



Survivors' experiences of media coverage after traumatic injury events



Liselotte Englund PhD^{a,b}, Rebecca Forsberg PhD^{c,*}, Britt-Inger Saveman Professor^d

^a Department of Media and Communication Studies, Karlstad University, Sweden

^b National Centre of Disaster Psychiatry, Uppsala University Hospital, Uppsala University, Sweden

^c Department of Surgical and Perioperative Sciences, Division of Surgery, Umeå University, Sweden

^d Department of Nursing, Umeå University, Sweden

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 October 2012

Received in revised form 9 March 2013

Accepted 22 March 2013

Keywords:

Accident site

Journalists

Media exposure

Survivors experience

Train crash

Trauma journalism

Qualitative content analysis

ABSTRACT

Survivors' experiences of media at traumatic events, is still a limited research area. The aim of this study is to explore survivors' experiences of interacting with journalists and media coverage, including their experiences of being portrayed in the media, following two Swedish train crashes. Qualitative interviews were conducted with passengers from two train crashes in Sweden. A qualitative content analysis generated meaning units, subcategories, and categories. Survivors experienced interacting with journalists mainly in three ways: harmful, inconsequential, and helpful. Media content and personal media exposure was experienced in a similar way: uncomfortable, insignificant, and useful. Journalists and media coverage have a large impact on survivors' experiences following a traumatic event. It is important that emergency responders, such as ambulance nurses, are aware of how victims are affected by journalists' presence and the media coverage that follows so that negative outcomes can be reduced and the positive can be enhanced. The present study also shows that media coverage in the long term can become important pieces of information for the victim in order to understand and process the traumatic event.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Traumatic injury events usually lead to intensive media coverage, both at the scene and during the aftermath. Survivors may be able to handle and collaborate with the media under the influence of acute stress and loss of control. The media needs the survivors' eyewitness accounts to fulfil the public's desire for information about the events. So, how do survivors experience journalists and the media coverage at the scene of a traumatic event? More knowledge about survivors' experiences could be of value to emergency responders, such as ambulance nurses, since they may end up as the caretakers for the survivors.

Background

Both the public and the people directly involved tend to be critical against media coverage from traumatic events. Media often becomes an important communication channel for suffering, stressed, and angry survivors. [Roxberg et al. \(2010\)](#) found that media coverage of the 2004 tsunami disaster in Asia caused survivors' memories to return. Other studies indicate risks of re-vic-

timisation when interviewing shocked survivors. Journalists' actions sometimes are perceived as intrusive, insensitive, and sensational – adding to the survivors' grief ([Coté and Simpson, 2000](#); [Haravuori et al., 2011](#); [Jemphrey and Berrington, 2000](#); [Kay et al., 2010](#); [Libow, 1992](#); [Maercker and Mehr, 2006](#)). Tensions between the journalists' need for information collide against the privacy of the survivors and as a result some survivors perceive journalistic presence on incident sites as disturbing. It is a challenging situation to both survivors and emergency personnel when reporters and photographers act as professional eyewitnesses instead of helping. The latter is not their role at the scene, but a regular wish of the survivors ([Englund, 2000, 2008](#); [Jemphrey and Berrington, 2000](#); [Swedish Government Official Reports, 1999a,b](#); [Englund et al., 2012](#)).

Despite that media staff must relate to ethical and practical guidelines (mediawise.org.uk) in their profession, incident sites are occasions where violations or ethical considerations will appear. A Gothenburg fire disaster study ([Englund, 2008](#)) showed that in certain situations it can be challenging for journalists who are present at traumatic events to follow the Swedish Codes of Conduct ([Swedish Union of Journalists: www.sjf.se](http://www.sjf.se)). Policies like, “be careful with pictures” and “show due respect when on photographic assignments and when obtaining pictures, especially in connection with accidents and crimes”, leave much leeway for individual interpretation. Working under stress, journalists sometimes find it hard to make proper decisions.

* Corresponding author. Address: Department of Surgical and Perioperative Sciences, Division of Surgery, Umeå University, SE-901 87 Umeå, Sweden. Tel.: +46 70 589 83 19.

E-mail address: rebecca.forsberg@surgery.umu.se (R. Forsberg).

A study by Lundäl and Volden (2004) showed that there is an obvious risk that photographers will also reinforce the negative stress of emergency responders at incident sites. This may also ultimately affect the victims. Furthermore, the emergency responders had experiences of fatalities and severely injured victims having been portrayed dramatically by the media. Englund (2002) found that the interaction between emergency responders and media staff heavily influenced the interaction between the media and victims. Working under acute stress with medically and psychologically vulnerable victims makes the professional work and ethical decisions difficult for both the journalists and the emergency responders. This demands extraordinary skill and composure from professionals working at a trauma scene.

