

Factors Promoting or Preventing and Relieving the Burnout of Newspaper Sports Journalists during a Prolonged Strenuous Period: Case Study of Estonian Sports Journalists during the Rio 2016 Summer Games

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to find out what the work demands and resources of Estonian newspaper sport journalists were during the Games and how they affected them. This article examines the possible burnout elements in sports journalists' work through the lens of Job Demands and Resources model and Conservation of Resources Theory. During the research period, seven journalists in two newspaper newsrooms were observed for two days. In addition, interviews with eight journalists were carried out. Although it might be assumed that working abroad might be more stressful than staying in a familiar environment, it appears that the journalists who stayed in their homeland exhibited more components of stress during the Olympics when they had a couple of days off, while the journalists in Rio had none.

KEYWORDS

Burnout – JD-R model – sports journalism – journalism – stress

1. Introduction

Since a sports journalist's work often lacks problem-oriented news and the stress of watchdog duties (Rowe, 2007), it might seem that the work is less complicated. Yet, there are other influences that have an effect on sports journalists' work. For instance, they have to work at irregular times (including night shifts, weekends and holidays) that keep them away from their families. In addition, they have to interview people who have just faced a negative outcome and sometimes clash with fans (Reinardy, 2006).

Additionally, sports journalists face the same problems, changes and demands as other journalists: fragmented audiences, convergence, multitasking and multi-skilling (Hutchins & Rowe, 2010; Boyle, 2013). Yet, sports journalists report that they are more accepting of the digital requirements and increased workload than other members of the newsroom; they report that they do not feel the demands to be very burdensome (Ternes et al., 2017). According to Wallace (2013), journalists might not see convergence as a threat, but instead as a chance to improve oneself.

Some empirical studies (Cook & Banks, 1993; Cook et al., 1993; Reinardy, 2006,

2011) imply that stressors have less influence on experienced journalists, because they have learned coping mechanisms that help them deal with or avoid these stressors. Moreover, they have developed strategies and routines of how to complete their work (Ivask et al., 2017). Older journalists have also reported to have higher levels of “flow” than younger colleagues, which means that they enjoy work more and show increased levels of self-efficacy (Burke & Matthiesen, 2005).

This study aims to find out what are the resources and demands in sports journalism during the Olympics, which in the long-term might have an effect on journalists’ well-being and job security.

2. Literature overview

2.1 Changes in newsrooms and job security

Traditional newsrooms have been changing due to the rise of new media platforms and keeping up with the demands of the audience, while at the same time having to deal with the downsizing of the newsroom and the loss of revenue (Hutchins & Rowe, 2010; Reinardy, 2011, 2013; Boyle, 2013; Ekdale et al., 2015).

Journalists now have to find ways to present the same news in different media (Deuze et al., 2004). But convergence as a process leads to problems among journalists, who are not willing to expand their “toolkit” with new set of skills or who are trying to do work that is unfamiliar to them (Saltzis & Dickinson, 2008; Reinardy, 2011).

Journalists have reported that multimedia work “conflicts with their values, challenges the decades-old division between media, and raises issues of training” (Saltzis & Dickinson, 2008, p. 225–226). Multitasking and the increased workload lead journalists suffering from the lack of time to focus on in-depth investigating and reporting (Singer, 2004; Saltzis & Dickinson, 2008; McGuire & Murray, 2016; Ternes et al., 2017). There are opinions that multiskilling and converged positions might lead to the decrease in quality of the material (e.g. a video journalist cannot produce at the same quality as a video crew) (Wallace, 2013). Another issue is the increase of time pressure that has negative impact on other resources: despite wanting to produce quality materials, journalists do not have the capacity to do so (ibid.).

Another threat to job security is feeling incapable of mastering new skills. Older journalists might fear that young journalists are able to adjust to newsroom demands better and faster and find big stories on the Internet that they cannot. Additionally, there is a tendency of young journalists willing to work more and even during their time off; in some newsrooms, young journalists are already preferred to older high-paid journalists (Phillips, 2015).

Journalists are questioning how long they will be allowed to practice their work in a traditional way (Reinardy, 2011), which might lead them to feel insecure in their own newsroom. Feeling insecure at the workplace could, again, have a negative effect on their quality of work (Schreurs et al., 2012). Additionally, journalists, who are unhappy at their workplace often feel too insecure to try out innovative approaches (Ekdale et al., 2015).

There have been concerns that journalists leave the field because they cannot handle the decrease of quality of their work and the conflicts with professional practices that, in turn, could have an influence on their work quality (e.g. meeting the sources face-to-face) (ibid.). Newsrooms expect journalists to change their routines and practices, but at the same time they lack evaluation/awarding systems and fail to communicate work expectations as well as explain current layoffs (ibid). In order for a journalist to feel more secure in their job and not consider leaving, they need to have changes communicated to them, be awarded, have a relationship with their supervisor, and have promotion/career opportunities (Smucker et al. 2003; Schreurs et al. 2012).

Witnessing people losing their job at a workplace or being once laid off personally makes the workers feel at risk (Gallie et al., 2017), which is already happening in newsrooms (Reinardy, 2013). Journalists identify themselves through their work, so if a journalist is being laid off, it could have an extreme influence on their own integrity (Reinardy, 2012), as well as on future career options.

