

An Analysis of Suicide Reporting in Three in Print Daily National Newspapers – Irish Independent, Irish Examiner and the Herald, over two twelve month periods, 1999 and 2016

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Abstract

Suicide reporting can be dilemmatic, whereby the Irish in print newspapers have to make on the spot decisions as to whether they should publish a suicide news story that is in the public's interest, even it might cause further upset to the families involved. Thereby, suicide reporting can become a dilemmatic issue for the newspaper involved, who has to strike a balance between producing good quality suicide reports which comply with media guidelines or breaching the guidelines and produce poor quality suicide reporting, just to satisfy the public's curiosity. Therefore, this research aims to analyse suicide reporting in three Irish in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month periods, 1999 and 2016, so as to analyse the quality, quantity of suicide reporting and to give a retrospective look at how suicide reporting has changed, over two twelve month periods, 1999 and 2016.

This dissertation focuses on analysing suicide reporting in three Irish in print daily national newspapers – Irish Independent; Irish Examiner and Herald, so as look at how suicide reporting on can stigmatise and/or sensationalise the issue of suicide in Ireland. This dissertation has met the research aim through a Triangulation research method approach, which is a mix of quantitative and qualitative content analysis research methods. This research has produced an analysis of the relevant literature pertaining to the analysis of suicide reporting, which discusses the use of media guidelines; news frames, news values and images in suicide reporting, in in three in print newspapers – Irish Independent; Irish Examiner and the Herald, over two twelve month periods, 1999 and 2016.

This research reveals that whilst the coverage of suicide was high in 1999, it raised awareness of suicide in a negative way because the newspapers did not adhere to media guidelines, which could have an effect on imitative suicide behaviour in vulnerable people, who are susceptible to the way suicide is reported on in print newspapers. The main conclusions which can be drawn from this research is that the high amount of coverage given to suicide in 1999 coincided with the high suicide rate in 1998 and this made suicide newsworthy. Moreover, it can be concluded that the quality of suicide reporting in 2016, in comparison to the corresponding reporting period in 1999, has significantly improved and can be attributed to all three daily national newspaper's compliance to media guidelines on suicide reporting which are enforced by Headline, the Media Monitoring Programme. This research argues for the continued compliance of the in print daily national newspapers to media guidelines on suicide reporting and to foster a more open and destigmatised attitude towards suicide in the Irish in print newspapers and the general public.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	7
1.2 Research Focus.....	8
1.3 Research Aims and Objectives.....	8
 Chapter 2 - Literature Review	
2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2 Suicide Reporting and the Copycat and Werther Effect.....	12
2.3 Suicide Reporting and Media Guidelines.....	13
2.4 Impact of suicide reporting on vulnerable people.....	16
2.5 Benefits of a Qualitative and Quantitative Content analysis approach.....	16
2.6 News Frames.....	18
2.7 News Values.....	20
2.8 Benefits of a Semiotic analysis approach.....	21
2.9 Benefits of qualitative interview techniques.....	22
3.0 Conclusion.....	23
 Chapter 3: Methodology	
3.1 Introduction.....	24
3.2 Research Strategy.....	24
3.3 Data Collection Sample selection and data collection techniques.....	25
3.4 Data Collection Interview.....	26
3.5 Data Analysis.....	26
3.6 Limitations and Potential Problems.....	30
 Chapter 4: Data Analysis Results and Discussion	
4.1 Introduction.....	31
4.2 Quantify the amount of coverage given to suicide in 1999 and 2016.....	31
4.3 Objective 1 – Evaluate the quality of suicide reporting against media guidelines, over two twelve month periods.....	34
4.4 Identify the use of news frames and news values in suicide reporting.....	36
4.4.1 Thematic News Frames.....	37
4.4.2 Human Impact News Frames.....	38
4.5 Objective 4 - Assess the use of imagery in suicide reporting in three Irish in print daily national newspapers.....	42
4.6 Data Results Analysis and Discussion – Interviews with three Irish in print daily national newspapers.....	44
 Chapter 5: Conclusion	
5.1 Introduction.....	48
5.2 Research Objectives: Summary of Findings and conclusions.....	48
5.3 Recommendations.....	50
5.4 Contribution to knowledge.....	50
5.5 Challenges.....	51
5.6 Self Reflection.....	51

Chapter 6: Appendices	
6.1 List of Data Tables and Graphs.....	52-58
6.2 Sample of letters to editors and opinion pieces.....	59-60
6.3. Media Guidelines.....	61-70
6.4 Sample of images.....	71-72
6.5 Interview Transcripts.....	73-82
 Chapter 7: Bibliography	 83-87

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The media can have a strong influence on people's opinions on issues that are being reported on (Gould, 2002; Cullen, 2006; Perkins, Burgess, Francis, Blood, Jolley, 2006; Pavesi, Florino, 1990) and the media uses news frames to present news stories in such a way that can shape people's opinions on issues such as suicide, (De Vreese, 2005; Scheufedel, Tewksbury, 2007; Di Angelo, 2002). Moreover, the public rely on the media for their information on what is going on in their local area and the world, as suicide (M.A. Mughal, 2017). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Irish in print newspapers, to treat the issue of suicide in a way that does not sensationalise suicide in Ireland. Thereby, this research will focus on how suicide is reported on in three Irish in print daily national newspapers, during two 12 month periods, 1999 and 2016, so as to determine how suicide reporting has changed by looking at the quality and quantity of coverage that is given to suicide.

In the initial stages of the data collection process, it was decided that a three month period of suicide reporting would be studied and analysed. However, this reporting period returned a very small number of suicide items from the Irish Newspapers Archive. Therefore, it was decided to select a period of 12 months because this reporting period returned a larger number of suicide news items. The 12 month period in 1999 was selected because the year 1999 marks the end of the 1990s and the move into a new century and millennium, which represents Millennialism that signifies "An intoxicating certainty that civilisation as we know it is about to end," (Irish Times, 1999) which could drive people to thoughts of suicide. Therefore, it was assumed that there would be a lot of coverage given to suicide in 1999, so as to reflect the feelings of "Pre-millennial tension," that the public might be having in response to the end of the old century, 1990s and the eve of a new millennium, (Irish Times, 1999). Moreover, Ireland also had the highest level of suicides in 1998, 504 suicides (Emmet Oliver, 1999), and therefore the year 1999 was selected because was assumed that the Irish national newspapers would give a high amount of coverage to suicide to coincide with the highest level of suicide rates in the 1990s e.g. 1998.

Moreover, the 12 month period, 2016, was selected and analysed for the purpose of achieving the research aim: Analyse suicide reporting in three Irish in print daily national newspapers, because 2016 represents the most recent reporting period,

Moreover, the Irish Independent was selected to be analysed because it was one of Ireland's most popular newspapers in 2016 and 1999. The Irish Independent had a high readership of 97,104 in the first half of 2016 97,104, (Newsbrand Ireland, 2016) is Ireland's most popular newspaper, (Irish

newspaper archive, 2017), and had a high readership of 165,650 in the first half of 1999, (Michael Foley, 1999). which illustrates the powerful influence that the Irish Independent's coverage of suicide might have on people's views on suicide in Ireland And, the Irish Independent was selected because it won the Headline award for responsible suicide reporting in 2016 and therefore it would be interesting to see how they report on suicide in 1999 and 2016 .

In addition, the Herald was selected because it was the second most popular national newspaper in Ireland in 1999 and 2016, which had a readership/circulation of 110,000 in the first six months in 1999, (Michael Foley, 1999) and 40,847 in the first six months in 2016, (Newsbrand Ireland, 2016). which has the potential to influence people's views on suicide in Ireland. Moreover, the Irish Examiner was selected because it was Ireland's third most popular national newspaper in Ireland in 1999 and 2016, which had readership figures 60,578 in 1999, (Michael Foley, 1999) and the third highest readership in 2016 e.g. 30,090, (Newsbrand Ireland, 2016). Thereby, these readership figures illustrate how influential the three national newspapers are and whom could possibly have a big influence on people's opinion of suicide.

1.2 Research Focus

This research will focus on analysing suicide reporting in three in print daily national newspapers, during two 12 month periods, 1999 and 2016, so as to determine how suicide reporting has changed between the period 1999, when Headline, the Media Monitoring Programme was not around to monitor suicide reporting and the period 2016, when Headline was around to monitor suicide reporting. Moreover, given the fact that there are no current studies that focus solely on how suicide is represented in print Irish national newspapers, which compares and contrasts two corresponding periods of suicide reporting, 1999 and 2016, makes the subject of suicide reporting in the Irish print media an area worthy of study, which also addresses the existing gap in knowledge of this subject.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

Analyse suicide reporting in three Irish in print newspapers in 1999 and 2016 is the aim of this research. A Triangulation research method, which is a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, will be used to achieve the research aim, objectives and will be used to quantify and qualify the amount of coverage given to suicide in the two periods. The chapter titled Methodology contains the full details of the research and data collection methods, which were used as part of the data collection and analytical process, including the use of interviews with three in print daily national newspapers to further an understanding of suicide reporting in 1999 and 2016.

In order to achieve the research aim, the following research objectives were set:

1. Quantify the amount of coverage given to suicide in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016
2. Evaluate the quality of suicide reporting, e.g. good and bad, against media guidelines on suicide reporting, in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016.
3. Identify the use of news frames and news values in three in print newspapers in suicide reporting.
4. Evaluate the use of images used in suicide reporting

Objective 1, 3 and are interlinked because they will focus on the quantity, quality of suicide reporting and how suicide is represented in the three in print newspapers. Objective 2 will focus on evaluate the quality of suicide reporting against three sets of media guidelines, Samaritan's (1998), Samaritan's, (2013) and the NUJ's (2012) in three in print national newspapers in 1999 and 2016, so as to determine whether how suicide reporting has changed, The objectives are not to be seen as independent of each other but are linked to the research main research aim: analyse suicide reporting in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month periods, 1999 and 2016.

This research gives a retrospective look at suicide reporting in 1999 and 2016 and as such attempts to fill the gap in existing knowledge on retrospective and comparative studies of suicide reporting in three Irish in print national newspapers in 1999 and 2016. Moreover, this research aims to make a contribution to the existing knowledge on suicide reporting in Irish print media e.g. Dr John Cullen's, (2006), analysis of suicide coverage in the Irish print media, 2002 to 2003.

Chapter 1, Literature Review, will focus on reviewing the literature that addresses the use of the different research methods to be used in the analysis of suicide reporting in the Irish in print newspapers, e.g. Triangulation quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods. Moreover, this chapter reviews the literature on suicide reporting effects; semiotic research methods; news framing and news values, so as to assess and justify the relevance of that the literature has made to this research on suicide reporting.

Chapter 2, Methodology, explains the use of the triangulation research methods, which will be used to achieve the research aim: analyse suicide reporting in three in print daily national newspapers in 1999 and 2016, which also gives a brief preview of the data findings results and analysis.

Chapter 3, Data Analysis Results and Discussion, analyses and discusses the data findings in more detail and depth and uses visual data e.g. tables and graphs, to represent the research data findings. Chapter 4, Conclusion and Recommendations, brings together all aspects that the research has covered by way of giving concluding views on the purpose of the research; it's achievements; it's limitations; challenges and so forth. This concluding chapter will also include recommendations on the study of suicide reporting.

The next chapter, Literature Review, discusses work of academics whose work is relevant to the analysis of suicide reporting in three in print newspapers, which will begin with a review of the literature on suicide reporting and the Copycat Effect and the Werther Effect.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review will examine and evaluate the literature that is relevant to achieving the dissertation's main aim – analyse suicide reporting and the in print daily national newspapers, which will include will reviewing literature on media guidelines on suicide reporting and the Werther Effect and the Copycat Effect; Suicide reporting and media guidelines; Impact of suicide reporting on vulnerable people; the benefits of using quantitative, qualitative and semiotic content analysis research methods and the use of news framing and news values in suicide reporting. The study within this literature review focuses on objectives 1,2, 3 and 4 below:

1. Quantify the amount of coverage given to suicide in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016.
2. Evaluate the quality of suicide reporting against media guidelines on suicide reporting, in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month reporting periods,1999 and 2016.
3. Identify the news frames and news values used by three in print daily national newspapers in suicide reporting.
4. Evaluate the use of images used in suicide reporting.

By evaluating the above areas of literature, a significant contribution will be made to this research by way of creating a solid base of information on topics relevant to this research e.g. Werther Effect and so forth, onto which an informed and comprehensive study on suicide reporting can be conducted and to facilitate a critical understanding of how suicide is represented in the print daily national newspapers. According to Stack, (2005), the media have a responsibility to vulnerable communities to report on suicide in a sensitive and discreet manner so as to avoid having an effect on suicidal behaviour, the copycat effect. Stack's study on suicide reporting and the copycat effect concluded that there was a connection between an increase in suicide rates during the time the stories were published, Similarly, the National Union of Journalists, NUJ, (2012), state that it is the responsibility of journalists to adhere to the media guidelines on suicide reporting, so as to avoid having an effect on suicidal behaviour.

It is hoped that by the end of this chapter, an informed understanding of the key topics that are relevant to this research on suicide reporting and three in print daily national newspapers

will have been achieved, that a clear focus and justification of the relevance of the inclusion of these topics under review will be justified. The process of reviewing the Literature will begin with reviewing the work of academics who have studied suicide reporting and the copycat effect.

2.2 Suicide Reporting and the Copycat and the Werther Effect

In order to achieve the objective 1: Evaluate the quality of suicide reporting, e.g. good and bad, against media guidelines on suicide reporting, in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016, one needs to review literature that addresses suicide reporting and its' effect on suicidal behaviour e.g. the copycat effect.

Stack's, (2005) discusses studies on the effect of suicide reporting, which have showed that there is an increase in suicide rates during the time the suicide news stories were published. The number of studies includes the first study of the copycat effect and in print newspapers that analysed 34 published suicide news stories 1948-1967 which showed an 2.51 % increase following the publication of the news stories. Stack, (2005) argues that the

“Any copycat effect of the media on suicide is assumed to involve already suicidal individuals. Media impacts may push already vulnerable individuals “over the edge.” (Stack, p.123, 2005).

Stack also says that suicide news stories published in print newspaper are more likely to have an effect on suicidal behaviour than televised suicide news reports, which last for twenty seconds and are quickly forgotten; whereas printed suicide news stories have a more lasting effect because they can be stored and reread. Thereby, the in print should exercise caution on how they report on suicide, so as to avoid having an effect on suicidal behaviour. Moreover, Stack, (2005,) says that the in print media e.g. in print daily national newspapers should not rationalise the suicide event by giving reasons as to why the person took their own life e.g. job loss; marital trouble or depression and in so doing will lessen the impact of suicide stories on suicidal behaviour.. Moreover, Stack suggests that good quality suicide reporting should not discuss positive solutions to suicide such as counselling because it is a negative definition of suicide. However, it could be argued that to include positive solutions to suicide e.g. information on suicide support services such as counselling is a positive aspect part of responsible and good quality suicide reporting. Nonetheless, Stack's study highlights how in

print newspaper's suicide reporting can lead to imitative suicidal behaviour, the copycat effect

Moreover, in Stack's, (2003) study of suicide reporting and the in print newspapers, Stack looks at the impact that media guidelines can have on the quality of suicide reporting in the Swiss in print newspapers and found that there was a substantial increase in responsible and good quality suicide reporting following the Swiss in print newspapers adherence to media guidelines on suicide reporting. Suicide news stories with sensationalised headlines had decreased from 62 to 25%. Stack (2005) argues that the increase in good quality suicide reporting in the Swiss media can be attributed to the fact that the Swiss adhered to the Swiss media's guidelines, whereby the Swiss media also gave less coverage to suicide, which affects the lessens the effect on imitative suicidal behaviour, the Copycat effect. However, Stack does not address whether it is possible that an increase in suicide reporting which includes adherence to the media guidelines can raise awareness of suicide in a positive way which might not increase copycat suicides.

2.3 Suicide Reporting and Media Guidelines

Professor Ella Arensman, (2014) carried out a study on the impact of media guidelines on suicide reporting. Arensman found that there was a decrease in suicides after media guidelines were introduced and adhered to by the Austrian in print media. However, media guidelines could be seen as a form of media censorship and could deter journalists from using the guidelines in suicide reporting, (Machlin et al, 2012). Thus, Arensman's study fails to address that media guidelines on suicide reporting can restrict the way suicide is reported on in print media. However, Arensman's study does addresses the positive impact that the media guidelines and how they can improve the quality of suicide reporting and in so doing limit the copycat effect that bad quality suicide reporting e.g. no adherence to media guidelines, can have on vulnerable people.

The National Union of Journalists, NUJ. (2012) guidelines on suicide reporting addresses the in print newspaper's responsibility to report accurately on suicide, which states that adherence to media guidelines can improve the quality of suicide reporting. These guidelines say that in print newspapers should be mindful of the language that they use in suicide news stories, e.g. they should not use the words "successful" or "failed" to describe the act of suicide if it did not result in death." (NUJ, 2012). Suicide terms such as "epidemic of suicide" should not be used because the words epidemic of suicide is alarmist and implies

that suicide is a disease that can spread. Moreover, the word suicide should not be in the stories headline because it sensationalises and glamorises the suicide, which makes the act of suicide attractive to vulnerable people. Moreover, the suicide term “committed suicide,” should not be used in suicide reporting because these words imply that the person who has committed a crime, when in fact suicide was decriminalised in Ireland since 1993, (Ancestry.com, 1993). However, the guidelines does not explain what is meant by the suicide terms, “suicide prone,” “suicide tourist,” “just a cry for help,” and “suicide victim” and therefore by explaining these terms can lead the media to question the reason why they should adhere to these guidelines. Nonetheless, the NUJ, (2012) guidelines are there to be adhered to so as to improve the quality of suicide reporting.

Moreover, the Samaritans guidelines are used to advise the in print newspapers on good quality suicide reporting, (1997), (2012) and say that the method of suicide should not be published e.g. describing the type and the number of pills taken because it might prompt vulnerable individuals to imitate suicidal behaviour. These guidelines say that the media should not use sensationalised terms in headlines and should avoid reporting on the contents of the suicide note, so as to reduce the risk of prompting imitative behaviour in vulnerable individuals. Also, the Samaritan’s, (2013), say that the media should not “overemphasise expressions of community grief, doing so may suggest that people are honouring suicide behaviour rather than mourning the death.” However, O’Brien, Irish Times, (2017) says it is hard to put this guideline into practice because one wants to report on communities who are hard hit by grief and in so doing might overemphasise the grief of the community that was affected by a suicide. Nonetheless, the Samaritan’s, (1997), (2012) guidelines provides a valuable insight into how media guidelines can be used to assess the quality of suicide reporting in print newspapers.

Moreover, Michel et al, (2000) assessed the quality of suicide reporting in Swiss in print newspapers against media guidelines on suicide reporting and found that the effect of suicide reporting on vulnerable people had decreased and the quality of suicide reporting had improved, after the introduction of media guidelines. They found that the quality of suicide reporting in the Swiss in print newspapers had improved because they were following guidelines and using less sensationalised or glorified headlines, text, pictures and as a result there was a decrease in the suicide rates:

“The rate decreased from 20.7/100,000 in 1991 to 19.6/100,000 in 1994.”

(Michel et al, p.77, 2000)

Michel et al, (2000), also reiterates what the Samaritan's, (1997), (2013) and the NUJ's, (2012) guidelines say about not publishing the details of the method of suicide and to not give prominence to the suicide, so as to reduce imitative suicidal behaviour in vulnerable individuals and in so doing emphasises how it is important that in print newspapers adhere to guidelines on suicide reporting.

Moreover, Cullen, (2003) analyses the in print media's, e.g. daily national, local newspapers and magazines adherence to media guidelines, whilst he simultaneously states how it is important to assess the quality of suicide reporting against media guideline's so as to improve the quality of suicide reporting. Over two twelve month reporting periods June, 2002 and May 2003, Cullen assessed the quality of suicide reporting in the Irish print media against the Samaritan's guidelines. He found that 281 news items included the suicide term commit suicide and thereby there was a heavy breach of the Samaritan's 2000, guideline that advises the in print newspapers to not use the suicide term, commit suicide because it implies that the person has committed a crime,

Madelyn Gould, (2001), examines the effect of suicide reporting in the in print newspapers on suicidal behaviour, the Werther Effect and how adherence to media guidelines can improve the quality and accuracy of suicide reporting, which can reduce the Werther Effect.

According to Gould, (2001), a novel by Goethe that was published in 1774, triggered an increase in suicide after it was released in Europe, the Werther Effect. Research on the Werther Effect was advanced and found that there was a subsequent increase in suicide rate after the publication of suicide news stories in print newspapers. Gould suggests that poor quality suicide reporting can cause imitative behaviour, by giving suicide prominence and placing the news story on the front and by using large headlines to draw attention to suicide, albeit in a negative way. Thereby, Gould highlights how it is important that the in print newspapers adhere to media guidelines, which will help to improve the quality of suicide reporting, whilst they simultaneously help to reduce the impact that poor quality suicide reporting can have on imitative suicidal behaviour, e.g. the Werther Effect and educate the public on the issue of suicide:

“in educating the public about suicide risks and shaping attitudes about suicide,”

(Gould, 2001, p. 245)

Therefore, Gould suggests that in order to maintain the integrity, quality of suicide reporting and to reduce the impact of the Werther Effect of suicide reporting - adherence to the media guidelines is needed.

2.4 Impact of suicide reporting on vulnerable people

Moreover, Vorcek, Benedict, (2010) says that media reporting of suicide has been repeatedly shown to affect vulnerable people who are susceptible to how suicide is reported on in the in print media which can trigger suicidal behaviour, whereby repetitive reporting of suicide was associated with an increase in suicide rates. In a similar study on the effects of suicide reporting on suicidal behaviour, Pavesi, Florino, (1990), argues that newspaper suicide stories can have an effect on vulnerable people, who are predisposed to suicidal behaviour, which is called the Werther Effect.

Pavesi et al, (1990) and Vorcek et al, (2010) studies on the effect of suicide reporting on give a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the effect of suicide reporting. However, both studies do not define who are the vulnerable people that are affected by suicide reporting. Arguably, vulnerable people could include suicidal, depressed or young people.

In addition, in a study on the effects of Australian media suicide reporting on suicidal behaviour, Perkins et al, 2006, examined the connection between suicide news reporting and increases in suicidal behaviour. After they analysed and assessed 4,635 suicide news items which appeared in Australian newspapers and the broadcast media, against the Achieving the Balance (Mental Health and Special Programs Branch, 1999, guidelines, they found that:

“39% of media items were followed by an increase in male suicides, and 31% by an increase in female suicides.” (Perkins et al, 2006, p. 2,874).

Perkins et al, (2006) effectively restates the effect that suicide reporting can have on suicidal behaviour and therefore highlights how the in print newspapers should be mindful on the impact that poor quality suicide reporting can have on vulnerable people.

