Building Bonds And Breaking News: Exploring Male Journalists' Personal Relationship Challenges

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Abstract

Workplace conditions significantly impact journalists' work-life balance and psychological well-being. This study explores male journalists' challenges in maintaining personal relationships outside of work via a phenomenological approach using purposive and non-proportional sampling to understand how they experience newsroom demands and balance their relationships.

Respondents revealed the complexities of balancing such relationships and their professional responsibilities. The study identified three main themes: the impact of newsroom demands on work-life balance and romantic prospects, coping mechanisms and boundary management, and conflict resolution outside work. Researchers also saw a divide between older and younger participants regarding these themes. These findings provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by male Filipino journalists and the strategies they employ to navigate their personal and professional lives. Recommendations emphasize the need for tailored support systems within newsrooms. By advocating for policy changes such as respecting journalists' time off, newsrooms can foster an environment that protects their well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

Workplace conditions have a significant impact on professionals across various sectors, including journalism. In recent years, work environments are particularly crucial journalists as well as the access to information and independent journalism (Lohner, Neverla, & Banjac, 2017). As journalism has witnessed trends that shaped the industry, including social media engagements (Hermida & Mellado, 2021), the adaptability of journalists to these trends posed challenges to the balance of their professional and personal identities (Hermida & Mellado, 2020).

Apart from the industry's challenging hierarchical structure and stagnant salary that has potential impact on their personal relationships and total well-being (Örnebring & Möller, 2018; Boateng & Lauk, 2020), the demanding nature of the journalism profession created gruelling newsroom atmosphere leading to increased stress, time constraints, and challenges in maintaining work-life balance for male journalists (Boateng & Lauk, 2020). The 24-hour news cycle, on the other hand, has become the norm, with the public expecting instant access to global news and real-time updates. This constant demand and high-pressure environment disproportionately affect male journalists, leading to increased stress and limited time for personal relationships.

However, the limited research focuses on work-life imbalances among male journalists, with recent studies starting to shed light on how newsroom demands affect both genders and impact personal relationships (Libert, Le Cam & Domingo, 2021).

Alongside the physical and time demands, emotional labor (Boateng & Lauk, 2020) and newsroom pressures involve emotional and psychological challenges to journalists (Witschge & Nygren, 2009; Reich & Godler, 2014). The culture of speed reporting at any time, regardless working hours, contributes to the difficulty in managing personal lives and relationships (Stobb, 2017) and the struggle to detach fromtheir professional persona (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019).

Previous studies that have predominantly focused on female journalists, particularly on work-life balance, left a gap in understanding the unique challenges faced by their male counterparts. In the Philippines, masculinity or *pagkalalaki* is learned through interactions between and among members of a society or community (Navarro & Elumbre, 2017). They said the concept of being a male in Philippine society have showed that it is formed from childhood by the family and the larger society. However, this has not yet been widely explored in local studies, including those in journalism.

This research, therefore, contributes to local studies, particularly on male journalists' relationships and provides substance on the dynamics between their work-life balance and personal relationships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Journalists are required to report on the clock due to the 24-hour news cycle, which severely affects both the quality of reporting and the journalists who report on them. Harro-Loit and Josephi (2019) emphasized the negative influence of time pressure and job overload on the well-being of journalists, highlighting the importance of news organizations recognizing and addressing these issues. The increase in speed and quantity of news production can also negatively impact the credibility of journalism, compromising the public's trust in media as a reliable source of information (Lewis and Cushion, 2009).

Newsrooms, like most organizations, place work-life balance as a pillar of company culture, but the discourse on it diminishes the importance of non-work activities, especially in journalism. Most journalists believe that work-life balance is a personal responsibility (McDonald et al., 2005; Thornthwaite, 2004). Allen et al. (2020) found that individuals who could effectively separate their personal and professional lives reported less work-life interference. News organizations must consider the negative effects of a lack of work-life balance, specifically its effects on the quality of journalistic output (Reich & Godler, 2014).

This "thirst to be first" has led to journalists working long hours without much compensation, and the need for transparency has become paramount (Karlsson, 2011). This has caused several consequences to the well-being of journalists (Finneman & Thomas, 2021), such as burnout (Arcalas et al., 2022) and high turnover rates.

