

Research Paper

Fear of Crime and It's Psychological Impact on Nurses

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ABSTRACT

This study explores psychological fear among nurses. Fear of crime is a significant psychological phenomenon that affects individuals' mental well-being and productivity, particularly in high- pressure professions like healthcare. Nurses often face unique challenges, including long hours, high stress, and frequent night shifts, making them more vulnerable to the psychological impacts of fear of crime. This study aims to examine the extent and nature of fear of crime among nurses and its psychological impact. The research investigates how fear reveals in this community and its implications for mental health, job performance, and overall quality of life. A qualitative data collection to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Key findings from this study are expected to inform policies and interventions designed to reduce fear and enhance the psychological resilience of nurses. The research is being conducted to address a critical gap in understanding the unique challenges faced by nurses. By identifying risk factors and vulnerabilities, this study seeks to inform policy-making and intervention strategies aimed at preventing crimes against nurses. The findings will benefit society by promoting inclusivity, ensuring justice, and safeguarding human rights, while fostering an evidence-based approach to supporting nurses and reducing crimes.

Keywords: *Fear of crime, nurses, psychological impact, mental health, workplace safety*

Nurses form the backbone of the health care system; they provide an almost 24/7 service in conditions that are either dynamic or sometimes high-risk. While strenuous physical and emotional demands of nursing occupy a lot of literature, one downside, which has often been neglected considerably, is the psychological impact of fear of crime upon nurses. Nurses in urban settings, such as hospitals, emergency rooms, or community clinics where rates of crime are quite high, may interact with different forms of crimes directly or indirectly. The fearful atmosphere about crime-whether from physical violence, theft, or verbal abuse-can heavily impair their mental health and well-being. A number of case studies have described the extent to which fear of crime and violence in real healthcare situations affect nurses' psychological health. For instance, a study in 2019 in the United States surveyed emergency department nurses, whereby 50 percent of respondents reported experiencing some form of workplace violence, including physical assault, verbal threats, and theft. Such incidents had a significant correlation with stress, anxiety, and

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burnout levels; many of the nurses revealed symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The greatest finding of interest from the study is that nurses in emergency units located in high- crime urban areas reported a significantly greater level of fear and anxiety compared to those nurses who worked in sub-urban or rural areas. In a similar campaign, a study conducted in the UK in 2018 explored the experiences of nurses working in inner-city hospitals with high crime rates. Crime fear was found to be rampant among the nursing workforce, with many nurses concerned about the safety of themselves and of patients. The study underscored concerns from nurses related to violence from patients, relatives, and even passers-by walking through hospital corridors. Such fears were connected with increased job dissatisfaction, sleepless nights, and extended periods of sick leave, demonstrating how the psychological burden of fear hindered their ability to function efficiently.

Then in Australia, a 2017 case study discussed the experiences of nurses working in a hospital in a high-crime neighborhood. Those nurses in this study reported concerns about physical and verbal abuse across all shifts, with 60% of respondents saying the environment did not provide sufficient safety measures for their protection. The study declared that fear of crime generated feelings of helplessness and vulnerability, contributing to emotional exhaustion, and increased turnover rates in nursing staff. The case studies prove that the problem is a far-reaching entity, suggesting the fear of crime in healthcare settings is not a local issue but a global challenge. Soulful psychological impacts resulting from fear can trigger stress, burnout. This study has the following objectives:

- To Understand how common the fear of crime is among nurses
- To Explore how fear of crime affects their mental health and well-being.
- To Find out the strategies they use to cope with this fear.
- To identify the predominant risk factor in the workplace harassment among nurses.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP

