



Examining the impact of domestic abuse survivors on employee
performance and recommendations for the employer

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Abstract

This research sought to extend our understanding on the consequences which may impact an organisation as a result of employees experiencing domestic abuse at home. Previous research has touched on this topic slightly which has helped to guide some aspects of this study. Interviews were held with victims of domestic abuse which had were employed at the time the abuse was occurring and the findings suggested that they had been negatively impacted within their professional career as a result to the abuse. These negative consequences included a loss in productivity and focus along with their attendance being affected and even their relationship with their manager had been impacted in some cases. The trauma which victims experience can have detrimental long term physical and especially psychological effects and many of the participants were left with mental health illnesses even after they had left their abuser. There are certain suggestions which employers can implement in order to protect and support victims and survivors of domestic abuse which would in turn benefit the organisation in the long run. These recommendations will be discussed in more detail below.

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1. Introduction

Domestic abuse in women is unfortunately a lot more common than people perceive it to be. According to Women's Aid (2019) one in four women have been domestically abused by a past partner or a current one. However, domestic abuse does not just happen in an intimate relationship, but within families also. Therefore, women can experience domestic abuse even without being in a toxic relationship, increasing the possible domestic abuse chances. However, for the purpose of this research, domestic abuse caused by intimate partner relationships will be analysed. Domestic abuse predominantly affects women and it can be described as controlling, threatening, coercive or violent behaviour which is repetitive rather than once off (Oliver, Alexander, Roe, and Wlasny, 2019). The types of a abuse a victim may experience can include but is not limited to physical, psychological, sexual and financial abuse. When women experience such traumatic events, it may negatively impact their self-esteem, quality of work, attendance and productivity within the workplace. Furthermore, this research will examine what impacts the participants experienced on their work, if any. Moreover, the actions which employers can take to support employees experiencing domestic abuse will be discussed with the recommendation that it will increase the organisations overall profitability and the victim's welfare. Primary research was carried out through semi structured interview. The participants were all women which had experienced domestic abuse while being employed and noticed a change in their professional careers as a result. Many had experiences a change in their productivity along with their attendance being affected. The secondary research will be analysed below in the literature review from which the primary research was influenced by. This research took a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative approach is it better suited the topic and a methodology of how this was carried out will be discussed further below. Recommendations such as training, policies and raising awareness will be included for employers as a guide to approaching domestic abuse. The intention behind this study is to see understand how employers and organisations can help their employees which experience domestic abuse and in result the employees may increase their productivity, improve their attendance and improve their quality of work as well as improving overall morale which would benefit the organisation overall.

2. Literature Review

2.1.Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can also be known as domestic violence and it's a complex issue which can include a wide variety of behaviours and relationships. McGarry, Simpson and Hinchliff-Smith (2011) emphasize the long term damage domestic abuse can on the victim's overall wellbeing and their physical health. Furthermore, this may cause significant negative consequence for the victim affected and it includes mental, physical and sexual abuse (Watson and Parson 2005). McGarry et al. (2011) also include financial abuse as part of domestic abuse on top of the ones just mentioned. While some researchers such as Showalter (2016) focus on intimate partner domestic abuse, it is important to note that domestic abuse happens among family members also who are not intimate partners (Benbow, Bhattacharyya and Kingston, 2018). Domestic abuse can be described as "a pattern of physical, emotional or sexual behaviour between partners in an intimate relationship that causes, or risks causing, significant negative consequences for the person affected" (Watsons and Parson, 2005, p.23). These acts are not done on a singular basis but would become a repetitive action the abuser does. Physical abuse can include slapping, punching, thrown with force down stairs or into an object while emotional abuse consists of humiliation, isolation, using derogatory language and putting the victim in constant distress or fear through the way the abuser talks and acts towards them. Sexual abuse would include the abuser forcing sexual intercourse of any kind upon the victim, furthermore, depriving the victim of money is counted as financial abuse (Watsons and Parson, 2005). This is significant to note for this research as there are many young employees which live at home as they may not be able to afford to move out of their family home and suffer with domestic abuse. Especially in Ireland, where rent prices are extremely high and many young adults cannot afford to move out due to this. Without employment stability, a victim cannot have financial stability to help them move out of their abusers place and gain freedom.

2.2.Impact of domestic abuse on the employee

Safe Lives (2017) identified that 12.6% of women between 16 and 19 had already been exposed to domestic abuse in a report carried out in March 2015. The detrimental

effects of such horrid events at such young ages can have long term negative consequences for the victims, which may stunt their career development and affect their productivity within a role. There has been plenty of research carried out on the effects of domestic abuse in adult women, however, there has not been much focus put on what this could mean for the employer of these victims, as Lloyd and Taluc (1999) mention. Wilson (2005) highlights that 96% of employed women which are victims of domestic abuse have had their work negatively impacted as a result of the abuse they had gone through or are currently going through. The long term psychological trauma which victims may experience due to domestic abuse can be PTSD, depression, anxiety, feeling suicidal, self-harm, substance dependency and abuse (Sanderson, 2008). The victim's behavioural and cognitive aspects may be negatively affected also. Hypertension, chronic fatigue, chronic pain, scars, lung disease and nervous system disorders are just a few of the long term physical affects a victim may experience as highlighted by Sanderson (2008).

2.3. Impact of victims on the employer

The severity of employees suffering from domestic abuse can negatively impact an organisation due to employees suffering from “problems with cognitive functions such as concentration and memory, which, in turn, can affect work performance” (Banyard, Potter and Turner, 2011, p.17). Moe and Bell (2004) also mention increase in absenteeism, lowered productivity and increase in turnover, which an organisation may experience with employees affected by domestic abuse. Reeves and O’Leary-Kelly (2007) emphasize that there is an increase in absenteeism in victims who experienced domestic abuse in the past compared to non-victims in the workplace. However, it is interesting to note that there was no difference in absenteeism in employees who were currently experiencing domestic abuse in comparison to non-victim employees which did not suffer from this (Reeves and O’Leary-Kelly, 2007). In an early research study carried, Lloyd and Taluc (1999) found that there was not much of difference in employment for women who were experiencing domestic abuse at home. In contrary to other researchers, Lloyd and Taluc (1999) didn’t notice a significant difference in turnover and absenteeism also. This could have been due to the victims being more motivated to keep their employment in order to gain financial independency and exit the toxic and abusive relationship as mentioned later in their findings (Lloyd and Taluc, 1999). This highlights the importance of a workplace for these vulnerable employees which may use their

attendance to work as a coping mechanism and as an escape from their abuser. This data is similar to Lloyds (1997) previous research where it was found that while domestic abuse would have a negative effect on women's socioeconomic and occupational status, it may not have much of an impact on their employment. However, Showalter (2016) also emphasizes the importance a stable job and financial freedom can have on a woman living abuse free. If a woman relies on her abuser for any kind of financial dependency, it can become very hard for her to leave her abusive partner without any money for basic necessities such as food and accommodation or a stable job to provide an income for herself. This situation can become even harder for women with children which may be stuck in an abusive relationship as they need to care for their children also, not just themselves. Young children can be an employment barrier for some women which can inhibit them from being employed or from accessing financial freedom as discussed by Tolman and Wang (2005). Thus, women feel trapped in abusive relationships, with minimal opportunity for them to seek for help or escape.