Some journalists argued that the lack of work-life balance hampers their ability to keep their personal life away from their professional work, especially with the high-stress environment inside the journalism

industry (Arcalas et al., 2022), and the need to maintain one's boundaries. From a psychological perspective, journalistic boundaries are inherently permeable. The flexibility and permeability of these boundaries between different roles determine how well-integrated or segmented they are. However, blurring the lines between roles can result in job dissatisfaction (Ashforth et al., 2000) and potential backlash from the audience. Audiences perceive journalists who can maintain objectivity and avoid conflicts of interest to be more trustworthy and reliable. Furthermore, the audience is more inclined to believe journalists who adhere to these boundaries more than those whose boundaries are more permeable.

Most literature on boundaries is dominated by how this affects the journalist's relationship with their sources or with other figures inside the field. However, there is scant literature on how this affects journalists' psychological well-being, especially in building deep and fulfilling relationships outside the field. Örnebring and colleagues' 2018 study highlighted that the discourse did not address boundary management beyond work in light of unstable working conditions. In turn, this emphasized the need for organizations and journalists to create boundaries for themselves.

Meanwhile, the emotional labor required in journalism can lead to burnout, compassion fatigue, and other mental health concerns for journalists, highlighting the need for support and resources to address the emotional toll of their work. News organizations must prioritize the mental health of their journalists and offer training and support for journalists covering traumatic events. Furthermore, understanding the role of emotion in the news-making process and its impact on audiences can lead to more effective and responsible journalism.Support from supervisors and colleagues and access to resources such as counseling or training programs are crucial to help journalists cope with these job demands and reduce their occupational stress.

With these conditions, Harro-Loit and Josephi (2019) emphasized the negative influence of time pressure and job overload on the well-being of journalists, highlighting the importance of news organizations to recognize and address these issues. It also meant that journalists had to employ various coping mechanisms. Monteiro et al. (2015) suggest that journalists use various coping strategies, including problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, to manage these demands.

The reviewed literature provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by journalists in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the evolving media landscape, and the impact of media on public opinion. However, the literature's restricted focus on the detrimental effects of increased job demands on journalists' personal lives and well-being is a major limitation. Studies have noted the detrimental consequences of extended work hours and a lack of personal time. However, more research is required to determine the precise processes by which these factors affect the mental and physical health of journalists. The long-term ramifications of these difficulties, such as the possibility of burnout and its effects on the sustainability of careers and job satisfaction, also need further study.

Another drawback is that news organizations' contributions to solving these problems are not given enough attention. While time management skills and seeking out social support are vital coping mechanisms, news companies must assume more responsibility for fostering positive work environments. A more thorough approach to resolving the difficulties experienced by journalists would benefit from an understanding of how news organizations may better support journalists in setting healthy limits and prioritizing their well-being.

Furthermore, the literature would benefit from a deeper exploration of the ethical dilemmas and boundary work faced by journalists, particularly in the era of social media and the wider internet. While Väliverronen (2022) highlights the importance of establishing appropriate boundaries in personal and professional lives, further investigation is needed to understand the specific challenges and strategies journalists employ in navigating the complexities of social media platforms. Examining the impact of social media on journalistic practices and ethics would provide valuable insights into the evolving media landscape and inform guidelines and best practices for journalists.

While there is pressure to report on breaking news and dramatic headlines, more research should be done to identify the organizational and structural reasons that support this trend. Investigating how editorial

guidelines, industry demands, and audience preferences affect political reporting would provide insight into the larger forces that shape journalism practices.

Journalists, in this case, cannot dedicate time to other activities, as even if they were to try and take a break, the news cycle does not allow them to. It affects how journalists set boundaries for themselves and how much their work bleeds into their personal lives. There is also a generational aspect to this, as the younger generation is more willing to set hard boundaries to keep their work from their personal lives. With this in mind, the current working conditions inside the industry have made it harder for journalists to form interpersonal relationships outside of work, and the industry is not better for it.

METHODS

The literature study found a gap in our knowledge of journalists' work-life balance, particularly among male journalists. Most available research focuses on female journalists or generalizes the issue, providing little insight into the experiences of male journalists. To address this, researchers conducted a study investigating single male journalists' difficulties in building and maintaining personal connections within the 24-hour workplace demands.

The research used three theories as a basis for its methodology. First is Inter-Role Conflict Theory, which indicates that the multiplicity of roles can cause relational conflict (Rincy & Panchanatham, 2014), which also applies to the many roles journalists play in their personal and professional lives. Second is Sociocultural Theory, which refers to the unwritten social rules that affect decision making (Main, 2023). One manifestation of sociocultural theory is that journalists are more likely to think twice about committing to non-work activities. Lastly, Boundary Theory deals with the individual's management of work-life balance via segmentation or integration of roles (Bulger et al., 2007). Journalism requires balancing boundaries, and most journalists feel that this is a personal responsibility.