Studies about job security show that those who feel the most insecure at work are young and have less experience (Cheng & Chan, 2008). Employees cope with the stressful work and dissatisfaction by leaving the field or job (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Lee & Jeong, 2017); young journalists have showed higher tendencies of considering to leave the field than their older and more experienced counterparts (Reinardy, 2011).

2.2 The Job Demands-Resources Model of Burnout

In accordance with the JD-R model of burnout developed by Evangelia Demerouti et al. (2001), the working conditions can be split into two general categories – the demands and resources of a job. These conditions exert either supportive or repressive influences on the outcome of the work depending on the balance of the factors or the lack of it. The employees are at risk for the biggest exposure to burnout in conditions where the burden of demands is greater than the proportion of resources (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Several years after the construction of the model, Wilmar B. Schaufeli and Taris W.T. (2014) arrived at the conclusion that the strengths of the JD-R model are its robustness, flexibility and applicability on different working environments. Many models of work-related stress and burnout emanate from the idea that the work related strain stems from the lack of balance between job demands and resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The job demands are mostly associated with one component of burnout – exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001).

If the job demands outweigh the resources, the worker has to make a bigger effort to accomplish the job goals, which comes with physical and psychological costs including irritability and exhaustion (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Workers can recover from that kind of an extra exertion with time off, taking on a different kind of task, or working on less demanding tasks. But if that kind of a recovery is not possible or is insufficient, the worker is forced to be continuously active, which puts strain on him or her (ibid.).

The same problems arise if the resources dominate over demands; for example,

Estonian sports journalists experience several low seasons during a year, which leads to decreased workload and more recreational time; at the same time, it is harder to achieve the employer's goals, which causes anxiety or boredom.

Stevan Hobfoll's conservation of resources theory (COR) claims that resources enable people to withstand stressful periods, but if our main motives are in danger or if we are not able to acquire or protect them, the outcome is stress (Hobfoll, 1989). Resources are physical, psychological, social, or organisational facets of an occupation that are elemental to achieving one's work goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). They may be objects, personal traits, conditions, or energy that the person values – these may be expertise, self-esteem, learned resourcefulness, socio-economic status and employment (Hobfoll, 2001). For example, the resources of an organization can be wage, career opportunities, work security, support of a supervisor and/or colleagues, team harmony, role clarity, participation in decision-making, the importance of a task given to the employee, autonomy, and feedback (Bakker & Demerouti 2007).

Resources counter the job demands and the physical-psychological cost related to demands as well as stimulate personal development and learning. Resources are not only essential to meet the demands of the work, but they are important by themselves. This correlates generally with the COR, which posits that the main motives of people are to accumulate and preserve resources (Hobfoll, 2001).

Job demands are physical, psychological, social, or organisational facets of work that require constant physical or/and psychological (cognitive and emotional) exertion or skills, which are linked to physical or mental cost (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Demands (strain, emotional burden and ambiguity of work role) might result in sleeping problems, exhaustion and health problems (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

2.3 Burnout and stress

In the study examining the burnout of journalists through the lens of COR-theory, Scott Reinardy (2013) found that the lack of investments in the newsroom and deficiency of full-time employees decreased the quality of journalism. This in turn put an increased strain on journalists. Journalists with low motivation and job satisfaction experienced more exhaustion, cynicism and only had average professional efficacy (ibid.) – which, according to Maslach et al. (1996), are three key components of burnout.

Maslach et al. (2007) define exhaustion as a feeling of being drained as well as the inability to relax and recover (which is one of the first reactions to the job demands). Cynicism refers to detached feelings towards one's job and colleagues resulting in a person distancing themselves from their jobs and coworkers. At first, it is a coping mechanism to handle exhaustion. As a consequence, the employee can become inefficient, developing a declining feeling of competence and of tasks being impossible to complete. In addition, such employee might develop health-problems, including: depression, cardiovascular disease or psychosomatic disorders (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Burnout has a considerable cost for health and organizations (Harnois, 2000). In Europe generally as well as in Estonia, stress and burnout are an expanding problem resulting mainly from downsizing, technological and informational stress, and

work overload (Jürisoo, 2004). Journalism and its influence are shrinking (Harro-Loit et al., 2016) – at the same time the influence of user-generated content, social media, algorithms (blogs, Facebook etc.) are growing. To increase profits and raise productivity, media companies use mostly two strategies – technology and strict managing of human resources (Maslach & Leiter, 2007). Those who remain employed have to deal with increased workload, new demands of technology and changes in their working routines. For example, many journalists work now in shifts and this arrangement might lead to sleeping problems, which are derived from overworking, work overload, low social support and discontent with one's job (Doi, 2005). To abate the burden of stress, some people may try to recover with the help of alcohol or psychoactive substances (Maslach et al., 2007).

Similar to other fields of journalism, sports journalists are in danger of being laid off since they also compete with user-generated content (Harro-Loit & Lauk, 2016). The proportion of web-content is growing, the number of sports-news pages in the newspapers is declining, and journalists are constantly under pressure to make a decision where to publish their material – in the newspaper or on the webpage or on social media (Reinardy, 2013).

Time pressure in journalism is growing; more than half of Estonian journalists believe that they do not have enough time to do research or proper groundwork for a news, while at the same time the average amount of work hours has increased (Harro-Loit & Lauk, 2016). These conditions put journalists under pressure, cause stress and expose them to burnout. This happens because with time pressure, the quality of their work might be affected and this might go against the journalists' values (Saltz & Dickinson, 2008; Reinardy, 2013; McGuire & Murray, 2016).

