



## ***Burnout and its relationship to psychological hardiness among psychologists***

Marya Sgatni<sup>1,\*</sup>, Ahmed Zerzour<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Larbi Ben M'hidi University (Algeria), [marya.sgatni@univ-ueb.dz](mailto:marya.sgatni@univ-ueb.dz), Laboratory for the development of quality systems in institutions of higher and secondary education

<sup>2</sup> Larbi Ben M'hidi University (Algeria), [zerzour67dz@yahoo.fr](mailto:zerzour67dz@yahoo.fr)

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### **Abstract:**

This study aimed at highlighting the phenomenon of burnout and its relationship with psychological hardiness to the psychologist, considering that burnout is a serious situation resulting from difficult work conditions that can deplete the psychological and physical resources of the psychologist, contrary to psychological hardiness which is considered as one of the psychological variables that relieve the impact of stressful events, thus, it represents a source of resistance, resilience, and protection from stress. Therefore, the study results showed that specialists who demonstrate low psychological hardiness reveal increased signs of burnout, in contrast to more resilient specialists who commit themselves to their actions and control their reactions to stressful, frustrating and challenging situations easily.

**Keywords:** Burnout, Psychological Hardiness, Psychologist, Psychology, Stress

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\* Corresponding Author.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Although our contemporary life is full of urbanization, development, technology and distinctive economic transformation, it has brought with negative aspects which led to badness, then to psychological deterioration. Thus, we must all realize that we are standing on a continuity, in which one of its parts is the state of adjustment and the other is bad adjustment. However, we are not far from the pits of psychological pressures that lead to the deterioration of this adjustment in front of any sudden life situation that a person neglects in the course of his life (Majdy, 2013, p.141)

Therefore, interest in psychology was important with the existence of bad life adjustment, as it endeavours to help individuals and solve their problems in the face of this tremendous momentum of stress, psychological and mental disorders that humanity is exposed to in the present era. As the need to activate the role of the psychologist in all aspects of society was a special and necessary requirement, the latter whose fields of work vary in psychiatric clinics, hospitals, correctional institutions, and the fields of professional and educational guidance and private centers. Moreover, his responsibilities are also determined from the psychological evaluation: applying standards, conducting psychological tests and clinical interviews to diagnose the case, contributing to diagnosis, providing counseling services and psychotherapy which is a search in the depth of the patient's mind to identify his hidden conflicts by relying on different schools according to the theories of psychology to understand the disease causes then putting in place therapeutic interventions which are appropriate for the patient to modify his behavior and awareness of his emotions and feelings, as well as to deal with the symptoms in a way that help him to achieve adjustment and restore balance (Salem, 2012, p. 55-56). The diversity of the psychologist's roles and the demands of his profession require him a psychological and personal adjustment for the success of his mission, as he may suffer from psychological pressures related to the profession that stand in front of the work goals and prevent him from carrying out his role. Moreover, the circumstances may range from internal or external ones, including: the lack of training in the field, lack of recognition of the profession by those around him and marginalization, work relations, lack of means and material capabilities, the nature of the profession that makes him dealing with vulnerable and psychologically disturbed groups that require him making double efforts which increase the injury to the pressure of the profession, work wages, and the physical conditions (heat, noise) All of these together cause high pressures that impede and reduce the competence of the specialist and may lead to the so-called phenomenon of psychological combustion, which is one of the most prominent obstacles that appear in the field of work.

**Freudenberger (1974)** was the first one to use the term burnout to refer to what afflicts professionals who face obstacles that prevent them from fully carrying out their duties, where their feelings become inadequate and unable to perform their work to the required level, as they often end up stressed, in which the professional attempts to adapt with it (Walaa, 2019, p.306)

**Christina Maslach (1977)** defined burnout as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, dullness of feelings and low personal achievement which occurs among individuals working in social services (humanitarian work). Therefore, it can be considered as a type of work stress that brings some negative effects of stress. (Zimbardo, 2015, p.2)

Since the profession of a psychologist is one of the noblest human professions, it requires a high level of internal energy and a special pattern of service in order to extend a helping hand. However, falling as a victim to burnout is due to several difficulties and factors in which energy begins to diminish over time. Besides, with these limitations and obstacles to the nature of the profession, the psychologist exerts more and more effort which drains his endeavour. Thus, he becomes exhausted psychologically and physically.

