



Kirkuk Journal of Medical Sciences

Letter to Editor

Examining Systemic Factors in Psychiatric Inpatient Violence: A Call for Broader Clinical Assessment

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Received: 24 May 2025

Accepted: 24 June 2025

First published online: 02 July 2025



How to cite this article:

Jaafar AA. Examining systemic factors in psychiatric inpatient violence: a call for broader clinical assessment. *Kirkuk Journal of Medical Sciences*. 2025;13(2):4-5.

DOI: [10.32894/kjms.2025.160670.1161](https://doi.org/10.32894/kjms.2025.160670.1161)

Dear Editor in Chief,

I read with great interest the article titled “Violence Among Schizophrenic Patients in Al-Rashad Training Hospital” in Volume 9, Issue 1 of the Kirkuk Journal of Medical Sciences [1]. I appreciate the authors’ valuable work and would like to share a few observations that may help build on their findings.

The study takes an important look at aggression among psychiatric inpatients, comparing those in forensic units with those in general wards. While it highlights key differences between the two settings, several aspects could benefit from further analysis to strengthen the conclusions. First, the exclusion of female patients limits how broadly the results can be applied. Gender plays an important role in how schizophre-

nia symptoms appear and how likely violence is to occur. Including women in future studies would help provide a more complete picture [2, 3].

Second, the study’s cross-sectional design, which examines patients at a single point in time, makes it difficult to assess whether treatment had a lasting effect. The similar levels of post-admission violence in both groups might suggest improvement, but only a long-term study could confirm whether these changes are sustained or temporary.

The study also notes differences between the wards such as staffing levels, staff training, and length of patient stay—but these important factors were not analyzed in detail. Such environmental conditions may strongly influence patient behavior and could partly explain the observed differences in violence.



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ISSN: 2790-0207 (Print), 2790-0215 (Online).

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Using multivariate analysis to adjust for these variables would provide clearer results.

Additionally, diagnosis was based only on DSM-5 criteria, without further assessment of clinical symptoms. This limits the ability to explore how different aspects of schizophrenia relate to aggression. Tools such as the PANSS (Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale) or the BPRS (Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale) could offer more detailed insights such as links between positive symptoms and impulsivity or negative symptoms and social withdrawal.

Although the study used the Modified Overt Aggression Scale (MOAS), adding instruments like the HCR-20 (Historical Clinical Risk Management-20), which combines structured scoring with clinical judgment, could improve the accuracy of violence risk predictions and guide treatment planning.

Future studies would benefit from including a more diverse group of patients, using a longitudinal design, applying symptom severity scales, and analyzing institutional factors more thoroughly. Combining this with interviews or qualitative methods could also provide a deeper understanding of how hospital environments shape patient behavior.

In conclusion, the article makes an important contribution to the literature on psychiatric violence in Iraq. Addressing the methodological gaps outlined above would help future research offer stronger guidance for improving care and safety in mental health settings.

ETHICAL DECLARATIONS

- **Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate**

Not required for Letters to the Editor articles.

- **Consent for Publication**

Non.

- **Funding**

Self funded.

- **Availability of Data and Material**

N/A

- **Competing Interests**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

- **Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence**

The author declares that ChatGPT, a generative AI-based tool developed by OpenAI, was used by the author solely to enhance clarity and grammatical accuracy during the final editing phase. It was not used for content generation, data analysis, or interpretation.

- **Authors' Contributions**

Azmi Abdulhussein Jaafar made substantial, direct, and intellectual contributions to the work and provided consent for its publication.

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