Stress and burnout have several similar characteristics (for example, insomnia), however stress is a preceding phase of burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004).

To some extent, stress and job demands can be even positive, but if they are too vast the extended effort could lead to burnout (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Stress has several definitions. Endres and Wearden (1996), who studied journalism education, defined stress as “a reaction to demands on people that tax or exceed their abilities to handle those demands. Stress is a reaction to other people, events, situations that you may find difficult to handle” (p. 33). Endres and Wearden found that the five biggest stressors of journalists are: personal desire for perfection, supervisor's demands, deadlines, working conditions, and conflicting judgments on what to focus on whilst writing news. Stressors are different aspects that evoke stress reactions in individuals (von Onciul, 1996).

Maslach and Leiter (2007) emphasize the personal and organizational dimensions in preventing burnout as well as mediating relationships. Several authors (Maslach, 2007; Jürisoo, 2004; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014 etc.) emphasize the idea that burnout is not only the worker's personal problem that has to be dealt only on a personal level, but is a problem for both the person as well as the social environment. Therefore, burnout has to be prevented and dealt with on both levels.

3. Methods

The aim of this study was to identify the demands, resources, possible exhaustion and burnout factors during a more strenuous period than the everyday work of Estonian sports journalists i.e. during the 2016 Olympics in Rio. The research questions of this study were:

Research Question No. 1: *What are the factors that promote the development of burnout in sports journalists during a prolonged strenuous period?*

Research Question No. 2: *What kinds of strategies are the sports journalists and their organizations applying to counteract or prevent burnout?*

In order to understand the complexities of sports journalism, a case study was conducted in sports newsrooms during the Olympics. The study sought to explore the reporting of the Olympics as it was happening, therefore it was crucial to be as close to the newsrooms as possible. Two methods of qualitative research were combined: interviewing and observation. A frequent criticism of the case study methodology is the issue of generalizations drawn from a single case (Tellis, 1997). However, in case study research, it is more important to fully understand the case than have a large sample size (Zainal, 2007).

Other burnout researchers have used questionnaires (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), diaries, observations (Demerouti et al. 2001), and interviews (Reinardy, 2008). Since the field of sports journalism and burnout in Estonia has not been widely researched, qualitative methods helped to map out the field (Hirsjärvi et al., 2010; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Bakker and Demerouti (2007) noted the application of a qualitative approach could provide knowledge about unexpected organization-specific demands and resources, which might be overlooked with a standardized approach. An intrinsic case study has to be zealously focused on a unit, person, or institution and rely exclusively on the living account of the group (Stake, 2010). Combining two methods, particularly the function of asking explanations in the interviews about what was observed earlier in newsrooms, allowed the researchers to use more of an explanatory in this case study, instead of an exploratory approach (both in Yin, 2009).

The observations were carried out in the middle of the Olympics in the sports newsrooms of two of the biggest daily newspapers in Estonia. The observations were a preparation phase for the interviews, but nevertheless offered important insights and data. The interviews involved eight sports journalists from three of the biggest dailies in Estonia as well as one television sports journalist. Both observations and interviews took place in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia.

3.1 Observations

Observation allows for “clean” data, meaning that it may show properties of a workplace and its environment that the worker might not be able to verbalize. One of the strengths of observation is the possibility to observe social interactions in their natural environment (McLeod, 2015). At the same time, the observer has to keep in mind that he or she may interpret the observed phenomenon according to his or her views and experiences (Mey et al., 2010; Given, 2008).

The observation was non-formalized and the observer was a non-participant. The observer remained in the background and did not interfere with the natural dynamics of the newsroom since the ideal is to exert as little influence as possible (Mey et al., 2010). This approach provided minimal intervention, but it limited the amount and quality of the data collected since the observer did not have an overview of the activity on the computers. The journalists knew and saw that the observer was there but he was not known to them previously – he was not their colleague from the same newsroom or an acquaintance.

The observations lasted nine hours each time, which amounted to 18 hours in total. The study had some limitations while conducting observations, for example some of the journalists tended to work from home, which left the newsrooms half-empty at times.

3.2 Interviews

The interviews took place two weeks after the Olympics, which allowed optimal time for journalists to take some time to recover and reflect. The expert interviews were semi-structured, meaning questions were previously prepared and categorized into three categories (preparation, work procedures, recovering). The characteristics of semi-structured interview helped the researchers to follow the natural flow of the conversation. The gathering of data was flexible, it was regulated according to the situation and respondent (Fassinger, 2005). Semi-structured interviews were preferred since this approach enabled the authors to research how sports journalists themselves perceived their workload during the period.

3.3 Research sample

There were eight participants in the study. The sample of interviewees contained equal amounts of younger and older journalists – four out of the eight journalists had been working in the field for ten years or more and other four had less than ten years of experience. The ages of the interviewees were: R1 – 38 years, R2 – 45 years, R3 – 23 years, R4 – 55 years, R5 – 46 years, R6 – 24 years, R7 – 27 years, R8 – 31 years. A year after the study, four out of eight respondents had left their positions/field for various reasons, among those were both experienced and less-experienced journalists.

Half of the respondents worked during the Olympics on the spot in Rio, Brazil, and the other four stayed in Estonia – this enabled the researchers to compare the differences and similarities between different work environments and experiences. Three of the respondents were female, five were male.

