Searching for roots of violence

“You cannot build nonviolence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages”. - Mahatma Gandhi in Mind of Mahatma Gandhi (Ed Prabhu and Rao), third Edn, 1968.

Ahamed et al.[1] study if the perception of safety from workplace violence affects job satisfaction among doctors practicing modern medicine in India by conducting an online nationwide survey in June 2021 issue of the Journal. They prepared a semi-structured, anonymous “Google forms” based questionnaire and invited collected data from users via personalized surveys without imposing any charges. Then they analyzed their study results and prepare four tables therein depicting their findings in an easy-to-observe manner.

In Table 4, entitled, Results of regression analysis for job turnover intention, the authors assess various variables and associate them with the intention for leaving their jobs. What we could not decipher is the term turnover itself. Whether it means changing job completely and escape to some other profession, for example, a nonmedical venture; or simply leave one’s current job at one hospital and join at another one, we are unable to reconcile. While talking to our colleagues in several parts of the world, we find that there is a higher probability of discovering a second option to be nearer the reality. Nevertheless, more clarification is needed when we go through an article specifically looking into this issue solely.

In the table, there is an application of mathematics to find out if one’s marital status is associated with one’s intention to change his job. We believe this association to be as much intriguing as wondrous. While getting married when one makes a pledge to care for more than one body-and-soul, how one can have ideas of finding new avenues of employment, we wonder. But after contemplation, we put forward a hypothesis that married doctors are likely to be older ones, completed their training, earned their basic qualification; hence, command more control on their job – not only when violence occurs but even otherwise as well. Hence, when the researchers correlate – and actually find an association – we believe that to be a spurious one. A spurious association is one where two variables are not directly correlated but interact by other factors – other than one, which appears to have affected the outcome.[2]

The table also discovers an association between one’s employer (government versus private) and one’s job turnover intention. In addition, the results indicate that those employed in the private sector are more inclined to change their employer. Nonetheless, the fact of the matter is that those doctors employed in the government sector are usually on a long-term contract called a regular job; hence, maybe sticking to the source of livelihood. Although nowadays various Central health programs, for example, the National Health Mission, vertical disease control programs, even Corona control program – centered to control one disease alone – advertise contractual jobs; those doctors who are employed in these short-term contracts may be leaving their jobs when their tenure is over.[3] Making an association with violence, which may be occurring otherwise at these hospitals, maybe a far-fetched thinking and a long shot on limited turf.

The investigators also find an association between the areas of practice and state that urban doctors have a higher urge to change their jobs. But the reality is that those posted in the urban landscape have a larger avenue of finding new attachments due to the existence of several hospitals catering to a large resourceful population in a limited area as compared to villages.[4] Government doctors in cities get this posting after wielding much influence; hence, may not be willing to change it – that is, they may not change their hospital even under occasionally hostile conditions. Similarly, private practitioners migrate where they get greener pastures, have better services or other suitable conditions, and better facilities for the schooling of their young kids. We would recall that this rural–urban divide came to haunt us during the COVID-19 pandemic.[5] Therefore, the presence of violence may not be a critical factor in the decision-making process at all these dynamics even when present, hence correlating everything with a single factor may be an overemphasis of the links throwing up incorrect inferences.

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