2.5 Benefits of Qualitative and Quantitative Content Analysis

Cullen, (2006), used a qualitative and quantitative content analysis research method to analyse suicide reporting in the Irish print media, 2002-2003. Cullen examined the content of suicide news articles and looked at the type suicide terms that were used in suicide reporting in 513 Irish in print newspapers. Cullen, (2006) found that 18% of the Irish national newspapers ignored the media guidelines to responsible journalism and in so doing addresses the Irish in print newspaper industry's lack of adherence to media guidelines. Moreover,

Cullen used a quantitative content analysis research method to quantify the number of suicide news articles found in 2002-2003. As part of this research method, Cullen, (2006) placed all data findings into a database software application, Access and categorised each news items that was found by placing them under different headings, e.g. the monthly frequency of news stories, name of newspaper and so forth. Thus, this research approach will allow one to quantify the amount of coverage that three Irish in print daily national newspapers newspaper gave to suicide in any given period of suicide reporting.

Machlin et al, (2012), conducted a quantitative content analysis study on suicide reporting in the Australian print media and assessed the quality of suicide reporting against media guidelines on suicide reporting. Machlin et al,(2012) says that media guidelines are there to encourage the media to use them when they are reporting on suicide, so as to avoid initiative suicidal behaviour. This study focuses solely on the Australian print media's adherence to media guidelines on suicide reporting and does not address the assessment of suicide reporting in the Irish print media against media guideline's. Nonetheless, Machlin et al's study addresses how it is the print media's responsibility to adhere to media guidelines, so as to create accurate and good quality suicide news stories. And, this study also provides general information on how to assess the quality of suicide reporting against media guidelines. Machlin et al, (2012) suggests that in order to assess the quality of suicide reporting against media guidelines, one needs to interpret the guidelines, so as to determine their meanings and to find out why some in print newspapers might be deterred from using them because the guidelines are not that easy to interpret, which in turn might deter the Irish in print newspapers from adhering to them.

Moreover, Kris Krippendorff, (2004), says that content analysis is a useful research method, which can be used by media researchers to carry out a systematic reading and analysis of a body of texts i.e. newspapers suicide stories/articles. A content analysis approach to studying newspaper content can help the media researcher understand the way suicide is reported on by the media by looking at the use of suicide terms and tone of language being used in news reports.

Moreover, when a media researcher is conducting a study of suicide reporting in the print media, they can use a mix of qualitative and quantitative content analysis research methods. According to C. Reyes et al (2012) a qualitative content analysis allows one to explore and interpret narrative data i.e. newspaper suicide stories, which can help the researcher to

understand the way suicide is reported by way of analysing the tone of language used.. In addition, C. Reyes et al, (2012), says that a quantitative research method is used to categorize the number of suicide articles which are found; the number of sources found e.g. national newspapers and so forth, which allows one to form a picture of the amount of coverage that the newspaper has given to suicide.

Based on the academic studies on the benefits of a qualitative and quantitative content analysis by C. Reyes et al, (2012) and Gould, (2002), it can be concluded that qualitative and quantitative content analysis research methods can be used to study and analyse the quality of suicide reporting in the Irish in print newspapers.

2.6 News Framing

In order to achieve objective 3: Identify the use of news frames and news values in suicide reporting, the literature will discuss the use of news frames and news values in news reporting.

Di Angelo, (2002), says that news frames shape the reader's understanding of issues that might affect them e.g. an anti-abortion rally or nuclear power, which suggests that news frames can affect how people view the impact that suicide can have on people's lives. And, this is done through repetitive and persistent patterns of cognition, interpretative and presentation of important issues, whereby the media select and place emphasis on or exclude certain aspects of the issue through the use of news frame, which can affect how the reader feels and thinks about suicide. Moreover, by placing emphasis on a specific aspect of the suicide story e.g. the method of suicide; the type of person who has taken their own life e.g. a celebrity or an ordinary person or the location of the suicide, the media has made the story more memorable and meaningful to the reader. And, in so doing the reader empathises with the person in the story and will subsequently draw upon the memory of the suicide news story that the news frame has created, when they come across suicide reporting in other newspapers. And in turn this can shape their opinion on suicide. Di Angelo, (2002) study of news framing, has shaped one's knowledge and understanding of how news frames are used to present the issue of suicide and addressed the importance of using news frames as part of a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of suicide reporting in the Irish print media.

Moreover, De Vreese's, (2005), study of news frames discusses the different types of news frames that are used in news reporting and provides information as to how one can identify

the different types of news frames used in suicide reporting in print daily national newspapers and in so doing gives one:

“Guidance to the investigation of media content and the relationship between the media and public opinion” (De Vreese, 2005, p. 51)

De Vreese, (2005) suggests that the in print media use news frames to present and define an issue such as suicide to the reader through the use of Frame Setting. This aspect of news framing is used by the in print media in news reports, whereby the reader interacts with the media based on the reader’s prior knowledge of the topic being covered. Therefore, the combination of the way the news story is framed and the reader’s interpretation of the stories content i.e. the reader’s frame, can affect how they feel and think about the topic e.g. suicide. De Vreese’s study of news framing provides information which can be used to aid one’s understanding of how suicide news stories are framed, which can be used to identify the use of news frames in suicide reporting, such as the Human Impact news frame. Mass Communications theory, (1999), suggests the in print newspapers use news frames to present news events to the reader by emphasising certain aspect of the story. They might use the Human Impact news frame to empathise the grief of a family who have lost someone to suicide, by using extracts from the suicide note and/or images of the grieving families, so as convey the impact that suicide has on people whose lives have been affected by suicide.
<https://masscommtheory.com/theory-overviews/framing-theory/>

Dietram A. Scheufele¹ & David Tewksbury, (2007), say that the way a news story is framed influences how people understand the issues being raised in the news story, which in turn can affect their attitude towards the issue being reported on. Emphasising certain aspects of a news story affects how people think about the issue being reported on. By placing an emphasis on the violent aspect of the method of suicide used e.g. hanging, frames the suicide event in such as way the reader will think that anyone who attempted suicide is dangerous Scheufedel, Tewksbury, (2007) study of news framing does not discuss how suicide news stories are framed however, the study suggests that news framing theory can be used to evaluate the use of news frames in suicide reporting.

Tiegreen and Newman, (2008), study of news frames discusses the use of news frame in news reporting and how the media decide on what facts or aspects of the news story they want to emphasise and make salient in the readers mind and in so doing makes the news

event memorable in the readers mind. Tiegreen and Newman, (2008), argues that news frames can be classified as Thematic that:

“Focus on the big picture, for instance, by providing statistics, expert analysis or other information to help the public view the event in a broader context”. (Tiegreen, Newman, 2008)

Thus, suggesting that the Thematic news frame can be used to frame the suicide by providing suicide statistics, so as so as to help the reader to view suicide in a mental health context.

Tiegreen and Newman comprehensive study of news frames provides one with news frame type with which to identify thematic news frames in suicide reporting

2.7 News Values

In addition, to identifying the use of news frames in suicide reporting, this literature review will also address how news values are used in news reporting. It is important to address how the number of news values that news story has, can make it news worthy or not. According to Harcup and O'Neill, (2009), news values play an important role in the news selection process and if a news story has one or more of the twelve news values, then that news story is selected and published. According to Harcup, O'Neill, (2009) the twelve news values were devised by Galtung and Ruge. The more likely the event or issue satisfies this news selection criteria, the more likely it will be selected as news, (Judy Mc Gregor, 2010). The news selection criteria is made up of 12 news values, some of which includes: Negativity; Threshold; Composition; Personalisation; Meaningfulness; Reference to Elite person; and reference to Elite Nations. Threshold, the more graphic or dramatic the suicide is i.e. the person drowned or they hung themselves, the greater the impact the news story will have on the reader the greater the chances that the story will be selected and published as news.

The other news values that are an important part of the news selection criteria is Meaningfulness. The closer the event is to where the reader lives, geographical proximity, the more likely that the event will be selected and covered by the media, (Allern, 2011). For example, if a cluster of suicides occurred in the Dublin area, the chances are that the Irish national newspapers will select the event as news. And, if an event refers to something negative i.e. someone killing themselves, the more likely that it will be selected as news (Harcup, O'Neill, 2001; Monika Bednarck, Helen Caple, 2012). The literature on news values, Allern, 2011; Hacrup, O'Neill, 2001; Bednarck, Caple, 2012 and Mc Gregor, 2010, can help one to identify the use of news values in suicide news reporting and see what makes

a news story news worthy and this knowledge can be used to identify the use of news values in suicide reporting.

2.8 Benefits of semiotic analysis

Reviewing the literature relevant to the dissertation's fourth objective, "Evaluate the use of imagery used in suicide reporting," can help one to examine the use of images in suicide reporting by three in print newspapers. According to NUJ, (2012), the in print newspapers' use of imagery in suicide reporting can encourage vulnerable people to imitate the act of suicide. By publishing and placing images of the location of the suicide or images of the grieving friends, family, on the front page of the newspaper can prompt vulnerable people to imitate the act of suicide that is being reported. This guideline addresses the purpose of conducting a semiotic analysis of the images used in suicide reporting, in three in print newspapers.

According to Paul Carter, (2000), the print media use photographs to communicate the meanings of the news event being covered by in print newspapers, such as suicide. Carter doesn't examine the semiotics of imagery used in suicide news reports. However, his semiotic analysis of the front page of 3 British newspapers provides guidance as to how one can apply a semiotic approach to analysing the use of photographs in suicide stories, which can help one to understand the way imagery can add to a suicide news story by increasing an awareness of the impact that suicide can have people who have been bereaved by suicide.

Carter, (2000) suggests that the attached imagery could be used to evoke an emotional response e.g. sadness; fear; empathy in the reader. Thereby the use of imagery creates an emotional connection and making the reader aware of the impact of suicide on people's lives. Carter highlights how the size and/or the positioning of the image on the front page of a newspaper; signifies the importance of the news report and the image itself, (Carter, 2000)

Carter's (2000) study on the use of imagery in the British in print provides with information as to how a semiotic approach can be used to analyse the use of imagery in suicide reporting in the in print newspapers and to determine whether an image add or detract from the suicide that is being reported on.

Moreover, according to Bignell, (2002) and Crhfoto, (2017), semiotics can used to determine the messages of the images used in suicide stories because images can convey messages about the emotional impact has on the people who have been bereaved by suicide. Also,

Bahransai and Madani, (2003) say that a semiotic research approach is a useful qualitative research method because it can help one to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying or implicit messages that are found in the suicide stories.

Also, C. Reyee et al, (2012), addressed the importance of using a semiotic approach to analyse the use of imagery in five news stories, in the Philippine in print newspapers. By analysing the photographs and examining the camera angle, the use of a close up shot and so forth, can help one to determine whether the photograph is being used to invite the reader to sympathise with the person being photographed, subjective and if the person is looking away from the camera, then it can be concluded that the photograph has an objective meaning to it.

It can be concluded that based on the studies on the use of imagery in news reporting, (C. Reyee et al, 2012; Crhfoto, 2017; Bahransai, Madani, 2003 and Bignell, 2005, semiotics has an important role to play in analysing the use of images in suicide reporting in the Irish in print newspaper because it can help one to verify or dispute any research questions that one may have about the use of photographs in a suicide story i.e. Are photographs being used to evoke a desired response i.e. fear, sadness and so forth, thereby the use of images connects the reader to the suicide news story.

2.9 Benefits of a qualitative interview technique

DISM, Duke Initiative on Survey Methodology, (2010), study on the benefits of using interviews as a qualitative research method , addresses how interviews can be used to further one's understanding of suicide reporting in the in print newspapers. DISM, (2010), says that interviews can be used to collect in depth information on how people feel about a particular subject e.g. suicide and suicide reporting. Thus, by conducting interviews with in print daily national newspapers, the interviews can provide one in-depth and informative data on how media professionals e.g. journalists, present suicide stories to their readers.. One can draw upon the journalist's experience and knowledge to further one's own understanding of the way suicide is framed and the dilemmas journalist face when they are reporting on suicide, e.g. should they report on a suicide, even it means they might be intruding on or adding to the family's grief? DSIM's, (2010) say that planning is an important stage in the interview process. By forming an interview plan and strategy which includes using open ended and targeted questions, gives the interview focus and allows the interviewer to get the information that they are looking for, in a structure and organised way,

3.0 Conclusion

The study of suicide reporting literature has revealed that suicide reporting is a sensitive issue and therefore reporting on suicide should be done in a discreet and sensitive manner. The literature suggests that news framing theories and news values can be applied to all types of news reporting, including suicide reporting. The literature also highlighted the need to interpret media guidelines on suicide reporting e.g. NUJ, (2012) and Samaritan's, (2017), (Machlin et al, 2012,) when one is assessing the quality of suicide report against these guidelines. Moreover, the literature review also revealed the benefits of using a triangulation research method approach e.g. quantitative, qualitative and semiotic, to study and analyse suicide reporting and how adherence to media guidelines can produce good quality suicide reports, which in turn can reduce the effect that bad quality suicide reporting has on suicidal behaviour. The literature on qualitative interviews will allow one to arrive at a deeper understanding of suicide reporting in the in print newspapers by providing advise on how to conduct interviews with three in print newspaper journalists. The next stage of this research will give details on the research methods used to collect empirical data, which includes details on the research strategy to be used; data collection and data analysis techniques and sample selection.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and justifies the research strategy (analysis of suicide news stories, and interviews with three in print newspaper journalists) and Data Collection techniques. Details on sample and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data will be provided. In addition, the limitations of the research methods are discussed in terms of validity and reliability. The purpose of collecting my own data is help one to one understand how suicide is reported on in three in print daily national newspapers.

3.2 Research Strategy

The overall research strategy includes collecting suicide news items from three in print daily national newspapers and to conduct interviews with journalists from the three in print newspaper. This research strategy has been chosen because collecting suicide news items will allow one to study and analyse suicide reporting in the three in print newspaper. Moreover, this research will examine three Irish newspaper's coverage on suicide, over two twelve month periods; 1st of January to 31st of December, 1999 and the 1st of January to the 31st of December, 2016. The first period of suicide reporting, 1999, was selected because suicide was very newsworthy in 1999 and there was high suicide rate in 1998 and therefore a lot of coverage given to suicide in 1999 to coincide with the high suicide rate in 1998. The second suicide reporting period was selected because one wanted to compare suicide reporting during the most recent reporting period, 2016 with a period of suicide reporting in the 1999, so as to get a retrospective perspective look at suicide reporting in Irish in print newspapers, 1999 and 2016.

The purpose of this research is to achieve the following research objectives:

1. Quantify the amount of coverage given to suicide in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016.
2. Evaluate the quality of suicide reporting, e.g. good and bad, against media guidelines on suicide reporting, in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016.
3. Identify the use of news frames and news values in three in print newspapers in suicide reporting.
4. Assess the use of images used in suicide reporting

Moreover, 3 Irish in print daily national newspapers - Irish Independent; Irish Examiner and the Herald., represent a selection of the Irish print media industry were selected for this research on suicide reporting, so as to determine how suicide was reported on during two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016.

3.3 Data Collection: sample selection and data collection techniques

Three Irish in print daily national newspapers were accessed through the Irish newspaper archive, an online print newspaper database, where past editions of print editions of Irish newspapers are available and easily accessible. The Irish Independent was Ireland's most popular newspaper in 2016, which had Ireland's highest readership of 97,104 in the first half 2016, thereby making it Ireland's most influential newspaper, (News Brand Ireland,2016) The Irish independent has been Ireland's most popular newspaper for the last 100 years, (Irish Newspaper Archive,2017). Also, in 1999, the Irish Independent had the highest readership in Ireland, 165,650 in the first six months of that year, (Michael Foley, 1999). Moreover, the Irish Independent was selected because it won the Headline award for responsible reporting on issues related to mental health and suicide in 2016, (Headline, 2016). Therefore, the Irish independent was selected because of its' ability to influence their reader's understanding of suicide and it would be interesting to see how suicide is reported during the period when they won the Headline award for responsible and accurate suicide reporting. Moreover, the Herald was selected because, the Herald had the second highest readership, 40,847 in 2016,, (News Brand Ireland, 2016), thereby making it Ireland's most popular tabloid newspaper in 2016, followed by the Irish Examiner which had Ireland's 3rd highest readership, 30,090, (News Brand Ireland,2016). Both the Irish Examiner and the Herald are the second and third most popular daily national newspapers whose popularity can influence people's opinion on important issues such as suicide and therefore it would be interesting to see how these newspapers report on suicide. Moreover, at the beginning of the research and data collection process, it was decided that the initial 12 month period, 2002, would be one of the periods of suicide coverage to be studied and analysed. However, as the research and data collection process got underway, it was discovered that the Irish newspaper archive did not have copies of the 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003;2004 editions of the Herald/Evening Herald. Thereby, it was decided that the 12 month period of suicide reporting in 1999 in the Herald newspaper was selected as part of this project on suicide reporting in the Irish print media.

As part of the data collection process, the search term suicide was selected at the start of news item,

in the by-line, headline and main body section of the news item. A list of search terms included: committed suicide; suicide victim; suicide bid; successful/unsuccessful suicide; epidemic of suicide” and “just a cry for help.” were also used to find suicide news stories. However, by using the search term “suicide” on its own, all the other suicide related words e.g. committed, bid, successful/unsuccessful, victim, automatically appeared next to the search term suicide in the suicide news story.

3.4 Data Collection - Interviews

Moreover, in an attempt to achieve the research objectives 1-4, a set of interviews were conducted with members of the three Irish in print national newspapers, e.g. Irish Independent; Irish Examiner and Irish Times and a member of Headline staff e.g. Claire Sheridan, news researcher. Prior to all the interviews, the interviewees were sent an information sheet which explained the purpose of the interview and a Consent form which was signed and sent back to this researcher. All interviewees were asked 10 questions in each interview, which lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. Each interview, except the interview with the Irish Examiner which was conducted via email, were recorded and transcribed. Full interview transcript is included in the Appendices 6.

3.5 Data Analysis

A qualitative and quantities research approach will be used to analyse data findings e.g. suicide news stories, so as to evaluate, compare and contrast the quality and coverage of suicide reporting in three in print daily national newspapers against Samaritan’s, (1997), Samaritan’s, (2017) and NUJ, (2012), guidelines on suicide reporting. Analysis of data findings will involve a four stage analytical process: Collect data; Describe Data; Categorise Data and Perform Analysis, so as to interpret what was found. In the fourth stage of the analytical process data findings will be compared and contrasted against Literature Review findings and interview data findings. In total, the data collection process produced 266 news items for the 12 month period of suicide reporting in 1999 and for the 12 month period of suicide reporting in 2016, excluding letters to editors and opinion pieces:

	1999	2016
Irish Independent	44	28
Irish Examiner	37	33
Herald	23	10
Total	198	78

Table 1: Number of news items returned from the Irish Newspaper Archives

Only news items about suicide i.e. suicide news stories, were selected for analysis from the data collection process. Letters to the editor and opinion pieces were excluded from the analysis because they refer to opinions on suicide and are not news stories or reports.

The first research objective “Quantify the amount of coverage given to suicide reporting in three Irish in print newspapers, over two twelve month reporting period, 1999 and 2016?” was achieved by applying an quantitative approach to the data found, whereby one systemically counted the number of suicide news stories that were found. The table of data findings results show that 69% coverage was given to suicide in all Irish in print newspapers in 1999. In comparison to 2016, where there was less coverage given to suicide, 31% suicide coverage. The reasons behind this difference in suicide reporting coverage between the two periods, will be discussed and analysed in the Data Analysis Results and Discussion chapter. The first research objective “Evaluate the quality of suicide reporting, e.g. good and bad, against media guidelines on suicide reporting, in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016 was answered by using a Triangulation research approach, which is a mix of qualitative and quantitative content analysis research methods, (Cullen.,2006), to assess the quality of each suicide news article against media guidelines on suicide reporting. by way of doing a systematic reading and analysis of each suicide newspaper story.

Moreover, the 3rd research objective, “Identify the use of news frames and news values in three in print newspapers in suicide reporting.” was answered by analysing each suicide news story’s headline and body of content, so as to identify the type of news frame being used. According to Claes H. de Vreese, (2005), what the media chooses to emphasise in a news story e.g. the effect of suicide on people’s lives or suicide statistics and the reader’s own frame of reference, can affect how the reader feels and thinks about what is being reported on. Moreover, the use of news frames determines the structure of the news story i.e. where the news story is placed in the newspaper e.g. the front or inside page; the paragraph size; and page layout i.e. headline, column size and so forth (De Vreese, 2005). Thereby, an informed understanding of the use of news frames in the in print newspaper has allowed one to identify the type of news frames used by the Irish in print newspapers to frame suicide news stories in 1999 and 2016.

Moreover, two types of news frames were identified in all three newspapers in 1999 and 2016 - the Thematic and the Human Impact frame. The use of the Human Impact news frames was represented by the journalist’s reference to the impact of the suicide on the family and friends of the

person who took their own life, by mentioning how the suicide has affected them. For example, the news story titled “Shaken communities unite for vigil amid spate of suicides”, (Irish Examiner, November, 2016), the journalist mentioned how communities came together for a vigil to remember those who took their own lives.

Moreover, ANZCA08 Rowe and Place, (2008), say that the type of news frame can be identified by looking at the news story’s headline and the main body of text. Thereby, by analysing the suicide news story’s headline can help to identify the type of news frame used in suicide reporting. The Thematic news frame was identified in the following headline “Statistics blur suffering behind suicide graph,” (Irish Examiner, December, 1999), was used to emphasise suicide statistics, so as to encourage the public to view the issue of suicide in a broader context e.g. the impact that the rise in suicide rates can have on an average size town.

Moreover, according to ANZCA08 Rowe and Place, (2008), newspapers play a key role in framing news about mental health and suicide. Thereby, this project’s analysis on the use of news framing in suicide news stories has helped one to identify the importance of news framing in suicide reporting in the Irish print media.

The total number of news frames that were identified are represented in the table below:

Frames	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Herald
Thematic	29	33	10
Human Impact	24	18	31
Total	53	51	41

Table 2: Number of frames identified in each newspaper over two 12 month reporting periods

From the data found on news frames, as presented in the above table, it can be concluded that most of the suicide news stories used a combination of two news frames e.g. Thematic and Human Impact frames. In the proceeding chapter on data analysis results and discussion will present more findings on the use of news frames in suicide in the Irish print media will analysed and discussed.

The 3rd research objective, “Identify the use of news frames and news values in three in print newspapers in suicide reporting. was achieved by analysing each suicide news story’s headline and main body of content. ANZACA (2008), say that news frames can be identified by looking at the news stories headlines, which suggests that news values can also be identified by looking the suicide news story’s headline and then the main body of text. Thereby, by looking at the suicide news story’s headline in the collection of suicide stories found for this project on suicide reporting in the Irish print media can identify the use of the use of news values in the Irish print media suicide news stories.

Moreover, Galtung and Ruge created a news story criteria that consisted of 12 news values which were used to identify the type of news values in suicide news stories, (Harcup, O'Neill, 2008) It was found that if the suicide news story had one or more of the prescribed news values, the more likely that the news story would be published.