The observations included sports journalists who happened to work in the newsroom while the researchers were observing. This included seven journalists in two dailies, one of which was a female journalists. Most of the journalists were in the age group of twenties-thirties, while one was in their forties. Additionally, there were two experienced (>10 years) journalists present during the observations.

4. Stress and demands

Similar demands and stress-inducing situations of both journalists who went to Rio and who stayed in Estonia are presented; then demands and stress that were specific to the journalists who stayed in Estonia or went to Rio.

The journalists said that in some cases, their newsrooms started to prepare for covering the Olympics early, thus the stress and workload increased not only during the Olympics but a few months before as well. There were some projects and tasks that the journalists needed to fulfill; for example, a special issue of the Olympics was published in a newspaper, a TV journalist had to participate in the planning and preparing of the live broadcast at the beginning of the year. Sports journalists were engaged with different tasks before and after the Olympics, which led to some journalists having to postpone a vacation until it was convenient for the whole newsroom.

R2: “It is not a good time or a right time for vacation. Although, of course, I could use some rest after a stressful event like this. The older you get, the more you realize you should take a rest.”

Suffering from a lot of stress and no rest leads to easily falling ill. One of the journalists fell ill while working in Rio, and when he returned to Estonia, he had to attend the station because his health rapidly worsened.

R3: “Well, I had and I still [1,5 weeks after Olympics] have tonsillitis and I do not feel good even right now [...] I have been sick the whole time.”

Further, during the observation in Estonia, a journalist came to work showing visible signs of poor health (coughing and sneezing). Even though he was ill the day before, he still had to work the night shift as well. The observer did not witness any relieving adjustments in work schedule because someone fell ill.

One of the stressors was deciding if the news the journalist had just produced should be published in a newspaper and/or should be published online – this was observed in the newsrooms conversations and mentioned in the interviews. According to some interviewees, the possibility of a scoop was the main aspect taken into account during the decision making process; if the news ends up online as soon as possible, it might lead to getting more clicks, reach and sharing on social media. The news kept for the newspaper was published the next day, which (according to some respondents) presented a risk because another outlet could still get the scoop and publish it. Other aspects that were taken into consideration were the exclusivity of the material and the importance of it.

R3: “I got my hands on an exclusive material, [...] I sent it to my newsroom in Tallinn at 2 a.m. with a note: ‘You can publish it now on the Internet if you want, if not, keep it for the newspaper.’ This was a really difficult decision and led to the question whether the online dominates over a newspaper or not.”

According to one of the journalists, one way to simplify the decision-making process and to solve the problem was to produce different versions of the story, for example a video, a picture gallery, a shorter version of the news, etc. That way, one version of the news would be put on the Internet, the other one printed in the newspaper.

4.1 Demands and stress of journalists who stayed in Estonia

There were situations and demands that were specific to the journalists who remained in Estonia during the Olympics. The journalists mentioned that during the Games, sports news were in the spotlight, so journalists received more feedback and reactions from the audience than usual. The feedback consisted mainly of critiques of the reporting and writing as was observed in both newsrooms, mostly through the belittling of the misuse of terminology or the lack of (ground)work that the reporter had done. During the observations in both newsrooms, angry letters from the readers were read out loud by the reporters. One of the journalists in the sample mentioned in the interview that this kind of criticism negatively impacted him, because he had worked very hard to produce quality news, but the readers and even his colleagues did not recognize the effort.

Sports journalists followed a schedule when working in the newsroom, and one of the newsrooms had a night shift. There were cases in which the night shift ended at 7 a.m., which meant that after four hours of sleep a journalist had to get back to work. Even though the Estonian journalists did have some days off, they still reported feeling very tired. To combat their tiredness, some of the journalists drank energy-drinks during the night shift, and reported feeling anxiety and confusion in the morning due to the exhaustion.

In several interviews, the respondents said that the exhaustion was so severe that the journalists were not capable of socializing with close friends/family during a day off or after work. Further, they did not have time to discuss the work issues, problems or everyday life with others despite staying in Estonia.

R7: “Those moments that you have time off from work, you would rather be alone, not with ten other people who are your close ones.”

Younger journalists struggled more with switching off their work mode than the older journalists.

One newsroom recognized that the journalists struggled with time management during the previous Winter Olympics in Sochi (Russia), so for the Rio Summer Olympics the newsroom managers hired additional reporters to reduce the workload of the fulltime journalists. Newsrooms had different strategies of how to assist journalists during the stressful period. Journalists reported that most of the newsrooms held short meetings in preparation for the Olympics. Further, due to the change in working routines during the Olympics, having new ground rules was necessary.

R6: “We had a meeting a couple of days before the Olympics, a four-week

work schedule was put together and then we talked about some rules and expectations, for example what online journalists needed to do and what designers of the newspaper needed to take into account. The meeting lasted for half an hour.”

In some cases, the journalists felt that the meetings were too short and insufficient. For example, journalists had to stand in for the managing editor, who was in Rio, during the newsroom meeting. A sports journalist’s day usually starts during the second half of the day and lasts until the late hours of the evening. In this case, the substitute journalist had to be at the meeting in the morning, even if he had just finished the night-shift.

Despite the fact that the journalists were in a role of the managing editor, they did not feel they had authority or autonomy. Since the journalists were criticised in the newsroom, they reported feeling uncertain and unstable. Afterwards, they reported the information and critiques gathered from the meeting to the managing editor in Rio, who disagreed with it. One of the stand-in journalists experienced negative attacks from both of the newsroom editors at the meeting as well as from the supervisor in Rio.

