

SURPASSING THE BOUNDARIES OF FORTITUDE: A STUDY ON PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE THEORY IN “FATAL FORECAST” BY TOUGIAS

Dayanıklılığın Sınırlarını Aşmak: Tougias'ın “Fatal Forecast” Adlı Eserinin Psikolojik Dayanıklılık Teorisi Üzerine Bir İnceleme

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Abstract

Every individual experiences traumatic events, including illness, death, and natural disasters, at some point in their lifetime. Although some individuals endeavor to resist life's challenges, others succumb to them, believing that they will ultimately fail. The capacity to persevere in the face of adversity is, in this context, known as psychological resilience. In Michael Tougias's *Fatal Forecast*, the protagonist Ernie seeks solutions to the challenges he faces, rather than surrendering to them. He overcomes the problems he encounters on his sea voyage by using his problem-solving and self-regulation skills, as well as, most significantly, by accepting the calamity that befell him. Ernie's capacity to control his urges is also one of the key elements in sustaining both his spiritual and physical endurance. Ernie's psychological resilience functions as a protective barrier, shielding him from the adverse effects of turbulent waves, hunger, and severe weather. When these factors, together with Ernie's capacity to adapt to environmental situations and overcome obstacles by using his power, and inner strength, are examined, he fits the criteria for being a resilient person. The aim of the study is to determine whether psychological resilience is an innate trait or the result of an individual's perseverance and fortitude in the face of adversity, as illustrated by the character Ernie. It examines the importance of resilience theory through the story of character Ernie.

Keywords: Psychological resilience, Fatal forecast, Perseverance, Michael Tougias

Öz

Hayatı boyunca her insan hastalık, ölüm , doğal afetler gibi travmatik olaylarla karşı karşıya gelir. Hayatın getirdiğı bu zorluklar karşısında kimileri mücadele etmeye ve direnmeye çalışırken kimileri de kaybedeceğini düşünerek zorluklara boyun eğler. Bu anlamda insanların zorlu hayat şartları altında dirayet gösterebilme gücü psikolojik sağlamlılık olarak adlandırılır. Michael Tougias’ın *Fatal Forecast* adlı eserinde, kahraman Ernie başına gelen bütün bu zorlu engeller karşısında pes etmek yerine bu durumdan kurtulmanın yollarını arar. Deniz yolculuğı boyunca karşılaştığı zorlukları problem çözme ve öz düzenleme yeteneğı ve en önemlisi başına gelen felaketi kabullenerek aşar. Bunun yanısıra, dürtülerini yönetebilme gücü de Ernie’nin fiziksel ve ruhsal dayanıklılığını korumasında en önemli faktörler arasındadır. Ernie’nin sahip olduğı psikolojik dayanıklılık onu azgın dalgalar, açlık, soğuk havaya karşı bertaraf eden bir kalkan gibidir. Ernie’nin çevre koşullarına uyum sağlayabilmesi, kendi gücünün verdiği imkanlar doğrultusunda zorlukların üstesinden gelebilmesi ve içsel gücü de olmak üzere bütün bu faktörler gözden geçirildiğinde onun dirayetli insan olma kriterlerini karşıladığını söylemek mümkündür. Bu çalışma karakter Ernie aracılığıyla psikolojik dayanıklılığın doğuştan gelen bir özellik mi yoksa kişinin zorluklar karşısında sergilediğı dayanma gücü ve dirayet midir sorularına cevap bulmayı amaçlar. Bu makalenin amacı karakter Ernie üzerinden psikolojik dayanıklılığın teorisinin önemini incelemektir. **Anahtar Kelime: Psikolojik sağlamlılık, Ölümcül rapor, Dirayet, Michael Tougias**

Introduction

Sometimes a person is faced with a life threatening situations that requires careful consideration regarding their course of action. While one individual may choose to give up, another may choose to develop some strategies to overcome obstacles. These strategies can be exemplified by the skills of exhibiting self-regulation, self motivation, remaining composed under pressure and engaging in purposeful activities. Recently, a growing number of professionals including psychological councilers, psychologists, yoga instructors have dedicated their effort to promote the impact of mental health, quality of life through books, workshops, and training programs. These trainings are designed to provide individuals with crises management techniques, and adaptability to changing circumstances.