Ferraro 1995 explored how individuals interpret victimization risk, establishing that perceived risk often outweighs actual victimization risk, creates fear. **Warr 2000** further highlighting the disconnect between actual crime rates and public perception. **Skogan and Maxfield 1981** provided insight into how communities and individuals cope with crime undergo the influence of neighborhood. **Sparks, Genn, and Dodd 1977** examined victim surveys to better measure criminal victimization and public attitude toward justice system, paving the way for evidence-based criminology. **Pain r 2000** reviewed the relational aspects of crime fear. **Banerjee and Sharma 2022** investigated Indian hospital identifying that healthcare professionals particularly nurses experience difference levels of fear due to frequent incidents of harassment and workplace violences. **Kumar 2019** focused on urban India analyzing how criminal psychology shapes fear perception and undergo the compounded stress faced by professionals in high-risk zones. According to **NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau, 2023)**, there has been a consistent rise in the number of attacks on health workers, with more than **500** cases of violence against nurses and doctors reported in **(2022)** alone. However, many of these incidents went unreported due to threats of dismissal and lack of faith in Nonetheless, challenges do persist. A cross-sectional survey conducted in **(2024)** among **1,566** healthcare personnel working in different medical institutions across India found that more than **50%** of the respondents felt that their workplace was unsafe, especially in state and central government medical colleges. The study pointed out that some serious gaps do exist in terms of security infrastructure, and

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more than **70%** of the respondents were unhappy about the effectiveness of security personnel or emergency alarm systems. **Tamil Nadu police department 2022** corroborate these findings offering data on rising violence and need for stronger institutional responses. These documents highlight systemic gaps in security measures in healthcare settings, especially in metropolitan areas like Chennai.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, the authors have used a method, combining both qualitative approaches to enhance their research. For the qualitative method, the authors developed a self-administered survey that was conducted among nurses using a random sampling method. The data necessary for the study were collected, and the analysis was performed using SPSS. For the qualitative, the authors employed the structured standardized questionnaire, contacting nurses via google link and conducting interviews to collect the necessary information for the study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 Have you ever experienced workplace violence?

Workplace violence	Percent
Yes	73.3
No	26.7
Total	100.0



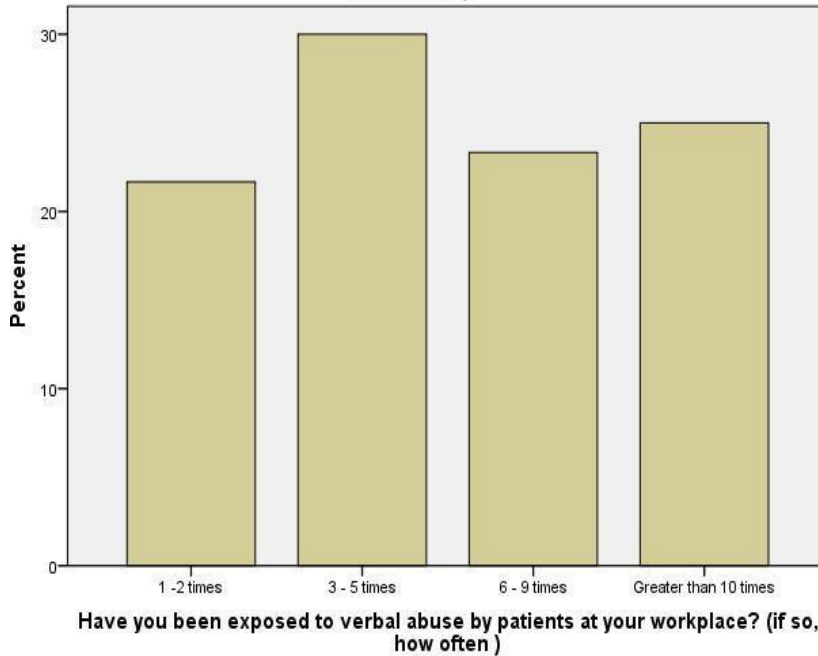
Among 60 respondents, **73.3%** reported have been experienced workplace violence, while **26.7%** reported never experienced workplace violence the result suggests that workplace violence among nurses are serious issue among nurses which shows it's a serious problem that needs a attention, highlighting the needs for preventive measure to support system within the workplace.

