

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER



Bullying
in the
Workplace

Editorial Note

Dear Readers,

Week in and week out, the Initiative for Cognitive Therapy and Mental Health (ICTMH) stands alongside other mental health organizations in addressing the rising incidence of mental health challenges globally. Whether through webinars, outreach efforts, social media advocacy campaigns, or the publication of articles and journals, our impact continues to grow and reach far.

Our recent Mental Health Week created safe spaces for honest conversations, shared truths, and reinforced support systems. From the courageous testimony of Tunde to the reflective contributions from participants, we witnessed the transformative power of storytelling and collective resilience.

Through our weekly webinar series, Prof. Elizabeth Andrew-Essien guided us through the complexities of workplace bullying, its meaning, effects, and practical solutions, while Nurse Laura Afoenyi tackled the often-overlooked reality of compassion fatigue and burnout in the workplace. Their insights did not merely inform; they inspired us to lead with empathy while safeguarding our own well-being.

As always, we encourage you to engage, reflect, and contribute. ICTMH remains committed to building emotionally healthy communities!

Warm Regards
Ese Ogheneovo
for ICTMH

Weekly Webinar Training

Theme: Handling Workplace Bullying and Toxic Leadership

The Initiative for Cognitive Therapy and Mental Health (ICTMH) organized the second weekly webinar in its June 2025 series. Prof. Elizabeth Andrew-Essien, an accomplished environmental scientist from the University of Calabar, used the platform to explore workplace dynamics, as it relates to **Workplace Bullying and Toxic Leadership**. Her presentation generated expert insights and relatable experiences that brought the topic to life.

Key terms such as workplace relationships, bullying, and leadership which were consistently emphasized throughout Prof. Andrew-Essien’s discussion were defined. She offered clear distinctions among the different types of workplace relationships:

- Formal: Boss–subordinate, client–staff interactions
- Informal: Friendships, mentorships
- Interpersonal: Cliques, emotional alliances

Bullying is a repeated, harmful behavior whether verbal, physical, psychological, or emotional, intended to intimidate or degrade others. It is often systemic, subtle, and sustained, making it challenging to detect and address.

Toxic Leadership Traits include, authoritarian control, favoritism and blame games, poor communication and lack of empathy among others, capable of fostering fear, discouragement, and disengagement across teams.

Statistically, 1 in 5 employees report being bullied at work, \$64 billion lost annually due to related staff turnover, absenteeism, and lost productivity, 65% of workers feel emotionally disconnected under toxic leadership

Recommendations and Action Points

At the Organizational Level:

- Enforce zero-tolerance policies
- Host bonding events—team dinners, retreats
- Encourage open, anonymous feedback
- Celebrate positive behavior (e.g., Staff of the Month)

At the Individual Level:

- Identify bullying early and document it
- Communicate assertively yet respectfully
- Practice empathy and emotional intelligence
- Use powerful yet simple words: “Please”, “Sorry”, “Thank you”

Words on marble

"Workplace bullying may not be eliminated entirely, but it can be controlled through honest self-assessment, continuous education, and a sustained culture of respect."
Prof. Elizabeth Andrew-Essien

