

Breaking News: How Hardiness Moderates the Impact of Burnout on the Psychological Well-Being of Filipino Journalists Covering Disasters and Emergencies

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The study examined the influence of hardiness on the impact of job burnout and psychological well-being of 100 Filipino journalists covering disasters such as wars, conflicts, natural disasters, accidents, and other emergencies. Using multiple regression analysis, findings reveal that hardiness buffers the effect of burnout on psychological well-being. Implications of findings on future research and how journalists can be prepared better to handle stress and burnout risks when covering disasters are discussed.

Keywords: Filipino journalists, disaster, psychological well-being, hardiness, burnout

In the 2012 World Disaster Report, the Philippines was cited as the third most vulnerable country to disaster (Quismundo, 2012). According to the Joint Typhoon Warning Center, approximately 80 typhoons develop above tropical waters yearly, 19 of which enter the Philippines with six to nine making landfall (Wingard & Brändlin,

2013). The deadliest typhoon to have hit the Philippines in recent history was Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), which devastated the Philippines in November 2013 leaving 6,300 dead, 28,689 injured, 1,061 missing and more than a million houses destroyed (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council [NDRRMC], 2014). In the same year, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck the entire Central Visayas region claiming 222 lives, injuring 976, and damaging more than 73,000 houses (Wingardn & Brändlin, 2013). In spite of these numbers, there is relatively few published research on disasters, which understandably focuses more on the experience of the survivors and their families. There is very little work done on those involved in the rescue, recovery, and identification of survivors, and also on journalists who cover disasters and emergency situations (Osofsky, Holloway, & Pickett, 2005).

A journalists' safety is often put at risk when they work. Research suggests that between 80 to 100% of journalists have been exposed to a work-related traumatic event (Dworznic, 2011). For example, in 2009, the Philippines was named as the most dangerous place for journalists because of the Maguindanao Massacre, unsolved murders, and journalist killings. Furthermore, according to the National Union of Journalists, four journalists were killed and at least seven went missing during the coverage of the Super Typhoon Yolanda in 2013 (Dumlao, 2014). This is on top of the intense competition in looking for breaking and exclusive news, the pressure of meeting deadlines, irregular working schedules, long hours, and low pay journalists have to deal with on a daily basis (Kalter, 1999), which may make them vulnerable to burnout. This study looked at the experiences of Filipino journalists covering disasters and emergency situations. Specifically, it examined how burnout impacts the psychological well-being of journalists who cover emergency or crisis situations including natural disasters, and how hardiness moderates the relationship between burnout and psychological well-being.

Journalists Covering Disasters and Emergency Situations

Crisis-related work assignments are understood to be part of the work of journalists. Thus, readiness to work well during crisis

situations is expected of them (Backholm & Björkqvist, 2012). In the event of accidents and disasters, media personnel are often among the first on the scene, apart from fire fighters and ambulance workers (Weidmann, Fehm, & Fydrich, 2008). In these crisis and emergency situations, journalists are said to experience adrenalin rush at the beginning (Ricchiardi, 1999) but could suffer from trauma after frequent exposure to this kind of events (Pyeovich, 2001; Smith, 2008; Smith & Newman, 2009).

Research of Smith and Newman (2009) has provided evidence that journalists who cover trauma and disaster events are at risk of developing posttraumatic stress and secondary traumatic stress from witnessing trauma during disasters, war-related conflicts, accident scenes, homicides, and murder trials. Weidmann et al. (2008) reported that some journalists developed posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression after covering a traumatic event. Many underwent a period of mental exhaustion, burnout, and trauma-related guilt that Kubany (1996) described as “an unpleasant feeling with an accompanying belief that one should have thought, felt or acted differently” (p. 429).

Overall, these stressful assignments, together with long workdays, intense competition, and demanding deadlines may result in job burnout (Backholm & Björkqvist, 2010).