News Values - 1999	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Evening Herald
Negativity	45	37	23
Unambiguity	45	37	23
Composition	45	37	23
Threshold	11	24	13
Personalisation	12	2	11
Meaningfulness	6	0	0
Unexpectedness	0	0	0
Reference to Elite Persons	0	0	0
Reference to Elite Nations	3	1	1
Consonance	0	0	0
Frequency	0	0	0
Total	167	138	94

Table 3. Number of news values found in 1999

As part of the quantitative and qualitative content analysis on suicide reporting in the Irish print media, each news item was read and analysed and seven of the twelve news values were identified in most of the suicide news stories. The above table of data results on the use of news values in the one of the two twelve month periods 1999, 2016, illustrates that all newspapers used the same news values. The table of data also shows that Negativity, Unambiguity and Composition were the dominant news values used in suicide reporting in the in print newspapers in 1999. All of the news value data findings will be discussed in more detail in the proceeding chapter, Data Analysis Results and Discussion.

The 4th research objective, “Assess the use of imagery in suicide reporting”, was achieved by applying a semiotic analysis research method to the analysis of imagery found in suicide news stories. Bignell, (2002) and Crhfoto, (2017), says that images communicate messages and therefore, by applying a semiotic research method approach to the analysis of the images that were found in the Irish in print newspaper’s suicide news stories, one could identify and determine the messages that the images convey. (Bahransai, Madani, 2003). Therefore, a semiotic approach was used to analyse the images that accompanied the suicide stories in the 3 newspaper’s coverage of suicide in 1999 and 2016.

3.6 Limitations and potential problems

There are limitations to this research. This research does not represent the entire but a small section of in print media. And therefore, assessing the quality of all in print media might not be in the scope of a MA dissertation. There is the question of the reliability of using interviews for the purpose of collecting empirical data on suicide reporting. There is the issue of bias, whereby interviewees might be inclined to give answers that they think the interviewer wants to hear. To mitigate bias, the interviewer does not have any affiliation with the interviewees. Secondly, interviews with journalists from popular in print daily national newspaper increases the reliability and credibility of the empirical data collected from the interviews.

Initially, 4 Irish national newspapers were selected to be analysed e.g. Irish Independent; Irish Times; the Daily Mirror and the Irish Sun. However, access to the Irish Times newspaper archives proved to be problematic because the PDF formats of the Irish Times newspapers were unreadable because the text was scrambled and the Irish newspaper archives does have copies of the 1999 and 2016 editions of the Irish Sun and the Daily Mirror. I overcame this problem by selecting the Irish Independent; Irish Examiner and the Herald, for this dissertation on suicide reporting in the Irish print daily national newspaper

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reveals the data findings results from the analysis of suicide reporting in three Irish in print daily national newspapers - Irish Independent; Irish Examiner and the Herald, during two twelve month periods, 1999 and 2016. Data findings results from interviews that were conducted with journalists from the three newspapers will be revealed. In the first instance, data findings results on suicide reporting will reveal the amount of coverage that suicide was given in the three in print newspapers, in 1999 and 2016. Secondly, data results analysis will include an assessment of the quality of suicide reporting against Samaritan's, (1997), and Samaritan's, (2013) NUJ, (2012) media guidelines on suicide reporting. Thirdly and fourthly, data findings results assessment will also include identifying the use of news frames and news values in suicide reporting and examining the use of imagery in suicide reporting.

The Triangulation research method, which is a mix of a quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods, was used to quantify and qualify the coverage given to suicide reporting during the two twelve month periods. In total, 164 items were found. After letters to editors and opinion pieces were deducted from the total, the total of suicide news items, which were found came to 150: 57 were found in the Irish Independent, 44 in 1999, 13 in 2016; 60 news items in the Irish Examiner, 37 in 1999, 23 in 2016 and 33 news items in the Herald, 23 in 1999 and 10 in 2016.

4.2 Objective 1: Quantify how much coverage is given to suicide in three Irish in print newspapers, over two twelve month periods, 1999 and 2016

A quantitative research approach was used to analyse suicide reporting coverage data findings and data tables and graphs are used to represent suicide coverage in all 3 Irish newspapers, which has allowed one to quantify the amount of coverage that each newspaper gave to suicide in two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016, which reflects the research method that Cullen, (2006), used in his study on suicide coverage in the print media in 2002 and 2003

Figure 1 below illustrates that more coverage was given to suicide in all 3 Irish newspapers, during the reporting period, 1999, 69%, in comparison to the reporting period 2016, which shows that there was a decrease in suicide coverage, 31%. The Irish Independent published 44 suicide news stories which accounted for most of the suicide coverage in 1999, 29%, followed by the Irish Examiner, whose suicide coverage came to 25%, 37 suicide news stories, followed by the Evening Herald, who published 23 suicide news stories, which accounted for 15% of coverage given to suicide in 1999. Moreover, the least amount of coverage given to suicide was in 2016, 46 news stories accounted for 31% suicide coverage. The Irish Examiner gave the most coverage, 23 news stories, 50%, followed by the Irish Independent, 13 news stories, 28% and the Herald, 10 news stories, 22% coverage. The suicide coverage is broken down into twelve month periods and is represented in the two tables and graphs of data below so to show how much coverage was given to suicide, month by month:

Suicide Coverage - 1999	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Evening Herald
January	6	3	3
February	3	5	2
March	5	2	0
April	6	1	4
May	2	7	2

June	2	3	0
July	2	0	3
August	3	1	1
September	2	3	3
October	5	4	2
November	4	4	2
December	4	4	3
Total			

Table 4. Number of news articles found in twelve month period, 1999

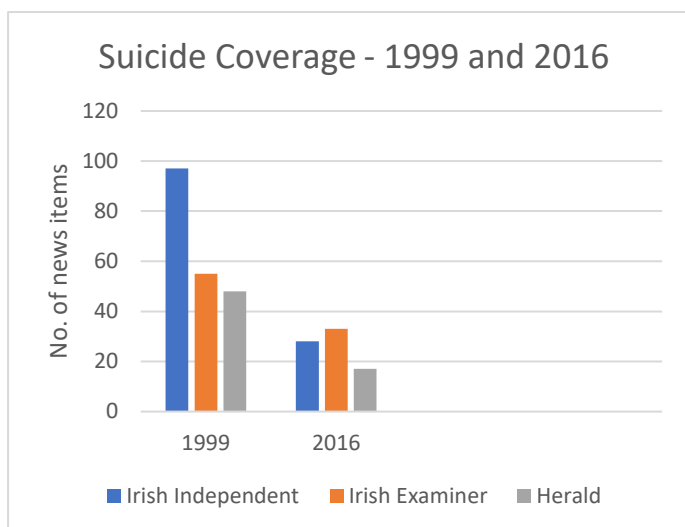


Fig 3. The amount of suicide coverage, 1999 and 2016

Suicide Coverage - 2016	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Herald
January	0	1	1
February	2	2	1
March	0	2	2
April	2	3	0
May	4	3	1
June	2	0	0
July	0	3	0
August	0	3	0
September	0	1	0
October	0	1	1
November	1	3	2
December	2	4	2
Total	13	26	10

Table 5. Amount of coverage over twelve month period 2016

Analysing data findings involves reading and rereading data findings, Hsieh, (2003) and has allowed one to conclude that the high amount of coverage given to suicide in all 3 Irish newspapers in the period, 1999, can be attributed to suicide being newsworthy because the previous year's suicide rate was high in 1998, 504 suicides, (Oliver, 1999)

In addition, it can be assumed that the low amount of coverage given to suicide during the reporting period in 2016, 35%, can be attributed to the possibility that the news worthiness of suicide had dwindled or as Irish Independent journalist, Conor Feehan said: "If the newsworthiness of particular suicide acts has dropped off then coverage of suicide would be low."

Moreover, there was less coverage given to suicide in 2016 because of an increased sensitivity towards suicide in all three newspapers, which could be attributed to the influence of Headline, the Media Monitoring Programme. Similarly, O'Brien, former social affairs journalist, Irish Times said that:

"Broadly speaking we, the Irish Times tend not to report on suicide for a number of reasons, such as sensitivity, cultural, the fact that it is a personal tragedy and you don't want to intrude on the grief of the individual and community."

There was a low amount of coverage given to suicide in 2016 because there were less suicides in 2015 and therefore, suicide was less newsworthy. Feehan, Irish Independent, suggests that the Irish Independent did not give much coverage to suicide in 2016 because suicide rates were low in 2015 and this reduced the newsworthiness of suicide.

The following selection of suicide news stories were selected, so as to represent the high amount of coverage given to suicide during the period, 1999, 104 news articles. 69% suicide coverage. Of the three newspapers, the Irish Independent, gave the most coverage to suicide in the reporting period, 1999, 29%, 44 news articles. In suicide news story, titled "Health Agencies uniting in a push to tackle suicide toll," Noel Smith, (Irish Independent, Noel Smith, 26.2.1999), the Irish Independent reported on the Mid-Western Health Board's proposal to tackle the problem of suicide by way of compiling a survey on attempted suicides and previous studies in Ireland which showed that there was a "marked difference" between males and females who have attempted suicide. The news story also reported on the number of people who have committed suicide in 1998, mostly young men.

Moreover, the Irish Examiner gave the second highest amount of coverage given to suicide, 25%, 37 news articles and the following news story represents a part of that coverage. In a suicide news story, titled “Suicide increase as more men take their lives,” (Irish Examiner, Evelyn Ring, 24/6/1999, p.2), the Irish Examiner highlights the significant and “staggering” increase in the suicide rate among young men in Ireland, which has prompted suicide experts to ask for measures to tackle this problem. The news item also states that suicide is the commonest cause of death in our young male population.

In addition, the Evening Herald gave the third highest amount of coverage to suicide in 1999, 15%, 10 news articles.

4.3 Objective 2 Evaluate the quality of suicide reporting against media guidelines, over two twelve month periods, 1999 and 2016

Michel et al, (2000) assessed the quality of suicide reporting against media guidelines. Therefore, one will be using a similar qualitative content analysis research method to assess the quality of the suicide news stories against media guidelines on suicide reporting, in 1999 and 2016, which has allowed one to give an objective description of suicide reporting in 1999 and 2016.

The quality of suicide reporting, during the twelve month period, 1999, is of poor quality when assessed against the Samaritan’s, (1997) media guidelines on suicide reporting. A rating system was used to rate the adherence to suicide reporting guidelines in 1999, e.g. if any news article breached two or more of the guidelines this indicated that the news story was of poor quality. As part of the selection process, each news item was categorised according to date and name of publication e.g. 12.6.1999, Irish Independent. Then, each news item was selected based on whether the news story did not adhere to the media guidelines. Thus, the following selection and sample of suicide news stories were assessed against Samaritan’s, (1997) guidelines on suicide reporting. which were chosen to represent the poor quality of suicide repointing in 1999.

In 1999, all 44 suicide news stories reported on by the Irish Independent were of poor quality because they breached two or more of the Samaritan’s, (1997) media guidelines on suicide reporting, such as the following suicide news story.” Love the spur in triple tragedy death leap girls”, Marcus Warren, Irish Independent,p.11, 13.2.1999) is about three Russian girls who died by suicide because their love for the same boy was spurred. The Irish Independent romanticises the girls’ suicide by exaggerating the family’s grief by saying that “Their mothers and siblings sobbed as they adjusted their veils” and “When it was time to take the girls to church their sobs turned to wails.” Romanticising suicide in this way suggests that suicide is something that should be honoured (Samaritan’s,1997). Moreover, the method of suicide that was used, the location of the suicide and the identity of the 3 girls was given: “Tanya, Masha and Alyona were holding hands as they leapt from the eighth floor window one evening last week,” and thereby this news story breaches the media guidelines that advises the media should not publish the method and location of suicide or give prominence to the suicide by mentioning it in the headline ,e.g. “Love the spur in triple tragedy death leap girls because it increase the risk of imitative suicidal behaviour in vulnerable people, the Werther effect, (Gould,2002).

In addition, “Suicide rate is the worst in the world,” (Irish Examiner, John O’Mahony, p. 1, 4.12.1999) breaches the guideline on sensationalising suicide because it gives prominence to suicide by placing the news story on the front page and by putting the word suicide in the headline. And in so doing, makes the act of suicide attractive to vulnerable people, who might engage in suicidal behaviour after they have seen this story. Moreover, the tone of language is alarmist because it implies that Ireland has the worst suicide rate in the world, which in turn might create a panic about Ireland’s suicide rate. Moreover, the Samaritan’s (1997) guidelines

advise against saying that “One in 100 succeed in killing themselves.” because it implies that the suicide was successful,

Moreover, “Eerie radio ‘drove man to suicide”, (Evening Herald, sept.1999, p.2), sensationalises and gives prominence to suicide placing the word suicide in the headline and thereby makes suicide attractive to vulnerable people who might be at risk of initiative suicidal behaviour and are susceptible to poor quality suicide reporting, the Copycat effect, (Stack 2005), The story also uses incorrect suicide terms to describe the man who took his own life as a “suicide victim”. Moreover, a description of the method used is given:

“They found Robert hanging from a door post,” (Evening Herald, 1999)

The Samaritan’s, (1997) media guidelines states that the in print newspapers should not publicise the details of the method of suicide used because it may prompt vulnerable people to use the same method to take their own lives.

In summary, the quality of suicide reporting in 1999 was of poor quality because none of the news stories found in that period, including the above sample of news stories, did not adhere to any of the Samaritan’s, (1997) guidelines on suicide reporting. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a lack of awareness of these guidelines in 1999 and this affected the quality of suicide reporting and as O’Brien, Irish Times says: “There was a lot of ignorance around suicide in 1999. I don’t think that there was a great awareness of media guidelines on suicide reporting in 1999, as there is today, where there is a greater awareness around suicide reporting, such as not describing the cause of death.”

In addition, the quality of suicide reporting in 1999 was compared and contrasted with the reporting period in 2016

All news stories, 57, in 2016 were of good quality, when assessed against the NUJ, (2012) and Samaritan’s (2013) media guidelines. A sample of suicide news stories that represent good quality suicide reporting in 2016 were selected. All news items were categorised according to date and name of publication. Then each news item was selected based on whether the news story adhered to one or more of the media guidelines. Thus, the following suicide news stories were chosen to represent good quality suicide reporting in 2016, all of which have adhered to media guidelines on suicide reporting, Samaritan’s, (2013) and NUJ, (2012).

Moreover, the news story, “Boss quits after death of employee,” (Irish Independent, James Rothwell, p.26, 30.12.2016) does not breach most of the guidelines on suicide reporting. The suicide news story is not given prominence and is placed on page 26 of the newspaper. And, it does not mention the method and/or location of the suicide or use sensationalised language and incorrect suicide terms in the headline and the main body of the story’s content, such as suicide epidemic; suicide victim; commit suicide and so forth. However, it does breach the guideline that states that the in print newspapers should disclose the contents of the suicide note, which the Irish Intendent does by publishing the following extract from the suicide note to the mother of the employee: Why do things have to be so hard,” However, this story illustrates the way adherence to media guidelines can produce good quality suicide reports, which can reduce the risk of imitative suicidal behaviour in vulnerable able people

Moreover, the news story, “Man who claimed that bank drove wife to suicide is to lose €750,000 home,” (Herald, Ray Managh, p.18, 24.11.2016) does breach the guideline that says that you should give prominence to suicide by placing the word suicide in the headline, Samaritans, (2013) and NUJ, (2012). However, the story does not breach most of the guidelines because it does not publish the details of the method and/or location of suicide, does not use incorrect

suicide terms, such as commit suicide; suicide victim; suicide prone and so forth. Therefore, this news story is another example of good quality suicide reporting in 2016 because it adheres to most of the media guidelines on suicide reporting.

It can be concluded that the difference in the quality of suicide reporting in 1999 and 2016 can be attributed to the fact there were no awareness of the Samaritan's (1997) media guidelines to suicide reporting in 1999 and Headline, the Media Monitoring Programme was not there to monitor suicide reporting. Whereas in 2016, both media guidelines to suicide reporting and Headline were there to encourage the three in print newspapers to adhere to NUJ (2012) and Samaritan's (2013) guidelines, during the 12 month reporting period in 2016.

4.4 Objective 3: “Identify the use of news frames and news values used in the suicide news reporting in 1999 and 2016”

In attempt to achieve the above mentioned objective, the literature on the use of news frames, De Vreese, (2010) has helped one to identify the use of the Human Impact and Thematic news frames during two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016. Of the 107 news stories found in all three newspapers in 1999, 107 news frames were identified e.g. 47 Human Impact and 60 Thematic. The data table below illustrates that the Thematic news frame was the dominant news in suicide reporting in the reporting period, 1999: and was mostly used by the Irish Examiner in suicide reporting:

News Frames - 1999	Human Impact	Thematic
Irish Independent	18	22
Irish Examiner	9	30
Evening Herald	20	8
Total	47	60

Table 5. Number of news frames found in the reporting period, 1999

Moreover, the data table below illustrates that the Human Impact news frame was the dominant news frame in suicide reporting periods, 2016 and was mostly used by the Herald in suicide reporting:

New Frames - 2016	Human Impact	Thematic
Irish Independent	6	7
Irish Examiner	9	13
Herald	11	2
Total	26	22

Table 6. Number of news frames found in the reporting period, 2016

The charts below represent the total amount of news frames found in 1999 and 2016

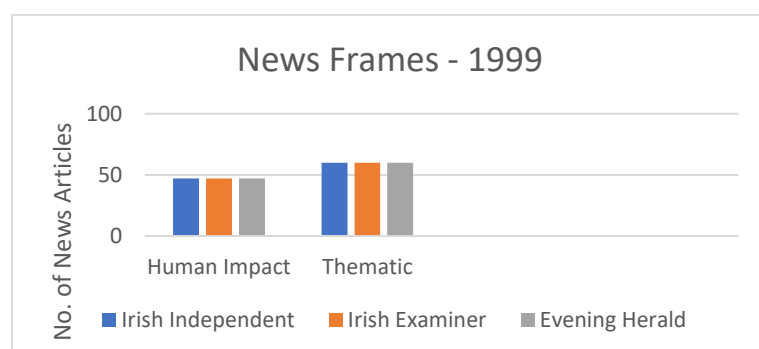


Fig. 4 Number of News Frames found in 1999

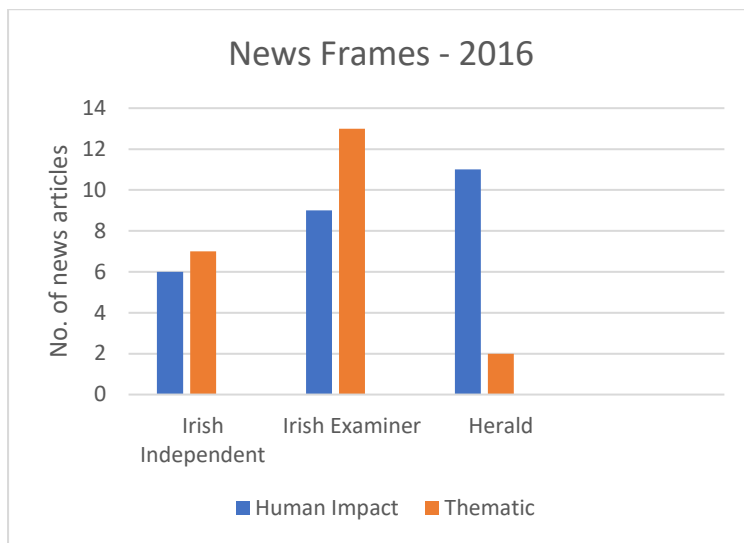


Fig. Number of News Frames found in 2016

4.4.1 Thematic news frame

The News Frame bar chart illustrates that the Thematic news frames was found to be the dominant news frame which was used in the 12 month reporting period, 1999, in all 3 newspapers: Irish Independent; Irish Examiner and the Evening Herald. The Thematic news frame was found in 60 of the news stories in 1999, 58%

News frames are used to shape people’s interpretations and understanding of the issue being presented, such as suicide, (Di Angelo, 2007; An, Gower, 2009), which can affect how the reader feels and thinks about suicide and can be identified by looking at the news story’s headline and/or main body of text, (De Vreese, 2005). And, in so doing one could identify the use of the Thematic news frame in the 104 news stories that were found in 1999. Thematic news frames are used to place an emphasis on suicide statistics or expert information on suicide, helps to the public to view suicide in a broader context e.g. mental health issues, (Tiegreen, Newman, 2008). Of the 107 news stories found in the Irish Independent, Irish Examiner and Evening Herald, the Thematic news frames was the dominant news frame in the reporting period, 1999, 60 news stories, 58%, The following news stories in the Irish Independent and the Irish Examiner were selected because there was a high use of the Thematic news frame in these newspapers, e.g. Irish Examiner, 30 news frames and the Irish Independent, 22.

The Thematic news frame was identified in the following news story, “Alarming suicide surge among young people, (Irish Examiner, Donal Hickey, p. 6, 31.8.1999) which places an emphasis on suicide statistics, “Last year – 29 people – 24 males and five females, took their own lives in the country compared with 17 in the previous year.” which allow the public to view high male suicide rates in the broader context of the lack of suicide support services for men affected by suicide.

Moreover, the Thematic news frame was identified in the following news story by looking at the following headline, “Third of prisoner ‘attempt suicide’” (Irish Independent, Marese McDonagh, p.6, 28.4. 1999) and the story’s main body of text, which suggests that the news story uses the thematic news frame to place an emphasis on the rate of Irish prisoners who have attempted suicide, so as to allow the public to view prison suicides in the broader context of the way prison life has an effect on prisoner’s mental health.

In addition, the use of the Thematic news frame was found in the 46 news stories in 2016, 22 news stories, 48%. The following news stories were selected from the Irish Independent and Irish Examiner they used a lot of the thematic news frames during the 2016 reporting period, The headline, “Huge concern at the number of Gardai who have taken their own lives,” (Irish Independent, Paul Williams, p.8, 2.1.2016) indicates that the Thematic news frame was used because the wording suggests that the news story includes statistics on the number of Gardai who have died by suicide and alongside some of the text in the main body of the story e.g. six member of the force – one sergeant and five - have died under tragic circumstances over the past year.”

In addition, the thematic news frame was identified in the news story titled, “Suicide of under 25s a major concern,” (Irish Examiner, Claire O’Sullivan, p.7, 15.10.2016) by examining the main body of text, which uses suicide expert’s, Professor, Arensman and Director of the National Office of Suicide Prevention, Gerry Ralieggh, views on the issue of the high youth suicide rate to emphasise the suicide rate of people the under 25. And in so doing puts this issue youth suicide in the broader context of the need for more youth suicide prevention services to tackle this problem.

4.4.2 Human Impact news frame

In 1999 the Human Impact was the second most dominant news frame in suicide reporting during that year and was found in 47 of the 107 news stories in 1999, 44%.

By analysing the following headline, “Suicide third biggest killer,” (Irish Independent, Feb. 1999), it was found that alongside the stories content, the news story use the Human Impact news frame, to convey to the reader the impact that suicide has on people’s lives by stating in the main body of text that “12,000 people killed themselves every year and 160,000 tried and failed,” and how suicide is a mental health issue that should be addressed by providing better mental health services.

Moreover, the following headline, “Suicide increases as more men take their lives,” (Irish Examiner, Evelyn Ring, p.2, 24.6.1999) exhibits the use of the human impact news frame, which in addition to the content of the news story conveys to the reader the impact that suicide has on young male lives.

Also, the following headline “Tragic suicide of adopted woman,” (Evening Herald, Oct., p.16,1999) and alongside the stories main body of text exhibited the use of the human impact news frame to bring to the reader’s attention the impact that suicide had on adopted woman life.