The study targeted ten respondents but only interviewed seven due to time constraints and unavailability. Purposive and non-proportional quota sampling approaches were used to ensure diverse viewpoints. Maximum variation sampling was also employed to capture a wide range of experiences.

Respondents must be full-time male journalists of any age, single, working in a 24-hour newsroom, and open to in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted in person or online, according to availability.

The researchers gave a semi-structured interview questionnaire with open-ended questions. The two-part questionnaire comprised a profile sheet (robotfoto) and in-depth questions about experiences, views, and coping mechanisms.

The University of Santo Tomas Journalism School's Institutional Review Board gave the authorization. Researchers utilized referrals and background checks to identify prospective responders. Before scheduling and conducting interviews, formal letters and consent forms were provided. The data was transcribed, cleaned, thematically organized, coded, and analyzed.

Ethical standards, including Institutional Review Board approval and consent documents detailing the research purpose, voluntary participation, risks, incentives, and anonymity, were emphasized. Respondents were given details about their right to withdraw at any time.

The study used a hermeneutic phenomenological method to explore the effect of journalism on interpersonal relationships. This method helps to identify social, psychological, and environmental elements that influence disturbed work-life balance. The data was evaluated for patterns and themes, taking into account sociocultural and structural impacts on respondents' experiences.

This technique revealed previously overlooked aspects of journalists' experiences, bringing new insights to the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the familiar demands within the newsrooms, journalists must encourage clear boundaries between work and non-work activities to avoid imbalance. Given these scenarios, the findings presented here show how these male journalists manage their boundaries and relationships within the confines of their work.

Using the methodology explained in the methods section, the researchers gathered diverse and insightful perspectives from qualified respondents, ensuring representation across all groups of interests and providing a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

The beats of the respondents interviewed differ, with some working multiple beats at a time. Another key difference was in terms of age and job tenure. The researchers considered those aged 20-34 as "younger journalists" and those aged 35 and above were considered "older journalists" within the context of this research.

Presented in Table 1 are the respondent's respective ages and beats. This is based on their respondent profile sheets.

Respondent	Age	Journalistic beats covered
A	26	Police, Defense, Judiciary, Education, Senate, Office the Vice President, Tourism, Bureau of Corrections
B	31	Agriculture, Crime, Politics, Social Welfare
C	22	Economics, Finance
D	24	Lifestyle, fashion, travel, politics
E	22	Justice, Business
F	45	Various
G	59	Lifestyle, entertainment, travel, tech, music, business

Table 1: Respondents and beats covered

With this, the researchers found four main themes: the impact of newsroom demands on work-life balance and romantic prospects, coping mechanisms and boundary management, and conflict resolution outside work. The researchers also looked into the demographic differences between the respondents to see if there was a distinct difference in behavior when dealing with workplace demands. Despite the stress that the journalism profession dictates, some of the respondents treat journalism as a "calling" and can still find fulfillment with the profession, manifesting their passion from the beginning.

"...When I was younger, when there was no social media yet, people only got into television. So, I grew up in Dubai. I grew up seeing a lot of reporters covering historic events on television. So, I wanted to become like them. So, I think that became the starting point on why I tried to build a journalism career because it's something that I really wanted since I was a kid." (Respondent B)

"I really love writing kasi (because) ever since before. Ever since I was a child, I've already discovered my interest in writing. And I wanted to find a job that would, na, ang tawag doon (what is that called)? That I will take advantage of my skill in writing. And journalism was the obvious choice. So that's why I pursued it." (Respondent D)

Coping mechanisms, as developed by these male journalists, are important in beating stress. The importance of personal activities—prayer, spending time with family (Mendez, 2022) are signs of healthy work-life balance in a high pressure environment.

Due to the tendency for male journalists to experience an imbalance between work and non-work activities and relationships, the questions also looked into their views on romance and dating, proving that most respondents prioritized their professional goals over romantic pursuits. Considering their schedules and limited

time to connect with others, building relationships with fellow journalists, especially those working in the same beat, is possible. Though sharing similar experiences and understanding the profession's demands could lead to stronger connections, dating fellow journalists creates problems, primarily resulting from how tightly-knit the industry is.