Burnout Among Journalists

Maslach and Leiter (1997) defined burnout in terms of its six components, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, a diminished sense of personal accomplishment in one's job, physical exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness. Other research has shown that burnout can lead to decline in creativity, difficulty to focus, frequent change in moods (Kalter, 1999), and poor psychological well-being (Burke & Greenglass, 1996). Among journalists, burnout can lead to diminished job satisfaction as well as job-related health problems such as insomnia, alcoholism, and hypertension (Keats & Buchanan, 2009).

Journalists are often the first people in sight following the occurrence of crisis and emergency situations (Keats & Buchanan,

2009). Covering these traumatic events may be a source of stress for them (Kalter, 1999). However, unlike emergency responders, journalists do not usually receive special instructions, nor are given briefing and debriefing (Ricchiardi, 1999).

Part of being a journalist entails ignoring one's emotional and physical needs, which leads to physical and psychological exhaustion or burnout (Kalter, 1999). To get more important assignments, they learn to suppress or ignore negative reactions or thoughts that they encounter during traumatic events (Keats, 2010), which may be a reaction to the pressures of dealing with death and destruction in the stories they cover. These excessive work-stressors could have a devastating effect on physical health, mental health, and job-performance (Gershon, Boracas, Canton, Li, & Vlahov, 2009).

Research has shown that burnout impacts both physical health and psychological well-being (Burke & Richardson, 2000; Shirom, Melamed, Toker, Berliner, & Shapira, 2005). Shirom et al. (2005) pointed out that there is a positive relationship between burnout and different types of psychological health problems such as distress, depression, and psychosomatic complaints. Likewise, the inability to manage emotional trauma can impact psychological well-being (Long, 2013), which is defined in terms of personal growth, feeling of improvement and growth, continued development, and openness to new experiences (Ryff, 1989).

Psychological Well-Being of Journalists

According to Drummond (2004) and Norwood, Walsh, and Owen (2003), journalists' psychological well-being may be harmed as a result of their work. At the time an emergency situation occurs, journalists are able to focus on the task at hand, asking questions, and writing down notes. Later, however, some journalists may suffer from fearfulness, insomnia, emotional numbness, and intense, intrusive memories (Kalter, 1999). Likewise, some reporters who feel that their journalism has failed to bring about the change that they hoped it would be more vulnerable to burnout (Rees, 2013).

In light of these possible negative consequences, hardiness is an important individual resource that can have a positive impact on the

health and well-being of individuals (Hystad, Eid, & Brevik, 2011). One's level of hardiness may have an impact on how individuals handle work-related stress.

Hardiness

Hardiness is a personality variable that distinguishes those who become ill under stress from those who remain healthy (Kobasa, 1979). It is a pattern of attitudes and actions that assist in converting stressors from potential disasters into growth opportunities instead (Alfred, Hammer, & Good, 2014). Hardy individuals have a strong awareness of and commitment to their values, goals, and capabilities. They also have a greater sense of control of what occurs in their lives and perceive stressors as challenges that will make them stronger. Previous studies have identified that hardiness buffers the effect of life stress on physical or psychological disturbances (Ganellen & Blaney, 1984). For example, hardiness has been found to be consistently negatively related to stress levels (Westman, 1990) and emotional exhaustion (Bue, Taverniers, Mylle, & Euwema, 2013).

As a pathway to resilience, hardiness is made up of three components: (a) commitment "to finding meaningful purpose in life," (b) "belief that one can influence one's surroundings and the outcome of events," and (c) "growth from both positive and negative life experiences" (Bonanno, 2004, p. 25). As a component of hardiness, control is the belief that people can influence their life situation; hence, people who have higher control have higher hardiness scores (Alfred et al., 2014).

Journalists are vulnerable to stress because they witness painful and chaotic events but must stifle their own reaction and persist in the face of difficulties (Kalter, 1999). Individuals who are hardy are observed to anticipate stressful events as an opportunity for growth and thus achieve better mental health and psychological well-being (Alfred et al., 2014). Moreover, when attempting to cope with stressful circumstances, hardy persons operate by analyzing the problem, formulating possible solutions to it, and carrying those solutions out (Maddi & Hightower, 1999). Hardiness provides courage and motivation for an individual to face stressors instead of denying

or avoiding them, thus enhancing their performance under stress through problem solving and seeking assistance and encouragement rather than avoiding or striking out (Maddi, 2002).