R7: “There was a situation at the meeting, where it was said that we should put more photos on our newspaper section, make them larger, create graphics. We reported it to our supervisor in Rio, who reacted saying ‘what the hell, there are already too many photos on the pages, we will not use more’.”

Additionally, the interviews revealed that there were problems with not having the authority in the newsroom on the collegial level as well. The journalists at the newsroom were in charge of how their newspaper designer should design the news in Rio. The author provided some guidelines about what he was expecting from the designers and the journalists at the newsroom forwarded them to the designers. Yet, the designers of the newspaper did not take the guidelines in some cases into account and the journalist who had forwarded the guidelines needed to explain the situation to the author in Rio.

All in all, the journalists felt that the rules and expectations for everybody involved should be stated clearer beforehand. For example, in one newsroom, the managing editor had not prepared design elements for the newspaper, when he left for Rio the journalists who stood in for him had to hastily solve the situation. As those journalists suffered from role ambiguity, there were also conflicts between colleagues and supervisors since they felt uncertainty about authority and autonomy.

4.2 Demands and stress of journalists who went to Rio

There were situations and demands that were specific to journalists in Rio. Estonia and Brazil are in different time zones (time difference of four hours), which was reported as actually working partly in the journalists’ favour compared to previous or the next Olympics: the journalists on the spot could write the news before going

to sleep or do it even the morning after. Therefore, the differing time zones did not really affect the journalists' work. On the other hand, jet lag did have an effect on journalists' sleeping schedule, even weeks after returning to Estonia.

R3: "I am still [three weeks later] having problems with jet lag [...] I was off to bed around 3 a.m., woke up at 8 a.m. for three weeks in a row."

Further, the journalists in Rio mentioned local conditions, the arrangement of the competition, and the poor English speaking capability of the local volunteers as stressors. Sports journalists said that they had to solve technical and personal problems in an environment where locals could not communicate in *lingua franca*, which amounted to a considerable level of stress.

R3: "I should have studied a bit of Portuguese before. During the Olympics I had to see medical staff, find and buy a new laptop, solve money problems, had issues with my phone [...]. Solving these problems was really difficult, because local people could not speak English!"

There were situations where the two main problems – language and transport – were intertwined for the journalists. There were special buses that the journalists could use, but the interviewees said their schedule was unclear, which in some cases resulted in the journalist arriving in the wrong place. The inability to ask for help from a volunteer also made the journalists feel stressed. Additionally, the journalists said that they could not trust the local transportation and they felt that organizers reacted poorly to complaints about these problems. Experienced journalists, who had been to the previous Olympics, felt that the arrangement of the Olympics had never been this low in quality.

R2: "Everything was as it had always been, but ten times worse! There were loads of small, but important issues that went wrong and this could lead to an impression that the whole event was rubbish."

Other interviewees made similar observations, but they were less critical because they were taking into account the cultural space, norms and traditions that could have influenced the organizing.

5. Resources of journalists

In this sections, the resources of both journalists in Rio and Estonia are presented. A journalist's interest in the sports themselves acted as a resource: when something positive happened during the Olympics, the journalists felt emotionally exhilarated. For instance, when the journalists were asked: "What do you remember about this period most vividly?" their answers mainly touched on the excellent performance of athletes, whether or not the athlete was Estonian. The answers to this specific question, however, did not focus on other possible topics (arrangements, organization. etc.).

R3: “I have a top 3 emotions: the moment that Rasmus Mägi [*an Estonian athlete*] made it to the final [...], Maracana’s football [...], a girlfriend of the Estonian athlete Maicel Uibo dove over the finish-line and won a gold medal.”

Both the journalists in the newsrooms and the journalists in Rio also mentioned that social support from their colleagues was very important to them. Further, even journalists from competing newsrooms provided support and help to the journalists. Sometimes, the support was benign feedback on grammar errors or typos that a journalist had made in the news. Other times, the feedback was also a positive acknowledgement of what the journalist had accomplished.

5.1 Resources of journalists who stayed in Estonia

The journalists who stayed in Estonia reported that they had some days off. For example, in one of the newsrooms, the journalists got two days off during the Olympics period, which was said to be an improvement since during the last Olympics they had no days off. Since they felt very stressed out and tired from work, the days off could have been a resource. Some of the journalists, however, did not stop working, so these days off did not work as a resource in actuality.

Journalists in the newsroom reported to have a strong understanding what their main role was: to write news for the web, not for the newspaper, and to support and stand in for journalists who were on the spot in Rio.

Further, another resource was the social support from the colleagues in the newsroom. There were situations when a reporter was too tired, the other ones helped proactively to divide the workload between each other. The experienced colleagues encouraged the younger ones to take a rest and stop focusing on work during their time off.

In both of the observed newsrooms, the managing editor vocally analyzed clicks and comments on the news at times. If the feedback was negative and it was passed on in front of the colleagues, then the journalists perceived this as a practice that evoked negative emotions. On the other hand, if the feedback was positive and the work of the journalist was highlighted, it was perceived as a positive practice.

5.2 Resources of journalists who went to Rio

In the interviews, the journalists said they were working the entire time they were in Rio. The journalists mentioned that visiting one of the greatest sports events had a compensating effect that helped them to avoid feeling overly tired or bored. Even though the journalists in Rio were on duty every day, they did not perceive it as a burden. They only reported feeling a little tired during the last days of the Olympics. In some cases, sports journalists compared themselves with athletes, saying that only the best will end up going to the Olympics.