Most of the responses showed a nuanced view on dating other journalists in the industry. Aside from private conflicts such as public gossip and discomfort if they did work together, the biggest problem is a lack of time and commitment, which explains why most respondents preferred to date casually. Factors such as age gaps, different job levels, not regularly meeting other journalists, and even bad experiences with prior relationships have become factors as to why respondents have found it hard to start romantic relationships with fellow journalists.

With this in mind, the researchers emphasized separating one's personal and professional spheres to maintain peace of mind and effective performance on the field, with some finding their boundaries depending on what they prioritize most. Some prioritized family and personal time over work commitments, while others stressed the need for professionalism and control over personal information shared with colleagues. In essence, the many factors affecting boundary management and interpersonal relationships for these journalists are varied, with everyone having their reasoning and experience as to how they arrived at their respective perspectives and viewpoints.

Impacts of newsroom demands on work-life balance and romantic prospects

Most couples who marry in the Philippines usually do it around their late twenties to early thirties. National statistics have narrowed this down to 25-39 years old. Though the journalism industry does follow this trend to a degree, those who have remained single cite newsroom demands and their personal preferences as to why they have not actively pursued a committed romantic relationship.

Several respondents have cited that they prefer to date casually, with these relationships or situationships lasting for a short period before the relationship ends. Other respondents have said they have no time or opportunity to find a long-term partner due to work and other external circumstances.

"...Isa din factor yun sa ano ko, sa setup ko. And I know, napag-isipan ko na gusto kong sabihin na on-site, alam kong pagsisisihan ko yun kasi alam kong mahirap yun. Pero, ayun, siguro isa din sa mga consequence yun na wala kong nakukuha ng relationship. Or, like, wala kong nakukuha ng, let's just say, connection with other people. Especially with new people kasi, with your friends, siyempre, hindi mo na rin sila makakausap. I really feel empty. I really feel na-sad at times. Ganoon. Kaya nga ako nag-re-resort with dating apps or social media…I'm trying dating apps. May mga nakausap ako. Pero, um, I'm not really looking for a relationship. Pero, if we get there, we get there. Pero, not now. Hindi talaga ulit, ah, particular sa, um, romantic relationship." (Respondent C)

[One factor is my current set up. I thought about it and I know I will regret it at some point because I know it's difficult. But maybe one of the consequences of that is I cannot have a relationship...or life. I cannot have connections with other people, especially with new people because with your friends, you wouldn't be able to talk to them. I really feel empty. I really feel sad at times. This is why I resorted to dating apps or social media. I'm trying dating apps. I am able to talk to some people but I'm not really looking for a relationship. But if we get there, we get there. But not now. Never again, particularly a romantic relationship. (Respondent C)]

Other respondents such as Respondent E said he did not have time for courtship but said there was time for dates and romantic relationships after his work. The only challenge, Respondent E said, is dating may not be as often as possible and to a point where he is already actively pursuing a potential partner. He also said, however, that dating apps, like buying more tickets for a lottery, offers one "more chances of winning" because apart from romance, he is also able to expand his network which he was able to benefit from during his College days.

Though most studies on the issue of stress in the journalism industry have concluded that managing one's stress is a personal affair, this does not guarantee a surefire solution to navigating one's relationships. Though professional responsibilities can get in the way of romance, there is a line between this lack of time becoming an annoyance and it becoming a full dealbreaker. One respondent experienced this when his former girlfriend broke up with him a few years ago due to the journalist not allocating enough time for the relationship.

"...Probably the hardest for me, is that when my significant other left me during a coverage. Dahil wala na talaga ang time *(because I couldn't give more time to the relationship)* . Nawalan ako ng time sa kanya *(I ran out of time for her)*. And ang masama nun *(What's worse is that)*, it was like the start of the week, Monday. It happened Monday. I had to bottle up that emotion until Friday, until the weekend." (Respondent E)

This "lack of time" has been cited as a general reason why the journalists were not in a current relationship or only had past romantic relationships. However, the older journalists acknowledged that the newsroom demands set upon them would make it harder for them to have a romantic relationship in the first place. Spending time with friends and family would be challenging as well. The older respondents did not mind this as much, as they had a firmer grasp on their boundaries and could allocate time between work and non-work activities (Allen et al., 2020).