Although hardiness is generally considered a personality trait, there have been successful attempts to teach hardiness to individuals. For instance, Maddi (1987) developed a hardiness training program that uses three interconnected coping techniques to help people transform disruptive changes into less stressful experiences by exploring their cognitive, emotional, and action responses to them. This hardiness training allowed individuals to make commitments, exercise control, and grow through the challenge of interaction with the world. Participants of the training began to find work and home life more meaningful and rewarding, felt less tense, and experienced fewer signs of illness (Maddi, 1987).

Moderating Role of Hardiness

Studies have linked job burnout and psychological well-being. Burnout has been associated with reduced psychological well-being including psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and reduced self-esteem (Hobfoll, 1989; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Researchers have proposed that hardiness can influence the direction or strength of the relationship (Baron & Kenny, 1986) between burnout and psychological well-being through improved health practices and adaptive coping (Maddi, 2002). For example, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that among teachers, burnout was negatively related to health. However, certain personality factors, like hardiness, may affect the degree of how a person deals is affected by burnout (Alfred et al., 2014).

Studies show that hardiness can enhance the performance and health of a journalist under great stress (Maddi, 2002). A journalist high in hardiness is not impervious to stress, but rather strongly resilient in responding to stressful conditions (Bartone, 2008). The proposed relationships among burnout, psychological well-being, and hardiness cited in the studies above are shown in Figure 1.

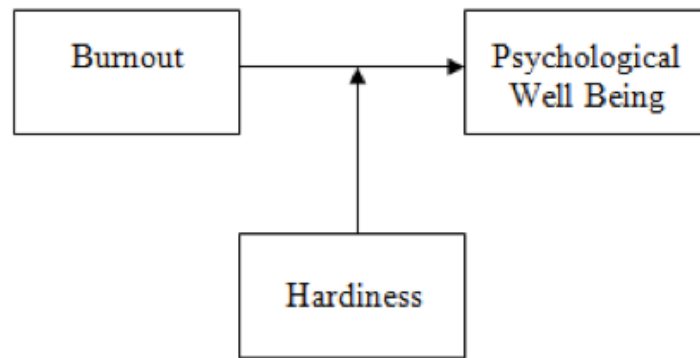


Figure 1. Hardiness as a moderator between the relationship between burnout and psychological well-being.

Journalists' involvement in trauma-related workload like those concerning disasters, conflicts, and wars, coupled with long exposure with the trauma-inflicted victims, increase their vulnerability to developing burnout (Maslach & Courtois, 2008). Journalists who experience high levels of stress (e.g., erratic schedules) may have lower levels of psychological well-being (Greenberg, Thomas, Murphy, & Dandeker, 2007). However, hardy journalists have been found to be more capable of coping with the stress and consequences that go with covering disasters and emergency situations (Hystad et al., 2011).

This study examined the experience of Filipino journalists in covering traumatic events and how this impact on the journalist's well-being. Specifically, this paper aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Does job burnout predict psychological well-being of Filipino journalists?
2. Does hardiness as a personality trait moderate the relationship between job burnout and psychological well-being?

The researchers hypothesized that job burnout negatively affects the psychological well-being of Filipino journalists and that hardiness moderates the relationship between job burnout and psychological well-being, such that when job burnout is high, psychological well-

being will be low among journalists with low levels of hardiness.

METHOD

The study utilized a survey method designed to measure level of burnout, psychological well-being, and hardiness. Filipino journalists from print, television, and radio participated in the study.

