



## Short Communication

# Violence against doctors at government tertiary care hospitals in Pakistan: Someone's life over your own?

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## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Abuse  
Physicians  
Healthcare  
Threats

Madam, violence against healthcare workers (HCW), particularly doctors, is at an all time high right now, with over three quarters of all physicians in Pakistan affected [1]. Harsh words, antagonism, bullying, threats, and harassment are all tools of harm, and they can even extend to physical assault by patients, their attendants, or fellow doctors. According to a recent study by AJ Zubairi et al., 53.4% of doctors had experienced at least one of these types of violence in their practice [2]. Another study conducted in nine tertiary care institutions across the country found that over 75% of the doctors there had been subjected to violence from either patients or their attendants [3]. Repeated events can have a negative impact on physicians' mental health; they may develop burnout, post-traumatic stress disorder, and impaired job performance, all of which can affect patient care indirectly. Young doctors, who were once eager to rescue lives and serve their country, are now considering leaving for jobs abroad [4]. A cross sectional study conducted in 2015 revealed that around a third of HCW wanted to leave government jobs to work in the private sector with better security [5], and another study conducted in 2019 revealed that 62% of physicians in Bahawalpur, one of Pakistan's largest cities, were willing to leave the country as soon as the opportunity presented [6]. If current trends continue, Pakistan may face a severe physician shortage. As a result, it is critical to put in place effective measures in order to save the country's future. Better hospital security, including a zero-tolerance policy for violent behavior, can help doctors relax and focus more on patient care. In stressful and occasionally abusive circumstances, a good patient-to-doctor ratio, ideal facilities, appropriate medical supplies, mental health programs for physicians, and enhanced hospital

management can all assist raise morale. The government should launch public awareness programs emphasizing the need for respecting HCW, adhering to the one-attendant regulation, and requiring attendants to behave correctly in hospitals, as they are the ones who inflict the majority of the violence [7]. To recapitulate, violence against doctors poses a serious threat to Pakistan's healthcare in the future, as doctors may be forced to choose their own safety over the lives of their compatriots.

### Ethical approval

The paper did not involve patients, therefore no ethical approval was required.

### Source of funding

No funding was acquired for this paper.

### Author contribution

Nayab Razzaq: conception of the study, drafting of the work, final approval and agreeing to the accuracy of the work, Zunera Huda: conception of the study, drafting of the work, final approval and agreeing to the accuracy of the work.

### Trail registry number

Not Applicable.

*Abbreviations:* HCW, Healthcare workers.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amsu.2022.104012>

Received 8 June 2022; Accepted 12 June 2022

Available online 23 June 2022

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## Guarantor

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## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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