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Table 2 *Have you been exposed to verbal abuse by patients at your workplace? (if so, how often)*

VERBAL ABUSE BY PATIENTS	Percent
1 -2 times	21.7
3 - 5 times	30.0
6 - 9 times	23.3
Greater than 10 times	25.0
Total	100.0

Have you been exposed to verbal abuse by patients at your workplace? (if so, how often)

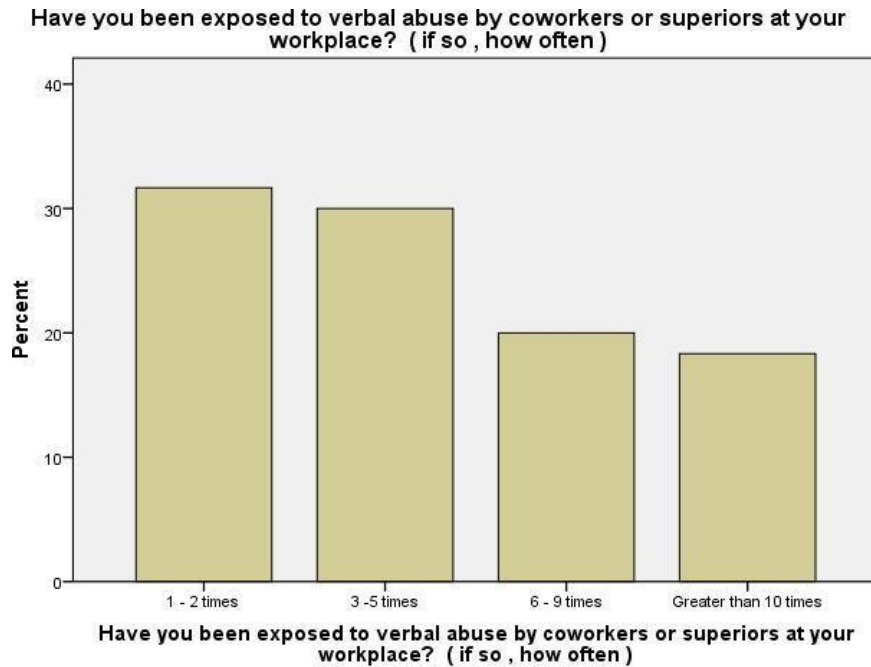


Among 60 respondents 30% have experienced verbal abuse, 25% of respondent have experienced verbal abuse more than 10 times 23.3% of respondent have been experienced 6 to 9 times of verbal abuse. The verbal abuse by patients is common and repeated incidents. The fact that shows that 48.3% of respondents reported verbal abuse are critical issue in workplace environment. This underscores the need for strong protective policies, staff supporting system etc.

Table 3 *Have you been exposed to verbal abuse by coworkers or superiors at your workplace? (if so, how often)*

VERBAL ABUSE BY COWORKERS	Percent
1 - 2 times	31.7
3 -5 times	30.0
6 - 9 times	20.0
Greater than 10 times	18.3
Total	100.0

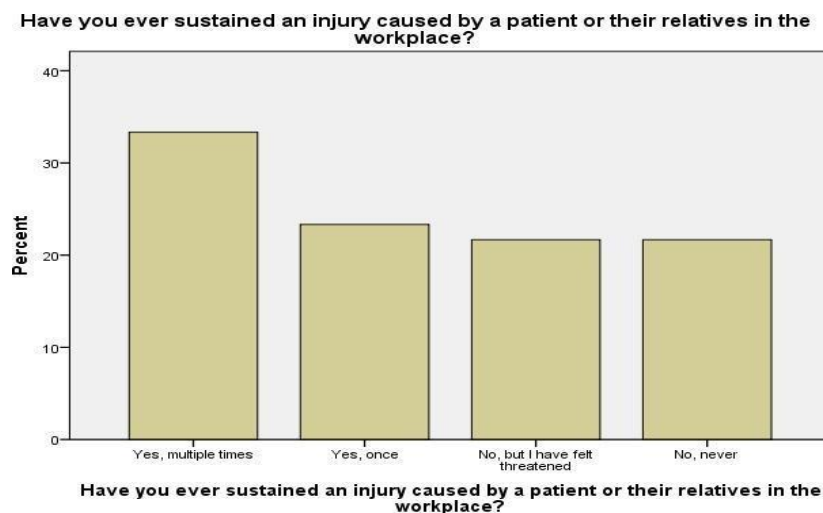
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Among 60 respondents 31.7% of respondents have experienced verbal abuse from superiors at workplace, 30% have experienced 3 to 5 times of verbal abuse from superiors per day, 20% have reported that they have experienced 6 to 9 times of verbal abuse from coworkers. 18.3% have exposure the verbal abuse more than 10 times. It shows that verbal abuse from coworkers is a relevant issue, this occurrence reflects a potentially of unsupportive work environment among nurses it has to implement strict anti-harassment policies and provide healthy workplace environment.