Respondents

A total of 100 Filipino journalists working in Metro Manila took part in the study. Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents who had at least one year experience on the job and had covered events such as wars, conflicts, natural disasters, accidents, or emergencies within the last three years of the 100 respondents, 66 were male and 34 were female. Their ages ranged from 22 to 74 ($M = 37$; $SD = 9.86$). Years on the job ranged from 1 to 43 years ($M = 12$ years; $SD = 8.63$). Of the 100 respondents, 41 are from print media, 42 from television, and 17 from radio.

Most of the respondents are field reporters (36), writers (23), and cameramen (29). The least represented are photojournalists (8) and editors (4). In the last 3 years, almost all of them have covered various kinds of work assignments such as wars, natural disasters, police incidents, and accidents.

Procedures

Information sheet and questionnaires were given to respondents after getting their consent. The survey consisted of three scales to measure burnout, psychological well-being, and hardiness.

Burnout, viewed as an affective state characterized by feelings of depletion of one's physical, emotional, and cognitive energies (Shirom, 1989), was measured using the Shirom Melamed Burnout Questionnaire. The 14-item scale makes use of a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*) and consists of items such as "I feel tired", "I feel tensed", and "I feel I am not thinking clearly." Reliability analysis of the scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .90.

Psychological well-being, which refers to the feeling of personal growth, having continued development and openness to new experiences (Ryff, 1989), was measured using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale. It includes questions like "I am not afraid to voice my opinions" and "The demand of everyday life often gets me down." After conducting the pilot study, 17 items from the original 21 item scale were used to measure psychological well-being. The items were measured by 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 6 (*strongly agree*). Reliability analysis of the scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .72.

Hardiness, a personality structure that functions as a resistance resource under adversity (Kobasa, 1979), was measured using Bartone's Dispositional Resilience Scale (Funk, 1992). Bartone's Dispositional Resilience Scale consists of 9 items out of the original 15. The items included statements such as, "I feel that my life is somewhat empty of meaning", "How things go in my life depends on my own actions", and "I enjoy the challenge when I have to do more than one thing at a time." Responses were measured on a scale of 0 (*not at all true*) to 3 (*completely true*). Reliability analysis of the hardiness scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .70.

RESULTS

The mean scores and standard deviation of burnout, psychological well-being, and hardiness as well as their correlations are shown in Table 1. Results show that burnout and psychological well-being are moderately correlated. To examine the role of hardiness on the relationship between burnout and psychological well-being, hierarchical regression was used to examine the main effects for the two predictors and their interaction term.

Results indicate that the interaction of hardiness and burnout predicts psychological well-being scores. High level of hardiness ($\beta = 0.91, p < 0.05$) and lower level of burnout ($\beta = -0.28, p < 0.05$) were both associated with better psychological well-being. Results likewise show that 38% of the change in the psychological well-being of the journalists can be accounted for by the change in burnout and hardiness.

The moderating effect of hardiness on the relationship between

Table 1. Correlation Among Burnout, Hardiness, and Psychological Well-Being

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Burnout	35.72	14.06	--		
2. Hardiness	19.37	3.25	-0.45*	--	
3. Psychological Well-Being	76.44	11.08	-0.52*	0.43*	--

Note. * $p < .05$.

burnout and psychological well-being is illustrated in Figure 2. Using the regression analysis summarized in Table 2, we plotted the different values of hardiness against the level of psychological well-being. The predicted degree of involvement in psychological well-being is illustrated in Figure 2: three regression lines represent degree of burnout while the regression lines represent three different levels of hardiness from the lowest (score = 31.36) to the highest level (score = 74.49). The interaction is evident. When hardiness is at low ($\beta = 0.70, p < 0.05$) and mid level ($\beta = 0.88, p < 0.05$), the regression line is slightly less steep. On the other hand, when hardiness is high ($\beta = 1.06, p < 0.05$), the regression line has a more pronounced effect. High burnout is associated with high impact on psychological well-being when hardiness is low but not when hardiness is high.

The significant regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.06, p < 0.05$) for the interaction term indicates that the effect of hardiness is to lessen the impact of burnout when hardiness is high than when protection is low or absent. This suggests that hardiness moderates the relationship between burnout and psychological well-being among Filipino journalists who cover natural disasters and emergency situations.