2.4. The consequences of Covid-19 on domestic abuse

Due to the recent Covid-19 pandemic, the domestic cases have risen dramatically in Ireland. The rapid move from working on site to remote working had dramatic negative consequences for victims of domestic violence which do not have the luxury to escape their toxic household, even for just a few hours a day for work. The hypothesis here is that the level of productivity would have dropped for victims of domestic abuse, especially working remotely, as they may find it harder to concentrate in a toxic environment. There has been a 25% increase in domestic violence calls recorded by the Gardai in April and May in 2020 compared to the same months in 2019 due to the pandemic (Doyle, 2020). United Kingdom have also experienced a dramatic increase, doubling their murders due to domestic violence in 2020 compared to the same time frame in 2019, France has also had an increase of 30% in domestic violence due to Covid-19 (Doyle, 2020). Furthermore, Europe has experienced a striking increase of 60% in emergency calls in April 2020 due to victim's restrictions to leave their household because of Covid-19 (Mahase, 2020). This is an extremely worrying increase compared to previous years and organisations should take this into account in order to maximise their profit and employee satisfaction. Taub (2020) suggest that when families are spending more time together than usual, domestic abuse rises. Christmas holidays or summer

holidays are examples of when domestic abuse rises as families are spending more time together. When lockdowns were enforced around the world, families had to spend all their time together, putting domestic abuse victims at constant risk and danger compared to previously. Taub (2020) emphasizes that within two weeks of entering the Covid lockdown, Spain had an increase of 18% in domestic abuse calls compared to the same time the previous month while France had an inflation of 30% in domestic abuse nationwide. This provides evidence for how important employment can be in a woman's life, especially for a victim of domestic abuse. There is no place for the victims to escape to even for a short period of time during the day.

2.5.Organisational costs due to domestic abuse

From the evidence provided above, domestic abuse victims are left with long term physical and psychological trauma which in turn, can have an impact on their employment and their employer's costs. Their productivity may be hindered due to a lack of focus, increase in distractions, mental health problem or physical injuries as a result of the abuse. It can be hard to measure the full economic costs a victim of domestic abuse has on an organisation as there are many factors contributing to this. Victims of domestic abuse affect the overall economy of an organisation, directly and indirectly. In a study carried out in the United States, it was found that the total cost of lost productivity due to domestic abuse was nearly 0.9 billion dollars (National Centre for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). This portrays a significant decrease compared to the estimated costs of 5 billion annually as mentioned by Johnson & Indvik (1999). In a more recent study carried out in New Zealand, the organisational cost due to domestic abuse in employees was estimated at 368 million dollars for June in 2014 (Kahui, Ku and Snively (2014). Furthermore, in Peru the figure is almost double, as the financial dent to an organisation due to domestic abuse was estimated at 613.9 million dollars as mentioned by Vara-Horna (2014). In a survey carried out by KPMG for Vodafone in 2019, they estimated a number of 9000 employed women which experienced a reduction in productivity due to domestic abuse in Ireland (Vodafone, 2019). This number of employees could potentially cost the organisation 15 million if their productivity decreased by only 1%, 75 million if their productivity decreased by 5% and an astonishing 151 million if their productivity decreased by 10% (Vodafone, 2019). This enhances the drastic organisational costs due to domestic abuse victims within the workplace. Similarly, Tolman

and Wang (2005) found that women which experience domestic abuse worked 137 hours less than women which were not affected by domestic abuse. Therefore, domestic abuse within the women employees has a direct negative impact on a business as it contributes to their turnover and increases organisational costs due to absences. Other effects of domestic abuse on an organisation are loss of concentration among victims, job loss which contributes to a company's turnover rate and poor attendance costs as many abusers try to interfere with their victims workplace through a range of controlling actions (Moe and Bell, 2004; Adams, Tolman, Bybee, Sullivan, and Kennedy, 2012). Domestic abuse victims are more likely to lose their employment by either quitting or being dismissed by their employer compared to women which have not and do not experience domestic abuse while employed (Lindhorst, Oxford and Gillmore, 2007). The victim being dismissed could be due to misconduct they may have encountered due to the psychological or physical distress from their abuser. Recruitment costs are usually high depending on the industry and labour market at that particular time. Therefore, losing a valuable employee due to domestic abuse, whether they have resigned or have been dismissed can negatively impact an organisations costs. Similarly to the decreased amount of hours victims of domestic abuse work, Adams et al. (2012) discovered that victims of interpersonal partner violence had a decrease of 3.06 months worked at any employment as a consequence of the abuse. Even when the abuse is terminated, the victims are still left to deal with physical or psychological trauma for an extended period of time or the rest of their life in some cases. According to Beck, Clapp, Jacobs-Lentz, McNiff, Avery and Olsen (2014) anxiety as a result of domestic abuse can influence the level of performance a victim is able to carry out and in instances where the anxiety is severe, it can impact their career advancement also. Furthermore, organisations are faced with low performers due to mental health implications as a result of the abuse, ultimately resulting to recruiting outside the company for a senior role which the victim could have potentially advanced to if they would not have experienced domestic abuse. Stalking can be another tactic which abusers use in order to intimidate or control their victims, this form of abuse can negatively impact a victim even more. In some cases, the abusers stalk their victim in the workplace also, which has even more of a detrimental effect on the victim. As some victims use their place of employment as an escape from their abuser, if they are faced with their abuser in their workplace also, it can cause even more damage to their mental health. In a study carried out by Logan, Shannon, Cole and Swanberg (2007), it had been discovered that women which were being stalked by their abuser were being disrupted in work more than those which were not stalked and this affected their performance of their role

also. Similarly to previous points mentioned, this negatively impact the overall organisation and its costs. The abusers would use other tactics on their victims also in order to inhibit them to go to work or perform their job well. Logan et al. (2007) indicate another tactic within domestic abuse which would negatively impact an organisation, this tactic is when the abuser refuses to take care of the children, therefore not allowing the victim to go to work or to stay at work and would be forced to stay at home or come home early from work. Widiss (2018) also highlights some tactics which abusers use such as physically holding them back and not allowing them to leave the house or even hiding the keys to their car in order inhibit them from going to work.

There are so many tactics which abusers use on their victims which leads the victims with long or short term physical and mental health problems. Some victims may be so traumatized that they are unable to search for employment or become employed for a long period of time, leaving her to be financially dependent on their abuser or the government for any welfare. Women which have experienced domestic abuse in the past are referred to as survivors. Lindhorst et al, (2007) and Showalter and McCloskey (2020) both discovered that job instability was more prominent among victims and survivors rather than women which were not affected by domestic abuse in their past or currently. As employers begin to understand more about employee satisfaction, motivation and performance, it is important to note what may affect these externally and not just internally within a company. Although employers expect employees to perform to the best of their ability every time they are in work, this is not realistic as external factors which may affect an employee could have an impact on their work life and not just their personal life. It's difficult for an employee to turn off their feelings as they walk into work, therefore it's important for an employer to take this into consideration when developing policies and development plans or training. Costs can become high when reduced productivity, increase in turnover and increase in absenteeism are calculated and in some cases legal liabilities and medical expenses could be necessary also, bringing costs even higher. Personal problems do have an impact on an employee's performance, productivity, absenteeism and ultimately add to the company's overall costs. These hidden costs can add up between 3 to 5 billion dollars which an employer is suffering from due to domestic abuse victims and survivors among their employees (Showalter and McCloskey, 2020). The amount of days victims and survivors are absent due to this is concerning for employers. While Tolman and Wang (2005) discovered that women affected by domestic abuse work 137 hours less than women which were not affected, this seems to

have increased drastically as in a more recent study, Showalter and McCloskey (2020) identified that employees affected by this miss 175,000 days annually. That is 175,000 days in which employers are losing out on productivity, inflated costs to covers the employees absent, healthcare costs and unsatisfied colleagues as more work may be forced onto them which could result in an increase in turnover. An employer which does not take a proactive approach when they find out an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, will lose out on overall company profit. Lindquist, McKay, Clinton-Sherrod, Pollack, Lasater and Walters (2010) related to the figure mentioned above as they also suggest that victims of domestic abuse can cause businesses a loss of 3 to 5 billion dollars in the United States every year. Domestic abuse does not exclusively just affect women, men can be victims of this also, however, as this predominantly affects women. Widiss (2008) notes that introducing a legislation for domestic abuse could be a step forward to diminish inequality of genders within the workplace.