According to Boateng and Lauk, 2020, the limited availability of time for journalists poses a significant challenge in establishing and sustaining relationships outside of work. A journalist's schedule is not conducive to dedicating time to personal relationships or leisure activities. This only means that time is mainly dedicated to work or work-related activities and relationships, such as relationships with co-workers or potential sources for news stories.

This has resulted in these journalists refraining from pursuing romantic relationships as they recognize their inability to commit fully to such endeavors. This aligns with the findings of Allen et al. (2020), who emphasized the challenge journalists face in delineating between their work and personal lives, underscoring the critical importance of boundary management for maintaining positive relationships with peers and upholding ethical conduct in the field. Similarly, the study by Harro-Loit and Josephi (2019) highlighted the inherent difficulty in achieving work-life balance while working in a newsroom environment characterized by constant time pressure. As a result, journalists may struggle to allocate their full attention and effort to their personal lives due to the demanding nature of their work.

Coping mechanisms and boundary management

Due to a lack of work-life balance and round-the-clock demands within the industry, journalists have difficulty reinforcing their boundaries with fellow journalists and those outside the industry (Holton et al., 2021). These journalists suffer a high degree of stress, and if their name is associated with a big news story or controversy, they can receive death threats, which directly affect both them and their families.

In most of the interviews, the journalists talked about boundaries as either a rigid or permeable perception, noting that boundaries are up to the individual journalist to settle. The blurred distinction between personal and professional spheres concurs with the need to have positive relationships with others in the field (Allen et al., 2020), not just for upholding ethical standards but as a guide in delineating one's time effectively.

Scholars such as Lukan and Čehovin Zajc (2022) further highlight the impact of rushed journalistic practices on boundary management, for instance, when Respondent D's credibility as a reporter was compromised due to hurried reporting during a breaking news event. In this instance, the journalist's failure to wait for the priest's statement or conduct a proper interview resulted in a loss of trust and credibility.

The rapid pace at which news is disseminated can also jeopardize journalistic integrity, as Lewis and Cushion (2009) noted. The pressure to deliver breaking news quickly may lead journalists to sacrifice accuracy and thoroughness, eroding public trust in their reporting. However, despite the challenges, Lukan and Čehovin Zajc (2023) observe that journalists often maintain a strong sense of duty towards the public, driving them to remain dedicated to their work despite their difficulties.

Boundary management for these journalists usually involves time management techniques or flat-out ignoring work-related calls when on their day off. This relates to Arcalas' 2022 study, where the effects of stress on these journalists would cause strain in both work and non-work activities. Another facet of this is prioritization, and how most of the journalists interviewed either prioritize work or family above all else.

From this perspective, boundary management, according to the journalists interviewed, was contingent on what they prioritized in their lives and how they perceived these boundaries in the first place. Journalists who see boundaries as more permeable would be willing to make exceptions when necessary, but those with a rigid viewpoint of their boundaries are less willing to compromise.

Conflict resolution outside work

Like most professions, journalism can cause interpersonal conflict with those outside the profession. In the interviews, respondents outlined their methods for resolving conflict in their relationships, especially allocating time for relationships. One respondent recalled giving quality time and gifts to his former significant other whenever he was assigned to work outside the country.

Other forms of conflict resolution came in the form of clear and transparent communication between both parties. Communication is a tenet of every strong relationship and is crucial in both work and non-work settings. Several respondents said that one must "lay their cards down" if they plan to pursue a romantic relationship while staying in journalism.

In this vein, the journalists interviewed had varied ways of solving relational conflict, but these mostly applied to how journalists dealt with their editors. Several of them emphasized the need to communicate their boundaries to their superiors to preserve their personal time. They also said there had been a divide between the desk editor and reporter, making communication much harder for them.

When asked about what specific policy changes they would want to implement within the newsroom, the most common response was for editors to respect the day off of the journalist. There have been several cases when editors asked their reporters to cover despite it being their day off, and this has caused friction between reporters and editors.

Though several of the journalists interviewed did have specific policy guidelines they wanted implemented, some were content in their current news agency. Regarding the findings, some respondents were content with the agency they worked for, which affected how they perceived their relationships at work.

With these factors in place, the researchers were able to gather a nuanced understanding as to why these journalists have stayed single, how newsroom demands have played a role in such relationships, and how their current coping mechanisms (Arcalas et al., 2022) and boundary management strategies have helped them navigate the industry.

