

# Work Place Violence Against Nursing Staff Working in Emergency Departments at General Hospitals in Basra City

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## ABSTRACT

This study including 84 nurses working at emergency departments at general hospitals in Basra City, to determine the rate and sources of different types of violence, some characteristics of violence incidents and reactions of nurses towards violence incidents. Results showed the majority were exposed to work place violence (90.5%). Exposure to work place violence rate among males (93.8%) was higher than among females (86.1%). Exposure to work place violence rate was lower among younger than 30 years of age (77.8%) than older participating. The majority (71.1%) of the participants were exposed to verbal violence. Relatives of the patients were the major source of violence (86.8%), the main time of exposure to violence was during night shift (48.7%). The main reason for not submitting the incident of violence reports was that they consider it of no importance (76.3%). Nothing was done as consequence for (35.3%) of the work place violence. The main single feeling was disappointment which was expressed by (32.8%) of the participants who exposed to violence.

**Keywords:** Emergency departments, Work place, Violence, Nursing staff

## INTRODUCTION

Emergency department provide very important services for the life threatening conditions and the number of the patients using emergency department is increasing every day and it is a place where health staff should do the most accurate action in less time<sup>(1)</sup>. Their presence in stressful situations exposes them to more abuse or harsh behavior from patients or their companions than other hospital staff<sup>(2)</sup>. Patients and their relatives in response to stress as caused by accidents or illness might use violence against health personnel and a number of official reports, media, stories and international initiatives have focused attention on the problem worldwide<sup>(3)</sup>. High rate of victimization among nursing staff considered as an important reason for losses from the workforce and an inability to attract new staff<sup>(4,5)</sup>.

A study including 68 nursing staff working in central emergency of Imam Reza hospital, revealed that all nurses were exposed to verbal violence at least once during the last year and (22.1%) experienced physical violence, patient's relatives were the main source and

most of the nurses had not taken any action against them and more than half of the nurses do not report the incident of violence because they thought it's useless to report or talk about it<sup>(1)</sup>. Other study in Iran including 6500 health personnel the findings revealed that nurses were the main victims of physical violence (78%) and patients' families were the main perpetrators of violence (56%)<sup>(6)</sup>.

In Australia a study in 94 nursing wards revealed that about one third of participated nurses perceived emotional abuse during the last five shifts worked<sup>(7)</sup>. A cross sectional survey in Chinese hospitals on 588 nurses revealed that (7.8%) of the nurses reported exposure to physical violent incident and (71.9%) non physical violent experiences in the preceding year. Nurses with low experience were more likely to report physical (13.2%) or non-physical (89.5%) violence compared with more experienced nurses<sup>(8)</sup>. The results from retrospective study on 275 Italian nurses showed that 43% of nurses were exposed to at least one attack of physical or verbal violence during lifetime activity in clinical setting and were mostly assaulted by patients or

their relatives and friends <sup>(9)</sup>.

A national survey in Kuwait including 5876 nurses showed that the rates of verbal violence and physical violence experienced by nurses were (45%,7%) respectively in the 6 previous months <sup>(10)</sup>. In Riyadh Saudi Arabia a study conducted on 121 nurses revealed high overall incidence of workplace violence was (89.3%), and (74.1%) of nurses were exposed to verbal abuse in the past 12 month, including 23 (21.3%) exposed to violence more than four times. The incidents of violence was the highest in the evening shift. Patients (82.4%) and their relatives (64.8%) were the main source of violence<sup>(5)</sup>. In Palestinian hospitals a study including 271 physicians and nurses, the majority of respondents (80,4%) reported exposure to violence in the previous 12 months, No statistical difference in exposure to violence between physicians and nurses was observed and males significantly experienced higher exposure to physical violence in comparison with females violence<sup>(11)</sup>. Across sectional study conducted in general hospitals in Jordan including 468 nurse, (52.8%) of them reported that they were physically attacked and (67.8%) were verbally attacked in the last 12months . Female nurses were 0.5 times less likely to report being physically attacked and were 1.5 times more likely to report being verbally abused than male nurses<sup>(12)</sup>. Other study on 447 nurses working in various departments in 3 hospitals in Amman. Verbal and physical abuse was 37.1% and 18.3% respectively. Patients and their relatives were the usual abusers. Only 35.1% of the abused nurses reported it; of those that did not, 57.1% thought it was useless to do so<sup>(2)</sup>. In Basra city Iraq, previous study conducted

in Basra hospitals on 198 emergency care staff (48.7%) of the respondents had faced verbal violence, (24.6%) faced physical violence and most victim did not take an action after the end of the violence incident <sup>(3)</sup>.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1- Design of the study: Descriptive, cross sectional study.