As suggested previously, domestic abuse definitely has an impact on female employment stability and progression within their careers. Therefore, employers which provide support for their employees which may have or are currently experiencing domestic abuse, play a positive proactive role in the victims employment journey and healing from the abuse or trying to escape their abuser. Widiss (2008) also emphasizes the importance of financial stability for a victim trying to detach herself from the abuser, a very sensitive time where the victim being dismissed rather than offered support, may put them in an extremely dangerous situation. In some extreme cases, the victims may end up being murdered by their abuser or even committing suicide as an escape. The sad reality is that one in four women report to have been domestically abused at least once in their life time (Widiss, 2008). Furthermore, 24% to 52% of domestic abuse victims claimed to have lost their job due to domestic abuse, either being dismissed for being late, poor performance, absenteeism or bringing their personal life into work or by being forced to resign by their abuser. Financial instability traps the victims in staying with their abuser or returning to them if they had escaped before as their only other choice is usually to be homeless (Widiss, 2008). Although these studies were carried out in the US, domestic abuse is prevalent worldwide, in some countries it's more common than others and it affects women of any races, financial status, level of education or religion and according to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2013) 30% of women which have been in a relationship have experienced at least one type of domestic abuse.

As highlighted by Johnson and Gardner (1999), ignoring employee's personal problems such as domestic abuse has no benefit on the employer in the long run as these issues will impact the employee's ability to be productive and work as efficiently as they would have before the domestic abuse. Therefore, it would be advised that employers take a proactive approach through training, implementation of policies or programs and strategies to support domestic abuse victims.

2.6. Workplace support

Providing supportive services to domestic abuse victims could contribute to their mental health and overall wellbeing which would in return benefit the organisation. There are tangible and intangible support which a workplace can offer for employees suffering with mental health problems. Tangible supports include definite practices and policies a workplace may have in place for their employees. This could include sick pay policies, employees assistance programs (EAP) or specific training and development programs offered. On the other hand, intangible or informal support systems psychologically help the victim through the actions of supportive and comforting colleagues which may provide a listening ear so that the victims does not feel isolated and alone (Swanberg, Macke and Logan, 2006). According to a study carried out by Swanberg et al. (20016), 65% of employed women had confided in someone at work about their domestic abuse experience. This could have been reported to a colleague or a member of management. This means that 33% of victims did not feel comfortable enough to bring this up to someone within their workplace. Lindquist et al. (2010) suggests that companies should have EAPs which are specifically tailored to support domestic abuse victims as well as employees suffering with their mental health as the benefits of this for an employer may include preventing a crisis situation which may impact costs and provides a confidence boost and trust between the employees including management. However, Lindquist et al. (2010) highlights that only a small number of companies understand the negative consequences which employees experiencing domestic abuse may have on the overall organisation, therefore, not many provide support systems in this area.

Although there has not been much research done to prove the results of employer's providing support systems for victims of domestic abuse compared to those which do not provide any specific support systems, we can make an educated guess based on similar

topics. For example, it is common for companies to have bereavement policies in place in order to support an employee experiencing bereavement due to the known hardship this brings on an individual, especially within the workplace. According to a research in regards to the impact of bereavement in employees which Wilson, Rodrigues-Prat and Low (2020) carried out, all of their participants stated that they needed help and accommodation in order to return to work and recoup their ability to work again after a bereavement. Similarly to the impact of domestic abuse victims, bereavement can impact an employee's emotional, cognitive and physical ability to work which can negatively impact organisational costs in the long run (Wilson et al, 2020). It is suggested that there is a considerable positive benefit to be gained directly for the employers if they facilitate support for bereavement in order for their employees to recover from their grief before returning back to work and during their time in work (Wilson et al, 2020). Tehan and Thompson (2013) emphasize that it is unrealistic to expect employees to leave their feelings at the door as they enter their workforce and therefore must be supported and adequate policies must be put in place to protect their employees in such hardships. Bereavement can impact grieving employees as it reduces their focus, reduces their quality of work as increase in error may occur, reduced productivity and irritability which could lead to workplace conflicts (Tehan and Thompson, 2013). The impact of bereavement in employees compared to the impact of domestic abuse victims are extremely similar and the negative consequence on the employer are costly. Although there is no legal requirement for employers to provide bereavement leave in Ireland, majority of companies have a policy in place to provide support and adequate time off for their grieving employees, however, the amount of time off they office is up to the individual company (Irishjobs Career Advice, 2019). Therefore, if providing a policy, time off and flexibility for grieving employees has proven to be an effective way to support employees, perhaps the same positive impacts can occur for victims of domestic abuse if organisation approach this topic proactively. Gayed, Milligan-Saville, Nicholas, Bryan, LaMontagne, Milner, Madan, I., Calvo, Christensen, Mykletun, and Glozier (2018) also indicate that certain policies within the workplace can positively impact an employee suffering with their mental health and as mentioned previously, many victims of domestic abuse suffer with their mental health as a response to the trauma. If organisations would have specific policies to offer leave of absence due to domestic abuse, flexibility, training, EAPs or other methods implemented to help their employees experiencing domestic abuse, they would ultimately have a proactive approach to support employees.

2.7. Conclusion

Deriving from the evidence above, the negative consequences on an organisation add up to be extremely costly. Forcing a victim into unemployment due to their poor performance should not be practiced by an employer, as this would prove as poor organisational ethics. Furthermore, it would cost more to replace the employee lost rather than offering help and supporting the employee to cope with the domestic abuse and hopefully to escape it. Without financial stability, it could be too difficult for women to escape their abuser, especially if they financially rely on them for shelter and basic needs. Dismissing a victim of domestic abuse could cause extreme negative consequences for the victim, and may even trap them further in this toxic loop. Many victims rely on their employment as a coping mechanism as well as relying on the steady and secure financial outlet and where offered, the support of their employer (Showalter, 2016; Kahui et, al., 2014; Banyard et, al. 2011; Moe and Bell,2004). By helping their employees escape domestic abuse, the employees may form a sense of loyalty to the company as well as increasing their productivity, turnover, performance, morale and overall employee satisfaction.

3. Research Questions

The following section will outline the primary objectives of this study and the questions which helped guide this research will be discussed. These questions were influenced by secondary research literature which was studied. The literature based on how domestic abuse victims impact an employer and the support systems which employers can provide to support the victims was limited which raised the curiosity of this research even more. If this aspect of an employee's life has such negative impact on an organisation, then how come not more awareness raised among employers regarding this? The impact of domestic abuse victims on their employers are similar to the impact made by employees experiencing bereavement or being sick for a prolonged time, however, majority of employers have bereavement policies and long term sickness policies in place. The questions will explore what the participants would suggest employer provide in order to support employees experiencing this abuse along with what the primary changes they noticed in their work as a result of the abuse. The research was conducted through semi structured interviews as previous literature such as Moe and Bell (2004), Showalter and McCloskey (2020) and Lindquist et al. (2010) carried out as this research is qualitative rather than quantitative. Drawing on previous research, the following questions will be addressed throughout.

Objective 1:

What are the employment experiences of victims and survivors of domestic abuse?

Objective 2:

What are the direct impacts of employees suffering from domestic abuse on the organizations?

Objective 3:

What support systems do victims of domestic abuse think would be helpful and would like employers to implement?

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Philosophy

In order to get the optimum results out of this research study, this thesis will take a qualitative research approach rather than a quantitative approach. A quantitative approach is more focused on surveys, questionnaires or experiments given to individuals and focuses on the numerical data received from participants (Choy, 2014). This type of research is optimum for when a researcher must see a pattern or correlation between data variables and outcomes. On the other hand, qualitative research leans towards having open ended conversation with people to gather data. In regards to this research, an interpretative qualitative approach is used as this allows us to understand the experiences that the participants (Merriam, 2002) had with domestic abuse and how this impacted their workplace. Furthermore we will be able to interpret how this impacted the organisations that these victims have worked for, as a response to the domestic abuse. The impact on the participant's health and mental health will be discussed as well as how their trauma directly impacted their employment. When a victims experiences this, it may be hard to reach out for help, especially in work. Data will be analysed in order to understand if victims feel comfortable to reach out to a manager or a colleague for help. For participants which did not reach out for help, the reasons behind this will be discussed. While this topic is sensitive, a qualitative approach was preferred in order to see this topic through the participant's point of view to gather a more intellectual and emotional understanding in this area (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen and Liamputtong, 2009)

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to gather a more in depth understanding on how domestic abuse affects victims within the workplace and how organizations can support these victims. The impact of domestic abuse on an employee can affect the organizations overall productivity and can increase their costs. The idea behind this research is that if employers would be able to support employees which suffer from domestic abuse, this may decrease the company's turnover, a decrease in faulty products or mistakes, diminish some of the costs implied by the victims and improve overall employee morale. The aim here is to understand what support systems employers can put in place and how they can approach this sensitive topic within the organization.