Macho mentality of male journalists

Within Filipino culture, men are expected to have a facade of control, a mentality where they are able to solve everything by buckling down and getting the work done. Males are seen by society as providers and pillars of strength in the community, and this means that men are not allowed to be vulnerable towards others, especially those of the opposite sex (Valledor-Lukey, 2012).

In journalism, this manifested in how most of the activities done by the male journalists outside of work were solo activities, with social activities mostly done with family. This would also explain the lack of commitment that these journalists face in terms of romantic relationships, with the common point of contention within the relationship is the lack of time that the male devotes to the relationship due to the nature of journalism as a profession.

"It's part of the job because in journalism, you are in a daily grind basis. So, it means like assignments will be given to you in the morning and the report should be finished by evening. So, I guess it's, you know, deadlines are very tight." (Respondent B)

Other respondents such as Respondent E echoed this sentiment, with the general response giving a "never give up" mentality. Males under the influence of machismo or "macho mentality" have a hard time processing their emotions (Angeles, 2001; Pingol, 2001) in a healthy manner, resorting to methods that either distract them from the painful emotion at hand or bottle it up until a later date. An example of this is how Respondent E dealt with his past breakup, "bottling up" the feelings regarding it throughout the week until he could finally break down over the weekend. He noted that since he received the news during a coverage, this encouraged him to bottle up the emotion instead of processing it in the moment.

Age is also a factor in the pervasiveness of macho mentality amongst the respondents. The younger journalists were somewhat forthright with their struggles. They were able to articulate how the stresses of the profession affected them emotionally, while the older respondents were more likely to brush off these stresses as part of the job, or just something that they did not have to dwell upon.

This model of masculinity is similar to how Madonna Kolbenschlag's nonfiction work titled Exit the Frog Prince, talks about the male ideal. The essay talks about how men have been deceived by the male ideal

that society advertises to them. In the work, the "ideal man" is only concerned with his goals, and not his emotions. This "ideal man" is someone who is calculated and deliberate, almost emotionless—and that only in his liberation, he would be free from the ideals imposed upon him by the patriarchy (Kolbenschlag, 1979).

In the journalistic context, machismo becomes the driving force as to why journalists force themselves to make deadlines no matter what, even at the cost of their own mental and physical health. The profession of journalism, for the respondents, is the patriarchy in microcosm, a reinforcement of the ideals pushed onto them by society—to mask emotion, to be self-sufficient, to see themselves as indispensable to the point of self-sacrifice. Consequently, the circumstances around them, along with their personal preferences, lead them towards a path without much romantic entanglement or commitment to anything else other than their jobs.

Another manifestation of the macho mentality within the respondents was the lack of concrete responses as to how they felt regarding the instances where they expressed annoyance with their editors, or had gone into relational conflict with those outside of work. Respondents would talk in terms of a plotline, actions leading to specific consequences. Take this quote from Respondent G:

"...You will always feel stressed from your bosses. The media is nothing new... - It's nothing different. So, in the same way that all employees would have conflicts. They would have arguments with their bosses. Then, journalists are also experiencing that." (Respondent G)

Talking about stress in such a manner also exhibits how private they are as individuals, and how this need for privacy in one's personal affairs is another sign of not wanting to be vulnerable with others. Such responses highlight an overarching problem in how Filipino males see themselves. Despite the proliferation of pro-mental health rhetoric and a society that is slowly opening up to the concept of allowing men to express their own emotions, it still remains to be seen if this will help in letting Filipino males, especially male journalists, open up to their emotions.

Does age make a difference?

The respondents ranged from people in their early twenties to late fifties, and as stated previously, the younger journalists were more likely to voice their opinions on stress and problems with those at the desk. Meanwhile, the older journalists were more keen to say it was just a part of the job, such as Respondent F saying that he grew up in an environment where the "editor is the law."

Such perceptions also impacted attitudes towards their boundaries, which were getting overstepped, and the means of correction. The researchers found that the demographic differences between journalists in their early twenties and those who are much older significantly impacted how they perceived their boundaries and relationships outside work. The younger respondents felt the brunt of the balancing act that journalists have to face, and this had either left their relationships intact or stagnant at best or faced relationship conflict or fallout at worst.

In tackling how the stress of the newsroom has affected their ability to maintain relationships outside of work, several respondents noted that this was just part of the job and that it was really up to the journalist in question to manage their time.