R3: “Your dream as a sports journalist is to get to the Olympics, it is comparable to a dream of a top athlete.”

Sending journalists to Rio acted as a motivational aspect, since it was viewed as an acknowledgement for the work the journalist had done so far. This was perceived as an indicator of prestige and trust (getting quality material/stories) as well as having a variety of skills (handling multimedia and taking photos).

The journalists from different newsrooms supported each other in Brazil. For example, if a journalist was not familiar with the sport event he had to cover, a colleague, even from another newsroom, who was more knowledgeable offered background information. Further, at times they shared a taxi. Competition, however, was not always that friendly. For instance, there was a situation where a journalist from one newsroom wrote news based on the questions that another journalist asked during a press conference, which caused some friction.

6. Demands or resources?

There were some aspects that could be considered demands or resources depending on the employee's personal judgement, so they could not be divided into concrete categories. The characteristics used to determine who would be sent to the Olympics were experience, trustworthiness, the number of sports one specializes in and the popularity of those events. The interviews showed that there might be a new aspect that could be superior to these others: the capability of producing materials for different platforms. The younger journalists mentioned that the information technology equalizes them with their experienced colleagues, since they can use technology to get information that in previous years was available mostly only through personal contacts acquired over years of working on the field. Older journalists also mentioned the rise and importance of Information and communications technology (ICT).

R3: "Nowadays in print media, it is quite easy to manage, just open Google and search or check a fact, or open social media and ask from a colleague – this all is much easier than it used to be."

The journalists said that it did not play a role where a journalist was, whether in Estonia or in Brazil, the data of a competition ended up online almost at the same time. It could be argued that due to older journalists' incapability of mastering new skillsets fast (taking photos, recording videos, editing them, writing on smartphones, etc.), gives more opportunities to younger and less experienced journalists, who are used to different opportunities that the ICTs offer.

R5: "Newsrooms used to send on the spot more experienced journalists and less experienced journalists with more versatile skills. Now it is understandable that younger journalists are faster and more skilled to fulfill the needs of online journalism, there has to be a balance between experience and new skills."

In addition to online journalism and its demands, social media played a crucial role in the journalists' work as well, since the reporters and editors published news-

bites on Twitter and Facebook as was observed in the newsrooms. Further, journalists used also Facebook and Skype as communication platforms.

R3: “You saw a competition and you had no idea that you would produce a story from there, but in the end you could not help but to write the news because the event was exciting [...] because you have this idea in your head that you were chosen to be here, you need perform as excellent as the top athlete whose performance you just saw.”

One example of the diversity of skills journalists are expected to have is a case in which a journalist in Rio had to also be the photographer, even though this was not a part of his everyday work. This gave the newsroom an opportunity to cut back costs, as one journalist remarked.

R5: “X, who’s actually a writer, was accredited as an photographer. Since Rio is extremely far away [from Estonia] and [sending people there] is costly, compared to travelling by plane in Europe you know [...] so in essence he had to write and take pictures. Because of that his workload was definitely burdensome.”

Since the hotel did not have reliable internet, some of the journalists had to travel to the press centre to have access to a better quality Internet connection. The journalists mentioned that the organizers offered a good Internet connection and technical support for photographers. This allowed the journalists to work on a news piece and publish it while travelling on a bus to or from an event. There were limited areas with good Internet connection, so the journalists had the pressure of producing the materials on the spot as soon as possible. On the other hand, the lack of good Internet in the hotel in some cases could have limited the working time and force journalists to rest as well.

7. Managing stress and increased workload

There were different practices used among journalists with different work experience levels to manage stress or avoid it overall. The more experienced sports journalists said that they tried to divide their work into more manageable parts, so that their tasks would not accumulate. During their leisure time they watched TV, went out to have dinner, or read a book. This way they avoided being overwhelmed by work and tried to relax while being in Rio.

On several occasions, the more experienced journalists admitted that they knew what to expect and were mentally prepared for what the Olympics would be like, the younger and less experienced journalists on the other hand mentioned that they did not know how to prepare for the Olympics. The younger journalists tended to work during their leisure time and after working hours, taking little or no time for resting.

R4: “I said to the younger colleagues that they should take a time out

whenever they can. This did not mean they had to go to bed early, no: they just had to understand that they do not have to write a story about everything they see. Just watch the Olympics on the TV and enjoy it.”

Relaxation was also an issue among journalists in Estonia even though they had a couple of days off per week. It was difficult to unwind after a stressful period at work, so a couple of journalists admitted to drinking alcohol to relax.

R1: “I know it sounds really bad, but the only way to fall asleep was to drink half a bottle of wine. This is why many journalists are alcoholics. I did it during the football European Masters’ Cup as well... so a glass... or three helps you to relax.”

One of the journalists in Estonia mentioned that at the end of the workday, which was around 10:00 p.m., he would go home and finish the article there – he was willing to work on his spare time. Sports journalists reported that they enjoy their work and the field they write about. Even on a day, off the journalists would watch the Olympics, some of them stayed up for a long time because their favourite event was on TV, which resulted in them sleeping less and heading to work tired. One of the journalists said that when a really interesting basketball competition was at 1 a.m., he had to watch it even though he did not have to write about it.

R6: “There were opportunities to have the leisure time... but it was filled with the Olympics anyway. The body might have gotten some relaxation, the brain did not.”