The qualitative approach is superior to the quantitative approach for this research as it provides a more solid ground to answer the research questions previously mentioned. This

approach offered the opportunity to probe the participants depending on their individual experiences during the interview process. Qualitative research studies include having open-ended interviews with participants which allows them to share their unique experiences with domestic abuse as Patton (2005) states. The qualitative interview process allows us to gather as much data as possible from each participant as they all had unique experiences and have been affected in many different way within the workplace while they were domestically abused at home.

4.2. Research Sample

My research sample consisted of nine women that had experienced domestic abuse which manifested in psychological, physical, sexual, financial or the four combined and have been employed during this though time. The geographical region for participants was wide with participants living in Ireland, England and America and all interviews were conducted in English. Snowball sampling was used through social media regarding this research in order to gather the suitable participants for this, allowing the victims to reach out if they were comfortable to share their story. Snowball sampling is a research method used in instances where participants are hard to find and reach, therefore this requires the use of social media (Leighton, Kardong-Edgren, Schneidereith, and Foisy-Doll, 2021). Domestic abuse support groups on Facebook were joined and with the admins permission, a brief post was shared with an overview in regards to what this research is and a note was included that participants were needed to carry this out. Initially, four women reached out to be interviewed regarding their experience for this research. Additionally, other social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn were used to post about this research proposal and with the help of family, friends and acquaintances the posts were retweeted, re-shared and reposted, reaching a wider social demographic. An email address was included for the interested participants to reach out and a note to say that participants could reach out through direct messaging on social media also. The direct messaging addition meant that participants could cut one extra step of opening up their emails, looking for the email address and typing out the email, making it a little bit faster for them to reach out.

Overall there were 13 women and 1 man who reached out to be potential participants for this research. Out of the total potential participants, 9 of these reached out directly

through the Instagram page but unfortunately, 5 were not able to participate when further information was provided to them or they did not meet the guidelines of the research. Some reasons for this inhibition were that they were not comfortable doing an interview, they did not work during the domestic abuse or the abuse happened when they were minors. There were 3 participants which reach out through my email and 2 reached out directly on Facebook. Overall, 9 women were successfully interview regarding their experience with domestic abuse while in the workplace. When the potential participants first reached out, more details were provided to them such as how the interview will be conducted, how long they would roughly take and confirmed that they were working while the domestic abuse was occurring. The next step was to ask for their availability for the interview, and book them in.

4.3. Research instrument

Due to geographical distances and a global pandemic taking place during the time frame that the interviews were conducted, they could not be held face to face. Instead, an adaption was made to accommodate this change and the interview were conducted on Microsoft Teams. Due to the sensitivity of the topic and the danger that the participants could potentially be exposed to, a participation information sheet was not sent to them in advance. This was due to fear that they may still be in a domestic abuse currently and in case the abuser saw this information sheet, it may have put the participant's life at risk. However, when each participant joined the meeting, the screen was shared with the information sheet open and then allowed some time for them to read through the information sheet and ask any questions they may have. Once this was completed, their permission to record was asked and once consent to this was given, recording of the interview begun and the interviewing process started. When the interview commenced, each participant was informed that they are under no obligation to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable with and could choose to leave the interview altogether. Interview questions were open ended in order to allow the participants to speak freely about their experiences, this allowed them to express themselves which would not have happened if I would have asked closed ended questions. An approach to open ended interview questions which was semi structured was taken as there was only one chance to interview the participants and this allowed the participant to express their views freely (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). This is an extremely sensitive topic for someone to share with someone they do not know or trust, especially when face to face human contact is

erased and everything is carried in front of a screen. The video camera was turned on for every interview in order to gain the participants trust and to try and simulate a face to face interview. Participants had the option to turn their cameras on or keep them turned off, whichever they felt most comfortable with. All participants chose to turn their camera's on bar one participant which expressed that her anonymity is extremely important to her due to fear of her safety. Each interview durations was from 15 to 30 minutes and were carried out between 4th to the 17th of June 2021. The interview questions were guided by previous literature which was studied and some of which is included above. Deriving from previous literature, many researchers chose to carry out interview and this allows the researcher to focus on particular themes (Showalter and McCloskey, 2020). A total of 19 questions were produced to ask in the interview, these questions are included in Appendix A of this research.

4.4.Data Analysis method

After each interview was carried out, a couple of minutes were taken to write down some notes regarding that interview. Notes were not taken during the interview itself as to not throw the participant off as it is such a sensitive and triggering topic. Each interview was then transcribed into written text which aided in analysing the data gathered. Two predominant themes had emerged on how domestic abuse victims are affected within the workplace from the data gathered.

4.6 Limitations

The main limitation regarding this study was the nature of the topic which is extremely sensitive and triggering for people which have experienced domestic abuse. Gathering participants proved to be tougher than initially anticipated and due to the time constraint there were with less participants than originally planned. Another limitation was time and time zone differences. As both the interviewer and the participants work full-time, finding a suitable time to suit both parties was challenging. There were participants in Eastern Time zones, this was another limitation in trying to schedule the interview to a suitable time. The coronavirus global pandemic was ongoing throughout this research and as Ireland was in lockdown at the time that interviews were conducted, it meant that the interviews had to be

carried out over Microsoft Teams. Not being able to meet the participants which were situated in Ireland, decreased the sense of trust which may have formed in a face to face interview rather than a virtual one. Another limitation was the sampling method which was through the snowball method. As this topic area is very personal, the groups which were joined on Facebook included people which were there looking for help during their time of distress due to domestic abuse. The probability that these victims and survivors wanted to participate in this research was low as they were there to be offered support rather than having to express their experience in an interview. This sampling method gave little to no control over participants.

Literature on the effect of domestic abuse on an organisation and how organisations can best support these victims were limited which slightly hindered the gathering of an in depth perspective on this subject. However, the limitations of this research did not affect this qualitative research to a point where it was not possible and each limitation was surpassed by adapting a different approach which was better suited.

5. Analysis and Findings

5.1. Thematic Analysis

The primary aim of this research is to gain a better understanding on how domestic abuse in women affects them in employment and what the employer can do to support these victims within their employment in order to diminish or minimise the repercussions of this within the company. The participants of the interviews were all female survivors of domestic abuse which had been employed during the period domestic abuse was occurring. The primary data gathered from this research emphasized the repercussions of domestically abused employees on their employment, majority of the impacts that the participants were encountering were predominantly negative rather than positive. Semi structured interviews with employed victims of domestic abuse were held to gather this primary research. The results of this were explored by using thematic analysis by coding all the results and analysis from the interviews and collectively putting them into the different themes which emerged throughout the interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The findings discussed in this chapter correlate with the secondary data discussed previously in this research. Initially, all interview participants claimed that the domestic abuse at home impacted their ability to have employment security, productivity, attendance and mental and physical health. Therefore, this points to the undeniable importance for employers to invest time and resource into this area in order to support their employees faced with this difficult challenge. Furthermore, participants claimed to not feel comfortable to disclose this hardship within the workplace, to their colleagues or a member of management due to feeling embarrassed or fear of judgement. The findings and analyses of these findings will be discussed below under their primary themes while referring to secondary data included in the literature review of this research also.