In addition, of the 57 suicide news items found in 2016, the Human Impact news frame was one of two news frames identified in 2016. The Human Impact news frame was identified in the following headline “Boss quits after the death of employee,” (Irish Independent, James Rothwell, p.26, 30.12.2016), which conveys the impact that an employee’s suicide on her boss. The suicide involved a Japanese company’s employee, who took her own life because she was experiencing work related stress. The Human Impact angle is used in the story to evoke an emotional response in the reader, e.g. sadness, by stating that the woman employee “left a note for her mother, which asked her mother, “Why do things have to be so hard.”

Moreover, the Human Impact news frame was identified in the following headline: “Jim, I’m not for this world, please forgive me,” (Irish Examiner, Sarah Slater, 7.7.2016). The headline is used to convey the impact that suicide has people’s lives e.g. Carrey’s life and by way of bringing an emotional angle to a suicide event, actor Jim Carey’s ex-girlfriend, Catriona’s died by suicide, which was used to connect the reader with the story by evoking feelings of empathy in the

reader, who might have been in a similar situation as the person in the news story i.e. lost someone to suicide over love related problems e.g. White was dumped by Carey. The Human Impact news frame was also identified in main body of text, whereby the person who allegedly took her own life was named with an overdose of Carey's medication and by stating that she had emotional problems, who was besotted with Carey and took her own life because Carey broke up with her.

In addition, the Human Impact news frame was identified in the news story, "Garda probe after victim of online sex scam." (Herald, Fiona Dillion, Cathal McMahon, Brian O'Reilly, 2016), which was identified in the main body of content which included the following emotive words to convey the impact that a father's suicide could have on his son: "A loving dad took his own life. Thereby the text conveys the impact that suicide has on the man's family.

It can be concluded that the sample of suicide news stories from both reporting periods, 1999 and 2016, used two news frames i.e. Thematic and Human Impact, to catch the reader's attention about suicide, which convey the impact that suicide can have on people's lives by placing an emphasis on suicide statistics and emotional language. And in so doing these news frames are used by the reader as they refer to their own frame of reference and experience of suicide, so as to make the issue of suicide salient in their mind.

3rd objective: Identify the use of news frames and news values in suicide reporting in three in print daily national newspapers

In an attempt to achieve the above objective, six of the twelve news values were identified in 107 of suicide news stories in the reporting periods, 1999 and 57 suicide stories in 2016. It was found that reference to something negative; unambiguity and composition were the dominate news values and was found in all 107 suicide news stories, as illustrated in the two tables below:

News Values - 1999	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Evening Herald
Negativity	45	37	23
Unambiguity	45	37	23
Composition	45	37	23
Threshold	11	24	13
Personalisation	12	2	11
Meaningfulness	6	0	1
Unexpectedness	0	0	0
Reference to Elite Persons	0	0	0
Reference to Elite Nations	3	1	1
Consonance	0	0	0
Frequency	0	0	0
Total	167	138	95

Table 7 Number of news values found in 1999

News Values - 2016	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Herald
Negativity	27	22	10
Unambiguity	27	22	10
Composition	27	22	10
Threshold	6	7	2
Personalisation	3	8	3

Meaningfulness	1	5	1
Unexpectedness	0	0	0
Reference to Elite Persons	0	2	2
Reference to Elite Nations	0	0	0
Consonance	0	0	0
Frequency	0	0	0
Total	91	88	38

Table 8 Number of news values in 2016

The number of news values that were identified in 1999 are represented in fig.6:

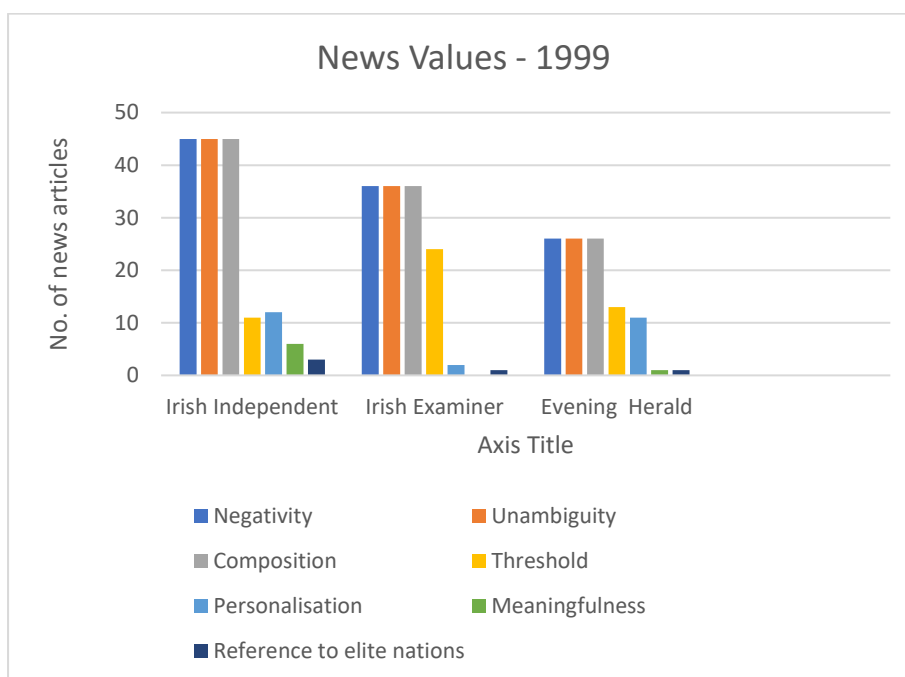


Fig. 6 Number of News Values found in three in print newspapers in 1999

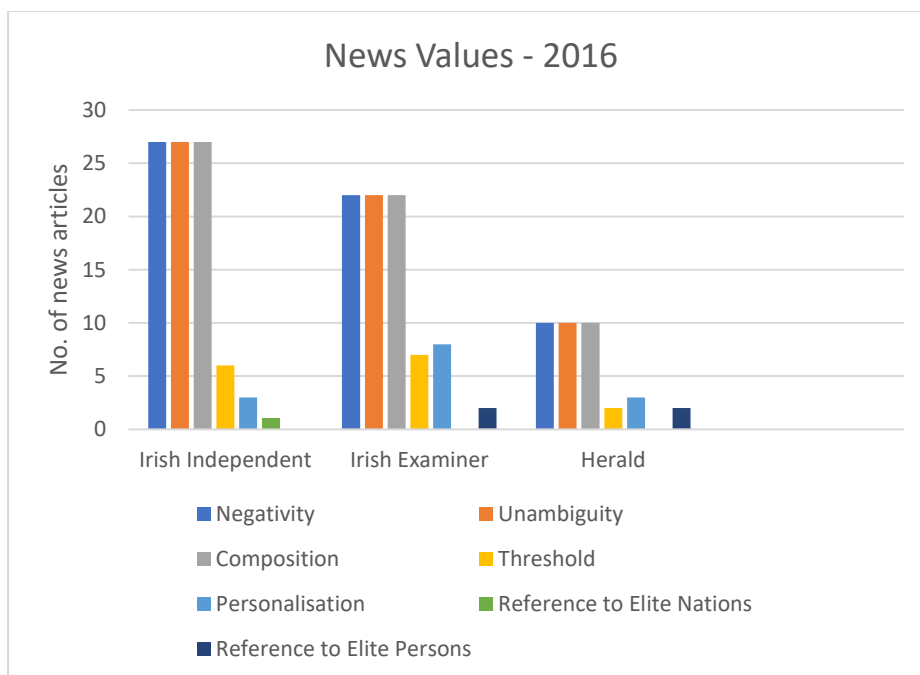


Fig. 7 Number of news values in 2016

Moreover, the Irish print newspapers selected suicide news stories that are news worthy by picking the ones that have one or more of Galtung and Ruge's twelve news values criteria, (Judy McGregor, 2010).

Moreover, the following sample of suicide news stories were selected because they represent the use of news values in all three Irish newspapers coverage of suicide in 1999, e.g. 107 news articles. In "Prison Suicide crisis as yet another man dies," (Evening Herald, 13.12.1999), five of the nine news values were identified during the reporting period, 1999 and are as follows: Negativity, the news story refers to something negative i.e. a prisoner's suicide; Unambiguity, the story is clearly about a suicide, thereby multiple meanings cannot be derived from the story and Composition, the news story is placed next other hard news stories giving an even amount of coverage to hard news on the page. Other news values identified include: Threshold, the news story highlights the high number of prisoner suicides in Irish prisons; Personalisation, it is about the actions of a prisoner who took his own life and Meaningfulness, the news story is deemed to be meaningful to the reader because the reader might be from the same area as the prisoner. Dublin. Thereby the reader might share the same cultural background as the prison and thereby this makes the story meaningful to the reader.

The following news story, "Men four time more likely to commit suicide," (Irish Independent, 25.4.1999) five of the seven news values were identified and are as follows: Negativity, Irish men taken their own lives; Unambiguity, the story is clearly about male suicides and does not have multiple meanings; Composition, this hard news story is placed alongside next to a light news story about people enjoying the winter wonderland created by a heavy snow fall, so as to create a balance of light and hard news stories on the page. Other news values include Threshold, the story uses statistic to convey the high number of men who are affected by suicide.

The following news stories were selected 2016 because they have six of the eight news values found bar the news values, Threshold and Unexpectedness.

For example, in the suicide news story titled, Jim, I'm not for this world, please forgive me," (Irish Examiner, Sarah Slater, 7.7. 2016), the following news values were identified: Negativity,

the story refers to something negative e.g. Jim Carey's ex-girlfriend, Catriona White died by suicide; Personalisation, the girl was named; Meaningfulness, the story could be deemed to be meaningful to the reader because the reader shares cultural similarities i.e. White is Irish, who can identify and empathise with the circumstances that led to White's suicide i.e. her emotional problems i.e. she was deeply in love with the actor Jim Carey, led her to take her own life. Other news values identified include Composition; the suicide event was given prominence over two other stories on the same page and most of the page is devoted to the coverage of White's suicide and is placed against other negative news stories e.g. stories about animal testing and compensation for an accident in a zoo; Unambiguity, it is clear what the story is about e.g. a celebrity suicide and does not have multiple meanings or messages. Therefore, the Irish Examiner decided that this suicide event was news worthy because it had seven of the twelve news values.

It can be deduced that "Boss quits after death of employee," (Irish Independent, James Rothwell, 30.12.2016) was selected because it had six of the seven news values: Negativity, the news story refers to something negative i.e. a Japanese employee took her own life; Unambiguity; the story does not have multiple meanings and it is clear that the story is about suicide and Composition, the story fits into the overall composition of the page placed i.e. a light news story about a new scientific discovery is placed next to hard news story i.e. a suicide. The other news values identified include: Threshold, the news story includes statistics on the number of Japanese suicide e.g. "In 2014, there were 25,000 suicides in Japan," which conveys the impact that suicide has on Japan; Reference to Elite Nations, the story involves a country that is economically predominate and important; Personalisation, the news story is about the actions of an individual i.e. a female Japanese employee took her own life, which is deemed to make the news story attractive to the reader.

It can be concluded that most of suicide events had one or more of seven news values, which were found in all three Irish newspaper's coverage of suicide in 1999 and 2016: Negativity, Unambiguity, Composition, Personalisation, Meaningfulness, Reference to Elite persons and Reference to Elite Nations and as result has made suicide a newsworthy event, more so in 1999 than in 2016.:

4.5 Objective 4 "Assess the use of imagery in suicide reporting in the three in print newspapers"

In total, 40 images were found in all three newspapers during the two twelve month reporting periods, 15 images in 1999 and 2016: 8 in Irish Examiner, 6 Irish Independent, 3 Evening Herald, 25 images in 2016, 7 Herald, 9, Irish Independent, 9, Irish Examiner which are represented in the table of data below:

Use of imagery in suicide news reporting	1999	2016
Irish Independent	6	9
Irish Examiner	6	9
Evening Herald	3	7
Total	15	22

Table 9. Number of images found in 1999 and 2016

The following news stories were selected from the Irish Independent and Irish Examiner, 1999 and 2016 because there was a higher use of images in these newspapers during these two reporting periods, as represented in the above table of data findings. A sample of suicide news

stories which had images attached were selected because the news stories use of images illustrates how the use of imagery can affect the quality of suicide reporting because according to the Samaritan's, (1997), NUJ, (2012) and Samaritan's (2013) guidelines, using images/photographs of grieving families friends can encourage vulnerable people to consider suicide as a way of making people who have bullied them regret the hurt they have caused them and placing images on the front page can exaggerate the act of suicide, although the guideline does not specify in what way the images can exaggerate the act of suicide. In addition, the sample of images were selected because they illustrate how the use of imagery in suicide reporting can be used to contribute to how suicide is represented in the three in print newspapers and comparing and contrasting the use of imagery in these newspapers.

By applying a semiotic analysis research method, one could analyse the use of photographs and determine why photographs were used in suicide reporting in the two 12 month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016. The images used, alongside the language used in news stories, can communicate meanings and messages about the issue being reported on, (Bignell, 2002; Crhfoto, 2017).

The news story titled "Suicide teenager's father blames acne drug," (Irish Independent, Martha Kearns, Des O'Sullivan, p. 3, 30.8.1999), featured a small photo of the teenage boy, Sean Ryan, which had the caption: "Sean Ryan: suicide blamed on drug." The photo shows Ryan looking directly at the camera, which draws the reader in and creates a connection with the story and the reader. Thereby, it can be deduced that by using the image has allowed the newspaper to evoke an emotional response in the reader i.e. feelings of sympathy in the reader towards the boy who took his own life and the boy's father.

In news story titled, "Huge concern at the number of Gardaí who have taken own lives, (Irish Independent, Paul Williams, p.8, 2.1. 2016), which is about the high number of Gardaí who died by suicide and uses an image of a Gardaí officer to connect the reader with the story because it evokes an emotional response in the reader i.e. fear, whereby are fearful of there being less Gardaí around to protect them and their community.

In contrast to the above story, in the Irish Examiner's news story, "Grim figures reveal a sad facet of life," (Irish Examiner, TP O'Mahony, p. 15, 25.6. 1999), the newspaper used images of two well-known figures in religion, Father Fortune and politics, screaming Lord Sutch, to raise awareness of the rise of suicide in Ireland, not by evoking an emotional response but by evoking their interest in this issue, who will be interested to know that well know people are also affected by suicide. By publishing photos of two well know people alongside the story's text conveys the message that suicide is a permanent solution to life's problems.

Moreover, in a news story titled, "Do not be afraid to speak to someone," (Irish Examiner, Stephen Maguire, p.5,18.8. 2016) which reports on the inquest into the death of Erin Gallagher, who took her own life in 2013, there is a large image of Erin and her sister Shannon, which it can be assumed was used to connect the reader to story by way of evoking an emotional response i.e. empathy in the reader who might have lost someone to suicide. Moreover, the image and main body of content conveys the message that suicide is a permanent solution to life's problems, e.g. bullying. And, it could be argued that the image of two girls could lead vulnerable people who are being bullied to take their own life and get their photo published in a newspaper so as to make their bullies feel regret for their hurt that they have caused.

Similarly, in a suicide news story titled, "My brother's suicide left family devastated say RTE broadcaster, Evanne" (Herald, Melanie Finn, p. 2, 19.2.2016), which reports on the suicide of RTE broadcaster, Evanne Ni Chuilinn's brother, uses two images to accompany this news story e.g. a large photo of Evanne and a smaller one of Evanne with her father so as to connect the

reader with the story because the images are used to evoke an emotional response in the reader e.g. empathy

In contrast to the above news, in the Evening Herald's news story, "Doctor takes own life in hotel room,(Evening Herald, 26.4.1999), the newspaper used two images of a man who was an eye witness to a doctor's suicide and a member of the hospital staff at the hospital where the doctor worked, both images depicted the two people as looking upset and concerned which are used to evoke an emotional response in the reader, who will then connect to the story because it evoked an emotional a response in them e.g. sadness.

Moreover, in a news story titled "Jim, I'm not for this world, please forgive me," (Irish Examiner, Sarah Slater, p.3, 7.7.2016) which is about actor Jim Carey's ex-girlfriend, Catriona, who took her own life because she was heartbroken about their breakup, was accompanied by 3 photographs i.e. Carey and Catriona; Carey helping to carry Catriona's coffin and a larger photograph of White. The larger photograph of Catriona, who is looking directly at the viewer, it can be concluded that the photo was used to put a face to the person who took their own life, so as to create an emotional connection with the reader and the news story. Moreover, the photo of Carey helping to carry his girlfriend's coffin breaches the Samaritan's, (2013) and NUJ's, (2012) guidelines that states that the in print newspapers to not publish images of people grieving over a suicide because in some way the images are being used to honouring suicide. The other two photographs, contributed to the news story's emotionally evocative headline and main body of text, which conveyed the message about this suicide event/story, which is about the devastating impact that suicide can have on people's lives and this is how the Irish Examiner chose to represent this suicide event/story to the reader.

In summary, all of the selection of images that have been analysed which were found in three Irish in print newspaper's news stories, used images that breached the NUJ (2012) guidelines on the use of imagery in suicide reporting, that states that you should not publish photos of people who are grieving over a suicide because in some way it honours suicide. However, all images did contribute to raising awareness of the effect that suicide has on people's lives because the use of images helps to strengthen the emotional connection, alongside the stories text, of the suicide event with the reader, which puts a face to the person(s) who took their own life and thereby raises awareness of the effect that suicide has people who have lost someone to suicide.

Moreover, by analysing the sample of images used by Irish Independent; Irish Examiner and the Herald, 1999 and 2016, illustrates the impact that images can potentially have on the reader and how the images can contribute to how suicide is presented to the reader by way of connecting the them to the suicide event. And, in so doing the in print newspapers have the potential to foster an understanding of the effects that suicide can have on people's lives by getting the reader's attention with emotionally evocative imagery and written content and in the process has the potential to create a more open and unbiased attitude towards suicide in Ireland and in the Irish print media.

4.6 Data findings, Analysis and Discussion – Interviews with three Irish in print daily national newspapers

In addition to analysing the data findings on the quantity, quality of suicide reporting in 1999 and 2016, data findings from interviews with Carl O'Brien, Irish Times education editor and former social affairs journalist John O'Mahony, Irish Examiner journalist and Conor Feehan, Irish Independent journalist was analysed, so as to get their opinions on suicide reporting and in print Irish daily national newspapers, in 1999 and 2016. All interviewees were asked approximately ten questions. The following interview data includes interview questions and responses:

Interviews with three Irish in print daily national newspaper journalists

Q.1 What is your opinion on the media guidelines on suicide reporting, such as the Samaritan's, (2013) and the NUJ, (2012) guidelines?

Response: The three journalists all agreed that media guidelines were an important part of suicide reporting. Two respondents referred to the Samaritan's, (2013) guidelines and said that they would heed to them when they are reporting on suicide. One respondent said that the guidelines helped to ensure that there was a greater awareness of irresponsible suicide reporting and how it can increase the risk of copycat suicide. However, the same respondent questioned some of the guidelines and said that it was difficult to put into practice the guideline that states that the in print newspapers should not overemphasise community grief: "One of the guidelines talks about overemphasising community grief, which is difficult to put into practice. I've seen communities who have been hit really hard by grief over a suicide in their area."

Q.2 Would you say that media guidelines are a form of media censorship?

Response: All respondents agreed that the media guidelines are not a form of media censorship. One respondent said "I would look on the guidelines as guidelines and not demands. I think that the decision to publish lies with us."

Similarly, another respondent said that guidelines do not restrict how the in print newspapers report on suicide and are there to ensure that suicide reporting is responsible. However, one respondent said that there are times when the Samaritan's would advise them to not report on a suicide but they report on it anyway.

Q.3 Would you say that the in print media e.g. daily in print national newspapers have a role to play in reducing the stigma towards people who have attempted suicide and towards people whose lives have been affected by suicide?

Response: All respondents agreed that all newspapers have a responsibility to tackle and highlight the issue of suicide. One respondent said by highlighting the issue of suicide helps to reduce the stigma by encouraging people to talk more openly about suicide:

"For too long, suicide was our dirty little secret, but as a society we are beginning to have a conversation about the scale of the problem, the causes and most importantly the solutions."

Q.4 If it was in the public's interest to know about the method and location of suicide, would you say then that the print media should be allowed to publish the details of the method and location of suicide?

Response: Two respondents said that it was tricky and that they tend not to report on the method and/or the location of the suicide. One respondent said that they would publish the details of the method, location of suicide and that: "The short answer is yes - but it's more complicated than that. In the vast majority of cases, the specific details of a suicide - the how - do not need to be reported and do not take from the veracity and accuracy of a news report. But there can be specific cases where the details are important and need to be reported, particularly when reporting from the coroner's court, where very specific medical details are given as to the nature of the act and the cause of death. But again here, the media can use its discretion and can choose to exclude graphic details on the grounds of taste, or if we feel they are not necessary and their exclusion does not alter the overall accuracy or balance of a news story."

Another respondent said that the newspaper would be very careful with how they would relay information about the suicide.” You might keep the terminology as vague as possible, so that you’re not giving very, very specific information e.g. information on whether they used an electrical cord or a rope

Q.5 In what way has suicide reporting changed since 1999?

Response: Two respondents agreed that media guidelines have helped to create a greater awareness of responsible suicide reporting today. One respondent said: “In general, there was a lot of ignorance around suicide in 1999. I don’t think that there was a great awareness of media guidelines on suicide reporting in 1999, as there is today, where there is a greater awareness around suicide reporting, such as not describing the cause of death.”

Q.6 If publishing a suicide news story infringed on the privacy of the people of the person who has taken their lives e.g. families and friends and it was in the public’s interest to know about the suicide, you would publish the news story?

Response: All agreed that the newspapers would give the above issue careful consideration and would up weigh the merits of each suicide before they would publish the news story. One respondent said: “Invariably not, it is about why would you and why wouldn’t you. I would say that you would find a way to highlight what’s in the public’s interest in the suicide, without identifying the person or the family involved. It is the most logical compromise in a situation like that.”

Q.7 What are the news frames used in suicide reporting?

Response: Two of the respondents said that they would use the Human Impact in suicide news reporting. The other interviewee was asked this question as a follow up and did not respond. One respondent said that:” We would use the Human Impact news frame to highlight the impact that the suicide has on the family, the impact of the event on the person and what could’ve have been done to prevent it from happening.” In summary, the human impact news frame is the news frame most likely to be used in suicide reporting by the in print newspapers who were interviewed.

Q.8 What news values would you use to decide which suicide is news worthy or not, e.g. reference to elite persons, threshold and so forth?

Response: Two of three respondents said the news values are used by the in print newspapers to decide if the suicide is news worthy. Two of the respondents agreed that if the suicide involved a famous person than the news story was more likely to be published. Moreover, two same respondents said that the newsworthiness of the suicide was decided on after they had weighed up the merits of the case. Another respondent said that every suicide was newsworthy. One of the respondents referred to the use of Personalisation news value in suicide and gave the example of Anna Byrne whose suicide was extensively covered by the Irish Independent. The same respondent also said that: What makes a suicide newsworthy depends on (a) whether they are famous people and people want to know about it and (b) is one of the possible root causes why they took their own life was something in society is happening at a particular time that needs attention and should have got attention, then we would report on it, such as suicide related cyberbullying.