The symptoms of burnout develop as any of the pathological symptoms. According to Maslach : the symptoms of burnout begin with the first dimension which is emotional exhaustion, as providing assistance to others leading to a sense of exhaustion of organic and emotional energy, As for the third dimension, it is the feeling of inability to achieve personal achievement, and the lack or shortage of professional competence, as at this stage this feeling can develop negative or even inhuman attitudes (Boudoukha, 2009, p. 13). It is clear that many and various symptoms appear : feeling tired, exhausted, feeling helpless and losing interest in work, mocking others, depression and suspicion of the value of life, and social relationships, as negativity appears in self-concept (Ghobari & Abou Shaira, 2015, P. 185) In addition to isolation, lack of emotional participation, lack of balance and stability, weak ability to face work and its demands. It should be noted that the causes leading to psychological burnout differ according to individual and personal differences, as well as to the psychological endurance, the method of containing and

dealing with the sources of burnout, and the level of psychological and social support surrounding it.

As the specialist is exposed to all the above-mentioned symptoms, in which they impede his work and affect his professional competence and performance, but as it is said, "every disease has a cure". Just as there are causes of burnout, there are protective solutions for all psychologists and professionals in any profession.

Mental and physical health can be preserved through a positive trait which is Psychological Hardiness. As it is a mixture of attitudes that provide courage, motivation and strength to transform stressful conditions from potential problems into opportunities for personal growth (Mund, 2017, p.154)

According to **Kobasa (1979)**: Psychological hardiness consists of commitment versus alienation, control versus powerlessness, and challenge versus threat. As people with high psychological hardiness commit themselves in everything they do (commitment), besides, they believe and act as if they can affect the events that disrupt their lives (control), moreover, they consider change not only natural but a barrier to development (challenge). (Kobasa et al 1983, p.42)

Psychological hardiness is one of the personality features which help the individual to deal well with stress and protect him from psychological burnout. Thus, every psychic must not take care to succumb to the profession to the point that everything valuable in life loses meaning and interest.

Even though the profession of a clinician is the essence of the work of all people, the individual devotes himself to the welfare of others, as this work will be vital to what the individual can maintain his balance in his life through psychological hardiness. However, if the contrary happens, the individual's life will become narrow and distorted, as this leads to a negative impact on himself, which is burnout, as it extends even to the life of his family and his personal relationships, including the respondents. " (Wicks, 2007, p. 43)

Accordingly, this study aimed to clarify the concept of burnout, how does it appear, its main symptoms and its causes, as well as to identify psychological hardiness and the preventive role that it plays in burnout. Moreover, in order to find the relationship which links psychological hardiness with burnout by a psychologist.

## **II- Identifying the psychologist:**

The psychologist is considered as a link between the respondent and the accurate diagnosis. Moreover, as a specialist he must have a set of positive qualities which make him a successful element in his dealings with the normal and the misfit. Thus, these features are necessary because they assist to adapt well to all climates. Furthermore, the specialist will be able to understand others, their motives and frustrations, in addition to the positive traits of the specialist, his personality must be stable, mature and with emotional balance, and a distant view of all the duties he addresses. (Atouf, 1986, p. 85)

### **2. 1. A psychologist is defined:**

According to the APA Dictionary (2007): Clinical specialists are those in clinical psychology and PhD, who have received training in research methods and techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of various mental disorders, they also work primarily in health and mental health clinics, in research or in academia, as well as in collective and independent practice. (Vandenbos, 2015, p.193)

According to **Marzillier and Hall (1999)**: "Clinical psychologists are specialists in mental, psychological and health care, their main activities include: psychological evaluation and psychotherapy"(Knight, 2002, p.5)

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The latter conducts the process of psychological care which is defined by the Dictionary of Psychiatry and Mental Medicine as "an individual or group treatment aimed at assisting the patient to adapt and cope with his illness and his real condition through a therapeutic relationship, in which the therapist attempts to reduce the anxiety of the disease, he also helps him to get rid of his problems and dealing with them. " (Aouad, 2011, p. 395)

Psychological care is divided into diagnosing mental, psychological and social disorders, drawing a treatment plan commensurate with the nature of the case, Moreover, establishing and evaluating treatment programs, and modifying the behavior.