Sports journalists said that since they are interested in sports, they did not feel that keeping up with the Olympics was exhausting. On the contrary, they were very emotional about the events they favoured and everyone kept an eye on how the athletes of Estonia competed.

8. Discussion

The interviews indicated that journalists thought that their resources and demands were in balance, meaning that the JD-R model suggests they were not at the risk of burnout. The journalists who were in Brazil were away from their usual setting, people they are close to, and had to adapt to time-zone differences and changes in their sleep regimen as well as some stressors caused by the on-site organizing (transport, unstable internet connection, distant location of a hotel, organizing and changes of the competitions). It seemed that the strong positive emotions of witnessing the performances of top athletes at the competition and the motivation that comes with being sent to Rio balanced out those stressors, which prevented burnout.

Even though the journalists who went to Rio were in unfamiliar working conditions, it was surprising to find that they did not evaluate exhaustion levels higher than journalists who remained in Estonia. On the contrary, in many cases journalists

who stayed in Estonia indicated more symptoms of exhaustion. Other indications for exhaustion included illness (possible characteristic of declining physical health) and the need to use alcohol for relaxing. In one case, alcohol was considered as a necessary remedy to fall asleep after a stressful day. Using alcohol or drugs may be one mechanism for dealing with stress (Maslach et al., 2007). Therefore, although the interviewees did not rate their exhaustion levels high, there were indicators that referred to the characteristics of stress and possible burnout. Since working while being ill encumbers and prolongs the healing process, it can affect the quality of work. Weakened health is one of the possible symptoms of burnout or being under a severe stress (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). For example, one young journalist was working in Tallinn while being ill. Unwillingness to admit exhaustion can stem from social pressure from the newsroom: the job is stressful for everyone and journalists might feel embarrassed to admit the severity of its impact on them.

There is a possibility that interviewees downplayed the exhaustion they experienced during the coverage of the Olympics. This argument is supported by indirect hints where respondents talked about how colleagues warned them that the Olympics period will be difficult; also, there were many allusions to conversations where they evaluated previous coverings of the Olympics as exhausting.

One of the most productive young journalists in Rio said that because of being active and producing a lot of material he had repeatedly gotten monetary bonuses. The fact that organization rewards productivity might be one of the reasons why young journalists, who usually get lower salaries than their experienced colleagues, feel the need to work even when they have a day off or they have fallen ill. This, on the other hand, could lead to exhaustion and burnout that could have severe effects on someone's career; they might leave the field because of health problems or not feeling that their work is recognized by the audience or by colleagues.

Journalists who stayed in Estonia were able to work in a familiar environment, but had additional tasks and workload (night-shifts, supporting the colleagues in Rio, substituting for the managing editor of the sports section and reporting to editor-in-chief). They also had to abide with the timezone in another country. Due to this additional pressure and work, the amount of demands increased. The journalists who went to Rio had different resources that balanced out the demands (e.g. recognition and prestige of being sent to the Olympics, which resulted in higher motivation). Comparatively, the journalists who stayed in Estonia did not have the same amount of resources that could have balanced out the demands. However, it was still possible for the journalists in Estonia to get positive emotions (a resource) from the performance of top athletes and their competitions via TV.

The opportunity of seeing the greatest athletes and teams competing, whether abroad or at home, provides positive emotions. Maslach et al. (2007) argue that positive emotions alleviate some of the cynicism (one of the burnout signs), they also support commitment and increases in motivation. In other words, if the job provides positive feelings, the attitude of an employee towards work is more optimistic. This results in the employee trying harder to accomplish something extra as well as being creative and open-minded.

The distribution or the amount of clicks of the news on web might be considered

positive feedback since the journalists whose news had many clicks, biggest reach and received the most comments were acknowledged and/or rewarded by the editors in the newsroom. Feedback is a necessary resource (Reinardy, 2013; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014) – it gives the worker a sense of if their efforts are valued, it is related to the clarity of roles and it gives a clearer overview about their productivity.

As there is more public interest in sports journalists work during the Olympics, journalists get more feedback during that period, which the journalists admitted was mostly negative. Further, the journalists' work was critiqued by different editors when there was dissatisfaction with the design, focus of the story or the volume of news.

Another mechanism to manage stress that the journalists used was collegial support; journalists jokingly shared both organizational and public critique between themselves, meaning they used the recourse of social support to balance out negative emotions.

Social support is one of the most important resources (Demerouti, 2001; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014), be it from family and friends or colleagues. The journalists reported that during the most stressful period they had very little contact with family and friends. Even though sports journalists who stayed in Estonia had some days off, they preferred to spend those days alone, which meant that the journalists did not use the opportunity to share emotions, talk about their problems or positive experiences, and rarely engaged in activities other than work. Becoming withdrawn and reluctant to communicate are also the characteristics of burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Reinardy, 2013; Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996).

Without any coping mechanisms or positive feedback at a stressful workplace, employees might leave the field or job (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Lee & Jeong, 2017). Four of the journalists in the sample of this study do not work in the same newsroom anymore and another one has expressed strong intentions of leaving.

8.1 Versatile skillsets and job security

Older journalists have been considered valuable for newsrooms, as they have experience and a larger network of sources than their younger and less experienced colleagues. Although less experienced young workers are considered to feel most insecure at work (Cheng & Chan, 2008), there are shifts and changes happening in the newsrooms that could lead to job insecurity among older more experienced journalists and a big part of it lies in the usage of new technology.