Q.9 Would you agree that by simplifying or sensationalising a suicide news story could cause people who are susceptible to how suicide is reported on, to engage in suicidal behaviour?

Response: Two respondents agreed that responsible suicide reporting involves adhering to the media guideline and that you should not simplify or sensationalise suicide because it can affect suicidal behaviour in vulnerable people. One respondent said that: “I do agree that over sensationalised coverage of suicide can do more harm than good.” The other respondent also said: “You shouldn’t over simplify a complex issue such as suicide, in particular you do not say that a suicide has triggered another suicide, we don’t know that for sure. Certainly, research points to suicide been a whole combination of factors. Ultimately, suicide reporting involves being engaged in an important health matter and it involves doing it in a responsible way.”

Q.10 The Irish Independent; Irish Examiner and the Herald gave a low amount of coverage to suicide in 2016. In your opinion why did the three in print newspapers give a low amount of coverage to suicide in 2016?

Response: One respondent said that his newspaper did not reduce their coverage of suicide in 2016. Another said that: “if the newsworthiness of particular suicide acts has dropped off then coverage of suicide would be low.” The other respondent said that he did not know.

In conclusion, the interview data findings revealed that all three in print daily national newspapers were aware of media guidelines on suicide reporting and would heed to them, except under certain circumstances. And even then, they would all weigh up the merits of each suicide before they published the story, so as to reduce the impact of poor quality suicide reporting on vulnerable people. One could not get an interview with the Herald. However, the interview with Carl O’Brien was informative, insightful and furthered ones understanding of suicide reporting in Irish print newspapers in 1999 and 2016.

For full details of interview transcripts see appendices 6.5

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The main of this research was to analyse suicide reporting in three in print daily national newspapers and to achieve the following objectives that were set to achieve this aim:

- 1 Quantify the amount of coverage given to suicide in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month periods, 1999 and 2016.
2. Evaluate the quality of suicide reporting, e.g. good and bad, against media guidelines on suicide reporting, in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016.
3. Identify the use of news frames and news values in suicide reporting in 1999 and 2016.
4. Assess the use of imagery in suicide reporting.

The section titled, Research Objectives: summary of findings and conclusion, will revisit the above objectives, summarise the data findings of the research work that was carried out for this dissertation and offer conclusions based on the data findings. The previous chapter, Data Analysis Results and Discussion was large, detailed and has been summarised, hence the inclusion of the section, Research Objectives: summary of findings and conclusion in this chapter. There is also a section titled Recommendations included in this chapter, with regards to carrying out further studies on suicide reporting. In addition, the contribution of this research to the study of suicide reporting will also be clarified. A section titled, Self-Reflection is included in this chapter, which will reflect on the research process and so forth. Also, whether the dissertation's aim and objectives have been achieved will be discussed which will also include the value of this study.

5.2 Research Objectives: summary of findings and conclusions

Research objective 1: Quantify the amount of coverage given to suicide in three daily national newspapers, over two twelve-month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016.

With regards to the above objective, the literature discussed the value of using the quantitative research method in quantifying the amount of coverage that was given to suicide in three daily national newspapers, in 1999 and 2016. By using the quantitative research method, one could categorise the number of suicide stories found and place them in the relevant categories e.g. name of news publication; month and year of publication and so

forth. The quantitative research method allowed one to achieve the above objective and to conclude that there was more coverage given to suicide in all three daily national newspapers in 1999 i.e. 107 news stories which accounted for 65% of coverage given to suicide in 1999, in comparison to the reporting period in 2016, where there was less coverage given and 57 suicide news stories accounted for 35% of the coverage in 2016. The main conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that all three daily national newspapers gave more coverage to suicide in 1999 to coincide with the high suicide rate in 1998, (Emmet Oliver, 1999) and thereby suicide can be attributed to the low suicide rate in 2015 to a drop off in the newsworthiness of certain suicides and thereby suicide was not newsworthy to be reported on or maybe

Research objective 2: Evaluate the quality of suicide reporting, e.g. good and bad, against media guidelines on suicide reporting, in three in print daily national newspapers, over two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016.

With regards to the above objective, the literature identified studies which discussed how adhering to media guidelines which can improve the quality of suicide reporting and in doing so can reduce the impact that poor quality suicide reporting has on imitative suicidal behaviour, (Stack, 2005; Gould, 2008 and Michel et al, 2000). Moreover, the literature allowed one to achieve the above objective by discussing the value of using a qualitative content analysis method to assess the quality of suicide reporting against the media guidelines on suicide reporting,

It can be concluded that the difference in the quality of suicide reporting in the two twelve month reporting periods, 1999 and 2016 can be attributed to a lack of awareness of Samaritan's, (1997) guidelines in 1999 and adherence to Samaritan's, (2013) and NUJ's (2012) guidelines on suicide reporting in 2016 under the advisement and guidance of Headline, the Media Monitoring Programme, which greatly improved the quality of suicide reporting in 2016 who was set up in 2006 to ensure that standards of responsible and accurate suicide reproofing are kept by the Irish in print newspapers.

Research Objective 4 Identify the use of news frames and news values in suicide reporting in 1999 and 2016

The literature identified and discussed the use of news frames and news values, (De Vreese, 2008; Di Angelo, 2005; Mc Gregor, 2005) in print newspaper news reporting and has allowed one to identify the use of news frames in suicide reporting in 1999 and 2016. Two news

frames were identified in all three daily national newspapers suicide news stories, - Thematic and Human Impact and were found in 60 of the 104 news article, 56% in 1999. Also, seven of the twelve news values, (ref) were also identified in all three newspapers in 1999: Negativity; Unambiguity; Composition; Threshold; Personalisation; Reference to Elite Persons and Reference to Elite Nations. It can be concluded that the issue of suicide can be made salient in the minds of the reader through the use of news frames and news values.

Research Objective 6: Assess the use of imagery in suicide reporting in three in print daily national newspapers.

The literature identified why the semiotic research method can be used to evaluate how images can be used by three Irish in print daily national newspapers to further the public's understanding of the impact that suicide can have on those who are bereaved by suicide by putting a face to the person who has taken their own lives. It was concluded that images were used to evoke an emotional response in the reader and in so doing makes the issue of suicide more salient in reader's mind.

5.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that a further study on suicide reporting and the in print newspapers be carried out and this time the study would include other in print daily national newspapers: Daily Mirror; the Sun; the Star and the Irish Times, so as to get a general overview of the quality of suicide reporting in all Irish in print daily national newspapers. The benefits of this recommendation include adding to other research on the effects that good quality suicide reporting has on suicidal behaviour, (Stack, 2005; Gould, 2008), which in turn could increase awareness of the effects that irresponsible suicide reporting has on suicidal behaviour in Ireland. The second recommendation to be made is to revise the Samaritan's, (2013) and the NUJ's (2012) guidelines on the use of suicide terms such as suicide prone; just a cry for help, should be revised so as to make the meanings clearer and easier to understand e.g. what is meant by the term suicide prone.

5.4 Contribution to knowledge

This research has made an important contribution to the study of suicide reporting in three daily national newspapers because it fills in the gap in knowledge on suicide reporting in the Irish in print media, in so far there are no other studies that have been carried out on this research topic.

5.5 Challenges

Over the course of this research I have encountered some challenges, which included selecting the period of suicide reporting. I initially chose 2002. However, the Irish Newspaper Archive did not have copies of the 2002 editions of the Evening Herald. To overcome this challenge, I chose the 1999 edition of the Evening Herald to study and analyse. Also, at the beginning of this dissertation, I chose to study and analyse suicide reporting in the Irish Times. However, the PDF copies of this newspaper were unreadable because the text was distorted.

5.6 Self-Reflection

My interest was piqued in suicide reporting and the in print newspapers by the Erin Gallagher suicide news story that I read in 2013, (O’Cionnaith,2013). There were contributing factors that led to her suicide, including the fact that she was being bullied on a social media website called Askfm. Therefore, I wanted to examine the quality of suicide reporting because research indicates that poor quality suicide reporting can impact on imitative suicidal behaviour in vulnerable people, (Stack, 2005; Gould, 2007). Moreover, doing a dissertation requires hard work, focus and discipline. I encountered a few problems along the way such not being able to get an interview with the Herald newspaper. However, I did manage to get an interview the Irish Times education editor and former social affairs journalist, Carl O’Brien and I benefited from his knowledge and experience of suicide reporting, which was of great benefit to this research. Also, there was a sense of satisfaction at completing each chapter which required hard work, patience, focus and being able to put one’s organisational skills to test; but completing each chapter was a reward in itself.

Chapter 6 – Appendices

6.1 List of Tables

	1999	2016
Irish Independent	44	28
Irish Examiner	37	33
Herald	23	10
Total	198	78

Table 1: Number of news items returned from the Irish Newspaper Archives

Frames	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Herald
Thematic	29	33	10
Human Impact	24	18	31
Total	53	51	41

Table 2: Number of frames identified in each newspaper over two 12 month reporting periods

News Values - 1999	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Evening Herald
Negativity	45	37	23
Unambiguity	45	37	23
Composition	45	37	23
Threshold	11	24	13
Personalisation	12	2	11
Meaningfulness	6	0	0
Unexpectedness	0	0	0
Reference to Elite Persons	0	0	0
Reference to Elite Nations	3	1	1
Consonance	0	0	0
Frequency	0	0	0
Total	167	138	94

Table 3. Number of news values found in 1999

Suicide Coverage - 1999	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Evening Herald
January	6	3	3
February	3	5	2
March	5	2	0
April	6	1	4
May	2	7	2
June	2	3	0

July	2	0	3
August	3	1	1
September	2	3	3
October	5	4	2
November	4	4	2
December	4	4	3
Total	44	37	25

Table 4. Number of news articles found in twelve month period, 1999

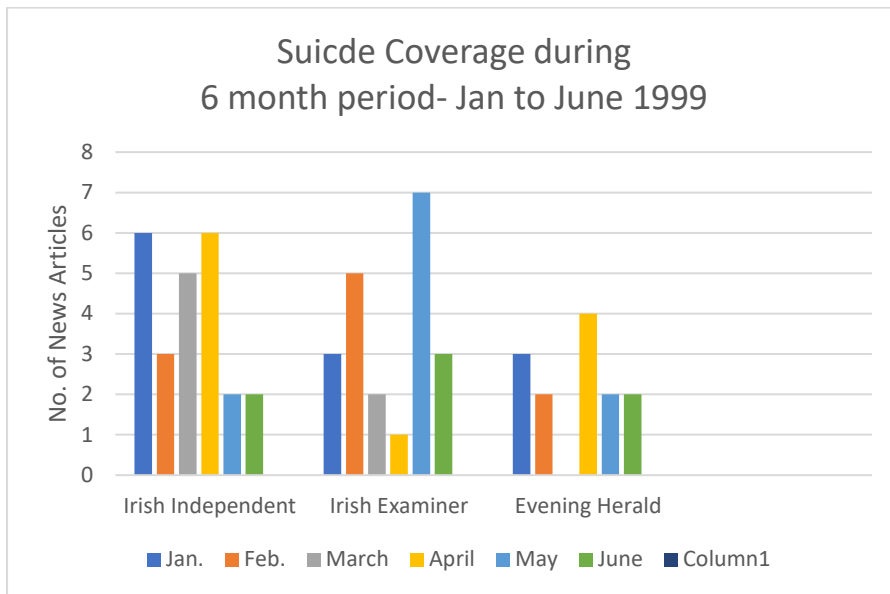
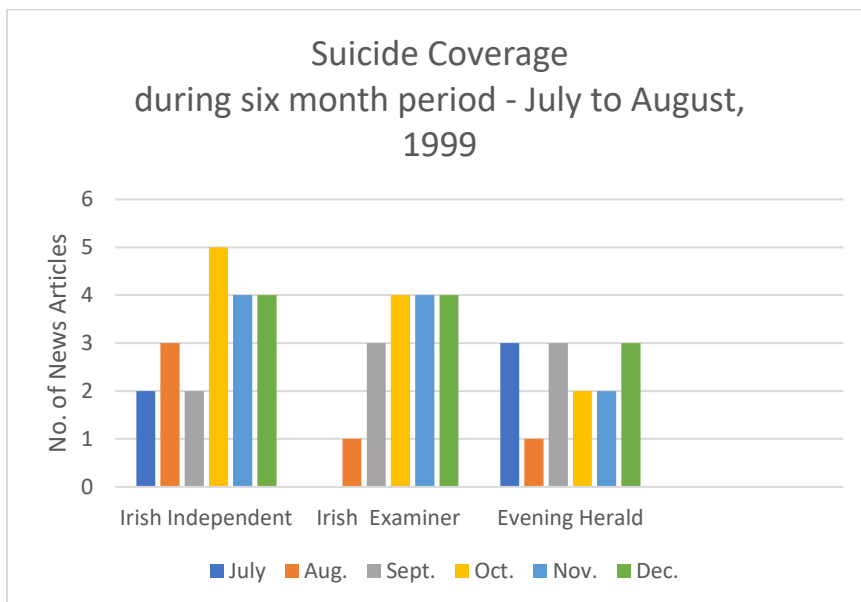


Fig. 1 – suicide coverage in first six months, 1999



F.2. Suicide coverage in the next six months, 1999

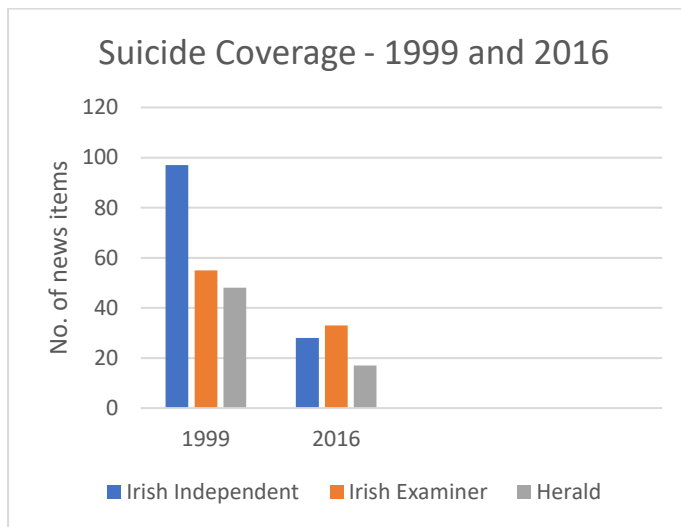


Fig 3. The amount of suicide coverage, 1999 and 2016

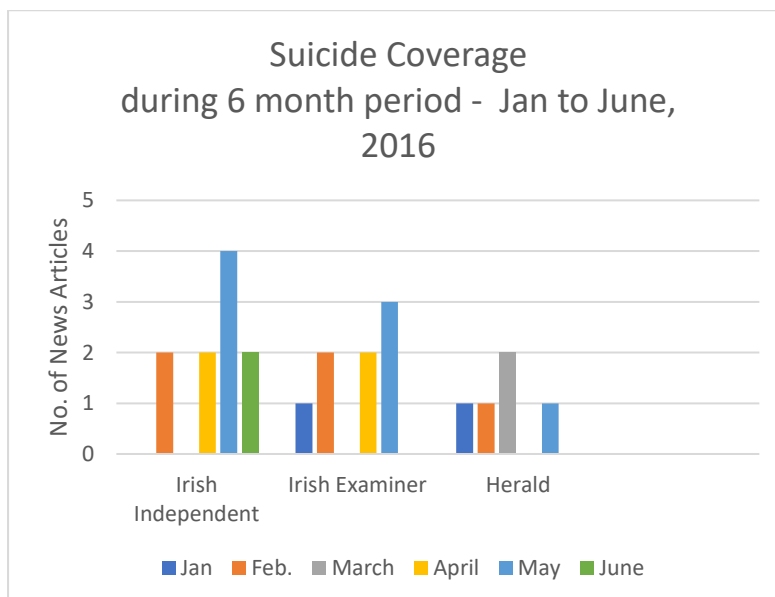


Fig. 4 suicide coverage in first 6 months in 2016

Suicide Coverage - 2016	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Herald
January	0	1	1
February	2	2	1
March	0	2	2
April	2	3	0
May	4	3	1
June	2	0	0
July	0	3	0
August	0	3	0
September	0	1	0
October	0	1	1
November	1	3	2
December	2	4	2
Total			

Table 5 Amount of coverage over twelve month period 2016

News Frames - 1999	Human Impact	Thematic
Irish Independent	18	22
Irish Examiner	9	30
Evening Herald	20	8
Total	47	60

Table Number of news frames found in the reporting period, 1999

New Frames - 2016	Human Impact	Thematic
Irish Independent	6	7
Irish Examiner	9	13
Herald	11	2
Total	26	22

Table 6. Number of news frames found in the reporting period, 2016

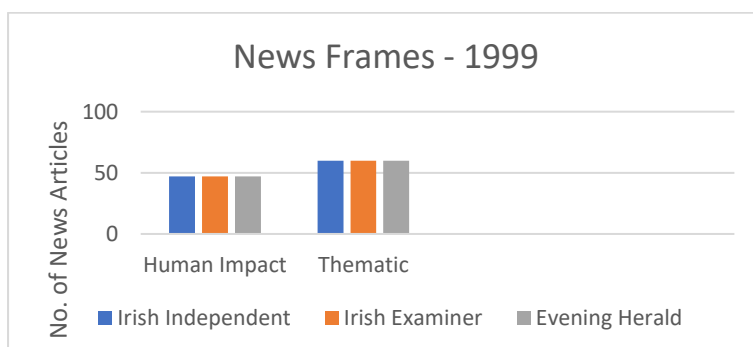


Fig. 4 Number of News Frames found in 1999

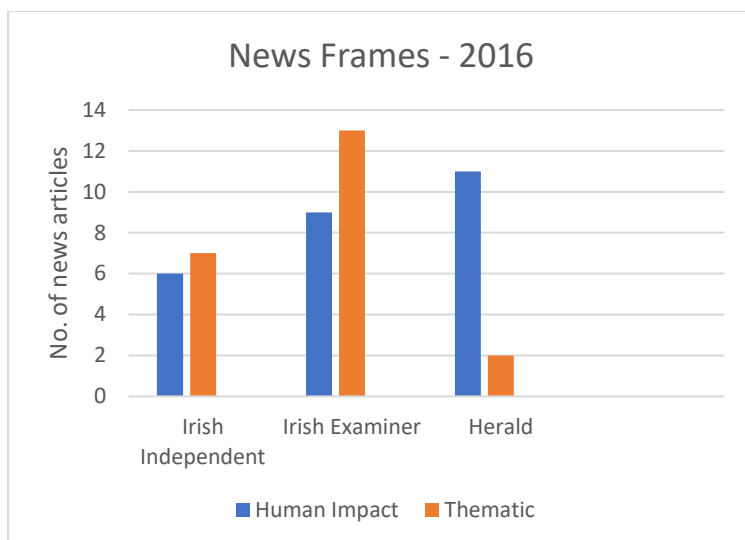


Fig. Number of News Frames found in 2016

News Values - 1999	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Evening Herald
Negativity	45	37	23
Unambiguity	45	37	23
Composition	45	37	23
Threshold	11	24	13
Personalisation	12	2	11
Meaningfulness	6	0	0
Unexpectedness	0	0	0
Reference to Elite Persons	0	0	0
Reference to Elite Nations	3	1	1
Consonance	0	0	0
Frequency	0	0	0
Total	167	138	94

Table 7 Number of news values found in 1999

News Values - 2016	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner	Herald
Negativity	27	22	10
Unambiguity	27	22	10
Composition	27	22	10
Threshold	6	7	2
Personalisation	3	8	3
Meaningfulness	1	5	1
Unexpectedness	0	0	0
Reference to Elite Persons	0	2	2
Reference to Elite Nations	0	0	0
Consonance	0	0	0
Frequency	0	0	0
Total	91	88	38

Table 8 Number of news values in 2016

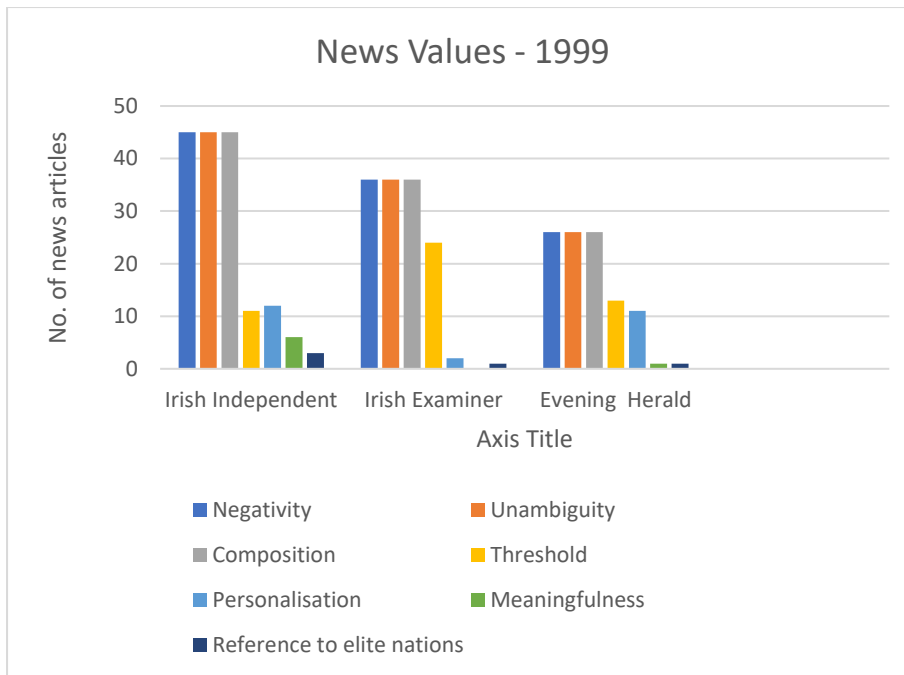


Fig. 6 Number of News Values found in three in print newspapers in 1999

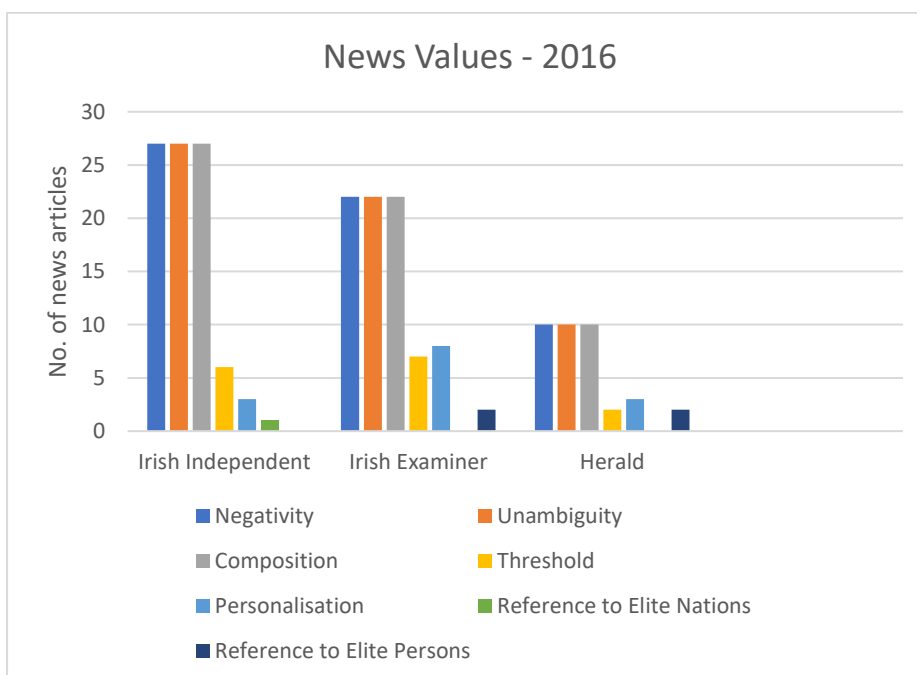


Fig. 7 Number of news values in 2016

Use of imagery in suicide news reporting	1999	2016
Irish Independent	6	9
Irish Examiner	6	9
Evening Herald	3	7
Total	15	22

Table 9. Number of images found in 1999 and 2016

6.2 Sample of Letters to editor and opinion pieces

Keep suicide figures in perspective

Sir — Here we go again! Your June 24th "Suicide toll at a record level as 504 take their lives" article, followed by an editorial on "a grave social problem a blot on our society", give free rein (as did RTE News last evening) to psychiatrists' ideas. They agonise particularly in relation to suiciders being nearly 90 p.c. males, most of whom do not check with media and other experts beforehand, and recommend (as does your editorial) wide-ranging measures.

