LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Comments on “Workplace violence among healthcare workers during COVID-19 pandemic in a Jordanian governmental hospital: the tip of the iceberg” by El-Shafei, D. A. et al., 2021 (10.1007/s11356-021–15112-w)

Moustaq Karim Khan Rony1 · Rashed Ullah Rana2

Received: 24 January 2022 / Accepted: 17 March 2022 / Published online: 23 March 2022
© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2022

Workplace physical assault (WPPA) is a threat to healthcare workers. Nurses, in particular, are at a higher risk. In this pandemic, the issue of physical abuse of nurses has attracted considerable attention. Although the world has seen how frontline warrior nurses have dedicated themselves. Nurses are responsible for understanding the healthcare needs of the patient and the patient’s family through effective counseling. Nurses work closely with patients and spend most of their time at the bedside, feeling themselves in the position of their patients (Rony et al., 2021). However, one out of every four nurses is assaulted at the workplace. Moreover, by 2021, 31% of nurses in the USA have been physically assaulted (Akther, 2021). Similarly, during this pandemic in the UK, 26% of nurses were physically assaulted (Fig. 1) (Tapper 2021). In addition, more than 50% of nurses in Bangladesh are physically assaulted (Latif et al. 2019). Ghereeb et al. (2021) also revealed that 38% of Jordanian nurses have experienced the same incidence.

WPPA of nurses is a common occurrence in developing countries. Patients, patients’ family members, or a group of individuals or local political parties physically assault nurses in the workplace with weapons, knives, sticks, buffets, slaps, kicks, or throwing anything. When dealing with patients who have been involved in an emergency, an accident, or a police case, Nurses in several Bangladeshi healthcare organizations are constantly threatened with violence by locals. As a result, nurses’ turnover is incredibly high (Islam et al. 2021). No study has looked into the WPPA cases on nurses in Bangladesh in this pandemic. It is essential to investigate occurrences of physical assault on nurses in Bangladesh so that proactive measures can be taken to improve healthcare facilities. Therefore, we are briefly presenting six incidents of physical assault on nurses that took place between October 2020 and November 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic in Bangladesh.

Report 1

On 30 January 2021, In Bhola, a patient with serious respiratory distress arrived at the government upazila level hospital. Following the patient’s conditions, the duty doctor referred the patient to the district hospital for better treatment. During a nurse’s counseling of the patient’s attendants, the patient’s relatives became agitated and verbally and physically abused the female senior staff nurse (Mahmud 2021).

Report 2

On May 5, 2021, in the evening, infected with COVID-19, a patient was admitted to a dedicated COVID private hospital in Dhaka. Following the patient’s admittance, the patient’s relatives exerted pressure on hospital officials to have him released from the hospital by the evening, violating the facility’s norms, and regulations. However, the on-duty staff advised the patient’s relatives to leave the hospital in accordance with the hospital’s policies. The patient’s relatives then ordered his immediate release. When the hospital authorities demanded that they pay their costs. Then, eight to ten people arrived and assaulted the nurses. They had...
broken down the ICU department. Also, a nurse and a doctor sustained serious injuries (Daktar Protidin 2021).

**Report 3**

On July 23, 2021, a corona patient randomly stabbed two nursing officers (aged 24 and 45 years) in the ICU ward of a reputable hospital in Dhaka city. When the on-duty personnel (aged 25 years) attempted to save them, he was stabbed as well. The victims were then admitted to the same hospital (Prothom Alo 2021).

**Report 4**

On 8 October 2021, at a tertiary level government hospital in the Kishoregonj district, a male nurse was physically assaulted and hit on the head with a mobile phone. In addition, a senior nursing officer working in the CCU was also slapped and punched at the same hospital a few days before this incident (Medi Voice 2021).

**Report 5**

At 12 a.m., on the 25th of October 2020, a seriously ill patient had admitted to the divisional hospital in Sylhet city. However, the patient’s condition did not improve over time, and the patient had died. The patient’s relatives then attacked the on-duty nurses. A male nurse was affected by serious injuries. Coworkers of the nurse arrived at the department later and rescued him (Bd Nursing 24 2021).

**Report 6**

On November 11, 2021, at 11:30 p.m., over a minor issue, some miscreants from Haripur Upazila attacked and physically assaulted senior staff nurses on duty at a hospital in the Thakurgaon district. Two nurses suffered severe injuries. They were rescued immediately and hospitalized for treatment (Alor kantho 2021).

**Consequences of physical assault on nurses**

Nurses have to work on the front-line at any time in any situation. Nurses must be emotionally, psychologically, and physically healthy to adapt to any environment. Nurses are accountable for understanding patient emotions and being able to handle patients and their attendants through effective therapeutic communication to provide high-quality care because effective nursing care is essential for good patient outcomes. In addition, job satisfaction among nurses and good patient outcomes are inextricably related (Said and El-Shafei 2021). When a nurse is physically assaulted, she/he becomes mentally exhausted, which leads to professional burnout and a strong desire to leave the workplace. As a result, the effectiveness and quality of nursing care will inevitably decrease. That is why nurse retention is very less in Bangladeshi hospitals (Catania et al. 2021). Spector et al. (2014) revealed that physical assault on nurses has a major negative impact on the quality of care provided in a healthcare setting. Besides, May and Grubbs (2002) explained that physical abuse leads to imbalances in the work-life of healthcare professionals.
Moreover, workplace violence against a nurse can have a significant physical and mental impact. Also, increased employment burden, disengagement, familial conflicts, and employee turnover are possible outcomes of WPPA.