Breakout Group Insights

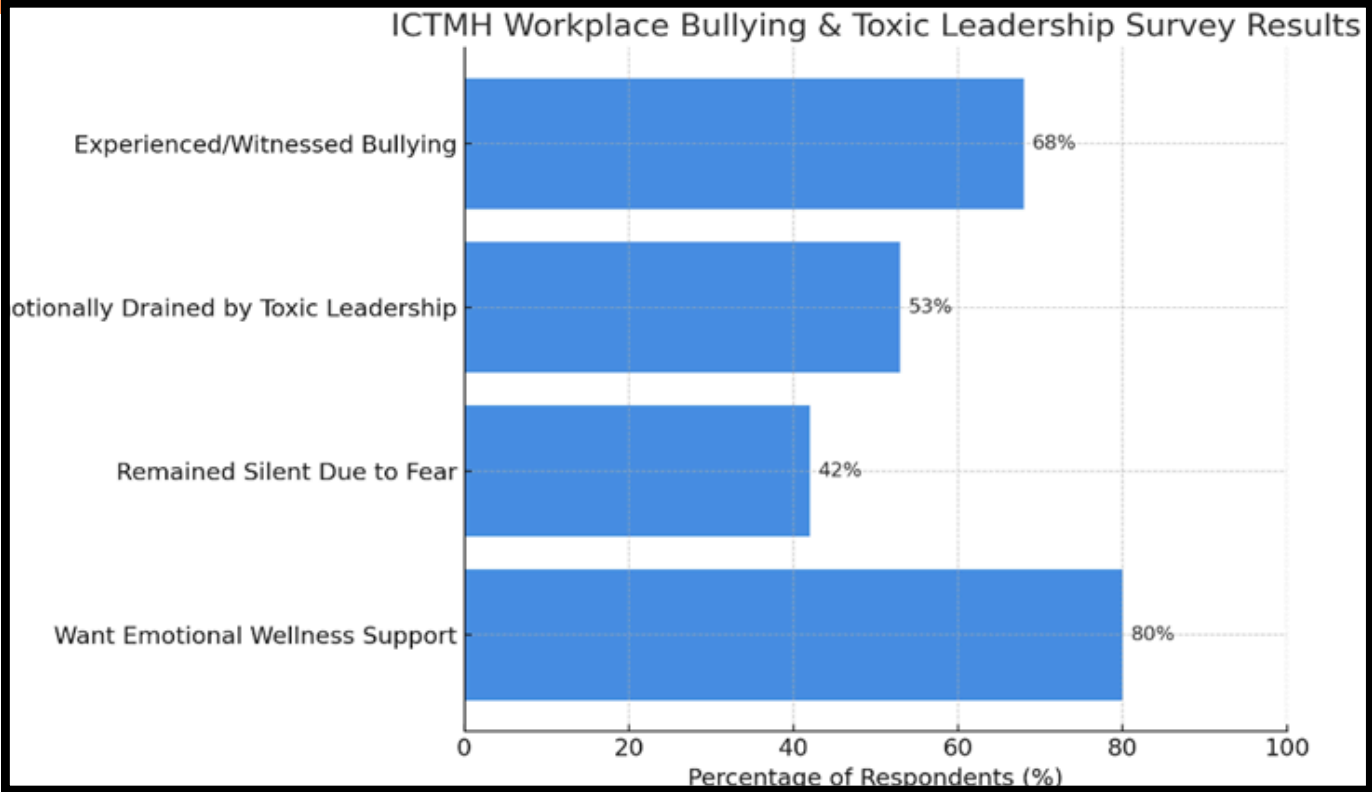
Emerging themes from Breakout Groups included

- Common tactics: Overloading one person, taking credit unfairly, denying training opportunities
- Root causes: Power imbalance, poor HR practices, entrenched toxic cultures
- Solutions offered: Assertive communication, workplace wellness training, building safer reporting systems, regular team retreats

Closing Note

The session wrapped up on a hopeful note, with participants expressing gratitude for the depth and practicality of the session. ICTMH reaffirmed its commitment to shaping emotionally healthy workplaces and invited all to stay connected and participate in future trainings.

Weekly WhatsApp Interactive Session



Data sourced from ICTMH June 2025 Event Log and compiled by Elizabeth Idowu

ICTMH Mental Health Week Report

Theme: Mental Illness Is Not Madness: Debunking the Myths in African Society

Date: June 2nd–June 8th, 2025

Overview

The Initiative for Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health (ICTMH) successfully hosted its second edition in the month of June (8th–June 15th, 2025) on Mental Health Week. Centered on the theme “Handling Workplace Bullying and Toxic Leadership,” the event was held virtually via WhatsApp and created a safe space for real conversations, healing, and community building. Workplace bullying and toxic leadership are silent stressors that affect mental health, productivity, and overall well-being.

This week’s conversations were hinged on issues around it, offering clarity, support, and tools for healing and resilience.

Motivational Monday

The week opened with the emotional story of Tunde, an employee who found his voice after enduring years of silent suffering under toxic leadership.

Key Takeaways:

- Silence is not strength. Speaking up is.
- Toxic environments can damage more than performance they harm people.
- Support systems (family, HR, mentors) are vital.

Participant Reflections:

- Hafsat: “There is power in our voice... Give yourself reasons to be sane and happy.”
- Uzo: “Tundes are everywhere. A simple act like dancing brought someone joy. Healing started there.”

Talk-It-Out Tuesday:

This day invited honest conversations about unsafe work environments. Participants were encouraged to take a brief anonymous survey. Data above reflects participant’s positions on some of the questions posed.

Quote from the day:

"Let’s not just survive work. Let’s fix what’s broken.

Wellness Wednesday

The conversation turned inward, focusing on self-awareness and small actions to protect inner peace.

Reflection Prompt:

"What’s one small thing I can do today to protect my peace at work?"

Key Insight:

- Deep breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system and promotes calm.
- Participant Highlights:
- Hafsat: “Today, I’m choosing to protect my peace by not engaging in negativity.”
 - Uzo: “Sometimes it gets overwhelming... Nevertheless, we keep pushing to stay well.”
 - Victoria: “Peace isn’t a luxury it’s necessary.”

