

Quick Review of Model System Research

Psychological Sequelae of the Station Nightclub Fire: Comparing Survivors with and without Physical Injuries Using a Mixed-Methods Analysis¹

What is the study about?

One of the deadliest fires in American history occurred at The Station nightclub in 2003. Researchers surveyed survivors of this event in order to study the impact of the emotional trauma on psychological outcomes. The main goal was to gain further insight to the effect of physical versus emotional trauma on psychological outcomes.

Who participated in the study?

The study group was comprised of The Station nightclub fire survivors. A multi-step survivor identification process, including use of a search agency, was utilized to find eligible study participants. Out of 362 likely survivors, 104 survivors completed the study survey. The mean age of respondents was 32 years. 62% of the surveyed study participants were male; 47% of the surveyed survivors had experienced a burn injury.

How was the study conducted?

Study participants completed a 130 question cross-sectional survey. The survey included items on demographics, medical, work outcomes, and quality of life information. Participants were given the option to comment further in the free response section of the survey. Linear regression was used to examine the potential relationships between variables of those with and without physical injuries.

What did the study find?

The survey did not find a significant relationship between being physically injured during the fire and depressive or post-traumatic stress symptoms. Fire survivors, both with and without physical injuries, showed similar depressive and post-traumatic stress symptoms. Analysis of the comments section showed that, regardless of injury, survivors experienced emotional trauma. Survivors without physical injuries were more likely to experience survivor guilt, helplessness, self-blame, and bitterness. All survivors of this large fire experienced significant psychological consequences.

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¹ Trinh, N. H. T., Nadler, D. L., Shie, V., Fregni, F., Gilman, S. E., Ryan, C. M., & Schneider, J. C. (2014). Psychological sequelae of the Station nightclub fire: comparing survivors with and without physical injuries using a mixed-methods analysis. *PLOS ONE*, 9(12), e115013.