A psychologist needs to succeed in his profession as a personal competence, his ability to make appropriate decisions, the ability to form human relationships with others, he also must be able to perceive his patients in a more comprehensive social framework. Furthermore, his ability to deal with colleagues and work institutions, with self-respect and understanding his shortcomings and advantages (Ibrahim & Askar, 2008, p. 48)

While performing his role, the specialist may encounter a number of difficulties which are various in relation to the treatment, from the inability of the respondent to express what is inside him, or his unwillingness to treatment or his lack of conviction in the feasibility of psychological treatment, or even the lack of experience and that of skills necessary for the care of the specialist due to the lack of training courses. Furthermore, there are social difficulties related to the negative perception of the psychologist from the community and colleagues in other professions, and administrative difficulties through being deprived of the documentation grant and pedagogical holidays, in addition to the weak and low wages (Debraso, 2010, p. 76).

Furthermore, the nature of the spatial framework which is not prepared to hold sessions with the respondents, the lack of tests, diagnostic methods and evaluation, conflict with the rest of the team responsible for cases, as they are the most prominent difficulties faced by the psychologist and his exposure to a set of accumulated pressures leading to the incidence of psychological burnout.

### **III- Burnout**

The concept of burnout is a relatively recent concept, Freudenberger is considered to be the first to use this term in the early 1970s to refer to the physical and emotional responses to work pressures in humanitarians.

**Freudenberger (1974)** defines burnout : the failure and exhaustion, as this is through the imposition of excessive demands on the energy, strength and resources of the individual, thus the employee becomes disabled. (Freudenberger, 1974, p .160)

Whereas, **Maslach** defined it : as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, dullness of feelings and low personal achievement which occurs among individuals working in the field of social services (humanitarian work), therefore it can be considered as a kind of work pressure that carries some negative effects of stress. (Zimbardo, 2015, p.2)

In other part, both **Maslach and Leiter(2005)** defined it as a chronic state of disharmony with the profession, it is not only the feeling of sadness or that you are going through a bad day, but it is a significant crisis in your life, it is explained through 3 points :

- Burnout is a loss of energy through a feeling of exhaustion and attrition, with disturbances in sleep and attempting to stay away from the situation for a while, but upon return, the relationship remains bad, with the requirements increasing more and more unreasonably.

- Burnout is a loss of enthusiasm, in which the spirit of work gradually fades and is replaced by cynicism and negativity in everything related to the profession, as the respondents or clients represent a burden and the bosses of work who constitute a threat.
- Burnout is the loss of confidence, when losing energy the individual loses the reason to continue working. So that, he feels a loss of effectiveness, as well as an increase in suspicion of self-worth that frustrates his relationship with himself. Thus, it is difficult for him to find a solution to get out of this state (Maslach & Leiter, 2005, pp. 2-3)

### 3.1. Causes of Burnout:

According to **Maslach & Leiter (1997)**, the causes of burnout are due to the difficult work environment instead of their focus on the individual himself (the employee). According to them, "Psychological burnout is not a problem of individuals themselves, but a problem of the social environment in which they work."

Thus, they determined six sources of burnout in the working environment:

- Work overload: The employee feels that he has many burdens that he must fulfill.
- Lack of control: the employee feels that he has many burdens that he must fulfill in a short period of time and through limited resources.
- Insufficient reward
- Absence of justice (injustice), unfairness
- Breakdown of community: social isolation with the large number of devices and accounts. As it creates burnout for the employee
- The value conflict: the individual is in front of options that contradict his value system. (Skovholt, and Trotter-Mathison, 2016, p. 104-106).

### 3.2. Burnout Symptoms:

**Beverly A. Potter (1996)** introduces the following group of the burnout symptoms as follows:

**-Negative Emotions:** Episodic feelings of frustration, anger, depression, dissatisfaction and anxiety are part of life and work. However, people who have fallen into a burnout cycle usually experience these negative symptoms of emotions until they become chronic. Ultimately, the person complains of emotional exhaustion.

**-Interpersonal Problems:** Feeling emotionally drained makes interaction with people at work and at home more difficult. When inevitable conflicts arise, the victim is likely to overreact with an emotional outburst or intense hostility. Thus, this makes communication with co-workers, friends, and family increasingly difficult.

The victim also tends to withdraw from social interactions. As this withdrawal is most evident among humanitarian professionals who often become isolated and they cannot be reached by the people who are expected to help him.