Table 1: Themes

Themes	Sub-Themes			
Stigma for seeking help	Fear or consequence	Personal shame	Repercussions	Workplace support
Individual differences on the impact of employment	Quality of work	Productivity	Loss of employment	Attendance
Mental health	Anxiety	Depression	PTSD	
Type of abuse	Physical	Sexual	Psychological	Financial

5.2.Type of Abuse

Domestic abuse can include many types of abuse which the victim can experience and from the research carried out, there were 4 predominant types of abuse which the participants endured. Please refer to appendix B and C to see a table which portrays all the types of abuse each participant experienced. The types of abuse the participants experienced were sexual, physical, psychological and financial abuse. These types of abuse may seem familiar as they have been previously discussed with reference made to McGarry et al, (2011) and Watson and Parson’s (2005), connecting the secondary data gathered together with the primary data. Out of the 9 participating women, 5 participant experienced physical and psychological abuse, 1 participant experienced psychological, physical and sexual abuse and the remained experienced psychological, physical, sexual and financial abuse. Some of the participants did not realise they were in an abusive relationship until after on in the relationship or when friend or family pointed it out to them. Participant 6 notes that “it started off very subtle, he was so charming and he was like the best, you couldn’t fault him” before the psychological and physical abuse started. The abuse started off slow with participant’s 6 abuser making comments about her appearance, isolating her from friends and family and constant texts and calls as a form of control “He would kind of make me choose between him and my family and I was completely isolated”. Similarly with participant 5 which expressed that it first crept up as with psychological abuse at first before getting extremely physically violent “It got to a point where I was thrown down the stairs and he had his foot on the back of my neck” and “smashing my head against the window as I was driving”. Participant 5 claimed

that it was only after she had terminated the relationship and opened up to her friends that she realised what she had been through as she would have made excuses for him during the abuse. Participant 7 also mentioned that she didn't notice the abuse until further into the relationship "I didn't know it was abusive at the time so when I actually realized it was about and a half in". Many of the participants stated that they were either scared of judgement or they had received judgement for being in an abusive relationship with people telling them to just leave, however as can be seen from the above statements, for many victims it's hard to distinguish the situation they are in until later on in the relationship or afterwards. This may portray the lack of awareness there is in regards to domestic abuse and what this is.

Participant 4 experienced sexual abuse on top of psychological and physical abuse for a long period of time before gaining her freedom "it was physical, mental, sexual assaults on a regular basis". It can be isolating for victims to experience this and have to go into work and perform to the best of their ability even when there are visible signs of domestic abuse as participant 4 stated "I would be going to work with bruises all over me frequently" yet none of her colleagues or management approached to see if she needed support. The need for financial stability from employment for a victim to escape (Lloyd and Taluc, 1999) is emphasized by 3 participants which experience financial abuse on top of the three other types mentioned above. At the start of participant's 7 relationship, her abuser was the predominantly bringing the financial income, however, he held this against her "There was financial abuse because he was in the military and he was like the breadwinner of the family and his job provided us housing and insurance and everything like that and even to this day he's still like financially and emotionally terrorizing me". The sexual abuse had an immense impact on participant 8 also as she was faced with "pervy managers" when she went into work, further adding to her trauma from the abuse and a massive reason why she didn't feel comfortable to reach out for help. Financial abuse can be detrimental to a person as it can inhibit their self-sufficiency and threatens their economic security through control tactics by the abuse (Cameron, 2014). The lack of money and control over their financial economy can make a victim feel trapped and isolated and without financial stability or a stable income, it can be hard or even impossible to leave the abuser.

5.3. Stigma for seeking help

It can be argued from an employer's point of view that they may not be aware of any of their employees going through domestic abuse and therefore may not be able to help if they are not made aware by the employees. However, reaching out for help, especially within their employment has proven to be a challenge for the participant's interviewed. This theme emerged in each participant and the predominant reasons for this are counted as sub-themes. Many participants felt that they could not reach out for help to their colleagues or someone from management due feeling embarrassed, fearing that the abuser may find out and that their colleagues would judge them, lack of known support for domestic abuse and the repercussions of this on them and their family. 88.9% of interviewed participants felt embarrassed to reach out for help, or if they did reach out, they were embarrassed afterwards. Participant 2 stating that "I felt embarrassed to reach out for help". Even on the very low chance that a victim does speak up it may sometimes be overlooked or ignored which can lead to embarrassment as participant 7 claimed she "felt embarrassed to reach out initially and even when I eventually reached out as they didn't take it seriously and didn't believe me or offer any support". If their abuser works in the same company as them, this can be another barrier for victims to reach out for help as participant 2 mentioned that she "felt embarrassed and not comfortable to reach out for help at work as he worked there too". There was one participant which didn't feel embarrassed about reaching out for help or talking about this in work with her manager as she described them to have a close relationship, however, participant 1 did note that due to the trauma gained from domestic abuse, she would have been "hesitant to reach out for help in men within management".

Having children while being domestically abused can be another barrier for victims seeking freedom. Four participants, 44.5%, explained that they feared to reach out for help, especially in work. Participant 1 explained that she was scared to tell anyone in work because "I have children and didn't want anyone other knowing my situation in case it backfired on me with social services". As stated previously in the literature review, Tolman and Wang (2005) recognise that having children can be a barrier for victims to reach for help or seek freedom due to fear of judgement or their children being taken from them due to their violent environment. Participant 4 related to participant's 1 statement and added that she "worked in a council and felt very self-conscious and intimidated to go and reach out for help as I had children and didn't want social services to take them due to my situation", she also

emphasized that she “didn’t want my co-workers to look at me different if they found out”. If the sensitive data is not handled properly when a victim reached out for help and the abuser finds out, it puts their life at risk. Therefore participant 2 also feared to reach out as “sometimes if you speak up, the abuser may know and if the situation is not dealt with, you’re stuck in a domestic abuse relationship where your abuser knows you’ve spoken out which can put your life at risk”. This emphasizes the importance of confidentiality within the workplace where employees feel safe and comfortable to speak up about a particular issue without fearing that anyone else inside or outside the company may find out.

A number of participants also mentioned that the repercussions of reaching out for help was not worth it and as mentioned above for the participants with children, the repercussion of having their children taken from them by social services didn’t outweigh the need to reach out for help. 22.2% of participants noted that they didn’t reach out for help due to the repercussions that they may experience and participant 4 mentioned that she “preferred to have the abuser sleep on the couch than to leave him and have to watch my back constantly” and therefore didn’t want the people she worked with to know about her situation and pass judgement or be treated differently. As many victims use their workplace as a break from their toxic household, they rarely want to bring this aspect of their life into the workplace and prefer to keep this private. The lack of support systems and awareness within their workplace is another influence to not reach out for help. Only one participant was aware of support systems specifically for domestic abuse within her workplace, while the remainder claimed that they weren’t aware of any support systems available or their employer didn’t provide any. Participant 7 did reach out for help to her manager, however she didn’t receive any support and was ignored, although she tried phone therapy, she had to discontinue this as her manager didn’t accommodate the time off she needed to attend the therapy sessions. Furthermore, participant 9 mentioned she was dismissed when she reached out for help to her boss “My boss dismissed me for bringing my personal life into work”. This further portrays the lack of awareness and education on domestic abuse among organisations and employers.

5.4. Individual differences on the impact of employment

All participants interviewed claimed that their domestic abuse experience impacted their quality of work, their productivity levels were affected along with their attendance and

even led them to voluntarily or involuntarily end employment as a result. For the employers which think that their employees should leave their personal life at home as mentioned by Widiss (2008) previously, this should be an eye opener which proves that this expectation is not realistic. Firstly, all participants noticed a change in their quality of work with 3 participants working more effectively and intently as an escape while the rest were negatively impacted in this area. Participant 2 noted that while she “worked more intently and buried herself in work due to the pressure at home” she eventually became more distracted and was “unable to focus on tasks properly”. Participant 4 mentioned that she “used work as an escape from my abuse, I was committed to the job and would do overtime” yet, similarly to the participant 2, the quality of work she could do was limited as she was often in pain “I would try and do tasks at work but sometimes I was unable to because I was hurt from the physical abuse at home”. Other participants experienced loss of focus, loss of memory, lack of motivation and an increase in mistakes which had an impact on the quality of work they produced. Ultimately, this led to their productivity within the workplace to be impacted also. Participant 1 acknowledged that she was “less productive” in work as a result of her “lack of concentration and loss of memory” due to domestic abuse. Participant 3 developed PTSD due to the abuse which negatively affected her productivity due to her increase in “procrastinating” as a result of her mental health diagnosis. Participant 8 was working within the hospitality industry when she started to experience domestic abuse and highlighted that she was excellent at customer service as she had a friendly and bubbly personality but she became very closed off and discontinued to speak to customers the same way she would have previously due to the abuse, affecting her productivity and the overall customer satisfaction in her place of work “the domestic abuse changed me completely where I wouldn’t participate as much and I wasn’t interacting with any customers or colleagues anymore”. This lack of customer interaction could negatively impact how the employer brand is perceived by customers, impacting the organisations costs internally and potentially externally also.