While strategies for psychological resilience are discussed, it is also essential to consider one’s prior experiences, cognitive abilities and social interaction. These factors play a crucial role in shaping an individual’s ability to manage obstacles in their lives. Cultivating self-awareness and maintaining an open mindset can contribute to an individual psychology. Given that resilience is a trait possessed by all individuals, it can be enhanced through ongoing life experiences. By identifying their strengths, they enhance their well beings. Consequently, it lead to a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. The self-confidence acquired through this process enables people to use their capabilities at their full potential.

The concept of resilience has been studied extensively in many fields. It has a long history, dating back to ancient Greece (Ungar, 2024, p.190). In ancient cultures, fatalism and heroism were closely intertwined ideologies. Death is one of the central themes of Socratic dialogues. Socrates examined the concept of death as an inevitable reality within the framework of existential inquiry, virtue ethics, individual moral conduct, and political philosophy. Socrates emphasized the importance of considering death in all aspects of life, using persuasion and logical arguments. Socrates exemplifies courage by accepting and defying the fear of death, ultimately surpassing his own limitations. The greatest inner experience and resilience come from facing death (Bolotnikova, 2021, p.291).

The concept was later referenced by Francis Bacon who recognized the power of sound to echo resilience. Norman Garmezy's work in the 1950s revitalized this term and highlighted individual's ability, especially children's, to overcome adversity despite challenges such as poverty and parent's mental illness (Ungar, 2024, p.190). Resilience is a concept which shifts our perspective from the negative impacts of stress to the abilities of the individual. It emphasizes the importance of individuals' taking control of their own personal growth by using various resources to fulfill their needs (Liebengerg and Ungar, 2008, pp.21-23). Resilience scientists emphasize the significance of personal strength to challenge difficult circumstances. In contrast to the traditional deficit-focused approach, a strength based approach promotes healthy adaptation to adversity (Hone, 2017, p.143). According to Reivich and Shatt  (2003) resilience is a skill which can be improved by self-practicing. You can improve their ability to handle setbacks and approach challenges with enthusiasm. It is through facing adversity and learning from our experiences that we build resilience (p.18). For Ungar (2024), failure is crucial for building resilience. For example, a child who learns to skate will fall down and get back up several times. Through repeated attempts and failures, a child can have the opportunity to learn and develop. Furthermore, our inability to accept a failure and learn from it hinder our ability to grow. It also leads to repeated mistakes and missed opportunities. On the other hand, embracing failure with courage and resilience can lead to wisdom gained from setbacks (p.58).

Building resilience comes from recognizing that adversity and challenges are a natural part of life. In the example of a car, one can be frustrated why the other driver hit his car specifically, which can be regarded as a natural response. However, it is not about whether you deserve what happened to you but rather how you are able to accept the reality of the situation. Instead of seeking answers to why it happened to you it is important to adapt the challenges (Neenan, 2018, p.43). On the other hand, by choosing to view the obstacles as opportunities people can shift their

perspectives and find ways to cope with the challenges. In this sense, maintaining a positive outlook help individuals overcome adversity. According to Southwick et al. (2023), “Optimism ignites resilience, often providing the energy that drives us to face our challenges head-on. It facilitates an active and creative approach to coping with challenging situations” (p.63). For him, when individuals approach obstacles with a positive mind, they seek out innovative solutions to their problems. It makes people cultivate strength and consider new possibilities. Thus, the ability “to broaden and build” allows people approach the situations from a broader perspective. They consider the alternative perspectives rather than focusing on limited solutions. By utilizing coping mechanism such as positive reappraisal, goal directed problem solving, and find meaning in everyday experiences, people cope with stress more effectively (p.33).