While every suicide may be tragic and harrowing for those bereaved, maybe all would gain if things were kept in perspective. After all, since only a fraction of 1% of males take their lives, maybe the measures suggested are akin to using a steamroller to crack a nut. For example, over 99% of UCD males did not

choose suicide this year.

Those who choose suicide pose a question, the answering of which by experts might be most helpful. As they think — perhaps over a long period — about the act, suiciders entertain the thought that they may be better off dead than alive. Experts ask them to believe that they would be better off alive, no matter what their pain, than dead. I am not aware of what arguments are used to support that belief. Maybe a public airing of them, via RTE and newspaper columns, would help. That would be much, much less expensive than steamroller measures, and maybe get results much faster.

JOSEPH FOYLE,

Sandford Road,
Dublin 6.

Letter to editor, 1999, Irish Independent

My family knows all about effects of alcohol

I would like to reply to the outgoing CEO of Irish Distillers Anna Malmhake who states "Irish Distillers is fully committed to tackling alcohol misuse. However, the current legislative proposals contained in the Alcohol Bill are a disproportionate and ineffective response and will have unintended consequences" (*Irish Examiner*, February 12). I suppose as the parent of a young man who died by suicide after a drink-fuelled and irresponsible house party, Ms Malmhake and I would have different opinions on the Public Health (Alcohol Bill).

She speaks of the bill having unintended consequences, certainly not for those abusing alcohol or for the three people who die every day as a direct result of alcohol.

Does she realise that in over 50% of suicides alcohol is a contributing factor and a person is eight times more likely to die by suicide when abusing alcohol? These are the consequences of alcohol abuse.

The three main drivers of abuse are price availability and promotion — the aim of the bill is to address those issues.

Why is the alcohol industry so afraid of this bill — is it because they know it will help to reduce consumption? I sincerely hope Ms Malmhake never experiences the tragic circumstances that have left us where we are today.

John Higgins
Shanaghy Heights
Ballina
Co Mayo

Letter to editor, Irish Examiner, 2016

'Normalising' suicide will make prevention a greater struggle

Mary Kenny



WILLIAM Shakespeare was much celebrated around the world over the weekend – it being the 400th anniversary of his death – and

many would nominate Hamlet's soliloquy as being the best-known of all time: "To be, or not to be: that is the question." It's been rendered in hundreds of languages, including text-speak (2B R n! 2B...).

The famous speech is actually a contemplation of suicide. Hamlet is asking himself whether it is better to fight against "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" or "to die, to sleep... perchance to dream". When faced with a feeling of unbearable misery, the idea of suicide has surely entered everyone's head. And some people have always felt impelled to end their lives either from despair, or when suffering from mental (or physical) illness.

Suicide was once not only against the law, but in western culture, it was disparaged as "the coward's way out" in popular literature. Coroners and health officials would often try to minimise the stigma for families by giving ambiguous reasons for a death which usually was, in truth, suicide. "Death by misadventure". "Death by mishap". And there was the compassionate phrase which offered solace to the bereaved: "Took his own life while the balance of his mind was disturbed."

A relative of mine by marriage, suffering from depression, made 17 attempts to take her own life, and finally succeeded. But even then, "suicide" was not written on the death certificate, and to be honest, there was a sense of relief in the family. Those bereaved by suicide nearly always feel they have failed to rescue the person who died, and any margin of doubt is, irritatingly, welcomed.

Stigmatising suicide is unkind, but surely it is alarming when suicide becomes "normalised". Maura Murphy, the principal of St Mary's CBS school in Portlaoise – which has seen the suicides of three pupils, plus the suicide of an adult relation of one of the dead youngsters – is concerned that this is what is happening with suicide now: that it is being "normalised".

She's dismayed by the amount of young people "who actually see it as an option... if things go sideways". A child told her, last week, that "he has a message from someone who is going to kill themselves. It was an option; now it's actually part of the culture".

Although it is claimed by the National Office of Suicide Prevention that Ireland's suicide rate is stabilising – there was a "significant increase" during the

recession – nonetheless, the cluster of suicides by young people in the Midlands cannot be described as anything other than utterly tragic.

A Portlaoise priest, Fr Paddy Byrne, spoke last week about the melancholy role of pastors ministering to so many funerals of suicides, and his fear that he could become "desensitised to the horrific reality that people are taking their lives in such numbers". Last month, in Newbridge, Co Kildare, five young men took their own lives, but Fr Byrne says he is conducting funerals for men and women.

Ms Murphy and Fr Byrne list reasons why they are faced with this regular occurrence of suicide. Social media has sometimes isolated individuals from real friendships; there is family breakdown; mental health issues; "remaining silent when carrying an emotional burden"; and a crisis of spirituality. Alcohol, opiates, unemployment and financial worries also play their part. People often need help.

And yet, there is help available to those who are troubled by suicidal thoughts. The HSE provides a suicide prevention officer – it's Josephine Rigney in the midlands; many schools and institutions provide access to counsellors; the Samaritans are always accessible; as is the excellent suicide prevention charity, Console, started by Paul Kelly after he lost a beloved sister to suicide.

But if Maura Murphy is correct, and suicide is being "normalised" as just another choice, prevention is an uphill struggle.

“

We must do all we can to prevent the young from killing themselves

Has the "right to die" movement encouraged the idea that suicide is "just another option"? Euthanasia, or mercy-killing, might be understandable where people are facing a terrible terminal illness, but where this is translated into a "right" to die for the young and healthy, then surely it's advancing the "normalisation" of suicide.

If there was a taboo on suicide in the past, it was for a reason: it is so hurtful to those left behind. Ask the pastors who are regularly conducting funeral services for the bereaved, who are inconsolable about the "huge void" left in their lives after such a death.

Maybe popular culture is presenting the consequences of suicide more starkly. A recent Nordic noir thriller, *Follow the Money*, featured a character who took his own life after his financial plans collapsed and he went bankrupt. It's interesting to note that this was portrayed in a disapproving way. "That's no answer to anything," said one of the other characters. "Imagine doing that to his kids," commented a police officer.

And Hamlet the Dane, anguished though he was, did conclude that whatever slings and arrows came our way, "self-slaughter" wasn't the right thing to do. @MaryKenny

12 Opinion

Irish Examiner

Established 1841

Mental health crisis

Enough talk, we must act on suicide

PROOF that mental health remains the most neglected part of the Irish health service comes from an examination of the suicide crisis sweeping Cork, as revealed in the *Irish Examiner* yesterday.

The statistics are horrific: In the city alone, 16 people are believed to have taken their own lives. Among them is a 16-year-old boy scout from Greenmount in the south inner city – along with two of his friends of the same age, a 15-year-old girl from Ballyphehane and a 17-year-old girl from Rochestown. Others include an 18-year-old boy from Mayfield on the city's northside and a 44-year-old woman from Ballyphehane, proving that suicide is no respecter of class, gender or age. It affects us all.

The rate of suicides in the Cork region is almost twice the national average. That is the statistic but, beyond the numbers lies the real heartache, horror, and grief for the families and loved ones left behind.

Many of them will be asking themselves the perennial question: what reason did he (or she) have to die? The reality is you don't need a reason to die; you need a reason to live.

Ten years ago, US President Barack Obama wrote about reclaiming the American dream in his book, *The Audacity of Hope*. In contrast, all we in Ireland can offer our vulnerable citizens is the audacity of despair. There must be a better way.

Taoiseach Enda Kenny was quizzed in the Dáil yesterday about the Government's response to the crisis.

In what appeared to be an ill-prepared and waffling response, Mr Kenny spoke about the need to have a 'conversation' about suicide and mental health. He pointed to Ireland having a dedicated minister for mental health and outlined new services that are opening in Cork that will raise awareness and offer help particularly to young people.

The problem, Taoiseach, is that another 'conversation' is the last thing we need. We have already had too much talking and the issue of suicide has – literally and in every other sense – been talked to death. What we now need is action to prevent and circumvent suicide.

But, how to do that? Firstly, it is essential to establish the scale of the problem, not just in Cork but in the whole of the country and to recognise that a proportionate response is needed, as a matter of the gravest urgency.

During the Dáil discussion on the issue Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin pointed to the need to resource properly non-governmental organisations that have experience in dealing with vulnerable and suicidal people. That is essential.

The sad reality is that there is no cure for suicide but it is something we may be able to prevent if we offer sustained counselling and help for those in despair in order to show them that life can be better than their experiences.

Most of all, we need to offer hope.

Ten years on from the launch of the government's Vision for Change mental health policy, there is still no 24-hour crisis care. Providing that would not be the full answer but it would be a significant start.

Opinion piece, Irish Independent, 2016.

Opinion piece, Irish Examiner, 2016

6.3 Media Guidelines

6. 3 Media Guidelines to suicide reporting – Samaritan’s Media Portrayal of suicide guidelines

page 10

How the media can help

A fine line remains between sensitive, intelligent reporting by the media and sensationalising the issue. The focus should be on educating and informing the public.

Perhaps the most important guiding principle is to consider the reader, listener or viewer who might be in crisis when they read, hear or see the piece. **Will this piece make it more likely that they will attempt suicide or more likely that they will seek help?**

Reporting A Suicide

The language used when reporting a suicide should be carefully considered.

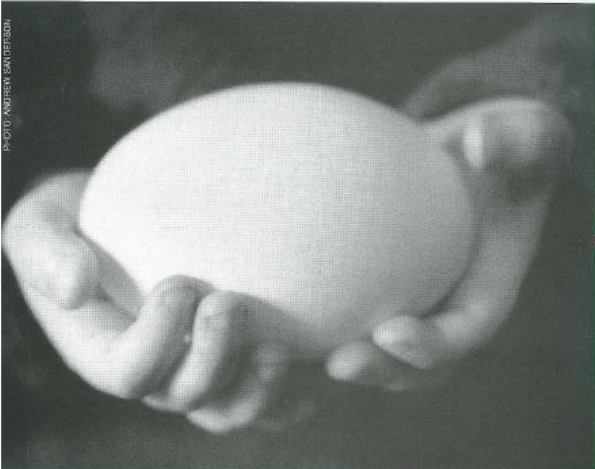


PHOTO ANDREW BRADSHAW

page 11

Recommendations

Use Phrases Like:

- A suicide
- Die by suicide
- A suicide attempt
- A completed suicide
- Person at risk of suicide
- Help prevent suicide

Encourage public understanding of the complexity of suicide.

Seek expert advice. The Samaritans' Press Office can help put you in contact with acknowledged experts on suicide and offer advice about depiction based on an overview of previous cases.

Debunk the common myths about suicide. There is an opportunity to educate the public by challenging these.

Encourage explanation of the risk factors of suicide.

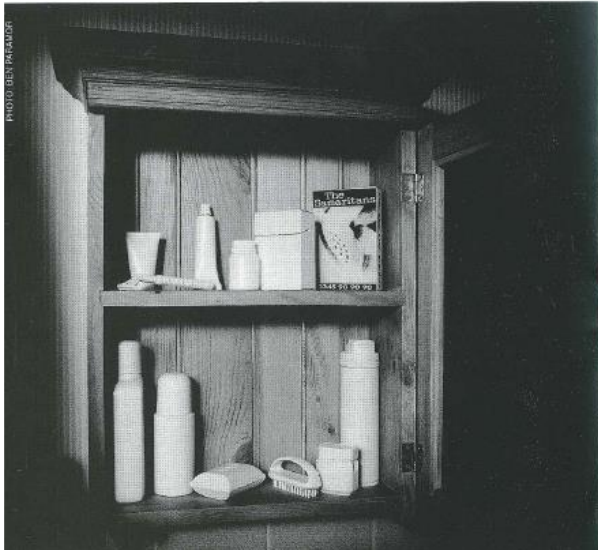
Encourage discussion by health experts on the possible contributory causes of suicide.

Consider the timing. The coincidental deaths by suicide of two or more people makes the story more topical and newsworthy, but additional care is required in the reporting of "another suicide, just days after...", which might imply a connection. There are 17 suicides every day, most of which go unreported.

Include details of further sources of information and advice. Listing appropriate sources of help or support at the end of an article or a programme shows the person who might be feeling suicidal that they are not alone.

Remember the effect on survivors of suicide - either those who have attempted it or who have been "left behind". It might be helpful to be able to offer interviewees some form of support (eg information about The Samaritans, or for those who are bereaved by suicide, information about The Compassionate Friends or Cruse).

Look after yourself. Reporting suicide can be very distressing in itself, even for the most hardened news reporter, especially if the subject touches something in your own experience. Talk it over with colleagues, friends, family or The Samaritans.



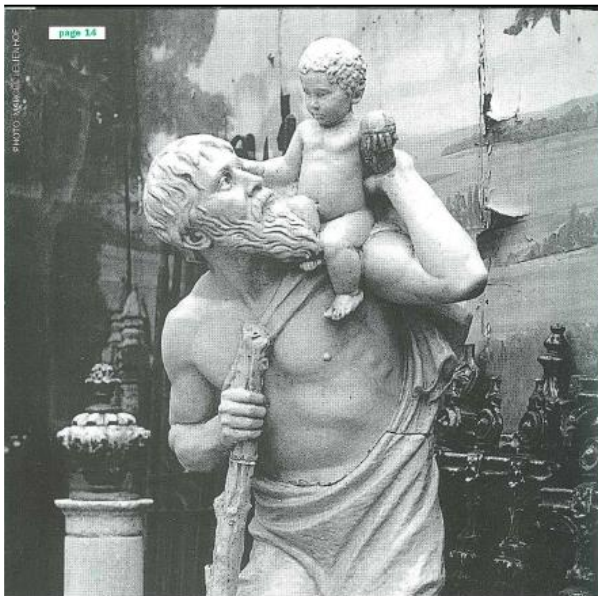
Avoid Phrases Like....

- A successful suicide attempt
- An unsuccessful suicide attempt
- commit suicide (since suicide was decriminalised in 1961, we prefer not to talk about "committing suicide", but use "take one's life", or "die by suicide" instead)
- suicide victim
- just a cry for help
- suicide-prone person
- stop the spread/epidemic of suicide

Avoid simplistic explanations for suicide. Suicide is never the result of a single factor or event although a catalyst may seem obvious. Accounts which try to explain a suicide on the basis of dashed romantic feelings or a single dramatic incident should be challenged. News features could be used to provide more detailed analysis of the reasons behind the rise in suicides.

Avoid brushing over the realities of a suicide. Depiction may be damaging if, for instance, it shows a character who has attempted suicide immediately recovered or if it glosses over the grim reality of slow liver failure following a paracetamol overdose.

Avoid explicit or technical details of suicide in reports. For example, reporting that a person died from carbon monoxide poisoning is not in itself harmful, however providing details of the mechanism and procedure used to carry out the suicide may lead to the imitation of suicidal behaviour by other people at risk. Particular care should be taken in specifying the type and number of tablets used in an overdose.



Don't romanticise or glorify suicide. Reports which only highlight community expressions of grief may suggest that the local community is honouring the suicidal behaviour of the deceased person, rather than mourning his or her death.

Don't overemphasise the 'positive' results of a person's suicide. A dangerous message from the media is that suicide achieves results; it makes people sorry or it makes people eulogise you. For instance, a soap opera storyline or newspaper coverage where a child's suicide or suicide attempt seems to result in separated parents reconciling or school bullies being publicly shamed may offer an appealing option to a despairing child in similar circumstances.

Guidelines on factual reporting

In addition to the general guidelines listed above, there are some special considerations for journalists who factually report suicide.

The BBC's Producer Guidelines state, "Reported suicides may encourage others. We should not try to add to this risk. They should be reported in moderate terms. Reports should usually avoid details of method; describe them in general terms unless there is a good reason to go into detail. When the method used is unusual, reports should continue to be circumspect".

News Coverage

Press coverage or broadcast footage of a suicide should be discreet and sensitive. Reports should avoid explicit details of method (e.g. the number of tablets taken) and if possible, avoid the use of dramatic photographs or images related to the suicide. In retrospective reporting or "reconstructions", actual depiction of means should be avoided; use of a long shot or a cutaway would be better.

Helpline Support

It is often the case that a particular programme or article can have a profound effect on the viewer, listener or reader. In this case, the provision of a helpline or other form of support is recommended and encouraged (for example, The Samaritans on 0345 90 90 90).

Benefits

It is important to note that several programmes and articles have had a beneficial effect in highlighting suicide and the issues surrounding it.

Dramatic portrayal of suicide

The Character

One of the key factors in influencing suicidal behaviour appears to be the choice of character. If the character is of close identity with the viewer or listener (i.e. "like me" and/or an "attractive" character), then there is more chance of imitative behaviour.

This is particularly the case if the character concerned is young and sympathetic. Young people are at great risk of suicide and there is more evidence of imitative behaviour by this group.

It also seems to be the case that there is an increased risk if the character is long-established.

Means of Death

An easily obtainable means of death is more easily imitable (for example, taking pills or jumping from a high place). Means of death where there is no easy form of intervention should also be avoided as should the precise depiction of, for example, putting a hose onto an exhaust pipe.

Follow-Up

How does the character and those around them change after the suicide or suicide attempt? It seems to be more risky if the character is seen to be eulogised and/or if circumstances are shown to have been affected positively (eg "Everyone's sorry now"). Are feelings talked through and are other characters listened to?

Time of Transmission

The time of day or time of year of transmission should also be taken into account. Christmas and St Valentine's Day, for example, may be particularly poignant times. Also consider whether there is help at hand easily available (eg weekends, Christmas, late at night).

Helpline Support

Please consider a back announcement promoting an available helpline (for example, The Samaritans on 0345 90 90 90).

Samaritan's Media Guidelines for reporting suicide, (2013)

BEST PRACTICE

Reporting tips

There are many ways for journalists to produce sensitive coverage on the issue of suicide. Samaritans' press office and its out of hours press phone are there to support the media when reporting suicide. Samaritans also offers confidential briefings for individual media outlets.

In the first instance, journalists may find the following reporting tips helpful:

Contact Samaritans' press office



+44 (0)20 8394 8300

Out of hours: **+44 (0)7943 809 162**



press@samaritans.org



[#reportingsuicide](https://twitter.com/reportingsuicide)

Do's and don'ts

1 Think about the impact of the coverage on your audience

- Your story might have an effect on vulnerable individuals or people connected to the person who has died. Providing information on how to contact appropriate local and national sources of support can encourage people experiencing emotional problems or suicidal thoughts to seek help. It can save lives.

2 Exercise caution when referring to the methods and context of a suicide

- Details of suicide methods have been shown to prompt vulnerable individuals to imitate suicidal behaviour. With this in mind, Samaritans recommends:

- Avoid giving too much detail. Care should be taken when giving any detail of a suicide method. While saying someone hanged themselves or took an overdose is acceptable, detail about the type of ligature or type and quantity of tablets used is not. Avoid any mention of the method in headlines as this inadvertently promotes and perpetuates common methods of suicide.

- Take extra care when reporting the facts of cases where an unusual or previously unknown method has been used. Incidences of people using unusual or new methods of suicide have been known to increase rapidly after being reported widely. Reporting may also drive people to the internet to search for more information about these methods.

- Remember that there is a risk of imitative behaviour due to 'over-identification'. Vulnerable individuals may identify with a person who has died, or with the circumstances in which a person took their own life. For example, combining references to life circumstances, say a debt problem or job loss, and descriptions of an easy-to-copy suicide method in the same report, could put at greater risk people who are vulnerable as a result of financial stress.

- Never say a method is quick, easy, painless or certain to result in death. Try to avoid portraying anything that is immediate or easy to imitate – especially where the ingredients or tools involved are readily available.



Do's and don'ts

3 Avoid over-simplification

Approximately 90 per cent of people who die by suicide have a diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health problem at the time of death.

- Over-simplification of the causes or perceived 'triggers' for a suicide can be misleading and is unlikely to reflect accurately the complexity of suicide. For example, avoid the suggestion that a single incident, such as loss of a job, relationship breakdown or bereavement, was the cause.
- It is important not to brush over the complex realities of suicide and its devastating impact on those left behind.

4 Steer away from melodramatic depictions of suicide or its aftermath

- Be wary of over-emphasising community expressions of grief. Doing so may suggest that people are honouring the suicidal behaviour rather than mourning a death. Reporting suicide as a tragic waste and an avoidable loss is more beneficial in preventing further deaths.
- A sensitive piece that explores the emotional devastation of a suicide on family and friends may prompt people with suicidal thoughts to reconsider or to seek help.

5 Aim for non-sensationalising, sensitive coverage

- Don't label locations as 'hot spots' or refer to a possible rise in suicides in a particular place or among a specific group as an 'epidemic'. Two or more people taking their own lives who, for example, share a similar background or live in a similar geographic area may be coincidence. Avoid implying a connection where there may be none.
- Be careful not to promote the idea that suicide achieves results. For example, that, as a result of someone taking their own life, a bully was exposed or made to apologise.
- When writing headlines think carefully about content and potential impact. Consider if the headline over-dramatises the story, details the method or uses sensationalist terms.
- Check that inappropriate language has not been used, such as referring to a death as someone having 'committed suicide'. Try an alternative such as 'died by suicide'.
- Avoid reporting the contents of a suicide note.

6 Consider carefully the placement and illustration of reports

- Some suicides attract intense media scrutiny. However, where possible, refrain from positioning a story too prominently, for example on a front page or as a lead bulletin, as this may unduly influence vulnerable people.
- Take extra care with the selection and placement of imagery linked to a report about suicide. For example, question if a large or prominently placed picture of the person who has died is necessary.
- Try to avoid repeated use of images of a deceased person, for example in online galleries. Also avoid recurring use of images of someone who has died previously, to illustrate subsequent stories about them or someone else. This is extremely distressing for bereaved families.
- Avoid dramatic or emotional images and footage, such as a person standing on a ledge. Try not to illustrate a report with specific locations, such as a bridge or cliff, especially if this is a place where people frequently take their own lives.

