

# Determinants of Verbal Abuse among Nurses at a Government-Owned General Hospital in Indonesia

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## Abstract

**Background:** Verbal abuse experienced by nurses has a significant impact on work so that it can reduce work morale, productivity and work quality. There are several factors that influence verbal abuse in nurses including age, gender, previous education, period of employment, employment status, work unit, work shift, marital status, and organizational climate.

**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that influence verbal abuse among nurses at government-owned general hospital in a province in Indonesia

**Methods:** This study applied a quantitative design with cross sectional approach. The sample in this study was 391, and obtained with a simple random sampling technique

**Results:** The results of this study found that the factors that influence verbal abuse among nurses at the hospital are age, employment status, work shifts, and organizational climate.

**Keyword :** *Verbal Abuse, Sociodemography Factor, Organizational Climate.*

## Introduction

Hospitals as a service facility engaged in a variety yet complicated labor problems. In 2011 to 2013, the occurrence of violence in the workplace, especially in hospitals, ranged between 23,540 and 25,630 each year with 70% to 74% occurring in health and social services. For health care workers, the incidence of workplace violence is 10-11%. Nurses in hospitals who provide direct nursing care to patients and families are more susceptible to violence in the workplace, especially verbal abuse <sup>1</sup>.

A survey conducted at six hospitals in the United States related to the incidence of verbal abuse in nurses, it was found that 69.4% of nurses experienced verbal abuse in the workplace <sup>2</sup>. There is also another survey conducted in eight provinces in China about the impact of verbal abuse on nurses working in hospitals, it was found that 75% of nurses experienced verbal abuse at work <sup>3</sup>. Another survey conducted in Jordan regarding workplace violence, found that 71.2% of nurses experienced verbal abuse in the last 12 months <sup>4</sup>.

The occurrence of violence in the workplace, especially verbal abuse in the health sector is a phenomenon that needs to be taken seriously throughout the world, which is one of the workers

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experiencing the highest rate of violence compared to other workers in the United States <sup>5</sup>. The percentage of sources of physical violence experienced by nurses is 43.5% obtained from patients. The percentage of verbal abuse experienced by nurses is around 55.6% obtained from the patient’s family <sup>6</sup>.

The incidence of verbal abuse of nurses in hospitals is also found in developing countries such as Indonesia. A study on work violence and work stress on nurses conducted at the Bitung city hospital found that 54.3% of nurses experienced verbal abuse. In the study, it was found that the forms of verbal abuse experienced by nurses were in the form of harsh words, insults, insults, and threats <sup>7</sup>. In Indonesia, research on verbal abuse has been widely studied in school settings or in adolescent settings, not much research has been done on verbal abuse in work settings. Related research on the incidence of bullying in nurses in the city of Banda Aceh was carried out at the Meuraxa General Hospital where the results of the study found that the incidence of bullying in nurses at Meuraxa Hospital was in the high category <sup>8</sup>.

**Methods**

Data collection in this study was carried out from

November 24 to December 6, 2021 at a Regional General Hospital using an online questionnaire measuring instrument via a google form which was distributed to all respondents. From a total of 410 respondents, as many as 391 respondents participated in this study so that the response rate was 95%. Respondents consisted of nurses working at inpatient wards, intensive care, emergency and operating rooms. The data that has been collected is then processed and analyzed using univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analysis. Data collection was conducted by three instruments, namely sociodemographic questionnaire, organizational climate and verbal abuse, which was adapted from the Verbal abuse Questionnaire <sup>9</sup>. Before testing the instrument, the verbal abuse questionnaire was translated and adapted. This adaptation process aims to achieve different language versions of the English instrument which are conceptually equivalent in each country/culture. The method used is back translation. Organizational climate questions are reliable with a score of 0.971, and verbal abuse questions are reliable with a value of 0.943.

**Results**

**Univariate Analysis**

**Table 1 : Frequency Distribution of Verbal abuse**

No		n	%
1	<b>Exposed to verbal abuse during the past 6 months</b>		
	Yes	133	34,0%
	No	258	66,0%
	Total	391	100%

Based on the table 1 above, it is known that out of 391 respondents at the hospital, 133 experienced verbal abuse (34%).