**-Health Problems:** As a person's emotional reserves are depleted and relationships with others deteriorate, the bodily resilience of the exhausted victim decreases. Therefore, simple illnesses increase, such as colds, headaches, insomnia and back pain. There is also a general feeling of fatigue and collapse.

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**-Declining performance :** During the burnout process, a person may feel bored and unable to be enthusiastic about projects. In other cases, a burnout victim may discover that focusing on projects becomes more difficult. Furthermore, the efficiency is affected and the quality of production decreases.

**-Substance abuse:** To overcome the stress associated with functional conflict and performance degradation, a person often consumes more alcohol, eats more or less, uses more medications (including prescription and over-the-counter treatments),he also smokes more cigarettes. Furthermore, he eats more sweets , drinks and more coffee. Thus, this increase in drug use exacerbates the problems.

**- Feeling of Meaninglessness :** This is a common form, especially among burnout victims who were once very enthusiastic and dedicated, in which enthusiasm has been replaced by cynicism, as the work seems useless (Beverly, 1996, p.2).

#### **IV - Psychological hardiness :**

is a proposition of positive psychology, as it is one of the immune personality traits, which is considered at the forefront of the path of resistance, thus, to maintain psychological and physical health, performance and increase in productivity.

Kobasa proposed a hardy personality as a source of positive resistance to the negative effects of stressful life events on health, Kobasa (1982) defined it : as a set of personality traits or characteristics composed of (commitment, control and challenge), which act as a source of resistance and facing stress, and enriching the positive life (Kobasa et all, 1982, p.392)

**Another definition by Kobasa (1979) :** People with psychological hardiness are protected from stressful life events and situations, because they share some emotional, cognitive, behavioral responses, also, preventing stressors leads to improve general health.(Mund, 2016, p.34)

According to Kobasa, individuals of high resilience are more able to bear the negative effects of life stress. Therefore, they are less likely to have disease than individuals of low hardiness, according to Kobasa, their resistance to disease is supposed to result from the perception of life changes as less stress, or the presence of resources in a person which enable him to deal with these changes with minimal damage.

**4.1. Dimensions of psychological hardiness :** Individuals have high psychological hardiness which makes them having positive effects in the course of events that they are going through. Thus, this is through the three dimensions, namely : commitment, control and challenge. As Kobasa believes that these components are related to the extent of the individual's high ability to challenge environmental pressures, as well as to convert those bad events into opportunities for growth. She also indicated that a deficiency in the three dimensions leads to psychological burnout (Ghaleed, 2019, p. 213)

**-Commitment: Kobasa (1979)** defines commitment as an evident feeling in the individual as he has values, goals, and abilities that he believes in, and their importance, commitment rather than self-estrangement, which is the individual's tendency to participate in activities rather than alienation (kobasa, 1979,p.420).

**- Control :Kobasa and others (1982)** argue that control is a tendency to feel and act as if the individual were influential rather than powerless in the face of external forces (Reich et all, 2010, p.115).

- **Challenge** : According to **Bartone (1989)**: Challenging people believe that they can find wisdom through what is learned from experience rather than easy routine and rest. (Maddi et al, 1998, p.78).

According to **Mund (2016)**: challenge makes people motivated in their environment and trained to respond to the unexpected. It is a belief in change and not stability, as it urges them to go into new and exciting experiences, and consider them as opportunities for personal growth and not a threat to their security (Mund, 2016, p.35)

## **V - Burnout of the psychologist:**

**5.1. The Burnout of a psychologist:** it is known that the happiest people who are the most compatible with their work or their families or even the well off, they also feel multiple frustrations, as disappointments, conflicts, constant daily stress factors, and our requirements for the better expose us to pressures (Magdy, 2013, p.141)

It is evident that there is no life without pressure. As each of us experiences it in a different form and level, regardless of our different status, educational and cultural level. As our responses to the situation are completed, but according to the differences of individual disparities, Rainer Maria Rilke says : "Do not believe that person who seeks your sympathy, and to relieve you, as he lives without anxiety amidst calm and useful words, even his life is full of difficulties and sorrows, if it was otherwise, he would not have been able to find these words "(Wicks, 2007, p.16) Since, the psychologist has a certain amount of characteristics, including sympathy and a sense of the other (he feels what you feel). Regardless of whether he passed or passes through situations that differ or are similar, or close to what the respondent is going through, he believes that the respondent suffers from problems haunting him. Therefore, it is based on the life experiences that the specialist went through, the ethics of the profession and his distinctive features which enable him to conjure the appropriate words. However, it also does not mean that he is a psychologist, as he is not subject to burnout. But the problem for many psychologists is that the causes of burnout are often quiet, and serious to the point where they fail to notice them until it causes them a lot of damage. In this context, Marshall Maluhan's contact view was proposed to describe burnout and how to respond to it. "If the raw temperature rises by one degree every ten minutes, how will the bather know that he is in danger and thus proceed to seek help." (Wicks, 2007, p.18)