According to Hanson, developing grit is important for both facing known challenges and being prepared for unexpected challenges (2018, p.78). It is possible to say that resilience also be built through opportunities to exert agency. For him, agency is an ability to take actions rather than being passive. Without agency, a person cannot overcome difficulties. When life knocks you down, it is the sense of agency make you stand back up (Hanson, 2018,p.79). To have a strong sense of purpose, motivation, and persistence are important to reach a desired result (80). According to Hanson (2018), “a vigorous sense of making something happen or pushing something forward” (p.80) signifies a strong determination to achieve goal. For him, drawing past experiences of being fierce and strong can help us challenge difficult situations. By recalling a moment when we stood up or handled an emergency allow us to tap into our strength (p.87). In times of limited actions, it is essential to look for small actions and concentrate on the feeling of agency that comes along with accomplishing these actions. For example, when faced with a health crisis, researching about health condition online can be useful to understand treatment options. Similarly, in an argument with family members choosing what to say carefully can help maintain control over the situation. In both examples individuals find ways to assert agency (2018, p.81). If we cannot exert control through actions or words, we can make decision within our thoughts. It is our power to change our ideas from negative ones to more positive ones. That is to say, it is in our hands to take the control of our thoughts and reactions. In this sense, our mind has a crucial role in challenging external situations. It is through conscious decisions we recognize our role as the chooser. On the other hand, Hanson suggests that it is crucial to focus on areas where we have agency. To illustrate the concept of agency, he gives the example of an apple tree. Although he nurtured the apple tree with pruning and watering, he cannot make it bear fruit. Just like the apple tree, there are many things in life that goes beyond our control despite our efforts (p.80).

The development of a resilient self involves a combination of nature and nurture as well as individual and communal efforts. Individuals can be better prepared to initiate change by attaching value to autonomous behavior. Living a conscious and fulfilled life involves seeking values that engage us meaningful activities. Living in this way shifts our focus away from gaining rewards and immediate results. Constructing meaning out of our experiences and integration our understanding of external reality enables us to determine what is harmful and conducive to progress. This process allows us to differentiate between our ideal self and reality (Celinski and Gow, 2011, p.110).

Man has the power to shape his own character through controlling, observing and changing his thoughts. By being mindful of his thoughts and their impact on those around him, he is able to discover the cause and effect relationship in his experience and effectively use them to his advantage (Allen, 1948, p.5). As we grow and learn from our experiences, we adapt to changing situations. New habits and perspectives shape our identities. Thus, our previous selves and habits undergo a process of mature. Through these transformations and adaptations, we transform into the person we desire to be (Duckworth, 2016, p.89).

1.Method

This study aims to highlight the significance of psychological resilience by examining the resilience demonstrated by the character Ernie. It was conducted to show the impact of psychological resilience on shaping individuals' experiences, setting the stage for the future studies. Consequently, it seeks to draw attention to the development of this. This article attempts to answer whether psychological resilience is an innate trait or a learned response derieved from determination in the face of challenges. It also investigates how external factors interact with an individual's inner strength. In analysing Ernie's character as a case study, it explores how problem-solving skills, self-regulation and acceptance can aid in overcoming obstacles. Through a detailed analysis of Ernie's approach to overcoming obstacles we can gain insight into the effectiveness of these cognitive processes in achieving success in real life situations.

This paper, through the lens of psychological resilience theory, provides a new perspective on the intricacies of human nature. In this aspect, it could delve into how this theory can be applied to understand the underlying the dynamics of resilience for personal development. Therefore, this research will serve as a model for enhancing individuals' resilience and facilitating self-discovery to maximize their capabilities.

2. Analysis of the Study

Before going into a detailed analysis of the protagonist's harrowing experience at sea, it is important to provide a brief overview of the initial predicament faced by the crew members. In the beginning of the novel, the crew of the vessel, Fair Wind, comprised of Billy, Ernie, Rob, and Berry, embarked on a maritime expedition on the 6th of November. When the crew of the Fair Wind sets out expedition on Georges Bank, the weather forecast provided by the National Weather Forecast Service predicted southeasterly winds followed by rain and fog on Saturday. Even if the crew members expected challenging situations at sea, they trusted the accuracy of the weather forecast. Thus, the team embarked on their journey, depending on the weather reports they had grown accustomed to. (Tougias, 2007, pp.11-12). After a while the boat was battered with each wave. The sailors found themselves battling against tumultuous water. They were swept overboard in the depths, one crew member called Ernie fought valiantly to stay afloat.