**Table 2 : Frequency Distribution**

No	Variable	n	%
1	<b>Age</b>		
	Young Adult (18- 40 years)	372	95,1%
	Middle Adult (41-60 years)	19	4,9%
	Total	391	100%
2	<b>Sex</b>		
	Male	89	22,8%
	Female	302	77,2%
	Total	391	100%
3	<b>Previous Education</b>		
	Vocational	179	45,8%
	Professional	212	54,2%
	Total	391	100%
4	<b>Period of Employment</b>		
	≤ 5 years	202	51,7%
	> 5 years	189	48,3%
	Total	391	100%
5	<b>Employment Status</b>		
	Permanent	147	37,6%
	Temporary	244	62,4%
	Total	391	100%
6	<b>Work Unit</b>		
	Emergency	52	13,3%
	Inpatient	339	86,7%
	Total	391	100%
7	<b>Work Shift</b>		
	Shift	50	12,8%
	Non Shift	341	87,2%
	Total	391	100%
8	<b>Marital Status</b>		
	Married	58	14,8%
	Not Married	333	85,2%
	Total	391	100%
9	<b>Organizational Climate</b>		
	Positive	192	49,1%
	Negative	199	50,9%
	Total	391	100%

Based on table 2 above, it is known that from 391 respondents, most of the respondents are young adults (18-40 years) totaling 372 respondents (95.1%), most of the respondents are female, amounting to 302 respondents ( 77.2%), most of the respondents' education was professional, amounting to 212 respondents (54.2%), most of the respondents' tenure was less than or equal as five years employment ( $\leq$  5 years) totaling 202 respondents (51.7%), most of

the respondents' employment status was temporary amounted to 244 respondents (62.4%), most of the respondents' work units were inpatient rooms totaling 339 respondents (86.7%), most of the respondents' work shifts were shifts totaling 341 respondents (87.2%). The marital status of the respondents was married, amounting to 333 respondents (85.2%). The organizational climate in the General Hospital is negative (50.9%).

### Bivariate Analysis

**Table 3 : Relationship of verbal abuse with factors that influence verbal abuse**

No	Variable	Exposed to Verbal abuse during the past 6 months		n	p-value
		Yes	No		
1	<b>Age</b>				
	Young Adult (18- 40 years)	132 (35,5%)	240 (64,5%)	372	0,014
	Middle Adult (41-60 years)	1 (5,3%)	18 (94,7%)	19	
2	<b>Sex</b>				
	Male	29 (32,6%)	60 (67,4%)	89	1,844
	Female	104 (34,4%)	198 (65,6%)	302	
3	<b>Last Education</b>				
	Vocational	61 (34,1%)	118 (65,9%)	179	1,000
	Professional	72 (34,0%)	140 (66,0%)	212	
4	<b>Period of Employment</b>				
	$\leq$ 5 years	72 (35,6%)	130 (64,4%)	202	0,551
	$>$ 5 years	61 (32,3%)	128 (67,7%)	189	
5	<b>Employment Status</b>				
	Permanent	61 (41,5%)	86 (58,5%)	147	0,021
	Temporary	72 (29,5%)	172 (70,5%)	244	

**Cont... Table 3 : Relationship of verbal abuse with factors that influence verbal abuse**

<b>Work Unit</b>					
6	Emergency	13 (25,0%)	39 (75,0%)	52	0,188
	Inpatient	120(35,4%)	219 (64,6%)	339	
<b>Work Shift</b>					
7	Shift	8 (16,0%)	42 (84,0%)	50	0,007
	Non Shift	125 (36,7%)	216 (63,3%)	341	
<b>Marital Status</b>					
8	Married	20 (34,5%)	38 (65,5%)	58	1,000
	Not Married	113 (34,0%)	258 (66,0%)	333	
<b>Organizational Climate</b>					
9	Positive	53 (27,6%)	139 (72,4%)	192	0,012
	Negative	80 (40,2%)	119 (59,8%)	199	

Table 3 above shows that out of 372 young adult nurses, 132 (35.5%) experienced verbal abuse. Among the 19 middle-adult nurses, 1 nurse (5.3%) experienced verbal abuse. There is a relationship between age and verbal abuse of nurses at the hospital under study ( $p=0.0014$ ). Among the 147 Permanent employment status of nurses, 61 (41.5%) experienced verbal abuse. Among the 244 contract nurses, 72 (29.5%) experienced verbal abuse. There is a relationship between employment status and verbal abuse of nurses at the General Hospital ( $p$  value 0.021).

Among the 50 nurses who work with a regular work schedule, 8 (16%) experience verbal abuse. Among the 341 nurses who work on a three-shift schedule, 125 (36.7%) experienced verbal abuse. There is a relationship between work shifts and verbal abuse of nurses at the General Hospital ( $p=0.007$ ). Among the 199 nurses with an unfavorable organizational climate, 80 (40.2%) experienced verbal abuse. There is no relationship between organizational climate and verbal abuse of nurses at the General Hospital under study ( $p=0.012$ ).