"It's part of the job because in journalism, you are in a daily grind basis. So, it means like assignments will be given to you in the morning and the report should be finished by evening. So, I guess it's, you know, deadlines are very tight." (Respondent B)

However, the older respondents touted the importance of knowing where one's boundaries lie, and this, combined with their prior romantic experiences, had made them more wary of pursuing romantic relationships. They also have a different attitude towards people at the desk, with respondents highlighting the significant differences between reporters and editors. In exploring these dynamics, the critical difference between younger and older journalists is how they perceive and manage their boundaries and their effect on external relationships.

Implications on newsroom culture

The primary aim of this study is to explore and understand the challenges male newsroom journalists face that compromise their personal relationships and work-life balance. One of the key themes that emerged was the effects of newsroom demands on the journalists' work-life balance and romantic prospects. Journalists' limited availability makes building and maintaining personal relationships outside work complex since their schedules prioritize work-related activities.

The first theme discussed how newsroom pressures affect journalists' work-life balance and romantic opportunities. Because of the participants' limited availability, building and sustaining personal connections outside of work was challenging since their schedules favored their professional responsibilities. This is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the problems journalists have in managing work and personal life, which commonly leads to a preference for casual dating or avoiding partnerships altogether (Reich & Godler, 2014).

Furthermore, journalists' coping mechanisms and boundary management strategies emerged as a prominent theme. Participants confessed to employing a range of coping strategies, including unhealthy habits, to deal with the stresses of their professions. Navigating the shifting boundaries between the personal and professional realms demands boundary management, which has repercussions on ethical standards as well as efficient time management..

Conflict resolution outside of work demonstrates how newsroom demands influence journalists' relationships and the efficiency of their coping mechanisms. Setting boundaries with editors and handling interpersonal conflicts are essential strategies for balancing personal and professional commitments, which were all influenced by the machismo that was exhibited by the respondents. These findings shed light on why some journalists choose to stay unmarried, how work demands affect relationships and the importance of coping strategies and boundary management in the workplace.

In terms of the theoretical framework, Role and Inter-role Conflict Theory explained how journalists struggle with maintaining personal relationships while fulfilling rigorous professional obligations. Sociocultural Theory emphasized the importance of social norms and societal expectations in male journalists prioritizing work over personal life. Finally, Boundary Theory provided a framework for understanding how journalists separate or connect their professional and personal lives to maintain work-life balance. By connecting these theoretical viewpoints, this study comprehensively evaluates male newsroom journalists' challenges and their coping strategies to overcome them.

The findings in this study have contributed to the understanding of male newsroom journalists' newsroom demands, boundary management, and conflict resolution reflected in their work-life balance or the lack thereof. This study has yielded findings that include long-term theoretical and practical implications for all in the field of journalism in general, especially for male newsroom journalists and media organizations.

However, these findings have limitations due to non-responsiveness of respondents, lack of generalizability, and the limited scope. Respondents were emailed before 20 December 2023 but did not respond. The researchers followed up on the first week of February, but the prospective interviewees declined due to unavailability and scheduling conflicts. Another set of respondents was emailed, but there were no responses to the researcher's invitations, specifically for those over 35 years old.

The second limitation concerns the lack of generalizability. The study does not provide evidence of a causal link for individuals. In addition to determining the purposes for which the knowledge claims may be intended, many changes in research methods are necessary. A generalizable sample to the larger population or context of interest and biased or unclear sampling methods pose issues regarding the findings' credibility and transferability.

The final limitation that could be addressed in future research is the limited scope. The study focuses on male journalists, albeit not restricted to one gender. The study required respondents who were practicing journalists; hence, the researchers tried to "fit in" with their schedules. Some of the journalists the group tried reaching out to might want to avoid talking about their personal lives as required by the study, leading to their unresponsiveness.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the researchers set out to find how male journalists navigated their relationships and boundaries both inside and outside the newsroom as they coped with the various demands of the industry. Most of the discussions in the interviews revolved around the three main themes identified by the researchers: the impact of newsroom demands on work-life balance and romantic prospects, coping mechanisms and boundary management, and conflict resolution outside work. These discussions shed light on various aspects, including professional responsibilities, lack of interest in romance despite socialization, emphasis on self-growth, and the utilization of modern dating strategies.

Male journalists are often drawn to their profession by a deep-seated passion for writing and journalism, viewing it as a fulfilling calling despite its demanding nature. However, the rigorous demands of the newsroom pose challenges to maintaining a work-life balance, especially in pursuing committed romantic relationships. Due to their demanding schedules, many male journalists opt for casual dating or forego relationships altogether. This leads them to develop personal strategies to manage boundaries between work and personal life, particularly in romantic endeavors.

