

Commentary

Workplace Violence against Doctors : A Controversial and Contradictory Situation for India

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Workplace violence is not something new to this world, it even existed in ancient times. Evidence of this menace can be found in Ancient Assyria where it has been found out that any loss of patient life due to a Surgeon lead to brutally cut off its hand by the patient party (Sullivan, 1996). The famous code of Hummarabi mentioned the Surgeon's role, Rewards and Punishment. Along with this protection of the doctors is also mentioned in this code as long as the Physicians and Surgeons diligently follow the standardized rules and regulations of this code (Ali, Johna, 2015). In ancient times many people avoid the career of a surgeon for the said reason. For example, in Ancient Assyria Surgeons were often seen as more conservative compared to Surgeons in India, Greece and Egypt (Ali, Johna, 2015). Even in the land of Jesus, it failed to save his healers from this evil. Seventy percent of Doctors and Paramedical staff in Israel reported verbal violence (Derazon *et al*, 1999).

"No Physician, however conscientious or careful, can tell what day or hour he may not be the object of some undeserved attack, malicious accusation, blackmail or suit for damages" — JAMA

The Journal of the American Medical Association, almost 130 years ago quoted this in its journal showing the prevalence and the evidence of this issue in present and future as well.

Review of Literature:

History : Review of the workplace first started when a Scottish General Practitioner was stabbed (Hobbs, 1994). The largest study on violence was conducted in UK and USA shows that 63% of the Practitioners experienced physical or verbal abuse in the last 12 months (Hobbs, 1991). In 1992, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considered Workplace Violence a serious Public Health Issue (Kinney *et al*, 1993). According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), annually out of 25,000 workplace attacks 75 percent (approximately) of them are from Hospitals only. This could give an idea about the seriousness of this problem.

Violence against Doctors in China during the Past

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Editor's Comment :

- If we can't pay gratitude towards a fraternity who have been treating us for ages, then we don't have the right to even harm them. We should respect every Doctor.

decades has caught everyone's attention due to the frequency and scale of attacks. The majority 87% didn't want their children to OPT for this profession and 9% of them clearly stated they were opting for this due to the violence (Wu D, *et al*, 2014). Neighboring countries like Bangladesh, and Pakistan are also facing emerging cases of violence against Doctors. Studies have shown that 74-76% of Doctors faced violence of varying degrees during practicing (Rasul, 2012).

According to the report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the rate of Non-fatal Occupational Injuries and illnesses involving days away from work was 15.1 per 10,000 full-time workers in 2012. It has also been reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States (2014) that Healthcare Workers are at high risk for experiencing violence in the Workplace.

Meaning & Definition of Workplace Violence :

The generalized meaning of workplace violence is given by Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) as "it is getting violent or threat of harming workers". It may occur at or outside the workplace and can range from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and even homicide.

One more definition of workplace violence for healthcare care employees is given by WHO. The World Health Organization (WHO) defined workplace violence as "Incidents where staff is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work, including commuting to and from work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, Well-being or Health" (Richards, 2003).

National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) at the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) defined Work Place Violence as "Violent Acts (including physical assaults and threats of assaults) directed toward persons at work or on duty". It is simply the behavior that involves, "Physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something" (OED, 2014).

According to a study conducted in 2002, this has a severe effect on Doctors starting from Fear, Anxiety and Cynicism (Hatch-Maillette & Scalora, 2002) to discomfort at work and 'feeling bad' (Anderson, 2002). Erosion of Self-esteem also lowers their confidence level (Bairy *et*

al, 2007). In Tamil Nadu study conducted on 174 Doctors, reported that around 59.55% of doctors stated that verbal violence lowers their Confidence and Self-esteem. Sadness and frustrations are some other emotions given by Anand *et al* (2016) and ranges up to PTSD.

Cases :

(1) NRS Medical College, West Bengal (2019) : This incident has taken place at the night time of 10th June 2019, after Mohammed Shaheed, a 75-year-antique affected person from Tangra, Calcutta, passed away at NRS Medical College. Eleven spouses and children of the affected person had been upset concerning the Patient's Death⁹ and alleged that he died because of Medical Negligence. They claimed that the body of the deceased was not handed over to them on time. Staff on the health facility said that the relatives additionally misbehaved with Junior Medical Doctors. Shortly after that, a mob reached NRSMCH at around 11 pm (UTC+05:30) and fought with the junior medical doctors. The clashes turned the premises into a "Battleground" at night time and in the morning after, Medical Doctors on the facility alleged that over 200 people arrived on trucks to attack Medical Doctors and smash hospital property. Another stated that the people arrived in cars wearing helmets to assault Medical Doctors at the Hospital, Intern Doctors, Paribaha Mukhopadhyay and Yash Tekwani, who had been dealing with the protests by the deceased affected person's relatives, had been seriously injured in the ensuing clashes. Yash was admitted at NRSMCH with Paribaha being admitted to an Intensive Care Unit at the Institute of Neurosciences in Kolkata when they each suffered head injuries Paribaha suffered a deep dent in the frontal bone suggested by a CT Scan image uploaded by Medical Doctors on the Hospital (Wikipedia).

(2) 14th June, 2018 : A doctor was tied to a tree, and robbed of all his money and belongings; his wife and daughter were gang-raped in the Gaya district of Bihar. (<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2018/jun/14/bihar-goons-tie-doctor-to-a-tree-gangrape-his-wife-teenage-daughter-20-suspects-detained-1828218.html>)

(3) Hojai District, India's North-eastern State of Assam (2021) : Dr Seuj Kumar who had secondary duty at a COVID Care Center in Hojai District, attended an already dead patient when he informs about it his family the reaction was horrible. He said they started hurling chairs around the room, breaking windows and abusing staff. Dr. Senapati ran for cover but soon more people joined the family and they found him.