Table 4 *Have you ever sustained an injury caused by a patient or their relatives in the workplace?*

Injury caused by patient or relatives	Percent
Yes, multiple times	33.3
Yes, once	23.3
No, but I have felt threatened	21.7
No, never	21.7
Total	100.0

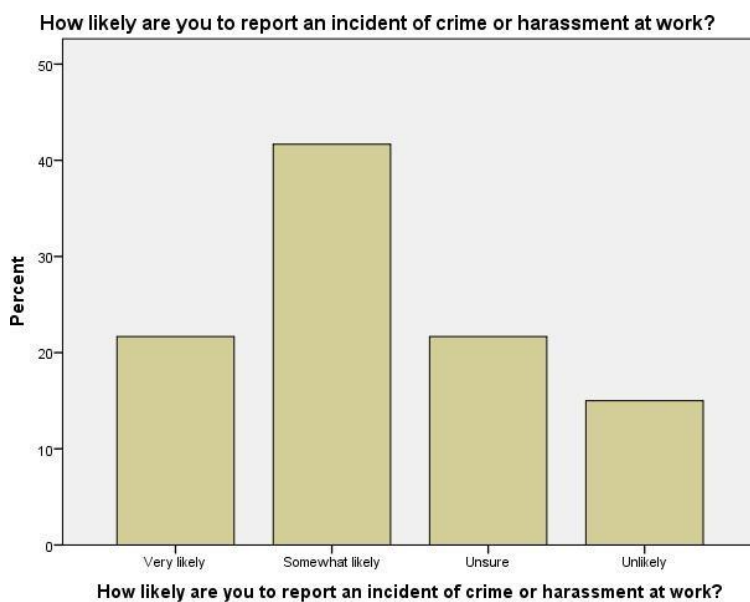


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Among the 60 respondents **56.6%** have respondents have sustained an injury from patient and from the relatives, Nurses are first responder to attend patients in emergency care unit most of an injury have caused by there relatives. Moreover additionally **21.7%** of respondents have not been injured but they says the felt life threatened it shows that fear of crime in workplace is still present.

Table 5 How likely are you to report an incident of crime or harassment at work?

Report an incident at work	Percent
Very likely	21.7
Somewhat likely	41.7
Unsure	21.7
Unlikely	15.0
Total	100.0



Out of 60 respondents most are willing to speak up around **42%** of respondents said they're somewhat likely to report such incidents and **22%** of respondents says they're very likely to do. That means some are willing to take some kind of action if the witnessed any kind of violence at workplace. Now a days everyone feels confident about reporting crimes **22%** of respondents were unsure if they would report and **15%** of respondents says they are not willing to say such incidents. They show some kind of hesitation which could be due to fear, or not knowing how to respond and report the incident.

Table 6 Have you received training on handling workplace violence or emergency protocols?

Handling emergency protocols	Percent
Yes	23.3
Yes, but limited training	41.7
No, I have not received any training	28.3
Not sure	6.7
Total	100.0

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Among 60 respondents **70%** have received at least some form of training on handling emergency situation **41.7%** of respondents have received limited training. Only **23.3%** of respondents have received full training on handling workplace violence. Moreover **28.3%** of respondents have reported that they have not trained in any kind of training program. Some hospitals in Chennai nurses were seriously injured by patients and from there relatives. Only **6.7%** of respondents are not sure that they received training.