The results showed that ICT acted as a demand and a resource for the journalists depending on the age and skills of the journalists. The journalists mentioned that the main criteria for sending a journalist on the spot used to be experience in the field, in the current study, the journalists emphasised the importance of technical skills and speed over field experience. Quick availability of information simplifies gathering of the material and lessens the importance of personal contacts/sources; therefore, it equalizes younger journalists with more experienced journalists who have worked in the field longer.

The opportunity to visit the Olympics acted as a resource for the younger journalists and the newsroom received different materials for different platforms from

them in turn. Technical skills might even substitute for the experience gathered with seniority, because it is cost-effective for the newsrooms. Giving a journalist different tasks – recording videos, taking pictures, interviewing, writing etc – means that one person is now bearing the workload of several people (e.g. a photographer), tilting the balance between demands and resources and a journalist may therefore be more exposed to burnout.

Since the variety of technical skills is the younger generation of sports journalists' main characteristics at the moment, it can start to undermine the job security of experienced journalists in the newsroom, who cannot or do not want to adapt with the demands of new media and stay true to the traditional values and practices of journalism (Saltzis & Dickinson, 2008; Ekdale et al., 2015; Phillips, 2015). One of the journalists with more than 20 years of experience in this sample was laid off a couple of months after the study was completed, which indicates that job insecurity is an issue now among experienced journalists as well.

This tendency could indicate a possible change in the newsroom, where these skills are becoming more important than experience in the field, meaning, the experienced journalists are not in the "safe zone" or as valued as they used to be – since the proportion of web-content is growing and the number of sports pages in the newspapers is declining (Reinardy, 2013a). This could be positive for young journalists' career opportunities (to be raised to the same level as older more experienced journalists), but more skills can lead to increased workload and witnessing layoffs can create job insecurity (Gallie et al., 2017) and regret or doubt in career choice.

Multitasking and producing materials for different platforms led to several issues (Hutchins & Rowe, 2010; Boyle, 2013). The other issue was deciding whether the news should be published both on an online outlet and social media or not. These kinds of decision-making processes could have been agreed upon in advance, before going to Rio. It appears that the journalists did not have a definite rule to go by and this was a stressor, especially for the younger journalists. On the other hand, it shows that the journalists had autonomy, which is a resource (Schaufeli & Taris 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001, Reinardy, 2013) to decide what to do with their news. In a couple of cases, however, the journalists let the newsroom editors decide, as they were not able or willing to do it. The fear of making mistakes and suffering from the consequences could be a part of these situations as well.

People in an information society are used to having a 24/7 updated news-feed and since the newsrooms are in an economic turmoil, they are willing to cover the need, which is why newsrooms have night shifts. Night/shift-work on the other hand is exhausting and could harm the health of the journalists (Doi, 2005) – possibly causing depression, cardiovascular disease or psychosomatic disorders (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). This in turn means that journalists had to cover demands (night shift and producing news) of the newsroom with their personal resources (health, well-being, and quality of life). The journalists who take sick leave affect the productivity and profits of the company.

In addition, publishing on different platforms prevents journalists from concentrating on developing one specific skill. Increased workload and time pressure results in less-experienced journalists being in a disadvantaged position. Being de-

pendent on technology caused additional stress when technical errors occurred (problems with the internet connection, laptop failure, finding a new device afterwards in unfamiliar environment, etc.). This added to the overall load of stress that the journalists experienced.

Web opportunities (access to information or telework opportunities) offer the option of telecommunicating and saves the journalists time. On the other hand, it incited journalists during their spare time to focus on working instead of relaxing. This result was evident among the journalists both in Rio and in Estonia – journalists gave up a resource (time to recover) to follow a demand (working).

The journalist's constant working reflected another issue that was admitted by the journalists: the incapability of switching off from work to relax, which was a problem of younger journalists, who at times did not see a problem in it even though their experienced colleagues did. This might have strengthened their job security, because the newsroom witnessed their efficiency and productivity (Phillips, 2015), but it might have a negative impact on their health and job commitment in the future.

As a strategy to avoid being overwhelmed by demands, more experienced journalists tried to avoid working on their time off. A different approach might lay in work security – older journalists have already established themselves and hence do not feel the need to prove themselves. Younger journalists are still searching for a reasonable workload and proportion between work and leisure.

9. Conclusion

The aim of this article was to find out what the work demands and resources of newspaper sports journalists were during the Olympics and how these demands affected the journalists. This study included eight in-depth interviews with journalists from four different newsrooms as well as two non-participant observations carried out in two dailies' sports newsrooms.

Younger and less-experienced journalists tend to work more than their more experienced journalists. The collisions between work and free time brought tension and exhaustion, whereas older colleagues did not experience the same problems. More experienced journalists tended to use more of their leisure time for relaxing and did not work during their time off.

Due to their versatility of skills, the younger generation of journalists has a chance to equalize with older colleagues in a newsroom – they get to go to the Olympics because of their technical skills, whereas some years ago a greater emphasis was put on journalists' experience.

More experienced journalists are usually less stressed at work, but the shift in the type of stress felt by journalists is due in part to older journalists' lack of technical skills and their subsequent fear of job loss related to the inability to compete with younger journalists' technological toolsets.

The journalists reflected that the newsrooms had prepared for the Olympics, but the results showed that in some cases the preparations were insufficient, which caused some additional stress for the journalists.

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