A horrific video of the attack shows a group of mostly men kicking Dr. Senapati and hitting him on the head with a bedpan. Then they drag him outside and continue to beat him. Dr. Senapati, bloodied and shirtless, can be heard howling in pain and fear.

(<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-57648320>)

(4) Indore (2020) : "We have been visiting the locality for the past three days for the Screening of Residents. We had information about a person coming in contact

A fear that's palpable

A recent survey by IMA reports that over 80% of doctors in India are stressed out in their profession

56 per cent of doctors do not get a comfortable 7-hour sleep most days of the week

13.7 per cent fear criminal prosecution most days of the week

82.7 per cent of doctors in India feel stressed out in their profession

46.3 per cent fear violence is the main cause of stress in many doctors

24.2 per cent doctors fear being sued

62.8 per cent of the doctors surveyed are unable to see their patients without any fear of violence

57.7 per cent have thought of hiring security in their premises

FIGURE 1: Violence and stress among Indian Doctors (Indian Medical Association) (www.thehindu.com/special/health/indian-doctors-in-india-are-stressed-out)

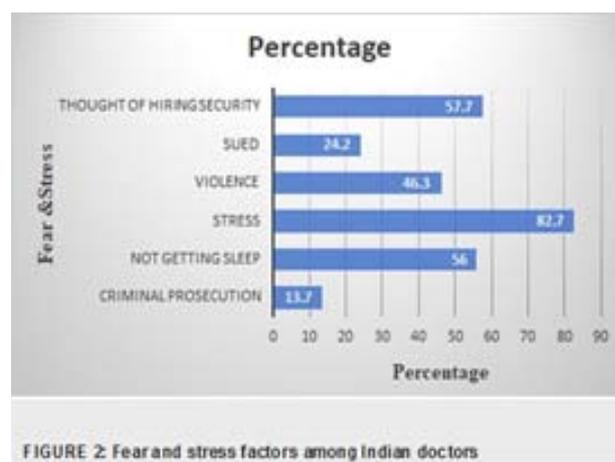


FIGURE 2: Fear and stress factors among Indian doctors

with a COVID-19 patient... We were talking to the person (the elderly woman) when, all of a sudden, residents got agitated and attacked us," said one of the Doctors.

She said the police had to intervene and save the members of the team. "Two Female Doctors suffered injuries. They managed to save themselves by hiding behind the jeep of a Tehsildar," Praveen Jadia, chief Medical and Health Officer, Indore.

(<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/health-team-pelted-with-stones-during-covid-19-screening-drive-in-indore/story-Yvqf325VMMWOfFhSdPJWSN.html>)

That's how people welcome their Female Doctors in a Country where females are often depicted as a Goddess.

These are just four cases one can write a book of more than 100 pages on only cases of Workplace Violence in India where we call Doctors equivalent to God, but when they failed to save the life we harass them, attack them, curses them and that's how Country India

wants to present itself as a Brand Ambassador of peace so at least either it is peace-promoting or violence suffering Country. Where we as a people attack our people.

Government Intervention in Coping up with Situation :

The Government has failed miserably in coping with the Healthcare Sector to save from getting victimized. According to news published, the Indian Medical Association has reportedly appealed to the Prime Minister and Union Home Ministry demanding a Central Law containing the section of the Indian Penal Code "Against Healthcare Violence" but no result. The Ministry of Health, Government of India proposed the passing of the 'Health Services Personnel and Clinical Establishment (Prohibition of Violence and Damage of Property) Bill', which proposed the imprisonment of 10 years and fine up to rupees 10 lakhs to culprit found in cases of violence against healthcare personal. Here Healthcare personnel includes Dentists, Nurses, Paramedical staff, Medical Students, etc, but the Ministry of Home Affairs declined by stating that no separate law can be introduced for a specific sector. However, in Delhi, there is a separate act for institutions operating in Delhi only. So we can conclude here that Government has no Precautionary Role in controlling Workplace Violence against Doctors. There will be not so Special treatment for the cases that have been arising out of Workplace Violence against the Healthcare Sector.

Comments and Suggestion :

Some suggestions for the Physicians :

(1) Better communication skill by the Physicians is considered the most workable strategy to deal with violence. The Physician should also understand the Class, Background, Economic and Educational status of the Patient.

(2) Inclusion of Philosophy of Ethics, Medicine and Empathy training in the Medical curriculum.

(3) Proper written consent in word should be taken from the patient in the patient's dialect and language. Also witnesses must be obtained before undertaking major investigations or treatments.

(4) Second opinion should be given very cautiously.

(5) A sense of security need to be provided to the patient and relatives.

Some Suggestions for the Hospital Administrations:

(1) Strengthening Security.

(2) All visitors must register at the front desk.

(3) Restrict the entry of attendants to the Clinical workplace.

(4) Well trained Psychologists need to be available to serve the emotional needs of the patients and their relatives

(5) Hospital Administrations must have made an alternative emergency plan including an evacuation plan in case of a major outbreak of violence.

Suggestions for the Government:

(1) Strengthening the Law against Doctors

(2) Proper implementation of the Law and action should be taken fast.

(3) Mass Insurance Schemes for whole population.

(4) Government should Co-operate with the Hospitals and take their suggestions to prevent the violence.

(5) Mass Media shall also be used by the Government to educate the Public about the Violence and their consequences.

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