DISCUSSION

Consistent with literature, findings reveal that burnout negatively impacts the psychological well-being of journalists. Higher level of burnout is related to lower levels of psychological well-being and less

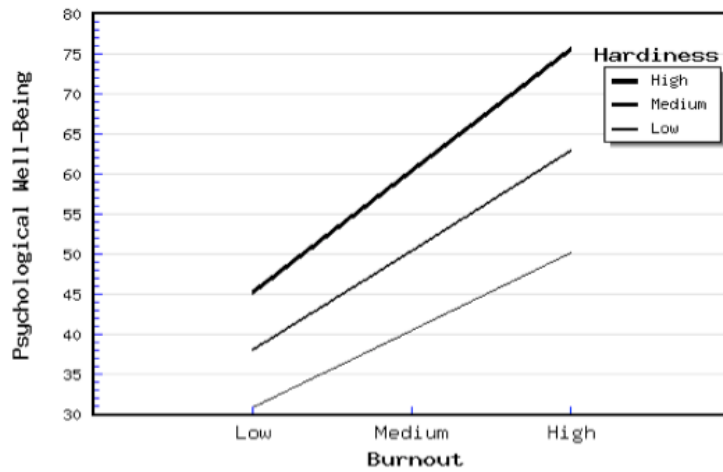


Figure 2. Effect of Burnout on Psychological Well-Being and Effect of Hardiness on the Relationship of Burnout and Psychological Well-Being

Table 2. Relationship of Burnout and Psychological Well-Being as Moderated by Hardiness

	<i>B*</i>	<i>SE of B*</i>	β	<i>SE of β</i>	<i>t</i> (96)	<i>p</i>
Intercept			1.26	0.99	1.27	0.21
IV Burnout	-0.35	0.09	-0.28	0.07	-3.83	0.00
Moderator: Hardiness	0.26	0.09	0.91	0.32	2.86	0.01
Product:	0.26	0.08	0.06	0.02	3.13	0.00
Burnout*Hardiness						

Note. $R^2 = .38$. * $p < .05$.

favorable work outcomes (Burke, Koyuncu, & Fiksenbaum, 2010; Schaufeli, Bakker, Heijden, & Prins, 2009). However, hardiness mitigates the relationship between job burnout and psychological well-being. According to Bartone (2000), people with high levels of hardiness tend to interpret stressful events in positive and constructive ways and construe such events as challenges and valuable learning opportunities. Given the results of this study, this suggests that hardiness can buffer the negative effect of burnout on psychological well-being.

The results of the study validate the moderating role of hardiness in the relationship between burnout and psychological well-being of journalists who cover natural disasters and emergency situations. Bonanno (2004) argued that there are multiple pathways to resilience under stress and he identified the personality trait hardiness as one of them. Findings of Maddi (2002) have shown that hardiness enhances resiliency in a wide range of stressful circumstances including ongoing demands and pressures of everyday life.

Hardiness plays an important role in the psychological well-being of journalists who cover natural disasters and emergency situations. It is said to buffer the effect of burnout by motivating a person to confront his or her stressors instead of avoiding them, enhancing their performance under stressor (Maddi, 2002). During stressful events, hardiness enables individuals to resist succumbing to the stress by facing the problem, formulating possible solutions, and carrying those solutions out (Maddi & Hightower, 1999) without getting too affected or emotional about it. Hardiness is a pattern of attitudes and actions that assist in converting stressors from potential disasters into growth opportunities instead.

Implications

Given the findings, it may be important to evaluate the level of hardiness of journalists that will be assigned to cover disasters and crisis situations. Hardiness assessment and training program might be very helpful among journalists and other groups that are at risk of burnout given the nature of their jobs.