Many of the participants had to resign or had been dismissed as a result of domestic abuse. It has been mentioned previously in this research that abusers tend to try and control their victims and often times this means that they can inhibit the victim’s ability to go to work in order to restrain them from gaining financial freedom and maintaining them in a stage of job instability (Lindhorst et al, 2007; Showalter and McCloskey, 2020). As briefly mentioned above, participant 9 was dismissed from her role when she had explained to her manager why she had to leave early the previous day due to “bringing personal life into work”. Other

participants had to change jobs also due to domestic abuse as the abusers actively tried to inhibit their victims to go to work through many control tactics. Participant 2 explained that she had to “leave employment due to domestic abuse because I wasn’t safe” as her abuser came to her workplace frequently and “would cause a scene”. Therefore when she left her abuser, she had to change employment so he wouldn’t know where she was and couldn’t come in to harm her. Participant 4 has a similar experience as she had to leave her job because her abuser would disrupt her in work “I had to leave one of my jobs as my abuser would come into my workplace and would make me feel unsafe”. Furthermore, she became a gardener which would travel to different locations every day in order to feel safe within the workplace as her abuser didn’t know what location she would be at when she was in work. This rises an organisations turnover, increasing organisational costs especially when the role has to be filled and recruiting can be costly.

Attendance was another employment area which was highly impacted as a result of control tactics by abusers. Participants experience an increase in being late to work, having to leave early or being absent from work completely. This affected their relationship with their employer and in some instances, it put the participant under stress having to deal with the repercussions of being late to work or absent altogether. Out of all the participants, 55.6% of these had their attendance in work affected as a direct result of domestic abuse. Similarly to the tactics discussed previously by Logan et al, (2007), participant 4’s abuser would try and consciously make her late to work by “hiding my work boots” and “leaving the house as I would need to leave for work” while he should have been minding their children so they would not be left unsupervised. This inhibited participant 4 to leave for work in time, making her late frequently and causing her a “lot of anxiety having to deal with the repercussions of being late in work”. Participant 7 also noted that her “attendance was really affected” as she was “often late” and had “a lot of sick days” which damaged her relationship with her manager “my relationship with my manager wasn’t great due to my absences and latest in work”. Furthermore, as a result of the abuse, participant 3 “experienced extreme fatigue in work” and had to reduce her hours in work to 32 a week compared to the normal 40 she would have usually done. Meanwhile, participant 6 explained that her abuser didn’t want her to work and would encourage her to stay at home by telling her “you’re not able to do it like you’re not physically or mentally able for it” while participant 5 had to take a long period of time off work as she was struggling with her mental health and was “suicidal” and battled with “depression and anxiety”. These absences, along with turnover, sick days and lates

directly impact an organisations cost and culture as other employees may have to help out more while their colleague is absent, causing potential conflict and satisfaction.

When questioned on what the participants suggested employer's do in order to support them, majority replied that they wanted a safe space and a confidential person they can go to and talk. Participant 2 noted "A designated person within the company where you can discretely go to regarding this, and they give you all the options and resources available" which is similar to the response participants 4, and 5 provided. Another popular suggestion given was that employers provide annual training for all employees to recognise domestic abuse and to give advice on how to cope with it as participant 9 suggested "More training for workplaces to educate what domestic abuse is and how to help others cope with it". While other participants suggested that training be provided to managers rather than all employees as mentioned by participant 1 "Training for managers on what domestic abuse is and the impact on the victim and how to help". The participants wanted to see more awareness raised around domestic abuse within their workplace rather than it be such a shameful and taboo subject, along with local resources they can access as stated by participant 8 noted "list available resource to employees". Similarly, participant 7 suggested to provide "an information sheet of services victims can reach out to would be good". Participant 3 had a different recommendation compared to the rest as she suggested to "limit access in the workplace to employees only where they can enter the building using a badge and visitors need to be checked in". This is an important recommendation as it would inhibit the abuser to come to the victim's workplace and cause a scene, become violent or destroy company property.

5.5.Mental Health

As a result of the ongoing domestic abuse, majority of the participants were left with mental health problems even long after they had escaped their abuser and were living an abuse free life. It is important to note that all participants were not in a domestic abusive relationship at the time which the interview had taken place. The main mental health illnesses which were disclosed by the participants were post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety as a result of their experience. Anxiety was the most prominent

mental health diagnosis among the participants which 4 participant experienced. Participant 6 stated that she “developed anxiety during the abuse” which she still suffers from. Similarly, participant 4 developed anxiety as her abuser frequently came “into my workplace and would make me feel unsafe” and as a result of the physiological abuse she endured. On the other hand, participant 3 was left with PTSD as a result of her domestic abuse experience which had a significant negative impact on her employment as the symptoms for PTSD replicated the “symptoms of ADHD which let me to procrastinate more” reducing her productivity in work. Participant 8 battles with PTSD also along with “a grocery list of mental health problems” including depression and anxiety. Lastly, 3 participants were still battling depression long after they had left their abuser with participant 7 having to take time off for her mental health as previously mentioned above. Participant 1 expressed that depression really affected her and her employment as she had lost her self-esteem and confidence, lacked motivation, gained significant weight and overall “stopped taking an interest in myself and how I looked, it was like I didn’t care about how I was at all”. This ties in with the secondary data provided previously in the literature review as Sanderson (2008) highlighted the long term mental health problems which could arise from domestic abuse and this included PTSD, depression and anxiety.

5.6. Conclusion

The focus of this research was to see if victims of domestic abuse have an impact on their employer and how this impact would manifest. By understanding how they impact their workplace and how domestic abuse affects them in work, employers can start to take proactive measures to support their victims which in turn would benefit the organisation in the long run. After analysing all the interviews, it has been made clear that domestic abuse impacts a victims within their workplace and not just at home. Both primary and secondary research pointed to a very similar direction of how employers are affected. The themes and subthemes identified above provide evidence that an organisation’s turnover, attendance, productivity, quality and work culture which can ultimately impact the organisational costs, in many instances their costs may rise as a direct result. When participants were asked what they suggest employers to provide in order to support domestic abuse victims, majority of the

results were similar. Majority of the participants suggested that employee's assign a specific person where employees can go to and speak with them about such matters without fear of repercussions or other colleagues finding out about their problems. They want a discrete listening ear to confide in. Other suggestions made were annual training for all staff to recognise signs of abuse and more awareness to be raised in regards to this, participant 7 suggested "more training around domestic abuse and how to notice the signs of it and how to help the victims would be great along with an information sheet of services victims can reach out to". Furthermore participant 2 suggested a call line to make "employees feel safe to speak up, a call line when you can call and it be discrete". On the other hand, participant 3 suggested that employers provide more flexibility for time off and working schedule along with "limited access into the workplace, where employees have badges and visitors need to be checked in" to make victims feel safe and limit the abuser's unexpected visit to their place of work. Ultimately, from the primary research data gathered, there seems to be little to not support systems in place for victims of domestic abuse within the workplace, yet this can have negative consequences on the organisation.

6. Discussion

Reflecting on the primary research carried out, the results linked back majorly with the secondary research discussed in the literature review. This current research focused specifically on the impacts on the employer as a result of employee's being domestically abused at home with specific focus to the changes a victim would experience within work and what employers could do to support them. This also explored the current policies and support the victims experienced within their workplace and what could be implemented by employers. The themes discovered as a result of the interviews will be discussed.