The prevailing mentality among these journalists, wherein when they struggle to balance their work and romantic life, they would prefer to let go of one aspect rather than choose an option that would not further complicate matters. They often avoid revealing their emotional distress by prioritizing work over relationships, masking personal struggles behind professional dedication.

Moreover, the respondents typically preferred partners outside their profession, acknowledging the time constraints and challenges of journalistic careers. This preference highlights younger journalists' struggles balancing work and personal life, often resulting in difficulty establishing and maintaining relationships outside of work. To cope with the stress of their profession, male journalists employ various strategies such as spending time with family and self-care activities, which are crucial for managing stress and achieving work-life balance.

Interpersonal conflicts, both within and outside the newsroom, are common among journalists. Effective conflict resolution relies on transparent communication and clear expectations regarding work-related commitments. Male journalists advocate for policy changes within newsrooms to better respect their personal time and days off, emphasizing the importance of mutual understanding and cooperation between journalists and editors.

However, the research faced two main limitations, namely in terms of its scope and focus on romantic prospects. Despite setting clear criteria, the researchers struggled to reach a diverse group of participants due to a limited network and conflicts in scheduling, which was the most common reason why interviews would fall through. The machismo mentality is evident as a big factor in the challenges experienced by the researchers due to the implications that male journalists prioritize work over personal relationships, possibly due to societal expectations regarding masculinity and career success. This prioritization may reflect traditional gender norms that emphasize the importance of professional achievement over emotional fulfillment or interpersonal connections.

Moreover, though a male researcher approached the respondents during the interviews, several respondents still showed hesitance or reluctance to delve into more detail about their

personal and romantic lives, possibly due to concerns about privacy and personal boundaries, which made it harder to extract insights during the interviews.

Given male journalists' challenges, the researchers would recommend comparing how the opposite sex perceives such challenges to compare and contrast how they cope with stress and to what extent this affects their personal relationships. Future research endeavors should aim to understand the efficacy of these coping strategies in mitigating stress and fostering resilience while exploring potential gender differences in their effectiveness. Additionally, such comparative studies can shed light on whether cross-adoption of coping mechanisms between genders could offer beneficial strategies, especially in navigating the reporter-editor relationship.

Another recommendation would involve studying male journalists who were once married but had trouble maintaining the marriage because of their work, with the researchers focusing on how work stress affected thereby hearing from these journalists about how they managed work and family, we can learn ways to help them balance their careers and personal lives better. This research can lead to ideas for supporting male `journalists in keeping long-term relationships aside from family life.

Lastly, the third recommendation deals with how newsrooms support their journalists, with future research detailing how well mental health services work inside newsrooms and if journalists are using them in the first place. Understanding how newsrooms care for journalists' mental health and other stress factors can lead to better policies for journalists regarding mental health and other newsroom hazards. By implementing these recommendations, news organizations can empower their journalists to thrive amidst the industry's challenges while maintaining fulfilling personal relationships and mental well-being.

This study reveals aspects often overlooked in newsrooms, particularly male journalists' desk roles and reporting duties, and how these affect their romantic lives. With this understanding, editors or news companies can develop practical solutions tailored to support journalists' lives outside of the newsroom. By exploring these dynamics, this study sheds light on such challenges, which helps newsrooms implement measures like flexible scheduling to help them address challenges effectively, particularly in maintaining romantic relationships amidst demanding work schedules.

Furthermore, this research noted valuable insights into journalists' coping mechanisms in the context of their romantic relationships. This study saw the need to integrate mental health initiatives and services within news organizations to support journalists facing personal challenges while managing professional demands and potential romantic prospects.

Lastly, this study provided insights into male journalists' preferences regarding seeking and being in relationships. It clarifies that work is not the sole reason they remain single; instead, they often seek partners who understand the nature of their work. These partners are characterized by their ability to comprehend the demands of the journalist's profession, eliminating the need for constant conflict within the relationship.

In the relentless pursuit of breaking news and chasing deadlines, male journalists often sacrifice personal relationships. The demands of the newsroom leave little room for nurturing romantic connections, leading many towards singlehood. Their dedication to their craft becomes a double-edged sword as the choice between career advancement and companionship becomes increasingly stark. Ultimately, it is a harsh reality that success in journalism often comes at the cost of love—but it is a risk most will take.

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