Reviewer’s report

Title: The experiences of people bereaved by suicide regarding the press reporting of the death: qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 17 Oct 2019

Reviewer: Keith Hawton

Reviewer's report:

This paper addresses a very important topic (press reporting of suicides) and one that is relevant to suicide prevention policies in many countries and also to the policies of press organisations. Use of qualitative methodology is very appropriate in terms of trying to encompass the range of personal experiences of participants, especially given the diversity of experiences of people who have experienced suicides of relatives and friends. While the method of recruitment was bound to be affected by response biases, including lack of representivity of respondents (especially by gender) and possible tendency of those with poorer experiences of media reporting to respond, these have been fully acknowledged by the authors. The recruitment method used was an ingenious way of accessing a large number of potential participants, although using a university sample was bound to bias the study findings towards people of relatively high intelligence and verbal ability. This could perhaps be emphasised a little more.

The results are largely in accord with those of the limited number of other studies of this issue, which both helps both validates them and emphasises the relevance of the conclusions. The authors' conclusions are constructive. It is to be hoped that this paper can when published be shared with media organisations.

I have some small comments:

The authors should perhaps include 'years' when referring to ages throughout e.g. 18-40.

Page 2 Abstract In Results the authors could avoid using 'negative' experiences twice in the same sentence. Also in this sentence there is an American spelling of 'behaviour'.

Page 3 Where the authors use 'population-level suicides' they could put this more clearly i.e. increases in suicides

Page 4 Where the authors refer to suicide bereavement being a 'risk factor' for suicide I suggest that they say that this 'increases risk of suicide'. There are subtle differences between the two.

In line 10 'suicide attempt' should be plural

In the first sentence of the second paragraph I suggest inserting 'generally' before 'poor'.

Page 5, second paragraph. Seems slightly odd to refer to 'bereaved and non-bereaved' staff at this point.
Regarding methodology, participants could have experienced more than one loss by suicide. The results are reported as if they each experienced just one such death. Presumably the authors could not distinguish those who had one such experience from those who had more than one - would be worth making this point and adding a note to this effect in the Discussion.

Page 8, again use of 'bereaved and non-bereaved' seems odd. They should at least be put in brackets.

Page 9 The percentages for those reporting loss of a family member and those of a non-relative do not add up to 100%. Again, were there not some individuals who had experienced a loss in both categories?

My overall conclusion is that this paper will be a useful addition to the literature on this difficult but important topic.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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