

Workplace violence in the Emergency Department: A systematic review

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Introduction

Violence is a serious problem encountering almost every society in the world. There are different forms of violence such as Workplace violence (WPV). Workplace violence becomes a concern for many health care organizations. Workplace violence is a serious problem for emergency department (ED) workers (4, 9, 14) and nurses are at extreme high risk of WPV (6). Workplace violence in the ED is recognized as a significant occupational hazard for nurses and the other health care providers (17). Furthermore, WPV is more common in the ED than in the other hospital settings because the ED is busy and overcrowded as the ED is considered as the main door of the hospital (13).

Aim

The aim of the systematic review is to appraise and analyse the existing studies about the prevalence of WPV in the ED among the nurses and the health care professionals working in the ED. Moreover, the systematic review was conducted to identify the type, extent and nature of WPV incidents in the ED to identify any gaps in this area.

Method

A total of 21 articles were found, by utilizing five different databases, 20 articles were then included in the review after assessing them by using the descriptive quantitative JBI check list by the researcher and his two supervisors independently.

Findings

These studies were conducted in many countries around the world and included different ED healthcare professionals as participants, different hospital types and examined different acts of WPV. However, these studies found that 8.5% up to 74.9% of the participants were subjected to physical assault (3, 7, 16), 10% up to 73% of the participants were subjected to physical threat (11, 12), 51.1% up to 98.5% of the participants in these studies had verbal abuse (12, 18) and up to 47% of the participants were subjected to sexual harassment (8). The most common forms of physical assault were pushing, slapping and kicking (1, 5, 19), throwing object, punching furniture/ equipment/supplies, threatening moves and body gesture were the most common forms of physical threat (1, 5), The most common forms of verbal abuse were shouting/yelling, swearing/cursing (1, 5, 19) and the sexual words/jokes and allusive sexual behaviour were reported by the participants as the most common forms of sexual harassment (8). Patients' families/friends were found to be the main perpetrators. Long waiting, overcrowding of the ED, patient presenting with mental illnesses and alcohol/drug use were identified as the main contributing factors for WPV in the ED (1, 2, 5, 9, 12, 15, 20). As a consequence of the prevalence of WPV, 93.3% of the participants in one study found to be anxious about their safeties and in another study 67% of the participants were not feeling safe in their EDs at all (7, 18). There is no study has been conducted with regards to WPV in the ED in the Kingdom Saudi Arabia (KSA). Therefore, conducting such study in the ED in the KSA to assess the prevalence of WPV is very important to set up strict policies and procedures to stop WPV in the ED if existing.

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