DISCUSSION

The study underscores the prevalence of workplace violence among nurses revealing that significantly impacts on their safety, mental health and job performance. **73.3%** of respondents have experienced workplace violence that the healthcare environment can be unsafe. Verbal abuse from both patients and coworkers was found to be common nearly half of the respondents reported experiencing verbal abuse by patients more than five times a day. This suggests that **Workplace violence is not only external from patients and relatives but also from coworkers**, poor communication, lack of mutual respect and mechanisms. Moreover **56.6%** of respondents reported physically injured by patients and relatives. Since nurses are frontline workers who handle critical care under high pressure environment. Additionally, **21.7%** of respondents who felt threatened from their relatives it indicates the fear of crime and psychological toll and sense danger experience in workplace they are willing to report such incidents the fear of higher officials, lack of support and mistrust in reporting system. Handling workplace violence and emergency protocols **70%** of nurses have received some form of training balance **23.3%** have received limited training. This insufficiency leaves nurses unprepared to protect themselves, risk situation and stress connected with their roles.

To understand the role how nurses experienced workplace violence

Victim 1, is a 28-year-old male nurse working in a private hospital in Chennai. He is a regular handling emergency cases and well adapted to stress. One night, an drunken patient was brought to the hospital after a road accident. While being treated by, the patient turned violent and punched him in the face. Some other staff members of the hospital got involved,

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the all came and saw suffering from facial injuries and a broken tooth. Police were called, complaints were filed, and no serious action taken against the offender.

Victim 2, works at a maternity hospital in Chennai as a nurse. With extended duty hours late into the night, frequently travels all alone to her home via public transport. One evening, while she waited to take an auto-rickshaw in front of the hospital, a group of men began to harass. They followed her, passed vulgar comments, and tried to block her way. She made her escape by dashing into a crowded spot, but even then, it affected her mental health deeply.

Victim 3, the victim was 23 year old nurse in Kilpauk were sexually assaulted by a co-worker in same hospital the offender forcibly entered her room and attacked her. Another nurses were found him and handed over to the police and he produced before magistrate and remanded in judicial custody the offender was 40 year old lab technician.

Victim 4, is 32-year-old nurse who has worked in a government hospital in Chennai for the past eight years. Usually, she is deployed for night shifts, and these shifts are often poorly manned, with the unfortunate consequence that she is often at the reception of patients and their families. One night, while she was attending to a critically ill patient in the emergency room, the patient's relatives went on the rampage, accusing her of delaying the treatment. And despite having explained the matter to the relatives, she was verbally abused and threatened with injury to her body.

RECOMMENDATION

- From this study, that fear of crime significantly affects the psychological well-being and work performance of nurses in Chennai.
- As frontline healthcare professionals nurses required not only physical protection at workplace but also emotional and social support.
- It is recommended that hospital and healthcare institution are implement mental health support system should provide safety training to handle violent patients and strengthen security measure and patrolling around workplace environment.
- Provide some community awareness program and collaboration with law enforcement department and also provide some counselling to reduce anxiety, stress among nurses.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the serious issues in fear of crime and its psychological impact on nurses working in Chennai, impacting their mental health, safety and over all job satisfaction. The research finds and indicates that nurses are vulnerable to anxiety, stress and emotional damage both inside and outside the workplace environment. Nurses are necessary part of the healthcare system and ensuring their safety is not only a matter of workplace but also determine of patients welfare. Understanding the psychological fear the face in day to day life. To understand these challenges healthcare institution should implement safety measures around workplace such as security protocols, emergency response training and psychological counselling and some awareness programs contribute in workplace environment. This study also undergoes the need for further research that indicates a boarder sample of healthcare workers across the states and various religions. Expanding the investigation allow understanding the issues the really face to survive. in this conclusion addressing the fear of crime and its psychological impact on Chennai nurses its not only

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critical for personal and professional life the well being of nurses should be viewed under public health, the deserve social support from both healthcare and society.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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