According to Hystad et al. (2011), hardiness acts as a protective

factor so it is important to measure the level of hardiness of a person before entering the profession and career of journalism. Hardiness can be measured using different scales such as Bartone's Dispositional Resilience Scale and this can be useful in selecting the journalists fit to cope with the demands of the job. Honing a journalist's skill can be done through education, practice, and experience covering different stories; however, if faced with traumatizing events, a journalist might feel stress and burnout and have a difficult time coping because of lack of hardiness (Bonnano, 2004). Aside from having heavy workloads and erratic schedules, journalists also encounter pressure to win awards because it is thru these awards that they feel prestige and recognized in the industry (Shapiro, Albanese, & Doyle, 2006). Selecting the right people to become journalists is important to protect individuals and prevent people from experiencing the effects of ineffective coping and susceptibility to different levels of burnout that go with certain types of coverage that can affect psychological well-being (Bonnano, 2004).

Hardiness can also be developed through training (Maddi, 1987). Hardiness training programs are varied in complexity from relatively simple self-paced learning modules to more elaborate approaches that also include teachings on additional factors that can influence healthy and unhealthy reactions to stress. However, in the study by Tierney and Lavelle (1997), although the levels of hardiness increased immediately after the training, the level returned back to the baseline level 6 months later. Hence, Hystad et al. (2011) recommended that to generate long-lasting results, hardiness training may require regular follow-ups and retraining.

The results of this study can contribute to the selection, training, and preparations a journalist can undergo to help cope with the demands of their work. The journalists must be aware and knowledgeable about the possible risks and effects of the job to help minimize the impact of burnout and increase their psychological well-being. This study opens a new perspective of looking at the safety and psychological health of Filipino journalists.

Limitations

Despite yielding significant results, this study has certain

limitations. First, the study was conducted among different types of journalists who cover different disasters and are use different mediums of reporting. Given the varying experiences of these Filipino journalists, it may be difficult to generalize results to the experience of having covered natural disasters and emergency situations. The significant impact may be true of any type of journalist covering any news. Likewise, the experience of burnout may not be directly due to exposure to disasters or work stresses but other personal factors that respondents may be experiencing at the time of the data gathering. Furthermore, media personnel have varying degrees of vulnerabilities. The exposure to stressful events and disasters may impact each journalist differently.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study is helpful as future reference for research on the psychological well-being of Filipino journalists and also on disaster research. Presently, there have been scarce researches done on trauma tackling news reporting in general (Marais & Stuart, 2005) and only a few studies examining journalists covering disaster events (Weidmann et al., 2008). It is rare to hear journalists receiving trauma training in preparation for reporting on disaster and trauma events, or psychological debriefing or assistance on returning home, unlike military and other professionals involved in disaster response (as cited in Backholm & Björkqvist 2012; as cited in Dworznik, 2011; Keats & Buchanan, 2009).

Given the dearth of research on this area in the Philippines, future research can look at differences in the experiences of journalists covering different types of news and events across years of experience and age as maturity is known to have an impact on reaction to work-related stress and burnout. The variables explored in this study can also be examined with other groups who are engaged in disaster work. Disaster research may also need to look into protective factors, particularly other personality traits that can buffer the negative impact of disaster-related experiences.

Conclusion

Given that the Philippines is vulnerable to many different types of disasters and that journalists are expected to be among the first responders when these disasters and emergency situations occur, it is important to find evidence-based ways of helping the journalists deal with these situations. This study tried to look into how the psychological well-being of journalists covering disasters and emergency situations are affected by their experience of burnout due to the nature of their job and the type of assignments. This paper has identified hardiness as a significant variable that can buffer the impact of burnout on psychological well-being. Results of this study showed that although burnout significantly impacts the psychological well-being of journalists, their level of hardiness moderate the relationship. This validates previous studies on different groups how hardiness can play an important role in coping with difficult and traumatic circumstances.

Possible implications are of two-fold: identification of journalists to be assigned in disasters and emergency situations, and possible preparation or training for this group of people. Aside from looking at expertise and experience of the journalists, it may also be important to include personality variables in assessing readiness of journalists for certain assignments. Finally, similar studies can be done also on other responders to disasters like social workers, government workers, volunteers, military, and police personnel.

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