From the evidence provided, it seemed that majority of the participants were apprehensive to reach out for help within their place of work due to many reasons. Many were embarrassed to share this aspect of their life with their colleagues or management even if they could have benefits from this, even to have someone to talk to and listen to. There seems to be a feeling of shame and embarrassment (Iverson, Shenk, and Fruzzetti, 2009) for victims to admit to someone that their partner is abusing them due to the judgement they may receive. People are quick to judge in such situations and with lack of education and awareness in regards to this topic, they cannot understand the effects of this fully on the victim. Even when participants did reach out and told someone in work, they were faced with negative reactions such as being dismissed or completely ignored, which would diminish the participant's confidence to reach out for help again or to someone else. This is why it is so important to treat these sensitive personal matters with support and understanding. Some participants claimed that people close friends or family did not understand why they were still with their abuser if he was so bad and why they didn't leave yet. However, the psychological impact on a victim can be so detrimental that many experience unhealthy attachment towards their abuser, making them feel that they are not worthy or being alone or with another person. Financial stability also plays an important role in victims being able to leave, especially if they have children. The fear which comes with speaking out when you have children has frozen some of the participants from accessing help in case their children will be taken from them by social services. This is due to the some governments claiming that children must be removed from abusive households as they question the mother's ability to protect them from the abuser (Wilson, 2005). Therefore, understandably some of the participants feared that if anyone were to find out about the domestic abuse, they would have social services involved and would risk of losing their children, preferring to keep quiet. This is when the importance

of confidentiality within the workplace becomes extremely important because if an employee reaches out for help within their workplace and the information is not kept confidential, other may find out and the employee could have their children taken from them as a result. The lack of policy regarding this does not help either as many managers are not trained on how to deal with such a sensitive topic and many people do not know what signs to look out for to notice domestic abuse or how to even approach it if they suspect someone is affected by this. However, it is important that if there are policies implanted, that these are enforced adequately and that the employees are made aware of them. Without the resources provided to promote employees to reach out for help in work, many victims will stay silent or make up excuses when their experience affects their work, leaving employers to question why their behaviour or work has changed. It is interesting to note that out of the participants for this study, 5 of these worked within the healthcare industry. However, this is a minuscule number to be able to give an educated guess on whether the industry the victim works in has anything to do with their impact in employment or the lack of support systems provided. As this is such a traumatic experience for anyone, it came to no surprise when this had negative consequences on their work. Participants experienced lack of concentration, an increase in sick days, lateness's and absences, an increase in errors made and a lack of focus while in work. These all affect an organisations cost as the productivity of an employee drops along with an increase in mistakes, depending on the industry, this could mean additional material costs or additional hours paid in order to meet targets.

The rise in turnover as some participants had to resign or were forced out of employment results in an inflation of recruitment fees for the organisation, as well as additional fees for training the new hires. Additionally, the impact in attendance can raise organisational costs also. As a participant mentioned above, her attendance was affected the most as she had more sick days, more lateness's and unexplained absent days. This was the reality for many of the participants as they had to take time off to either heal from physical or psychological injuries caused by their abuser, or were frequently late as their abuser tried to inhibit them from going to work as discussed in the results chapter. This could potentially increase an organisations costs but also affect the other employee's morale as they may need to pick up more work when the victim is late or is not in. Other costs may be hidden in sick pay or long term sickness payments and potentially having to pay another person to come in and do the victim's job while they are absent. Depending on what the company benefits are, medical costs may rise and in some cases, legal costs may be necessary. There is still an

immense amount stigma and shame in regards to domestic abuse on the victims which is stopping victims from speaking up or seeking support (Crawford, Liebling-Kalifani, and Hill, 2009). Therefore in some instances, the victims not speaking out may be potentially lead to her being dismissed due to her productivity, attendance and quality of work being affected. This is a tough situation for both employee and employer as the employee is losing their employment stability which could put them at more risk of abuse and the employer could lose out on a potentially great worker, on top of the inflation in recruitment fees. Perhaps if the victim spoke to her manager, the dismissal could be avoided. This is when support from an employer would be extremely beneficial for both parties involved.

As a result of the types of abuse the participants and victims of domestic abuse face, many of the participants had developed long term mental health illnesses as a result. Many of the participants were experienced depression, anxiety and even PTSD during and after the relationship was terminated. Roberts, Lawrence and Williams (1998) came across these findings from their research also adding that victims may increase their alcohol intake to a harmful amount or even become dependent on drugs as a coping mechanism. This would be a potential cause for a victims change in work However, this theory has not been studied intensely in this research. It would be suggested that a study is carried out to further understand the link between domestic abuse victims, substance dependency as a result and the impact this could have on their employer. The participant's mental health illnesses could be another influence which may impact their quality of work and productivity, negatively impacting the company. An organisation which may have mental health support systems such as paid counselling or employee assistance programs would aid in the recovery process of a victim. Some of the participants in this study claimed that being absent or late to work gave them anxiety as they knew they would have to deal with their manager questioning them in work, especially if this is reoccurring.

Lastly, the types of abuse the participants had experienced affected them in their employment also. While all experienced psychological and physical abuse, some experienced sexual and financial also. There is not much employers can do to a victim who is physically hurt by their abused apart from providing the necessary time off to heal or give them different tasks which would not hurt them further. A participant did mention that she was unable to do some of the duties she had to carry out in work as a result to her injuries following physical abuse by her partner. Some of the participants stated that as a result, they had changed their attitude in work and some even feared men in general and the men who they were working

with as they didn't trust that these would not hurt them. There was only one participant who reached out to her manager for help but she did note that she doesn't think she would have reached out if her manager was male. This put focus on how important gender diversity is within the workplace as some employees may feel more comfortable to reach out to a female rather than a male and vice versa. Furthermore, sexual harassment within the workplace should be diminished and policies should be in place to protect the employees. This is extremely important to note as one of the participants which was sexually abused experienced sexual harassment within her workplace also by male managers, therefore polluting the one place she used as an escape from her abusive partner. If the sexual harassment would not have occurred, the participant would have been more inclined to reach out for help to her colleagues or managers. Employers are generally unaware of such instances happening within the workplace or that their employees are being sexually harassed or experiencing domestic abuse, and sometimes choose to turn a blind eye if they are aware. However this will have detrimental effects on the organisations success and overall profit, especially in the long run which is why it would be advised to pay more attention to why an employee may be experiencing outside of work as this often affects their work life also. It is not sufficient to ignore a struggling employee or dismiss them as it would add to the organisational costs but could also have a negative impact on the rest of the employees to see a fellow co-worker being treated in a dissatisfactory manner as a result of them experiencing domestic abuse. When financial abuse is involved, the victim's employment stability is even more important to them as this gives them financial stability which could help them exit the abusive relationship. Taking this financial stability from them would only trap the victim in abuse for longer.

The idea behind this research at the start was to see if domestic abuse has any impact on the victim's employment stability and the overall impacts the employer may experience. From all the evidence provided, we can see that there is a clear link between domestic abuse and employment as all the participants which were interviewed stated that their employment was impacted as a result of them experiencing domestic abuse. Some were more impacted while others decided to focus more on work as it they used it as an escaped, either way, there were many things which had an impact on their employment stability. Many were late or absent from work as results while others struggled to be productive, lacking focus or concentration. The quality of work was also impacted as some participants experienced disruptions in work by their abuser, either coming in and causing a scene or constantly calling

and texting them. However, this study findings must be considered in light of the limitations mentioned previously. This research had a small candidate pool and more participants would be needed in order to deduct a more precise understanding of the impacts within an organisation. Discuss strength of study, allowed participants to explain their experience/ other research to compare women from 90 to today's.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the aim of this qualitative research was to understand what the impact of domestically abused employees are on an organisation and what an employer can do to support them. Secondary research was studied to gather a better understanding on the published literature in regards to this topic which was followed by primary research carried out through semi structured interviews. It was important to gain a better understanding on what employers can do on their part to support these victims as this would benefit the organisation in the long run. This research points to a clear impact on the employers through an inflation in costs. As employees experiencing domestic abuse had their productivity, attendance and quality of work negatively impacted, it resulted in potential additional costs for the organisation along with potential conflict among colleagues or decreased employee morale. Morally, employers should provide support and make reasonable adjustments to make sure that all victims become survivors and exit the toxic relationship, making the workplace a safe space. Further research is needed in this area to further expand on the optimum support systems an employer could provide for victims.