2-Setting of the study: the emergency department in Basra hospitals

3-The sample of the study: sample of 84 nurses working in emergency department. Structured questionnaire was used for the purpose of the data collection; the data collection was carried out from December 2016 through February 2017. the questionnaire contains two parts the first part consist of 6 items related to social demographic characteristics of the nurses the second part consist of 14 question related about exposed to violence incident to nurses. Data was collected via face-to-face interviews by two senior nursing students. Each interview session took 10 to 15 minute.

Before any attempt to collect data, approval to conduct the study was obtained from general health directorate of Basra. Participant were informed about the aim of the study, they have the 4- Statistical analysis: Analysis was made by using SPSS version 23, data was expressed in (frequency and percentage). Chi-squared test was used to examine the association between the groups and a probability of less than 0.05 was consider to be statistically significant.

## RESULTS

**Table 1. Socio demographic characteristics of the participants (n=84)**

Characteristics of participants	Categories /groupings	Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	48	57.1
	Female	36	42.9
Age in years	>30 years	27	32.1
	30-39	33	39.3
	40+	24	28.6
Level of education	Secondary nursing school	56	66.7
	High institute	26	31
	Nursing college	2	2.3

**Cont... Table 1. Socio demographic characteristics of the participants (n=84)**

Duration of employment in the emergency department	>5	31	36.9
	5-9	29	34.5
	10+	24	28.6
Work Shifts	6hour	67	79.8
	8 hour	9	10.7
	12 hour	8	9.5
Exposure to work place violence	Not exposed	8	9.5
	Exposed	76	90.5

Table 1 showed that (57.1%) of the studied sample were males , the majority of the sample were below (40) years of age , regarding education level (66.7%) of sample were Secondary nursing school graduate , regarding the duration of employment in the emergency department, (36.9%) were less than (5) years , high percent (79.8%) had a work shift of (6) hours. Majority were exposed to work place violence (90.5%)

**Table 2. Exposure to work place violence according to gender and age (n=84)**

Variables	Gender	Exposed to violence		Not exposed to violence		X <sup>2</sup>	Df	P value
		No.	%	No.	%			
Gender	Males	45	93.8	3	6.2	1.939	1	0.238
	Females	31	86.1	5	13.9			
Age	>30 years	21	77.8	6	22.2	7.467	2	0.02
	30-39	32	97	1	3			
	40+	23	95.8	1	4.2			
<b>Total</b>		<b>76</b>	<b>90.5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9.5</b>			

Exposure to work place violence rate among males (93.8%) was higher than among females (86.1%) . although the differences was statistically not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Exposure to work place violence rate was lower among younger than 30years of age (77.8%) than older participants and the difference was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) as shown in table 2.

**Table 3. Characteristics of work place violence during the last 12 months among the participants (n=76)**

Characteristics violence	Categories /groupings	Frequency	(%)
Type	Verbal	54	71.1
	Physical	22	28.9
Frequency	Once	10	13.2
	Two to three times	10	13.2
	Four and more	56	73.6

**Cont... Table 3. Characteristics of work place violence during the last 12 months among the participants (n=76)**

Attacked by whom	Patient	2	2.6
	Relatives of the patients	66	<b>86.8</b>
	Both of the above	8	10.6
Time during which violence occurred	At Day shifts	18	23.7
	At Night shifts	37	<b>48.7</b>
	During Holidays	21	27.6
Submission of violence report to the administration	Yes	17	22.4
	No	59	<b>77.6</b>

The majority (71.1%) of the participants was exposed to verbal violence. 73.6% of them exposed for four times or more attacks of violence. Relatives of the patients were the major source (86.8 %). The main time of exposure to violence was during night shift (48.7%) as shown in table 3.