Event of the Week (Picture Collage)



Nurse Laura, and colleagues at Mira Laser and Skin Treatment Clinic, Abuja in an outreach organised by ICTMH to sensitize and educate staff of the clinic on Compasionate Fatigue and Burnout.

Star Event of the Week

Date: 17th June 2025
ICTMH Outreach Summary
Venue: Mira Laser and Skin Treatment
Date: 17th June 2025
Facilitator: Nurse Laura Afoenyi
Theme: Holistic Care with Boundaries:
Balancing Compassion and Self-Care

Session Highlights

This impactful session explored the delicate balance between caregiving responsibilities and personal well-being. Nurse Laura Afoenyi led participants through the concept of holistic care within healthy boundaries, shedding light on how caregivers can deliver compassionate service without sacrificing their mental, emotional, or physical health.

A key part of the discussion centered on compassion fatigue and burnout, the emotional toll that prolonged exposure to suffering and unmet needs can have on healthcare professionals. Nurse Laura explained that while compassion is the foundation of caregiving, it can become draining when care providers neglect their own needs or feel emotionally burdened by continuous demands.

Participants discussed the signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue, such as emotional numbness, irritability, physical exhaustion, withdrawal, and reduced empathy. These, if unaddressed, often evolve into burnout, characterized by chronic stress, low morale, and a decline in quality of care.

Strategies for navigating these challenges, include

- Establishing clear emotional and professional boundaries.
- Practicing consistent self-care routines such as rest, exercise, reflection, and spiritual grounding.
- Seeking peer support, mentorship, and counseling when needed.
- Engaging in routine debriefings and team reflections to process difficult experiences.
- Advocating for supportive workplace environments that recognize and respond to caregiver stress.

Key Takeaways

- Participants gained clarity on how to maintain emotional balance while delivering patient-centered care.
- Emphasis was placed on active listening as the foundation of intentional, supportive caregiving.
- Attendees shared experiences on managing emotional boundaries to prevent professional detachment or emotional overload.
- The session highlighted the importance of recognizing early warning signs of burnout and having proactive coping strategies in place.

Reflections from the Session

“The antecedent of Caregiving is Active Listening with intention to Support.”
“While Compassion is the bedrock for Service, it may become overwhelming if not defined.”
“Self-care is essential for sustaining the compassion and empathy that fuels our ability to care.”

RESOURCE & ANNOUNCEMENTS



The poster features a light blue and white geometric design. In the top left corner is the logo for the Initiative for Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health (ICTMH), which includes a stylized brain and the text 'INITIATIVE FOR COGNITIVE THERAPIES AND MENTAL HEALTH'. The main title 'ONLINE TRAINING' is in a small, dark blue font, followed by 'WORK-LIFE BALANCE' in a large, bold, light blue font, and 'FOR NIGERIAN ENTREPRENEURS' in a bold, dark blue font. Below the title, there are three circular icons: a calendar icon for 'FRI, 20th JUNE', a clock icon for '8:00PM (WAT)', and a location pin icon for a Zoom link. A blue button with the text 'REGISTER NOW' is positioned below the icons. A hand-drawn blue arrow points from the button towards the speaker's photo. The speaker's photo is a portrait of Abimbola Olayemi Sackey, a smiling woman with dark hair, wearing a white top. Below her photo is a dark blue banner with her name 'Abimbola Olayemi Sackey' and the word 'SPEAKER' with a small microphone icon. At the bottom left, there is a globe icon and the website 'www.cognitiveng.org'.

INITIATIVE FOR COGNITIVE THERAPIES AND MENTAL HEALTH

ONLINE TRAINING
WORK-LIFE BALANCE
FOR NIGERIAN ENTREPRENEURS

 **FRI, 20th JUNE**

 **8:00PM (WAT)**

 https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8DUUd0tSR6EyLg1h_4IMQ

REGISTER NOW

Abimbola Olayemi Sackey
SPEAKER

 www.cognitiveng.org

Call for Journal Articles - ICTMH

ICTMH invites submissions of journal articles focused on mental health and cognitive behavioural therapies, especially those offering African-based solutions.

A list of suggested topics is available, but you're welcome to propose your own. Writing guidelines, including word counts and tips, are also provided.

Interested?

Contact Ese (07068487474) or Latifa (07064269139) on WhatsApp.

We're happy to support you through the process.

Thank you!

To get feedback or stories? Email us at enquiry@cognitiveng.org

For volunteering opportunities, join our team via social media

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