7 Educate and inform

- Whenever possible, try to refer to the wider issues associated with suicide, such as risk factors like alcohol misuse, mental health problems and deprivation. Also consider the lifelong impact that a suicide can have on those bereaved by a suicide. Discussion of such issues can encourage a better understanding of the topic.
- If possible, include references to suicide being preventable, and to sources of support such as Samaritans.

“For several years Samaritans has been doing extremely useful work advising on media reporting and portrayal of suicidal behaviour. This has quite rightly earned them the respect of many in the media, and also among those with a regulatory role, policy makers and researchers.”

Professor Keith Hawton
Centre for Suicide Research, Oxford University



Additional points to consider

1 Breaking news and instant publishing

A breaking story where events move swiftly and are the focus of national attention can increase pressure on journalists to produce speedy reports, which may increase the potential for error or inappropriate coverage. Consult with your organisation's in-house guidelines or codes of practice on reporting suicide before going live. If in doubt -

 **Contact Samaritans' press office:**
+44 (0)20 8394 8300
Out of hours: +44 (0)7943 809 162
 press@samaritans.org
 [#reportingsuicide](https://twitter.com/reportingsuicide)

2 High profile deaths by suicide

There may be a higher risk of unintentionally glamorising suicide in the case of celebrities or high profile individuals. Pay special attention to the general reporting tips when working on such stories.

3 Inquests

- It may be months or even years after a death before an inquest is held. Be aware that inquests can be very distressing for the bereaved people and need to be reported sensitively.
- Coroners' reports routinely include explicit detail about the circumstances surrounding a death, such as the methods used. This does not mean, however, that every detail should automatically be reported. In order to protect vulnerable people, careful thought should be given to the reporting of explicit or excessive detail.

Likewise, explicit details supplied by others involved with a case, for example police or paramedics at a scene, should be treated with the same caution. (For additional information see Factsheet '*Working with bereaved families in the aftermath of a suicide*' available at: samaritans.org/mediaguidelines).

4 Statistics

If using 'trend' data within a story, be aware that statistical 'blips' in suicide rates may occur from one year to the next. This can be especially true if focusing on the number of suicides in small geographic areas. It is best to look at timeframes of three or more years to identify significant patterns, for example increases in suicide rates for particular groups.

For the latest statistics and explanatory notes for suicides in the UK and ROI go to: samaritans.org/suicidefactsfigures

5 Murder-suicide

Murder-suicide is a rare phenomenon but one which can attract an exceptional degree of media attention. A murder-suicide is when a person kills members of their family before taking their own life, or where an individual murders a number of people in a public place, such as a school, before taking their own life. The circumstances of these deaths can be dramatic and disturbing, reports should adhere to the general media guidelines. Extreme caution is required, since 'imitative' behaviour also applies to murder-suicide. (For additional information see factsheet '*murder-suicides*' available at samaritans.org/mediaguidelines).

6 Language

The terms and phrases used when reporting suicide are important. Inappropriate or careless use of language can perpetuate stigma or sensationalise a death, while careful use can help balance the coverage, and minimise distress to bereaved family members and friends.

With this in mind, Samaritans recommends:

Phrases to use:



- A suicide
- Take one’s own life
- Person at risk of suicide
- Die by/death by suicide
- Suicide attempt
- A completed suicide

Avoid labelling a death as someone having ‘committed suicide’. The word ‘commit’ in the context of suicide is factually incorrect because it is no longer illegal.

Phrases to avoid:



- Commit suicide
- Cry for help
- A ‘successful’ or ‘unsuccessful’ suicide attempt
- Suicide victim
- Suicide ‘epidemic’, ‘craze’ or ‘hot spot’
- Suicide-prone
- Suicide ‘tourist’



NUJ, Responsible Reporting on Mental Health, Mental Health illness and death by suicide, 2012.

referring to it as a 'fad' as this can prevent people from seeking help. It can also encourage copycat behaviour.

Self-harm can be described as a physical symptom of internal distress. That is, the majority of people who self-harm do so as a way of coping with their distress. The underlying causes of this distress are complicated and may range from experiences of child sexual abuse to financial worries. The focus for any professional - journalist or otherwise - should be on the person and the underlying causes of the self-harm rather than the behaviour. However, describing any self-harm acts, such as 'cutting to relieve internal pain' or 'to feel in control' can influence others to see self-harm as a suitable means of managing emotional stress if not set within a proper context. Any discussion about these types of 'coping strategies' should only be mentioned in the context of seeking help and harm-minimisation.

Using judgemental terms such as 'cutters' or 'self-harmers' can also lead to their alienation and could lead to people avoiding seeking help. As discussed above the correct terminology should focus on the person, such as 'a person who self-harms' or 'a person with lived-experience of self-harm'.

It is also important to avoid using sensational imagery regarding self-harm as this, too, can encourage vulnerable people to see self-harm as a way of managing emotional stress.

Contact an expert for the best information and advice or research the websites of organisations like Breathing Space or Penumbra, the charity that provides support for young people and adults who self-harm.

Responsible reporting of suicide

"For the journalist, a death by suicide presents a difficult dilemma. As suicide is an issue of concern to the public, it is clearly the responsibility of the reporter to present the facts as they happen, without glamourising the story or imposing on the grief of those affected". - Simon Armon, former chief executive, in his introduction to the first edition of Samaritans' guidelines on reporting of suicide. Indeed there can be a positive aspect to reporting suicide, as debate may help to de-stigmatise the subject. However, some research shows that inappropriate reporting or depiction can lead to 'copycat suicides'.

The chances are that at some time in your career you will have to report on a death by suicide. Sadly, the chances in your lifetime of someone you know dying by suicide – or trying to – are frighteningly high. Reporting suicide requires sensitivity and compassion. It is therefore important you are aware that how you report suicide can have a direct effect on vulnerable people. Inappropriate reporting can

potentially cause copycat suicides; the words used can be damaging; referring to the method and location is dangerous; providing excessive detail of the method used goes against media guidelines; and romanticising the story or ill-thought out use of pictures can also cause huge problems.

Reports about suicide can be in the public interest, for example they can provide vital information that can help educate the public, so they should be based on the most reliable information. Gathering the views of health experts, researchers into suicide and self-harm and relevant community leaders can assist with this.

The following sections provide you with information that you might find helpful in reporting suicide responsibly.

Copycat suicides/contagion

Numerous research studies worldwide conclude that media reporting of suicide can lead to copycat behaviour and that certain newspaper coverage is associated with a significant increase in the rate of suicide. This risk is increased 'if the coverage is extensive, prominent, sensational, or explicitly describes the method'. (Source - World Health Organization Preventing Suicide - A Resource for Media Professionals (2008)) The effect on the suicide rate depends on the amount, duration, and prominence of media coverage. For example, there tends to be an increase in deaths following the appearance of suicide stories, but a decrease when the media stop reporting or are prevented from reporting because of factors like newspaper strikes.

Reporting suicide can create a ripple effect that can lead to suicide 'contagion' or 'clustering'. This is where more completed or attempted suicides than would be expected statistically, occur close together in time and location. Untreated people who identify with someone who completes a suicide, for example, if they are being bullied, are more likely to imitate the act. Vulnerable, young people can be particularly affected by this. Contagion as a result of media reporting can also have a more powerful impact and affect more people than direct person-to-person contact so it is important that journalists exercise caution and sensitivity with particularly vulnerable groups. For example, an increase in suicides can occur when the number of stories about individual suicides increases and when a particular death is reported at length or in many stories.

There is strong evidence to suggest that the positioning/prominence of stories in the newspaper can have a direct effect on the scale of the increase in suicidal behaviour. Copycat incidents are more likely when the story appears on the front page, has a large headline, and is heavily publicised. However, it is less clear what types of content can have a detrimental effect. Some evidence suggests that celebrity suicides,

10

11

particularly when they are on the front page, can lead to copycat incidents. Other research indicates that non-celebrity stories also have a significant impact, although to a lesser extent, if they receive enough publicity.

Language

How you use words can have great effect on the people who read your stories. Therefore, it is important that you choose your words carefully. Here are some pointers.

Don't describe a suicide as 'suicidal' if someone dies, or 'unsuccessful', 'failed' or 'suicide bid' if it doesn't result in death. It is better to use the phrases 'died by suicide' when someone dies and 'attempted' or 'non-fatal attempt' when someone survives. You can also use phrases like 'completed suicide', 'took their own life', 'ended their own life', and 'a person at risk of suicide'.

Remember suicide is not a crime so it is inaccurate to use the word 'committed'. Describing someone as having 'committed suicide' reduces the person to the type of death or implies criminal or sinful behaviour. An alternative term is 'died by suicide'.

Also avoid these phrases: 'suicide victim', 'just a cry for help', 'suicide-prone person', or 'suicide tourist'.

Try not to use 'stop the spread' or 'epidemic of suicide' when reporting several suicides as this is alarmist and implies that suicide can spread like a disease. It also suggests a more dramatic, sudden increase than is generally the case. Referring to a rise in suicide rates is more accurate, if that is indeed the case. In the period 2000-02 to 2010-2012, the suicide rate in Scotland reduced by 18%.

Also, try not to use 'suicide' in a gratuitous manner such as in phrases like 'suicide mission' or 'political suicide' when you can use a more appropriate term.

Putting the word 'suicide' in the headline or referring to the cause of death as 'self-inflicted' increases the likelihood of copycat suicides and contagion so this should be avoided. It is better to place the cause of the death in the story rather than in the headline. Also, including it in the headline can make the story more attractive to vulnerable people by glamourising and normalising suicide.

When reporting deaths that are likely to have a great impact on readers, such as celebrity deaths or a death by suicide in a small community, think about using straightforward headlines such as 'Joe Bloggs dead at 40' which avoid sensationalism. Research shows that suicides increase when headlines about specific suicide deaths are dramatic such as 'Girl, 9 kills herself over cyber-bullying'. Deaths by suicide are

12

complicated and it is very unlikely that there is one single reason why someone has chosen to take their own life.

Method and location

Most media guidelines state that the method and location of suicide should not be described, displayed or photographed. This is because evidence shows that copycat suicides can result from detailed descriptions or depictions of the method. Where possible avoid disclosing the method of suicide – and there should generally be a public interest justification for doing so. Therefore, both journalists and editors face a twin test: they must both publish with sensitivity and avoid excessive detail. If it is important to the story try to use general terms only such as an overdose 'of drugs' rather than the specific medications, which should not be named. Be wary. No journalist wants to be responsible for a death – or deaths.

You should also be very cautious when reporting an unusual method as research indicates that other people may try to take their own life after reading the story. It is safer not to state the method at all.

There are now sites on the internet that detail methods and means for people who wish to take their own lives. You would assume no paper would print the addressee of these. You would be wrong. Don't do it. Care should be taken not to inadvertently promote these websites and drive vulnerable people to the internet to research suicide methods by mentioning the detailed instructions they provide.

Reporting the location of suicides may lead to them becoming popular places for suicide attempts so you should be very careful not to portray these locations as 'suicide spots' and don't refer to them in your reporting as 'suicide hotspots'.

If it is necessary to refer to the location then try to do this in general terms instead of giving the exact location. For example, refer to the location as the Erskine Bridge and avoid using details such as its height or the actual place of the suicide, and do not use a photograph of the exact spot.

Sensationalism/romanticising suicide

While journalists want their audience to identify with the people in their stories, glorifying or romanticising suicide by including exaggerated community expressions of grief, regret or other comments that suggest the local community are honouring the act rather than mourning the person's death are best avoided. Reports that

13

idealise a person who has died by suicide might encourage others to identify with them and emulate their behaviour. **It is important to balance statements that praise the deceased with a more accurate picture of their situation by acknowledging that they may have been experiencing difficulties in their life.** If this is left out of the story then suicidal behaviour may seem attractive to others who are at risk, especially if they rarely receive positive reinforcement.

Special situations –

Youth suicide

The reporting of the death by suicide of a child or young person needs especially careful handling. Bear in mind that people bereaved by suicide are themselves at higher risk.

People who have suffered a death by suicide of a family member are vulnerable and working through grief and related issues – imagine if that family member was a child or young person. Also remember that the impact of a pupil's suicide will have a powerful effect on the staff and other pupils at the school. The risk of copycat suicide is very high at times like these. Evidence shows that media sensationalism or idealised obituaries of the deceased may contribute to this phenomenon. Try not to glorify the individual or present the suicidal behaviour as a legitimate strategy for coping with difficult situations.

It is probably best to wait for statements from the school or local authority. Approaching fellow pupils on their way to and from school is not only distasteful – it could be dangerous and contrary to codes of conduct. Again, avoid describing the method of suicide and avoid interrupting school as you may exacerbate what will inevitably be an already painful time.

The NUJ Code of Conduct states a journalist: 'does nothing to intrude into anybody's private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest'. As with everything in journalism, there is a judgement call to be made here. For instance, in the North of Scotland a young boy took his own life. He hanged himself from a tree. Afterwards, the local community split: on one hand there were people who wanted to put a plaque on the tree in memory of the boy. On the other were members of the community who wanted the tree cut down, believing that young people would congregate around it and maybe copycat

suicides would result. That's a story. But what if your editor wanted to run a picture of the tree? It might encourage others to see it as a suitable place/method of suicide. Think about the consequences of running the story.

Celebrity cases

Care needs to be taken when reporting the death by suicide of a celebrity. Such deaths are newsworthy and reporting them can often be considered to be in the public interest. However, research suggests that because celebrities are admired their suicide can influence the behaviour of vulnerable people and can encourage copycat incidents. The possibility of identification with a celebrity is much greater. Glorifying their death may suggest that this is acceptable behaviour. It is also important to avoid portraying a celebrity's suicide as the tragic last act of an anti-hero which glorifies the act of suicide. Avoid describing the method of suicide. Instead, where possible, focus on the impact on those left behind and seek a comment on the wastefulness of the act. Speculation about the reason for them taking their own life can also be harmful. Also, including a helpline number in the story can encourage vulnerable people who may be affected by the death to seek help.

Murder-suicide

Although there is growing media interest in murder-suicide where a parent kills their children and/or their partner and then themselves, instances are rare in the UK and the number of cases has remained fairly constant for several years. For example, there are around five incidents a year in England and Wales, and just under half that number of deaths in Scotland. However, murder-suicide can have a pervasive effect on the family and community and insensitive media reporting may cause unnecessary harm to those left behind.

The parent/perpetrators are often described as devoted to their families, may be involved in a custody battle after a family break up and may be described as feeling a sense of powerlessness or despair. According to Gammon, the reasons why someone chooses to murder others and to then take their own life are extremely complex. The academic literature available suggests that risk factors can include serious mental health problems and substance misuse.

When covering this type of story it is best to follow the general guidelines on suicide

14

reporting. There is evidence that poor media reporting can lead to copycat incidents so it is important to take a balanced approach and avoid speculation, distortion and invention. Watch the language you use too. Phrases like 'family wipeout' should definitely be avoided. Equally, sensational headlines can cause considerable harm to relatives and to the wider community.

Murder-suicide where the perpetrator is not related and might be unknown to the victims, such as school shootings, also attract media interest, and again care should be taken in reporting these stories particularly in the early stages of a breaking news story. Using information from social media without verification can result in inaccuracies and speculation which can be harmful to relatives and the community.

Suicide pacts

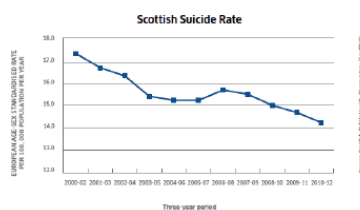
Suicide pacts – another rare type – are also covered extensively by the media. A suicide pact is a mutual agreement between two or more people to die at the same time and usually in the same place. They account for less than 1% of suicides in the Western world. Intensive media reporting can lead to contagion, particularly amongst adolescents, which could potentially result in clusters of suicides. However, not all incidents of contagion are suicide pacts because there may not have been a mutual agreement to complete suicide. Journalists should avoid simplifying the reason as being, for example, the act of loving individuals who do not wish to be separated and see no other way to be together. Research has shown that most pacts involve a coercive person and one who is particularly dependent.

Using pictures

As noted previously, do not use pictures of the location or site of a death by suicide as research shows that this can encourage imitation by people who are vulnerable, even though there might be a public interest reason. Using pictures of grieving relatives, school friends or teachers, local people expressing their grief, or a funeral or memorial can also encourage vulnerable individuals to consider suicide as a means of, for example, making bullies regret the hurt they caused. Additionally, placing pictures in a prominent position, such as the front page of a newspaper, can exaggerate the act of suicide. Always seek permission from relatives if you intend to use a picture of the deceased, including those from social media. (See section on Digital media reporting).

16

15



Reporting suicide rates and statistical information

Statistical information can be a key factor in reporting suicide stories – therefore it is important that you are aware of how these are calculated. Annual changes are based on relatively small numbers, so may not be statistically significant. It is conventional to pool rates over a three-year period, and develop three year rolling averages to account for yearly fluctuations. Annual data on suicide in Scotland are published by the General Register Office for Scotland at www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/theme/vital-events/deaths/suicides/index.html

Further analysis is published (also annually) by the Scottish Public Health Observatory http://www.scotpho.org.uk/home/Healthwell-beinganddiseases/suicide/suicides_keypoints.asp

Suicide statistics usually combine two causes of death: those by intentional self-harm where it appears that someone intended to kill themselves and those by undetermined intent where there is insufficient evidence to indicate whether the deceased actually intended to kill themselves.

The Scottish Suicide Information Database (ScotSID) is a useful resource. It contains demographic information, including information on past contact with health services by people who have died by suicide, related health data, and will eventually (through inclusion of information from other data sources) provide details relating to the suicide incident

17



Sean Ryan: suicide blamed on drug

Suicide teenager's father blames acne drug

A SECOND Irish teenager has committed suicide after having been treated with the anti-acne drug Roaccutane.

Nineteen-year-old Sean Ryan had been taking the controversial drug for three and a half months before he died.

Last night Sean's father blamed the drug for the death of his son.

"I am 100pc convinced that Roaccutane caused the death of my son,"

said retired Met Office official Liam Ryan. Mr Ryan had not been aware that Sean, youngest of his five sons and two daughters, had been using Roaccutane.

The first year business studies student was found hanged in his room at the University of Hertfordshire last month.

The teenager's tragic death comes as 12 Irish people prepare to sue the manufacturers of the drug following

By MARTHA KEARNS
and DES O'SULLIVAN

claims of severe reaction including psychiatric disorder and suicide.

Liam Grant, one of the claimants and chairman of the Roaccutane Action Group, confirmed last night that the 12 claims were being handled by a Dublin firm of solicitors and all claimants were members of the action group.

Mr Grant's son, also called Liam,

was on the drug when he committed suicide in Dublin two years ago.

Mr Grant said the claims were being taken because the drug manufacturer, Roche, had refused to release details on those cases where Roaccutane had triggered adverse psychiatric and physical effects.

However, it could take as long as two years for the claims to reach the High Court.

It is believed that 150 suicides

worldwide have been connected to the drug while there has been another 300 cases of people attempting or contemplating suicide.

The action group has commissioned two separate studies on the drug by an Irish and American university. The results of one are due out in two months' time.

The manufacturer's case details are essential to the studies, says the group.

THE EXAMINER
FRIDAY, JUNE 25, 1999

news analysis 15

TP O'Mahony examines the rise in Ireland's suicide rate and asks if the Government plans to address the once taboo issue

Grim figures reveal sad facet of life

A NOTHER set of shocking statistics on suicide have just been published.

There are far more than statistics, of course, for each is a human tragedy. Each is a lost and wasted life. But does officialdom care in this country?

Don Neville TD, President of the Irish Association of Suicideologists, doesn't think so.

"There is now a serious crisis in society which must be dealt with," he said in a reaction to the latest figures. "I call on the Minister for Health and Children for the immediate introduction of the recommendations of the National Task Force on Suicide."

"The rates of increase over the past year must be reduced. Comprehensive suicide prevention programmes must be introduced immediately," he said.

Deputy Neville believes action is needed on a number of specific fronts by the Minister in conjunction with Health Boards.

Among the areas where action is necessary, the Deputy has singled out the following measures:

(a) increase in public awareness of the problems of suicide; (b) increase the vigilance attached to suicide and para-suicide;

(c) support and participate ongoing research in conjunction with the National Suicide Research Foundation; (d) real concern. They show that there were 200 suicides last year — an increase of 20% on the previous year.

Statistics represented one-third of all deaths in the 15 to 24 age group. Male suicide is the most prevalent cause of five suicides are males and the rate of increase during last year.

The Department of Health, which set up the National Task Force on Suicide in 1997, has a long and painful history with a black statement. "Progress is being made," it said.

The National Youth Council of Ireland said suicide has become so treated as the most complex and



The suicide of Father Sean Fortune shocked many people.

serious issue facing Irish society.

It also called for greater funding to be allocated to the National Psychological Services, which have established a waiting list of 100 for the Education Department an initial level of funding of 21.6 million.

"The value system of our society where the pressure to be successful and to achieve academically often goes against the promotion of personal health and happiness and also needs to be examined," said William Hassett, President of the NVCF.

"All those working with young people in all sectors must be aware of the pressures of these pressures," Hassett added.

According to the figures published this week, suicide is most prevalent among young people, particularly among young men. "I call on the Minister for Health and Children to take these figures seriously and to take action to reduce the number of people under 35. Of this group 253 were male."

"Suicide should never be seen as an appropriate option," said Hassett. "What makes it such a pressing issue is

the fact that we still do not fully understand it. The figures make for very grim reading, and as a country we should reflect on them."

There are many reasons — especially young people — feel driven to take their lives in this area known as suicide — the statistics are getting grimmer and grimmer.

At least we are more open and upfront about suicide now. And that's a good thing. Hiding from it — or hiding it — was never a good policy.

The desire to spare the relatives of the unfortunate who commit suicide additional pain is understandable.

The harsh reality, though, is that we have a serious and growing problem in our midst, and we are ever going to alleviate it, then we must be prepared to face the reality of the deeply worrying social consequences.

There was a time in this country when papers did not report suicides. Today they often make front-page news, as in the case of Fr Sean Fortune.



Screaming Lord Sutch is just one of a long list of well-known people who have taken their lives.

Screaming Lord Sutch and rock star Kurt Cobain.

It is fair to say that the reasoning behind the old thinking was sound — up to a point. It spared the families of the suicide victims more pain, and it also helped to ensure that no copycat suicides would occur.

Unfortunately, in our celebrity-driven world, where the most bizarre antics of a rock or film star is likely to be emulated, such copycat factors cannot be ruled out.

Suicide overlooks road traffic accidents as the most common cause of death among 15 to 24-year-olds in 1997.

Last January, the Report of the National Task Force on Suicide was published, and the Government gave a commitment to implementing the recommendations in the shortest possible time, as resources permit.

The task force detailed the various courses of action which needed to be taken to address the high incidence of suicide, especially among recognised risk groups, such as young men between 15 and 24.

