

# Violence Against Psychiatric Trainees in Europe and Asia: A Cross-National Survey

*Authors:* Pereira-Sanchez V\*, Gürcan A, Gnanavel S, Rai Y, Parmar A, Pinto da Costa M, Szczelgiak A, EFPT VAPT Study Group\*\*

**Aims:** To explore the extent, context, and consequences of violence against psychiatric trainees (VAPT) in Europe and Asia.

**Background:** Violence by patients against healthcare professionals has been widely described. Although psychiatric trainees are particularly exposed, little is known about the extent, context, and impact of violence towards them.

**Methods:** The Violence Against Psychiatric Trainees was a cross-national study designed by trainees of the European Federation of Psychiatric Trainees (EFPT) Research Working Group. A cross-sectional online survey was distributed between June 2018 and December 2019 among European and Asian psychiatric trainees through professional networks and using a snowball approach.

The questionnaire asked about experiences of verbal abuse and physical and sexual assaults, as well as their context and impact. Descriptive and exploratory comparative analyses of the obtained data were conducted. The study received a centralized approval by the Ethics Committee at University of Navarra in Spain.

**Europe:** 827 responses from 39 countries;  
83.6% of participants reported assaults.

**Asia:** 467 responses from 16 countries;  
69.6% of participants reported assaults.

**In both regions:**

- Verbal abuse (~80%) > Physical > Sexual assault
- Psychiatry inpatient units and emergency rooms were the most common settings.
- Feelings of anxiety, rage, and sadness were the most commonly reported consequences.
- A minority of participants had received training in the prevention and management of violence against.
- Few participants reported such incidents to authorities.



Countries included in the study, with color intensity proportional to the number of participants (range: 1-125)

*KEY MESSAGE*

**Violence against psychiatric trainees is widespread, frequent, impactful, underaddressed and underreported.**

**Conclusions:** Violence from patients is reported by a large number of psychiatric trainees across countries in Europe, with very frequent verbal abuse and worrisome figures of physical and sexual assaults. The low proportion of trainees reporting to authorities and the lack of institutional training and management protocols (or trainees' unawareness about them) are of particular concern.

These results validate a call for urgent efforts to better address this problem in Europe and Asia and to explore the extent of the problem in other regions of the world.

**Publications, mentions in the media, and submissions related to VAPT work:**

1. Pereira-Sanchez V, Gürcan A, Gnanavel S, Vieira J, Asztalos M, Rai Y, Erzin G, Fontaine A, Pinto da Costa M, Szczelgielniak A. Violence Against Psychiatric Trainees: Findings of a European Survey. Acad Psychiatry. 2021 Oct 4.
2. Davenport L Psychiatry Trainees Subjected to High Levels of Physical, Sexual, Verbal Abuse from Patients. Medscape, 7/14/2020.
3. Parmar A, Gnanavel S, Gürcan A, Rai Y, Karki U, Pinto da Costa M, Szczelgielniak A, Pereira-Sanchez V. Violence Against Psychiatric Trainees from Asian Countries: An Online Survey. Submitted.

\*Submitting Author: **Victor Pereira-Sanchez, MD, PhD.** Fellow, Global Mental Health & Implementation Science Fellowship – Columbia University & New York State Psychiatric Institute, New York, NY, [vpereira@alumni.unav.es](mailto:vpereira@alumni.unav.es), 917-733-2369.

Dr. Pereira-Sanchez led all the work from the EFPT VAPT Research Study Group, initiating and completing it during his residency and fellowships.

\*\*More information about the European Federation of Psychiatric Trainees (EFPT) and the VAPT Study: <http://efpt.eu/wg/working-group-surveys/>