**Table 4. Causes of not submission of work place violence report among the participants (n=59)**

Causes	Frequency	(%)
It was not important	45	76.3
Afraid of consequences	14	23.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100</b>

The main reason for not submitting the incident of violence reports was that they consider it of not important (76.3%), (23.7%) were afraid from consequences of reporting, as shown in table 4.

**Table 5. Consequences of submission of work place violence incident reported to hospital authorities by the participants (n=17)**

Consequences	Frequency	(%)
Nothing done	6	35.3
Verbal warning to attacker	5	29.4
Aggressor prosecution to attacker	6	35.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

Nothing was done was consequence for (35.3%) of the work place violence as shown in table 5.

**Table 6. Feelings of the participants toward the violence incidents**

Item	Frequency	(%)
Disappointment	25	32.8
Sadness	12	15.8
Failure	10	13.2
Shocked	5	6.6
More than one of the above feelings	24	31.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

The main single feeling was disappointment which was expressed by (32.8%) of the participants who exposed to violence. as shown in table 6.

## DISCUSSION

Regarding the socio-demographic characteristic of the participants in this study does not differ much than what was reported in previous study in Basra<sup>(1)</sup>. Majority of nursing staff in this study were exposed to work place violence (90.5%). similar study in Jordan (91.4%)<sup>(13)</sup>. In this study exposure to work place violence among males was higher than females this could be due to the social and cultural factors that may lead to avoid attacking or insulting women. Exposure to work place violence rate was lower among those younger than 30 years than older age participants, reverse pattern seen in other studies<sup>(2,3)</sup>. Regarding exposure of emergency department staff to verbal violence, it was stated that

its rate internationally lies between 21–82.4% <sup>(14)</sup>, the current rate (71.1%) lies within these limits.

Majority (71.1%) of the participation was exposed to verbal violence lower than other studies done in Greece 75.2% and Iran 91.6% <sup>(15,16)</sup>, and higher than what was reported from other study in Iran 64.09% <sup>(17)</sup> and of previous study in Basra city (48.7%) <sup>(3)</sup>. However the exposure to physical violence for this study was (28.9%) which was higher than what was reported in previous study in Basra city (24.6%) <sup>(3)</sup>, regarding the episodes of violence (73.6%) of the sample in this study exposed to about four times or more attacks of violence higher than the result of study done in Jordan (27.0%) <sup>(13)</sup>. Relatives of the patients were the major source of violence 86.8% in this study slightly lower than the study in Chinese (93.5%) <sup>(8)</sup>, and higher the study in Saudi Arabia (71.7%) <sup>(4)</sup> and similar to study in Iran <sup>(15)</sup>. In this study working night shifts violent incidents was (48.7%), lower than result of study done in Turkey (67.4%) and Egypt (60.9%) <sup>(18,19)</sup>. While in other studies<sup>(2,3)</sup> the day time shifts was associated with more violent incidents.

About one fifth of nursing staff in this study, reported the violent incidents, similar to study in Egypt <sup>(19)</sup>, and lower than reports of studies elsewhere<sup>(2,3,11)</sup>. The main reason for not reporting the incident of violence was they consider it of not important (76.3%), higher than reports in study done in Iran, Jordan and Basra<sup>(1,2,3)</sup>. Nothing was done as consequences in (35.3%) of the work place violence, which was higher than the study in Iran (21.1%)<sup>(1)</sup> and lower than that for Egypt<sup>(19)</sup>.

Disappointment and sadness were expressed by (32.8%) and (15.8 %) of nurses and these rates were lower than other studies <sup>(18)</sup>.

### CONCLUSIONS

1. workplace violence was prevalent, verbal violence was more prevalent than physical violence.
2. Males exposed to violence more than females
3. Older age groups exposed to violence more than younger age groups
4. Relatives of the patients were the main source of violence.

5. Violence usually occur during night shifts
6. The majority of those who exposed to work place violence didn't submit violence report

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Design and implementation of an educational programs on how to manage the incident of workplace violence.
2. legislations need to be activated to protect health staff in general and specifically the emergency units staff

**Conflict of Interest :** Nil

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**Ethical Clearance:** Taken from Basra Nursing College ethical and scientific committee.

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