A suicide prevention/reduction strategy was being devised by the task force. The strategy's key components include the implementation of measures aimed at high risk groups, the provision of information and training on suicide prevention to relevant professionals and organisations, and the improvement of services of greatest benefit to those at risk of suicide and those who attempt suicide.

Despite all the hype about our Celtic Tiger economy, the sense of hopelessness and despair among young people is quite widespread.

Suicide is a symptom of what contributes to the problem of suicide. That and a spiritual emptiness now gnawing at the core of our culture, find the search for meaning and for self-esteem increasingly difficult.

In his novel 'Night Train', the writer Martin Amis says that there comes a sheer incidence of suicide begins to appear over-bolshoiism.

For the troubled, for those deep in despair, it can seem that everyone is doing it — so why shouldn't I? After all, after you've done sex and drugs and rock-n-roll, what's left but death? This is where the copycat elements can enter in, especially when you have high profile models like Cobain.

This tendency has been described elsewhere as the 'Romeo and Juliet syndrome', a school of thought that considers the copycat element of many suicides as a trigger response to the dark, romantic glamour that the phenomenon has somehow attracted in modern times.

It is certainly the case that every time there is a celebrity suicide, there is a ripple effect, and the very impressionable and those just waiting a final nudge over the precipice are lured into the bleak sphere of suicidal intent.

What we now know from the latest statistics is that Ireland had a real problem confronting suicide.

However, the key question remains what is officialdom planning to do about it?

'Do not be afraid to speak to someone'

Advice given at inquest of Erin Gallagher, 13, who died by suicide

Stephen Maguire

The mother of teenage Erin Gallagher has told how she found her 13-year-old daughter died at her home — the first time after chatting and joking with her.

Erin Gallagher gave her mother a letter in which she said she was going to die. The letter was found by her mother on the night of her death.

The mother said she had not read the letter until the following day. She said she had not read it until the following day.

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Erin Gallagher, left, and her sister Sharon. There were several scenes yesterday at the inquest into the death of Erin who died at the family home in Boregal in 1992.

"I thought she was a bit odd, but I didn't think she was going to die," said her mother, Mrs. Gallagher.

The mother said she had not read the letter until the following day. She said she had not read it until the following day.

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Jim Carrey
Thursday 7 July 2016

'Jim, I'm not for this world please forgive me'

Sarah Slater

Catharina White, the former Irish girlfriend of actor and comedian Jim Carrey, weighed a more somber mood when her body was found.

The 30-year-old reportedly from Capeside, Co Tipperary, was found dead in her rented LA home on September 20 last year after taking her own life.

The young woman, who was 5ft 10 in height, had only been dead for several hours despite not being seen for four days prior to her death.

The *Dumb and Dumber* actor was her personal assistant, Nicole Morgan, to Ms White's rented home at Briarwood Drive, Sherman Oaks, east central LA, after becoming concerned when he could not reach her on the phone.

A suicide letter addressed to Carrey found on the dining room table at her home, on TV, some five days now is disbelief that you're not here. I can go on, and try to put the pieces back together. I don't know if I have the will this time.

"I worry you did I wasn't there for you. I tried to give you my last gift."

Her letter also said: "Jim, I'm not for this world please forgive me. I don't really know about burial or that sort of thing. You are my family so whenever you choose will be fine."

She then asks for her remains to be sold and any monies to be given to her family.

The end of the note in "Dear Jim" as what appears to be her signature. There was no date on the note.

The last photograph shared with Carrey was a FaceTime call at 11pm on September 21 and it ended 10 minutes later. There was also a text message from the star at 3.17pm three days later on September 27 asking her if she knew where he was.

Police officers found the note and mentioned that there was a full prescription with anti-inflammatory for his back and the bottle was on a higher floor.

The notes says: "Given this, it appears that the bottle with the name Arthur King found on her bedside table was the one prescribed to me."

Ms White was found dead in bed dressed in a T-shirt and underwear. There was no sign of trauma and foul



Jim Carrey with girlfriend, Catharina White. The Co Tipperary native was found dead in her LA home last September.



Jim Carrey carrying Catharina White's coffin at her funeral in Capeside, Co Tipperary.

play was ruled out.

A friend, Emily Harper, who was one of the people who found her body, said in her statement to the coroner's office that Ms White had died Carrey for several years but that the couple had broken up in 2013.

This year started feeling empty, she said.

Ms Harper said after Carrey had reportedly broken it off with Ms White about five years ago, she "literally" had no colour or joy for a year after wards.

The report also shows that Carrey's personal assistant found that Ms White was last seen entering the studio building before her body was found on September 21 and had not left again.

The nutrition and make-up artist had broken up with Carrey days before.

Picture: Emma Hunt



Catharina White left a suicide letter addressed to Jim Carrey.

Arthur King on them. They seem to be her phone. But Carrey asked where were his pills for his back.

The Hollywood *Reilly* illustrated said in the *Los Angeles Century* County Coroner's office, the

investigation into the cause of her death was due to stroke as a result of overeating on multiple drugs. The drugs found beside her bed had the same

as in the US but that

friends said that she did have "depression", condition and may have attempted suicide

two years ago following the ending of a relationship with her personal assistant.

It said police said she made went to her residence after they had been from a third party that she had just broken up with her

The Tipperary native was found in her bed surrounded by prescription bottles.

Her sister, Brenda, along with her wife Lena and sister, Jennifer, assistant

to the actor, received Carrey's number on her phone and called and told him Ms White was dead.

residence, where she lived alone at Briarwood Drive, Sherman Oaks, but the door was locked. They managed to

enter through a side entrance, they found her

alone with no sign of a struggle before she was looking at

Carrey's number on her phone and called and told him Ms White was dead.

6.5 Interview Transcripts

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Anne Marie Whelan, Student

Interviewee: John O'Mahony, Irish Examiner journalist

Interview Setting: Interview was conducted via email. The interview was conducted at 11a.m. on the 26th of June 2017.

Affiliation with interviewee: Interviewer has no affiliation with interviewee

(Start of the interview)

Interviewer: What is your opinion on the media guidelines on suicide reporting, such as the Samaritan's and the NUJ, National Union of Journalist's guidelines?

Interviewee: The only media guidelines are those suggested by Headline - which acts on behalf of the HSE. The Press Ombudsman Office can also impose suggested reported restrictions - i.e. passing on a specific request from a family not to be contacted by members of the media or not to impose on funeral arrangement etc. Newspapers impose their own guidelines / restrictions. Our aim in covering suicides is to highlight the issue, while not adding to the grief of families or loved ones.

Interviewer: Would you say that media guidelines are a form of media censorship?

Interviewee: The guidelines do not restrict the reporting of suicides, but they can direct how a suicide is reported. They are designed to ensure all reporting is responsible.

Interviewer: Would you say that the in print media e.g. daily in print national newspapers have a role to play in reducing the stigma towards people who have attempted suicide and towards people whose lives have been affected by suicide?

Interviewee: The stigma has always been there. But irresponsible journalism can add to the problem and pain

Interviewer: What news values would you use to decide which suicide is news worthy or not, e.g. reference to elite persons, threshold and so forth?

Interviewee: In my opinion, every suicide is news worthy, because without reporting and recording we will never acknowledge and recognise the extent of the problem. We need to get the stats out in the open, start a conversation. Only then can we find solutions

Interviewer: What are the news frames used in suicide reporting e.g. Human Interest, human impact, threshold and so forth?

This was a follow up question and the interviewee did not email his answer.

Interviewer: In what way has suicide reporting changed since 1999 and has media guidelines been part of that change?

Interviewee: It's more open. There is not so much stigma. Those affected are more willing to talk. As a society, we've begun to accept the scale of the problem, and talk about what needs to be done at a local and government level. I believe the media has played a role in that - but we've a long way to go.

Interviewer: The Irish Independent, Irish Examiner and the Herald did not give a lot of coverage on suicide in 2016. In your opinion why did the Irish Independent give a low amount of coverage to suicide in 2016?

Interviewee: we did not reduce our coverage in any way in 2016.

Interviewer: Would you agree that by simplifying or sensationalising a suicide could cause people who are susceptible to how suicide is reported on, to engage in suicidal behaviour?

Interviewee: The advice from groups like the Samaritans and Headline would be that sensationalising suicide reporting or writing about it in simple terms (without sensitivity) could cause others to engage in suicidal behaviour.

As a reporter I can only trust their judgement in the matter because they are more expert than me in that arena.

If you are looking for a one word answer to your question I would say it would be 'yes'.

Interviewer: If it was in the public's interest to know about the method or location of suicide, would you say then that the in print newspapers should be allowed to publish the details of the method and/or the location of the suicide?

Interviewee: The short answer is yes - but it's more complicated than that. In the vast majority of cases the specific details of a suicide - the how - do not need to be reported and do not take from the veracity and accuracy of a news report. But there can be specific cases where the details are important and need to be reported, particularly when reporting from the coroner's court, where very specific medical details are given as to the nature of the act and the cause of death. But again here, the media can use its discretion and can choose to exclude graphic details on the grounds of taste, or if we feel they are not necessary and their exclusion does not alter the overall accuracy or balance of a news story.

Interviewer: If publishing a suicide news story infringed on the privacy of the people of the person who has taken their lives e.g. families and friends and it was in the public's interest to know about the suicide, you would publish the news story?

Interviewee: No. But I do agree that over sensationalisation can do more harm than good

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Anne Marie Whelan

Interviewee: Conor Feehan, Irish Independent journalist

Affiliation with interviewee: interviewer has no affiliation with interviewee

Location of interview: The interview was conducted by phone in the interviewer's home.
The interview took place on 24.7.2017 at 7.30pm

Interviewer: Would you say that media guidelines on suicide reporting impinges on the print media's right to report on suicide i.e. it impinges on their right to freedom of speech and expression?

Interviewee: I am aware of the Samaritan's booklet which has guidelines on suicide reporting and it is something that we would consider when we are reporting on the issue of suicide. Most of it would seem like common sense. I think that consulting with the Samaritans on suicide reporting is a good thing. The Samaritans say that the guidelines are there for information purposes, they are not demands, they are requests as to how suicide reporting should be done. We at the Irish Independent would heed to what they say in the guidelines. There are times when the Samaritans would say that we shouldn't report on a particular suicide, but we report on it anyway. They are guidelines and not the bible.

Interviewer: Would you say that media guidelines are a form of media censorship?

Interviewee: I wouldn't say media guidelines are a form of media censorship. I would look on the guidelines as guidelines and not demands. I think that the decision to publish lies with us.

Interviewer: The Irish Independent; Irish Examiner and the Herald did not give a lot of coverage on suicide in 2016. In your opinion why did the Irish Independent give a low amount of coverage to suicide in 2016?

Interviewee: We would not quantify what we have reported on in one year with a previous year. If the coverage of suicide is high in one years it is probably because there was high suicide rate in the previous year or the manner or the background to the suicide might have more of bearing to newsworthiness of the suicide. Hypothetically speaking, you might have a situation where there is a lot of cyberbullying related suicides and this was to the fore in 2016 than in 2015. Therefore, we would want to highlight the prevalence of this issue to the

society. If the rate of suicide is high one year, then the coverage of suicide will be high the following year or if the newsworthiness of suicide acts has dropped off then coverage of suicide would be low. For example, there was a body found in Bushy park, Dublin over the weekend, the circumstances about what happened was unclear and we reported on it as a crime on Independent.ie. It later transpires that the person took their own life. We didn't proceed to cover the story and took it down from our website because it was a personal tragedy

Interviewer: Would you say that the in print media e.g. daily in print national newspapers have a role to play in reducing the stigma towards people who have attempted suicide and towards people whose lives have been affected by suicide?

Interviewee: I would think so. I think that we have a responsibility to highlight the situation and the direction that people are moving in. If something like suicide related cyberbullying was prevalent we would not report on it in a sensationalistic way but would try to bring it to the attention of society. The Samaritans might not want us to report on it but if it's not brought to the attention of society than nothing can be done about it. If we didn't highlight this issue than the education would set up websites which have information on how to tackle cyberbullying.

Interviewer: Would you agree that by simplifying or sensationalising a suicide news story could cause people who are susceptible to how suicide is reported on, to engage in suicidal behaviour?

Interviewee: I don't think any newspaper actively seeks to sensationalise and stigmatise suicide, it could possibly happen accidentally. Each person's view on the matter might be different. I suppose if you use phraseology such as he topped himself in news story about a celebrity suicide (that is on the front page, my words) might lead people to think that you are ridiculing people who are susceptible to suicidal behaviour. We wouldn't want to label anybody in any way. Our own effort would be to destigmatise the suicide and make people feel that it's okay to openly talk about suicide and take the stigma away from it. We would like to encourage popular figure to talk about mental health issues such as suicide in order to stigmatise suicide and not the reverse.

Interviewer: If it was in the public's interest to know about the method and location of suicide, would you say then that the print media should be allowed to publish the details of the method and location of suicide?

Interviewee: The method and location of the suicide is something we tend to stir clear of. The location of the suicide is something that we would publish. If a situation involved a Dublin or Galway person we might name the suburb or townland in which something has happened. Often times, if it's a train line you would have to give a vague idea of where the suicide has happened because it might affect train services. Therefore, you should give the location to let the public know that train services have been disrupted. You wouldn't specify a particular bridge or a particular section of a railway. More often the method of suicide would become public knowledge after the inquest e.g. a person died by hanging or an overdose. You might keep the terminology as vague as possible, so that you're not giving very, very specific information e.g. information on whether they use an electrical cord or a rope

Interviewer: There was media guidelines on suicide reporting in 1999. Were the journalists at the Irish Independent aware of these guidelines during that reporting period?

Interviewee: I wasn't aware of media guidelines until six years ago. When a suicide happens the Samaritans usually send us booklets on guidelines on suicide reporting and take the opportunity to refresh our memories on responsible suicide reporting. In 1999, I wouldn't have been aware of media guidelines, you would've relied on common sense. It's only through trial and error that you would exercise your own reporting style. When I started reporting in 1999, I would've reported that someone had committed suicide and I was probably hauled up on it. They would tell me that you can't say that someone has committed suicide because suicide has been decriminalised. We would then use different suicide phraseology such as they died by their own hand than saying they had committed a crime.

Interviewer: In what way has suicide reporting changed since 1999?

Interviewee: I think that the guidelines have helped and it doesn't railroad you down a particular path that you can't do this or that. The guidelines have certainly created a border on the way we can report on suicide. I think that suicide reporting has become more responsible not only through the guidelines but through the help from groups such as Samaritans and Headline and also because the media and the general public conversation on suicide has become a lot more open. It could be argued that the media has allowed this to happen by openly discussing the issue of suicide or you could say that Headline and self-help groups have led the charge in bringing the conversation into the public domain. People are getting more open with their views in modern society.

We're less closed off, less stigmatised or guilt ridden about our feelings and emotions.

Interviewer: What are the news values used to decide whether a suicide is news worthy?

Interviewee: It depends on the merits of the case. A famous person who has died by suicide is going to be reported on. Famous people suicides such as the ones that involved Kurt Cobain or the more recent suicide of a the boy from the band Linkin Park, Whether they died by their own hand is a secondary issue. Down the line the way they died is something that the public will be curious about. I have covered suicide. For example, after the economic crash we reported extensively on the suicide of Fiachra Daly because we wanted to highlight how the banks were being treated more favourable than people like Fiachra. He lived in a disgrace of place, an apartment in Priory Place on the North side of Dublin. who took his own life because he was under financial pressures which was coupled with mental health problems. In another suicide that I reported on involved Anna Byrne who was heavily pregnant with twins and was seeking help from mental health services and help wasn't given to her. In the end, she took her own life and twins died too. I remember this being reported on at the time to hold up a mirror to the government and the mental health services and hold them accountable for what happened. What makes a suicide newsworthy depends on (a) whether they are famous people and people want to know about it and (b) is one of the possible root causes why they took their own life was something in society is happening at a particular time that needs attention and should have got attention, then we would report on it, such as suicide related cyberbullying.

Interviewer: What type of news frames are used in suicide reporting, such as Human Interest or Human Impact?

Interviewee: Not so much human interest, more society interest. We wouldn't be covering suicide to satisfy general human curiosity. We would use the Human Impact news frame to highlight the impact that the suicide has on the family, the impact of the event on the person and what could've have been done to prevent it from happening.

Interviewer: If publishing a suicide news story infringed on the privacy of the people of the person who has taken their lives e.g. families and friends and it was in the public's interest to know about the suicide, you would publish the news story?

Interviewee: You would decide on the case's own merits. Invariably not, it is about why would you and why wouldn't you. I would say that you would find a way to highlight what's in the public's interest in the suicide, without identifying

the person or the family involved. It is the most logical compromise in a situation like that

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Anne Marie Whelan, Student

Interviewee: Carl O'Brien, Irish Times education editor and former social affairs journalist

Interview Setting: Interview was conducted on the phone and in the student's home. The interview was conducted at 11a.m. on the 26th of June 2017.

Affiliation with interviewee: no affiliation with interviewee

(Start of the interview)

Interviewer: What is your opinion on the media guidelines on suicide reporting, such as the Samaritan's and the NUJ, National Union of Journalist's guidelines

Interviewee: I think that broadly speaking that they are very useful, constructive and they do help to raise awareness of the dangers of simplifying coverage of suicide that increase the risk of copycat suicide. The guidelines are very good at raising awareness of the dos and don'ts about what is a very sensitive issue. There's a lot of guidelines out there which is a problem. Having fewer guidelines would be better than more. Some of the guidelines are questionable, for example, one of the guidelines talks about not over emphasising community grief, which is difficult to put into practice. I've seen communities who have been hard hit by community grief over a suicide in that occurred in their area. However, having said that, the Samaritan's guidelines are really sensible and helpful and are generally aimed at having a positive impact on suicide reporting.

Interviewer: Would you say that media guidelines are a form of media censorship?

Interviewee: I don't think that media guidelines are a form of media censorship. First of all, they are only guidelines, no one is telling anyone on what not to write. They're really looking at promoting more responsible suicide reporting. I think that there is a mediocre response on telling the in print newspapers on what not to write about suicide. Your reaction is to automatically fight against things telling you what to write. We want to report on things without restriction. We are here to serve the public. However, when it comes to suicide, a more positive approach is needed. In summary, I don't think that media guidelines are a form of censorship and are there to promote responsible suicide reporting.

Interviewer: Would you say that the in print media e.g. daily in print national newspapers have a role to play in reducing the stigma towards people who have attempted suicide and towards people whose lives have been affected by suicide?

Interviewee: I think that all types of media e.g. broadcast, in print and social media have to be involved in tackling the stigma that is attached to suicide. See Change seems quite effective in tackling suicide stigma.

Interviewer: If it was in the public's interest to know about the method or location of suicide, would you say then that the in print newspapers should be allowed to publish the details of the method and/or the location of the suicide?

Interviewee: It is a really tricky one. If there is a compelling public interest to know about the method or location of the suicide, then it is something that should be debated on. I can't think of any reason why we should know about the details of the method used in suicide. As a rule, we should tread carefully when it comes to publishing the method of suicide and ask ourselves, do we really need to know. We must be mindful of the risks for publishing the method. We should have a checklist of questions before we publish the method, such as will publishing the details of the method of suicide help people in understanding the story; does it add to the story and does the public have a need or right to know. We should have that checklist before we write about suicide.

Interviewer: If publishing a suicide news story infringed on the privacy of the people of the person who has taken their lives e.g. families and friends and it was in the public's interest to know about the suicide, you would publish the news story?

Interviewee: You would tread very carefully. You don't want to whip up the public's fear about something. And at the same time, you don't want to ignore something. By ignoring something it can fester and have a greater impact on a community. The key is to tread carefully so as not to intrude on the grief of those who are affected by the suicide. You should point out that there are services out there to help people who are affected by suicide. For example, if a school was involved in a suicide you have to be careful that you do not create a panic about what has happened. We tend to weigh up each case on its merits e.g. who will be affected by the way we report on the suicide, is it in the public's interest to know about who was involved in the suicide and the act of suicide itself.

Interviewer: How would you determine if a suicide is news worthy or not?

Interviewee: That is a good question. You should consider each case on its merits. Broadly speaking, we tend to not report on suicide for a combination of reasons, such as sensitivity, cultural, the sense that it is a personal tragedy and you don't want to intrude on the grief of the individual and the community. It

probably goes back to the days when there was a big stigma around suicide and it was considered a crime even though you had killed yourself and not someone else. At the end of the day, you need to consider each case on its merits, such as is it in the public's interest to know about the suicide. I think the days of ignoring suicide didn't help anybody. We were writing about suicide but suicide rates were increasing.

Interviewer: What news values would you use to decide which suicide is news worthy or not, e.g. reference to elite persons, threshold and so forth?

Interviewee: I think that they apply and they use whatever news values they have. News values do feed into the merits of the case. We consider the impact of the story on people; do the people know the person involved such as the status of the person, reference to elite persons. At the end of the day, you need to consider each case on its merits, such as is it in the public's interest to know about the suicide. I think the days of ignoring suicide didn't help anybody. We were writing about suicide but suicide rates were increasing.

Interviewer: What are the news frames used in suicide reporting e.g. Human Interest, human impact, threshold and so forth?

Interviewee:: It depends on the story. Recently, we reported about people who have attempted suicide and families who were bereaved by suicide, a feature news story report called "Stories of suicide." In these cases, we used the Human Interest approach, then we had a way of connecting the story with the reader, who could be someone who has attempted suicide or someone who was facing acute work related pressure. By using the Human Interest frame in these stories, the reader could empathise with the people in the story. In this case, we highlighted that suicide is a permanent solution to a problem. If you use the Human Interest frame in suicide reporting, it tends to be something that you do with the consent of the family.

Interviewer: In what way has suicide reporting changed since 1999 and has media guidelines been part of that change?

Interviewee: In general, there was a lot of ignorance around suicide in 1999. I don't think that there was a great awareness of media guidelines on suicide reporting in 1999 as there is today, where there is a greater awareness around suicide reporting, such as not describing the cause of death. I think that happens far less regularly today. There is a greater need to educate and inform people about support services that are out there today. There is greater knowledge and greater awareness about suicide than in 1999. The first time I came across media guidelines on suicide reporting was in the 1990s. It takes time for guidelines to be embedded into suicide reporting. Awareness of guidelines is growing and the work of Headline is improving. We have a new generation of journalist coming through and many of them are being thought

about media guidelines. It'll take a while for guidelines to be embedded. We have a long way to go but suicide reporting has changed over time.

Interviewer: The Irish Independent; Irish Examiner and the Herald did not give a lot of coverage on suicide in 2016. In your opinion why did the Irish Independent give a low amount of coverage to suicide in 2016?

Interviewee: I don't know, you would have to ask them. I wasn't aware that they gave less coverage to suicide in 2016. And then whether it was a conscious decision not to is another question. I wouldn't be in position to know why that was the case.

Interviewer: Would you agree that by simplifying or sensationalising a suicide could cause people who are susceptible to how suicide is reported on, to engage in suicidal behaviour?

Interviewee: You shouldn't over simplify a complex issue such as suicide, in particular do not say that a suicide has triggered another suicide, we don't know that for sure. Certainly, research points to suicide been a whole combination of factors. Ultimately, suicide reporting involves being engaged in an important health matter and it involves doing it in a responsible way.

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