### Multivariate Analysis

**Table 4 : Multivariate Variable Candidate Selection Results**

No	Variable	p-value	OR	CI 95%	
				Lower	Upper
1	Age	0,014	9,900	1,307	74,992
2	Employment Status	0,021	1,694	1,104	2,600
3	Work Unit	0,188	0,608	0,313	1,184
4	WorkShift	0,007	0,329	0,150	0,723
5	Organizational Climate	0,012	0,567	0,371	0,867

Based on table 4, it can be seen that the independent variables that have a p-value <0.25 are age (p=0.014), employment status (p=0.021), work unit (p=0.188), work shift (p=0.007), and organizational climate (p=0.012).

a. Regression Logistic Backwards Method

The results of the multivariate analysis of the logistic regression test with the backwards method can be seen in table 5 below:

**Table 5 : Outcomes of Logistic Regression Factors Associated with Verbal abuse**

No	Variable	OR	CI 95%		p-value
			Lower	Upper	
Step 1					
1	Age	11,288	1,412	90,256	0,022
2	Employment Status	1,618	0,996	2,630	0,052
3	Work Unit	0,987	0,455	2,141	0,973
4	WorkShift	0,353	0,142	0,873	0,024
5	Organizational Climate	0,658	0,412	1,050	0,079
Step 2					
1	Age	11,299	1,415	90,256	0,022
2	Employment Status	1,618	0,996	2,630	0,052
3	WorkShift	0,351	0,149	0,827	0,017
4	Organizational Climate	0,657	0,412	1,049	0,078

Based on table 5, it can be seen that there was a change in the p value in the model which resulted in the variables being excluded from the model, namely: the work unit variable was removed in the first step because it had the largest p-value (0.973). The model stops at the second step because no more variables are excluded and is considered the best model.

The goodness of fit test shows that the model is feasible and in accordance with the results of the Hosmer and Lameshow test showing the results (X2 = 13.66, p = 0.057, df = 7). The results of the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficient have a value of 0.000 indicating that the p value <0.05, which means that the model experiences a reduction in the Chi-Square

value at each step so as to produce the best model. The value of Nagelkerke R Square at each step so as to produce the best model. The value of Nagelkerke R Square shows the result of 0.212 which indicates that each variable that is most related to verbal abuse has a 21.2% chance of influencing verbal abuse and 79.8% is another factor outside of these factors.

### Discussions

Based on the results of research that has been carried out, it is known that the incidence of verbal abuse experienced by nurses at the hospital was as many as 133 respondents (34%) experienced verbal abuse in the workplace. In this study, as many as 34% of nurses experienced verbal abuse. Verbal abuse experienced by nurses had a significant impact on work so that it could reduce work morale, increase job dissatisfaction, eliminate caring culture in organizations where turnover rates are high, reduce productivity, increase work errors, and overall lowering the quality of a service<sup>10</sup>.

Nursing care are parts of the core services in hospitals, therefore, hospital administrators must pay serious attention to the causes and symptoms of verbal abuse in the workplace, because if not addressed immediately it can result in decreased work performance, decreased work motivation, increased work pressure, increased nurse absenteeism, and an increase in nurses' desire to leave the hospital (turnover). If this happens, it will reduce the quality of nursing services and in the end will reduce the quality of health services in hospitals.

From the results of the study, it is known that the age of nurses at the hospital is mostly young adults (18-40 years). The percentage of verbal abuse incidents in nurses at the hospital is higher among young adults nurses (35.5%) compared to middle

adults, namely 5.3%. From the statistical test results obtained p value  $<0.05$  ( $p = 0.014$ ) which means that there is a significant relationship between the age of nurses and the incidence of verbal abuse in nurses in the workplace and the OR value = 9.900. This means that young adults' nurses are nine times at risk of becoming verbal abuse victims in the workplace. Based on the results of the research above, it is known that there is a relationship between the age of nurses and the incidence of verbal abuse among nurses at the hospital. Young adults nurses are more likely to experience verbal abuse at work than middle-aged ones.

### Conclusions

Nurses are prone to verbal abuses. The results of this study found that the factors that influence verbal abuse among nurses at the hospital are age, employment status, work shifts, and organizational climate. In cognizant of these issue, continuous effort to minimize the incidence required further attentions. Organizational support to overcome the occurrence of verbal abuse among nurses in the workplace may include tasks assignment based on the nurse's career path, close supervision between leader and staff, or assertive attitude in the workplace.

**Ethical Clearance:** Ethical Clearance for the study obtained from committee of ethic Zainoel Abidin Hospital with an approval number: 350/EA/FK-RSUDZA/2021.

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**Conflict of Interest :** There is no conflict of interest to disclose.

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