Just as it was addressed in consideration of both the demands of the profession and practice as well as the financial needs, and the environment of the institution in which the specialist works is only a small part of the group of pressures that cause burnout for only psychologist. According to Jeffrey Kotler (a psychotherapist), who explained that the challenges the profession facing any psychologist is dealing with the respondent, which expresses a tremendous obligation of the specialist towards a person (the respondent). Therefore, this commitment may last several years depending on the situation. Moreover, during this period, times will be very difficult.

First, a plan must be drawn up to get closer to the respondent, through mutual trust, then to reach his move, as he may despise or offend you, be friendly, or he cuts off the therapeutic relationship. This may coincide with the occurrence of all the previous things, regardless of what happens in the private life of the psychologist such as deaths, disappointments, illness ... these are matters that exceed the probability of the psychologist and cause burnout, it is also obliged him to bear more in a permanent presence for the respondent who has expectations from him concerning treatment and support It should also be noted from the causes of burnout that the respondent stops treatment suddenly and without warning. Thus, the psychologist issues

defenses and resistance so as not to fall into self-doubt, doubt of incompetence and competence, the danger of which, according to **Geoffrey Kotler**, is the narcissistic belief that we are distinguished specialists through constructive interaction, intelligence in asking questions, as well as through support and care which last for hours with several respondents per day. However, the narcissistic belief will constitute a real shock to our psychological system, especially when we do not find the family or friends that contain us after that trouble, as a result of burnout, the psychologist also lacks idealism through the occurrence of what is called negative self-talk (Wicks, 2007, p.19). As **Maslach and Freudenberger** say : "Burnout is a state of exhaustion of the physical and mental aspects, leading to a negative perception of the person towards himself, as well as the formation of negative attitudes towards work, life and people, in addition to the lack of idealism and a feeling of anger". (Al-Aouad, 2019, p. 175)The burnout reaches its climax in the psychologist through the development of his symptoms to increase the severity, as it affects different aspects of the specialist's life , it also takes time to recover, however, the psychologist may lose his therapeutic competence, in this regard **Baumeister** et al 1999 says, " Burnout undermines the employee's ability to carry out the duties necessary for his work, when this energy is completely depleted, he needs time to recover and restore energy. "(Ghobari translation, 2018, p. 535), Marsha Line says (behavioral treatment of borderline states)" Many researchers suggest that once burnout occurs, it can lead to a host of remedial errors, thus it can be difficult to overcome and recover from them ".(Wicks, 2007, p.16)

Because of the aim of psychology is to crystallize a change in a person's life, every specialist can prevent burnout, as **Marsha Line** says: "It is important to prevent burnout instead of falling into it and then attempting to treat it"(Wicks, 2007, p.16),However, this does not mean that falling into it is giving up or leaving the job, as there are methods and mechanisms that every professional must follow before the occurrence of burnout to prevent it, and even when falling into it, those components can be followed:

**5.2. Strengthening Personality :** to increase personal strength, the most difficult step is making the decision to manage your life, which takes place through eight paths :

-**Managing yourself :** by looking at successes to maintain self-motivation to carry on.

-**Managing stress:** It is important to identify the situations that trigger your response to force. The strength of personality lies in determining that although you do not find situations difficult, you can deal with them at the appropriate level instead of avoiding them.

-**Building social support:** A strong social system (family, friends and co-workers) assists to protect you from stress and anxiety.

-**Skill Building :** in which you may face skills that you have not encountered before, therefore it was necessary to gain confidence and arrange yourself to face new challenges to deal with the unexpected.

-**Tailoring the job:** it is better to have the person in the appropriate work, to suit the style of work with the job, in order to master it and work with passion.