After the terrorist attacks on 22 July 2011, the media management in Norwegian healthcare, in Oslo and Utøya, was evaluated by the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (Englund et al., 2012). Amongst the conclusions were that media management guidelines were extremely important for emergency responders at the scene as well as for hospital staff. This was especially true when the affected people were psychologically or medically unable to evaluate the consequences of participating in media interviews or photo sessions. Earlier studies have highlighted the importance of teaching and preparing nurses for the needs of survivors who have gone through life-changing trauma (Råholm et al., 2008).

These studies indicate that interacting with journalists covering traumatic events constitute a risk of aggravating the situation, and in the long term could lead to secondary victimisation of survivors and other affected persons (Campbell and Raja, 1999). Insensitive or unprofessional encounters between the media and survivors or eyewitnesses can, hypothetically, further burden those affected.

Train injury events are relatively uncommon and usually cause considerable media attention. It is of interest to explore how the survivors' experience their encounters with journalists and photographers at these events and how survivors felt it impacted on their recovery. The aim of this study is to explore survivors' experiences of interacting with journalists and media coverage, including their experiences of being portrayed in the media, following two Swedish train crashes.

Methods

The study context

The basis of our study involves two Swedish train crashes. In Nosaby, in 2004, a truck fully loaded with wooden pellets was stuck at a level crossing on a railway track when an oncoming three-carriage passenger train crashed into it (Swedish Accident Investigation Board, 2006). Two people were killed and 71 suffered non-fatal injuries. In Kimstad, 2010, a six-carriage passenger train crashed into the front bucket of an excavator resulting in one death and 20 non-fatal injuries (Holgersson et al., 2012). Shortly after the events several passengers were documented – interviewed and photographed – by journalists from print, radio, and television media that arrived to the scene. Both events received intensive national, regional, and local media coverage following the first days after the event.

Material

Police records provided information on the 71 passengers of the Nosaby train, of which 65 were given information about the current research project through a letter requesting their participation. Three passengers were deceased – two from the crash and

one afterwards. Three were foreign nationals who could not be reached.

If passengers chose to participate, informed consent was given either by phone or e-mail. Fourteen passengers from the train crash in Nosaby agreed to participate, 12 women and two men aged 20–64 (at the time of the interview). One possible reason for the low number of participants could have been because they actively needed to contact the researchers if they desired to be included, after receiving the letter. The researchers were not allowed to contact the passengers, a design determined by the Regional Ethics Committee.

In regards to the crash in Kimstad, the details of the passengers, including one fatality and 20 survivors, were provided by the Swedish Accident and Investigation Board. Information about the research project was given when they were contacted on behalf of The Swedish Accident Investigation Board. Informed consent was, thereby, given by phone. Sixteen out of the 20 were asked to participate (four were children <18 years old and therefore excluded). All agreed to participate; an equal number of women and men between the ages of 20–63 (at time of interview). In total 30 survivors were included in the study: 14 participants were from the Nosaby train crash and 16 from the Kimstad train crash. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and they were guaranteed confidentiality. Therefore, fictitious names have been used in quotations. Participants from Nosaby were given names starting with the letter N and passengers from Kimstad with the letter K.

Data collection

The data was collected using semi-structured interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2008). The interviews were carried out 4 years after the train crash in Nosaby and approximately 3 months after the train crash in Kimstad. This study contained questions concerning the media's work at injury events, of which some questions were based on results from earlier research (Englund, 2000, 2002, 2008). Other questions involved asking about specific guidelines in the Swedish Codes of Conduct to analyse at what level survivors thought that the media followed its professional standards at injury scenes (Swedish Union of Journalists: www.sjf.se). A few examples are: "How did you experience the presence of journalists at the crash site?", "To what extent did you experience journalists showing due respect to you and others affected?" and "Did you, at any point, suffer from "publicity injury?". The interviews were performed face-to-face ($n = 13$) and by telephone ($n = 17$). They lasted 20–80 min (an average of 40 min) and were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis

The transcribed interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2008) were processed using qualitative content analysis (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). The text was then read and re-read to acquire a broad overview of the passengers' experiences. This led to divisions of meaning units that were condensed while preserving the core content. The condensed text was later abstracted and given codes, after which a comparison (within and across them) was conducted and text was then sorted into 11 separate subcategories. Six categories were then formulated based on the whole text, including the content of subcategories and the original understanding of the text. Examples of the content analysis can be seen in Table 1.

Ethical approval

This study is in accordance with principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2008) and is ap-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2609576>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2609576>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)