Finally, WPPA can be prevented with competent patient management in all situations. Before beginning service, the organization should have adequate strength to successfully organize the healthcare system as well as avoid local or political threats. We would recommend conducting a survey to uncover WPA cases at the village/rural level to determine possible strategies for creating a flexible work environment. Also, the government should take all necessary steps to safeguard the occupational safety of healthcare employees. Healthcare organizations could arrange health awareness programs so that general people stay calm in emergencies in order to receive appropriate care. Local authorities need to be activated to make people aware. So that healthcare workers, particularly front-line caregivers, can work independently without fear of violence, danger, or client conflicts or arguments.

Abbreviation WPPA: Workplace physical assault

Acknowledgements The authors are very pleased to Newborn baby- Mubassira Bint Mustakim (Daughter of 1st author). Abdullah Al Saki (Noakhali textile engineering college)

Author contribution M. K. K. R., R. U. R., and A. L. S. are involved in the conception and design of the study. M. K. K. R., R. U. R., and A. L. S. are involved in drafting the manuscript or revising it critically for important intellectual content. M. K. K. R., and R. U. R. are involved in the final approval of the version to be published, and each author participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content. M. K. K. R. and R. U. R. are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Data availability Not applicable.

Declarations

Ethics approval Not applicable.

Consent to publish and participate We give full consideration for publication and Participate.

Conflict of interest The authors declare no competing interests.

References

Akther A (2021) Nurses say patients are getting more abusive, and simple questions can set them off. Retrieved from https://www.businessinsider.com/frontline-registered-nurses-see-rise-in-physical-and-verbal-abuse-2021-10

Alor kantho (2021) Human chain in protest of attack on nurses and airmen at Haripur in Thakurgaon. Retrieved from https://cutt.ly/VU2qsGw

Bd Nursing 24 (2020) Attack on the nurse by the patient’s relatives. Retrieved from https://cutt.ly/yU0VF5T

Catania G, Zanini M, Hayter M, Timmins F, Dasso N, Ottonello G, Aleo G, Sasso L, Bagnasco A (2021) Lessons from Italian front-line nurses’ experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic: a qualitative descriptive study. J Nurs Manag 29(3):404–411. https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.13194

Daktar Protidit (2021) Attack on doctor-nurse in Samaritan, ICU vandalized by patients. Retrieved from https://cutt.ly/vU0FlgA

Ghareeb NS, El-Shafei DA, Eladl AM (2021) Workplace violence among healthcare workers during COVID-19 pandemic in a Jordanian governmental hospital: the tip of the iceberg. Environ Sci Pollut Res 28(43):61441–61449. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-021-15112-w

Islam MI, Alam KMW, Keramati SA, Murshid ME, Haque R, Kabir E, Khanam R, Khan MH (2021) Working conditions and occupational stress among nurses in Bangladesh: a cross-sectional pilot study. J Public Health. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10389-020-01415-8

Latif A, Mallick DR, Akter MK (2019) Workplace violence among nurses at public hospital in Bangladesh. Issues Ment Health Nurs 201928(11):1247–1265

Mahmud S (2021) Break in the event of an attack on a nurse on duty. Retrieved from https://cutt.ly/uu03Rfl

Medi Voice (2021) Attack on nurse on duty in Kishoreganj, protest-human chain in protest. Retrieved from https://medivoicebd.com/article/21349

May DD, Grubbs LM (2002) The extent, nature, and precipitating factors of nurse assault among three groups of registered nurses in a regional medical center. J Emerg Nurs 28(1):11–17. https://doi.org/10.1067/men.2002.121835

Prothom Alo (2021) Two nurses were stabbed by a patient admitted to the ICU. Retrieved from https://cutt.ly/OU2ofN8

Rony MKK, Bala SD, Rahman MdM, Dola AJ, Kayesh I, Islam MdT, Tama IJ, Shaft EH, Rahman S (2021) Experiences of front-line nurses caring for patients with COVID-19 in Bangladesh: a qualitative study. Belitung Nurs J. https://doi.org/10.33546/ijbn.1680

Said RM, El-Shafei DA (2021) Occupational stress, job satisfaction, and intent to leave: nurses working on front lines during COVID-19 pandemic in Zagazig City, Egypt. Environ Sci Pollut Res 28(7):8791–8801. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-020-11235-8

Spector PE, Zhou ZE, Che XX (2014) Nurse exposure to physical and nonphysical violence, bullying, and sexual harassment: a quantitative review. Int J Nurs Stud 51(1):72–84. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2013.01.010

Tapper J (2021) Nurses and shop staff in UK face tide of abuse since end of lockdowns. Retrieved fromhttps://www.theguardian.com/money/2021/oct/23/nurses-and-shop-staff-in-uk-face-tide-of-abuse-since-end-of-lockdowns

Publisher’s Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.