

Manifestation of Behavioral and Emotional Disturbances in News Reporters covering Traumatic Events



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Abstract

The present study was conducted to identify emotional and behavioral disturbances among the News Reporters covering Traumatic events. In this study, a sample of 200 News Reporters belonging to the national and the local news agencies were selected from Rawalpindi and Islamabad who has covered any traumatic event in the past one year. Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank (RISB) and Impact of Event Scale interpretations were used to assess variety of emotional and behavioral patterns of News Reporters. Results showed that some of the frequent emotional/behavioral reactions exhibited by individuals like withdrawal, anxiety\depression, aggression, hyperarousal and avoidance behavior. Whereas gender based comparisons indicated that there is no significant gender difference in the News Reporters in manifestations of behavioral and emotional disturbances. It is concluded that significant negative emotional and behavioral reactions are exhibited by the News Reporters who cover traumatic events. The study identifies the negative emotional and behavioral reactions towards trauma, which can be helpful for identifying problematic area for counseling and therapeutic interventions for these News Reporters.

Keywords: Behavioral Disturbances, Emotional Disturbances, News Reporters, Traumatic Events, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

1. Introduction

Trauma has a significant impact on humans as it occurs without warning this factor limit the abilities of an individual to cope with those effects of trauma effectively. There are number of impact of a trauma on the victims and survivors ranging from medical to economical. Another area that is of great interest for the researchers over the past few decades is the psychological effects of trauma. In the field of Traumatology a number of researches have been done to explore the psychological impact of the trauma on the victims, survivors, and their families. Researchers have examined the effects that traumatic events have on people who are indirectly exposed (Staub, 2003; Stewart, 2008). According to a survey it is found that, 20 to 25 % of those exposed to trauma develop trauma related disorders. An increasingly developing ground in the field of traumatology is studying the effects of trauma on the professionals working with the survivors and victims'. There are significant number of individuals working for the rehabilitation of the trauma survivors and victims' including police, fire-fighter, doctors, paramedical, social workers, therapist, psychologist and media personals.

News reporters are the group of individuals who work with in a close contact to the traumatic situation. Researchers found that there is a strong psychological influence on the news reporters of covering traumatic events. Keeping this in mind the present study tried to explore the behavioral and emotional disturbances manifested by the reporters covering traumatic events. It has been reported that whenever a person undergo a traumatic situation or witness the event then there are acute neurophysiological and psychological changes occur in the individuals. The nature and the intensity of these changes are influenced by the nature of trauma, type of trauma, trauma context, and perceived level of threat and pre traumatic conditions (Weidmann, 2010).

Bolton identified in his study that Photographers and print reporters do cover a Variety of topics ranging from the mild routine domestic issues to highly disturbing events such as natural disaster, famine, and war. He also mentioned that working on these type of stores are not only life threatening for them but also have a strong psychological impact as one witness the



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sufferings of his fellow being. Sibbald (2002) mentioned in his article that all the professionals working in the traumatic situations like firefighters, police, ambulance attendants and other emergency and military personnel all of them has the basic training to face such situations and after these situations they receive the counseling if required. But the Reporters who witness the same atrocities they are not facilitated in this way (Sibbald, 2002).

Al Tompkins of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies wrote the following for Poynter.org on September 15, 2001: “Reporters, photojournalists, engineers, soundmen and field producers often work elbow to elbow with emergency workers. Journalists’ symptoms of traumatic stress are remarkably similar to those of police officers and firefighters who work in the immediate aftermath of tragedy, yet journalists typically receive little support after they file their stories. While public-safety workers are offered debriefings and counseling after a trauma, journalists are merely assigned another story.” “ It is now recognized that a variety of traumas can lead to PTSD, such as being the victim of a life-threatening event, or of an event that threatens one’s physical integrity, or witnessing such an event, or even learning of such an event occurring to a family member or a personally important person.” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Feinstein (2002) conducted a research on journalists. The research consisted of two groups of journalists in group one 140 war journalists and a comparison group of 107 journalists who didn’t covered war. His findings indicate that war journalists reported noticeably greater levels of distress and depressive symptoms compared to other group, and had lifetime prevalence rates of PTSD comparable to PTSD rates found in combat veterans. However, they were no more likely to receive psychiatric help than were the non-war journalists. A report by Wasif, Faruqi, Naqvi and Ahmed (2007) suggested psychological morbidity among people belonging to the same working community. When psychological reactions among journalists in Karachi were explored after six weeks of a bomb blast then there was persistence of anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and depressive symptoms prevalent in those who were exposed to bomb blast or witnessed injuries and deaths. And even after the passage of 6 weeks of disaster they were carrying these symptoms along, which show severity of distress.

Keeping the previous studies findings following hypothesis has been developed

The hypotheses that is tested in this study is as follows:

- 1) Traumatic events have an effect on the behavior and emotions of the news reporters.

2. Methodology

Sample

In the present study the purposive convenient sample of 50 reporters (130 males &70 females) from the News Agencies of Rawalpindi and Islamabad (Pakistan) has been taken. The sample has been taken from both the National and the local News Agencies. Those reporters are included in the present researches that are still the part of the Media.