7.1. Recommendations, Timeline and Cost

The onus does not just stand on the employer to support their employees but on the employees themselves also to speak up and tell their employer they are suffering with domestic abuse which is why they may be late, absent or their work may be poorer. If an employer is not aware of a situation, they cannot help or support that employee. As there are policies in place for bereavement, performance or sickness which have proven to be useful to employees, it would be recommended that a policy for domestic abuse may be implanted also. It wouldn't have to necessarily be very in depth, an explanation of what domestic abuse

is, what supports there are for employees experiencing this and other information on services which could be accessed may be helpful. Posters with available support services for domestic abuse victims could be hung up in bathroom, encouraging a victim to discretely look at the poster or take down details compared to if the poster was hung up in a public area, they may feel intimidated or judged by fellow co-workers. Hanging up a poster with available resources has minimum cost, however it could be extremely helpful for the victims. Awareness on this issue could be beneficial also, where all employees are able to understand what domestic abuse is, how it manifests and the negatives which come with this. By raising more awareness, a victim may feel less judgement from co-workers, and gain confidence to reach out for help, diminishing the stigma which encompasses this topic. It would be recommended that employers provide an EAP to aid with the victim's recovery and other employees suffering with their mental health. According to Attridge, Amaral, Bjornson, Goplerud, Herlihy, McPherson, Paul, Routledge, Sharar, Stephenson, and Teems, (2010) an EAP program is cost efficient for an employer in the long run due to the benefits on the employees, including positively changing work culture and boosting morale. Training should be provided to all employees, including members of management annually where employees are talked through what domestic abuse is, how to notice it among colleagues or themselves and how to approach this topic. Management should be given additional training on how to deal with an employee who is confiding in them that they are experiencing domestic abuse. Training should be mandatory for everyone as to not single out or discourage victims of domestic abuse to attend. Training could be provided by a qualified internal person if there is one which would be cost efficient or a company could reach out to specialised trainers in this area. This would turn out to be more costly than previous resources mentioned, however, training would only have to occur once a year and may only take a few hours or even less. Most importantly, employers should emphasize how important confidentiality and discretion is when dealing with such sensitive and personal information.

7.2. Personal Reflection

When I initially started out this research journey, I was influenced by working within HR and dealing with an employee which had experienced domestic abuse and was looking for support as her work was affected. This sparked an interest in me to understand why there was not much awareness raised regarding domestic abuse within the workplace as it clearly

had negative consequences on her work. Furthermore, I wanted to understand what how exactly domestic abuse impacts an employer and their costs and if this was an area that employers should take into consideration. Finding participants for the interviews was quite challenging as this is an extremely sensitive topic and for a brief moment I was discouraged by this but in the end managed to find an adequate number of participants to interview. Doing the interview was tougher than I anticipated and it emotionally impacted me slightly, therefore, I had to take an hour break in between interviews in order to process. Listening to the participants stories was hard as I'm an empath and I found myself putting myself in their shoes as they spoke, taking on their emotional burden. However, I found this experience extremely rewarding also and the participant's enthusiasm to carry out the interview and raise awareness motivated me even further to carry out this study to the best of my ability and not disappoint them. Overall the skills I have gained from this research will benefit me for years to come, especially within my career but in my personal life also.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview questions:

1. What was your relationship with the abuser?
2. How long were you in the relationship for?
3. When did you first notice signs of abuse?
4. How did the domestic abuse manifest?
5. Has the relationship been terminated? If so when?
6. Are you currently in an abusive relationship?
7. Were you employed during the period that domestic abuse was occurring?
8. What industry were you employed in?
9. Did you find it more difficult to get employed during this time?
10. What were some of the barriers you faced when looking for a job?
11. Did you reach out to any colleagues or a person from management?
12. Were you offered support when you reached out?
13. Did you feel that there was support there if you were to reach out?
14. Did you notice a change in your work life due to the abuse?
15. How did this change in work manifest?
16. Did you notice a change in your productivity and quality of work during this time?
17. What were the changes you noticed?
18. Did you feel embarrassed to reach out for help? / Did you feel embarrassed after you reached out for help?
19. What do you feel that companies could have done more of to support domestic abuse victims?

Appendix B: Types of abuse

Row Labels	Count of Interview
Physical and psychological	5
Physical, psychological, sexual	1
Psychological, physical, sexual, financial	3
Grand Total	9

Appendix C: A breakdown of the abuse each participant endured

Participant 3	Physical and psychological
Participant 5	Physical and psychological
Participant 6	Physical and psychological
Participant 7	Physical and psychological
Participant 9	Physical and psychological
Participant 4	Physical, psychological, sexual
Participant 1	Psychological, physical, sexual, financial
Participant 2	Psychological, physical, sexual, financial
Participant 8	Psychological, physical, sexual, financial

Appendix D: Interview information sheet

Examining the impact of domestic abuse survivors on employee performance and recommendations for the employer.

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT

My name is Violeta and I'm originally from Romania but have been living in Dublin, Ireland for the past 14 years. I have a Bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management and currently doing a master's in HRM. The overall aim of this study is to gather a better understanding on how organisations can support domestic abuse victims and how the victim's productivity within the workplace is affected.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

The participant will be interviewed on Microsoft Teams using video and audio. The interview will be recorded for this research purposes only and will not be shared anywhere to protect the participant's anonymity and confidentiality. The interview will be roughly 30 minutes and topics such as how the domestic abuse manifested and how this impacted your work life will be discussed.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

You have been invited to take part in this research as you have confided in me that you have been domestically abused in the past or currently are a victim of this. I know this is an extremely sensitive and triggering subject. Therefore, I would like to thank you for reaching out to me to share your experience.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

You do not have to take part in this, participation is 100% voluntary. If you do not feel comfortable to go ahead with the interview you are entitled to refuse the participation. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to and you can withdraw from this interview at any time.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

The benefits of this research is that organisations can have a better understanding of how to help victims of domestic abuse. This could provide victims with support from their workplace and in return this may drive loyalty, motivation and an increase in productivity from the employees. This could be a triggering experience for the participant due to the sensitivity of the subject. The participant can refuse to answer a questions, request to take a short break or withdraw from the research during the interview. The list below provides names and contact details of organisations which victims of domestic abuse can reach out to for help.

Womens Aid provide 24hr free phone helpline when you ring **1800 341 900** in Ireland. More information available at www.womensaid.ie

Samaritans provide 24hr free phone helpline when you ring **116 123** and also have a feature where you can chat online on their website. More information available at www.samaritans.org

AnyMan provide helpline support for men who have been domestically abused when you ring **01 554 3811**. They also provide counselling over the phone and in person. More information can be found at www.menaid.ie.

Rape Crisis Centre provide support for women throughout Ireland and England and have a 24hr helpline when you ring **1800 778 888**. More information can be found at www.drcc.ie

WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Your name will not be used in the dissertation and your identity will be kept anonymous. Everything you disclose will be confidential and the only people who will have access to your information is myself and my dissertation supervisor, Michael Cleary-Gaffney. A non-anonymised consent form and recording of the interview will be collected and retained as part

of my research process. All data will be collected on my personal laptop and retained in a private memory USB stick and stored away in a private, secure place.

HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

The interview will be recorded and all data will be collected on my personal laptop and retained in a private memory USB stick and stored away in a private, secure place. Signed consent forms and original recordings will be retained in my house until after my degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legalisation you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

This study will be used in submitting my dissertation to National College of Ireland.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

You can contact me at any time by emailing me at violetamunteanu89@gmail.com or ringing my number 0877520034. You can also contact my supervisor Michael Cleary-Gaffney at michael.cleary-gaffney@ncirl.ie

Thank you much for your time!

Appendix E: Consent form

Examining the impact of domestic abuse survivors on employee performance and recommendations for the employer.

Consent to take part in research

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involve me sharing my experience with domestic abuse.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being video and audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a dissertation.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the researchers house on a memory USB stick until December 2021
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years

- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

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Signature of research participant

Signature of participant Date _____

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of researcher Date _____