-**Changing job :** Sometimes the best solution is to change the job, and sometimes the reality in burnout leaves his job without analyzing the source of dissatisfaction, as the strength of personality comes in identifying what you need in the job and how to manage it before changing it.



**-Thinking powerfully:** Sometimes feelings may seem out of control and the individual is unable to suppress his thoughts, as he responds to all negative things in front of him, the strength of personality comes in knowing how to empty thinking of negative conversations, focusing on the challenges facing him.

**-Detached concern:** It is a form of personality strength by giving up the things that bother, this form is important for working people with difficult situations who feel helpless when suspending their thinking. (Beverly A potter, 1996, pp. 23 -24)

**VI- The relationship between psychological hardiness and burnout of a psychologist:** Psychological hardiness is considered as one of the important variables in the field of work, as it contributes to the individual's ability to face the many difficulties while performing their work and to maintain physical and psychological health. According to Cole et al (2004) : High hardiness turns stressful events into opportunities for growth and development. As reported by Madii (1999), individuals of high psychological hardiness tend to take actions to solve the problem rather than to it, thus their environment is free from stress.

The concept of hardiness indicates that people who are more resilient are easier for them to commit themselves to their actions and control their reactions to stressful situations. For Maddi (1999), the three attitudes of psychological hardiness are "commitment, control and challenge" that affect how individuals deal with stressful conditions. Thus, individuals with high hardiness experience interesting and important activities, i.e. Commitment, considering it a matter of personal choice (control) as important catalysts for learning Challenge.

The psychologist must have positive qualities and psychological hardiness from his commitment and belief that his life has a purpose and a meaning for which he lives, he also must control over stressful events and confront them effectively, he also should be emotional preciseness with motivation for achievement and a comprehensive and distant view of all the duties he deals with. And the challenge of every threat with its storming of problems and their solution, as these characteristics make him a successful element with himself and in his dealings with others, as well as to show a high degree of insight into his motives, feelings and desires so that his desires are not hindered by the negative repercussions of work, thus burnout has negative and disastrous effects in its personal and organizational dimensions of the institution

Hence, psychological hardiness has an important role in facing burnout that the psychologist suffers, as he can overcome it through the development of psychological hardiness such as emotional calm and optimism, including effective and direct dealing with the difficulties of the situations they are going through. Therefore, it is expected that the psychological hardiness of the psychologist will modify the relationship between the conditions of the institution and its psychological combustion. (Erkutla, 2012, p. 187.188)

Accordingly, it can be concluded that individuals who show low psychological hardiness show increased signs of depression and high burnout, in addition to increased anxiety and shortness of breath.

This is confirmed by many studies. In a study conducted by Thorn by, younger, Grap, Boyle, psychological hardiness is negatively related to burnout and positively related to social support.

Judkin found that a higher level of psychological hardiness among nursing unit directors predicted a lower level of stress, Judkin, Reid, and Furlow concluded that when strengthening nursing directors' resilience through a resilience training program over time, these researchers

concluded that training in resilience results in less stress. The end to reduce burnout, and illness while increasing job satisfaction.

These results indicate an increase in the importance of psychological hardiness for the psychologist, thus he must be alert to the symptoms and take appropriate steps to treat fatigue and burnout, including adapting him to techniques to reduce stress and coping skills in work environments, as well as to mitigate the destructive effects of work on his profession. (Emerg, 2011, p.125)

## VII- Conclusion:

To conclude, this study clarified the causes of burnout and its symptoms for the psychologist, as well as the importance of his psychological hardiness, in addition to the relationship between burnout and his psychological hardiness, it was found that there are reasons and factors related to the work environment, including what is related to the personality of the psychologist, which may be overlooked by many of them, as it leads to advanced and dangerous symptoms of burnout. Consequently, the maladjustment with the profession may be reflected on the respondents, as it has been shown that the relationship between psychological hardiness and burnout of the psychologist is an inverse and negative relationship, where psychological hardiness plays an important role in facing burnout that the psychologist suffers. Where he can overcome it by developing the trait of psychological hardiness, then he deals with preventive solutions that have been addressed not only when falling victim to burnout, but they can be set as goals and plans, daily or even weekly, for each professional that require taking them step by step, and arrange them according to priorities focusing on the most important thing for you as a professional as preventive or therapeutic solutions, regardless of your being a psychologist, you can seek help with expertise in the field if you suffer from increased symptoms and are unable to control them or even the inability to apply solutions.

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