Instrument /Tool

For this study the Urdu translated version of Rotter’s Incomplete Sentence Blank Test (RISB) and Impact of Event scale were used. RISB is used to analysis the behavioral modifications. Whereas IES is used to understand the emotional changes among journalists after working on trauma stories.

Procedure

Official permission for the administration of protocol on News Reporters was taken from official authorities of different local and national News Agencies of Rawalpindi and Islamabad city, both English and Urdu newspaper agencies were included. The research took in consideration the ethical concerns and consent was taken from the respondents, informed about the nature of the study. A protocol was given to respondents for self-administration under researcher’s supervision.

3. Result

Research Question: Traumatic events have a negative effect on the behaviors and emotions of the news reporters.



score of (RISB)	(f)	(%)
1-135 (adjustable)	14	28.0
135 & ABOVE (maladjusted)	36	72.0
TOTAL	50	100.0

Table -1: Scores of News Reporters (n=200) on Rotter's Incomplete Sentence Blank Test (RISB) (in frequency and percentage).

The above table shows the frequencies and percentages of the manifested of emotional disturbances by the news reporters. Where the table show differences on scores of Rotter's Incomplete Sentence Blank Test (RISB). The table indicates that (28%) Reporters showed adjustable behavior, while (72%) Reporters show maladjustment.

	Gender	M	S.D	t	p
SCORE OF (RISB)	F	1.60	0.50	1.231	.224
	M	1.77	0.42		

Table- 2: Mean and standard deviation of News Reporters on score of Rotter's Incomplete Sentence Blank Test (RISB).
df = 48 , p<0.05

The above table shows the Mean, standard Deviation, t values and significance level of the emotions manifested by the News Reporters on gender bases. Where the table shows differences on scores on Rotter's Incomplete Sentence Blank Test (RISB). The t-test was applied at $\alpha = 0.05$, where the t-value is calculated to be 1.231 while critical value is 0.224, which doesn't lie in the rejection region show that there is no difference between two group.

score of (IES)	(f)	(%)
9-25 moderate impact	3	6
26-43 significant impact	25	50
44-88 severe impact	22	44
TOTAL	50	100.0

Table-3: Scores of News Reporters (n=200) on scores of Impact of Event Scale (IES) (in frequency and percentage).

The above table shows the frequencies and percentages, of the behavior manifested by the News Reporters. Where the table shows differences on scores on the Impact of Event Scale. The table indicates on the bases of cut off score that (6%) Reporters showed moderate impact, (50%) showed significant impact, while (44%) reporters showed the sever impact. The results showed that behavioral problem exist in the News Reporters.



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	Gender	M	S.D	t	p
SCORE OF (IES)	F	2.48	.58	0.662	0.511
	M	2.28	.61		

Table- 4: Mean and standard deviation of News Reporters male (n=35) and female (n=15) Reporters on cut off score of Impact of Event Scale (IES). df = 48 , p<0.05

The above table shows the Mean, standard Deviation, t values and significance level of the behavioral manifested by the News Reporters on gender bases. The table shows differences on scores on Impact of Event Scale (IES). The t-test was applied at $\alpha = 0.05$, where the t-value is calculated to be -0.662 while critical value is 0.511, which doesn't lie in the rejection region show that there is no difference between two groups.

4. Discussion

Finding of the study indicates that there is behavioral and emotional disturbance seen in News Reporters who has covered traumatic events. The score of RISB (Rotter's Incomplete Sentence Blank) observed the characteristics that affect the individual's personality over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects performance or in which the individual feels inability to build or maintain satisfactory relationships or inappropriate behavior or feelings under normal condition, pervasive mood of unhappiness, fear etc. The findings are consistent with the previous research work as Backholm,2012; Brayne,2007; Dwarzink,2006) mentioned in their studies that covering a trauma story has a long lasting impact on the Reporters that do disturb them in many areas of their life and over all functioning to some extent.

The results of the study are very much consistent with the previous researches. Traumatic events always have the significant and profound effect not only on the person who has been affected or injured but also on the loved ones, survivors, and witnesses Altheide (1999) and Hight (2001) identify the Impact of natural disasters on individual that has found negative emotional and behavioral consequences, to varying degrees.

5. Conclusion

The following conclusion has been drawn from the study of manifestation of behavioral and emotional disturbance in news reporters. The study indicates that the reporters manifest behavioral and emotional disturbances after covering traumatic experience. From the analysis of data it is concluded that the hypothesis that manifestation of behavioral and emotional disturbance by the news reporters with the covering of trauma are shown by the reporters. The causes of showing disturbed behavior might be that the reporters has too face as well as cover all the extremely stressful situation with mass death and widespread, abrupt collapse of community life, lack of assess to social support, security are the great problem for them (Giller, 1995).

According to a PTSD expert and the head of psychiatry at University of Adelaide, Professor Alexander McFarlane, "people underestimate the stresses of journalists", although it is true that they are in the extreme stress will covering all these traumatic situations. Bolton mentioned that Photographers and print reporters cover a variety of topics ranging from the mild routine domestic issues to highly disturbing events such as natural disaster, famine, and war. Covering these events results in the situations that are life threatening for the reporters, they are also the witness of significant human suffering. All these situations create the stress in reporters. This stress might be presented in the form of the emotional disturbances in these individuals that lead to the behavioral disturbances leading the individual to the symptoms of PTSD.

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