Throughout his journey , Ernie faced numerous physical and mental challenges. One of the key aspects of resilience theory, as demonstrated by his experience on the raft, is his ability to respond effectively to the powerful waves. When he was faced with violent waves he was able to control the impacts of them through his strategic responses. He struggled against the power of the sea and did his best to stay afloat in the turbulent water. Even so, he had trouble maintaining balance because of the violent waves. In one of the scenes, the force of waves caused him to constantly slide around the raft. The force of the waves was so strong that he could not move or even lift his head (2007, p.53). As the time passes, he learns how to react to the impact of waves. By responding each wave and adjusting his position he controlled the raft. By developing strategies, he navigated the unpredictable waves. Thus, Ernie's response to waves shows his ability to adapt to the changing situations.

Ernie's sense of hopefulness in envisioning the possibility of being saved contribute to his psychologic strength. Despite the unknown challenges ahead, Ernie clings to the belief that help will come soon. As he struggled against the crashing waves, his thoughts were consumed with determination to survive. Somewhere deep within him, a glimmer of hope pushed him to keep swimming. With every ounce of strength, he fought against the powerful currents. Finally, he saw a silhouette of his boat in the distance and he kicked his legs as hard as. In a last desperate attempt, he pushed himself to swim towards the boat. Despite the challenging situations, he tries to keep his hope alive through these sentences:

Fight, you son of a bitch, hang in there. Just a few more hours and this storm will have moved on. Then the Sea Fever or the Broadbill will find me. And if not them, then the Coast Guard will have planes looking for me. (Tougias, 2007, p.54)

Ernie’s perspective is optimistic as evidenced by the above sentences. Rather than succumbing to despair, Ernie derived strength from his conviction that he would be rescued by the Coast Guard and Sea Fever. His faith in being saved gives him even more will and courage to battle. He does not even consider the potential risks Coast Guard may encounter on the way or the fact that they may be uninformed of the calamity they faced. Ernie’s predicament bears a striking resemblance to Henry’s circumstances in Herbert Clyde Lewis’s novella Gentleman Overboard where the character also experiences a similar misfortune at sea. Henry’s reflection on his resilience while facing insurmountable challenges at sea is truly remarkable.

He would use all the gifts God and breeding had given him to get through this alive; stamina and courage and the sharpest edge of his wit. He would conserve every ounce of his energy, prevent sunstroke, stave off thirst and hunger, keep afloat through hour after endless hour, if necessary, by the exercise of an unflagging spirit...But he would live! (Lewis, 1937, p.89)

By using all of his physical and mental abilities he demonstrates a strong will to survive. Despite the challenges of sunstroke, hunger, and thirst, Henry focuses on conserving his energy.

During the time when he was adrift at sea, he evaluates his circumstances and adjusts his tactics to enhance his likelihood of survival. Especially, his problem solving skills and strategic planning to potential dangers allowed him to survive. In one of the scenes, he considered securing the raft’s doorway to keep water out. However, he thought that there was a possibility of being trapped if the raft capsizes. Then, he chosed not to do so. He carefully considered the pros and cons of his choice because he needed to be able to swim in case of another overturning (Tougias, 2007, p.57).

In times of crises, to be able to make practical decisions and adapt to the circumstances can be crucial factor for survival. Especially, utilizing cognitive skills not only solves the problem but also contributes to survival in extreme circumstances. Ernie, faced with the challenge of keeping the raft afloat, exemplifies his quick-thinking skills. Despite the valves on the raft being damaged and leaking air, he did not panic. He quickly brainstormed possible solutions. He used hand pump to inflate the chambers but he heard a sound signifying air was still leaking. He cut a patch from the survival bag and used it to tie over the valve. Thus, he was able to prevent any further leaks and keep the raft inflated (Tougias, 2007, p.80). By demonstrating his mental toughness he not only identifies the problem but also comes up with a solution that saved himself from further peril. The protagonis’s resilience is also put the test when he faces scarcity. However, the strength of his will

and his commitment to frugality are undoubtedly his greatest assets in this battle for survival. He was unable to find a proper tool to open a can of water that he discovered in his survival bag, but eventually opened it with his teeth and then a knife. Savoring each sip of water he wanted to preserve his supply to last until the end of the day. Additionally, he did not succumb to the temptation to indulge in more cookies. He determinedly closed the cookie tin. Thus, he understood that if he wanted to survive in the midst of the sea, he needed to be frugal with his resources. Thus, Ernie’s attempts to come up with ways to live on little resources emphasizes his capacity to solve problems and adjust to harsh circumstances.

Recalling past pleasant experiences and picturing bright possibilities ahead are crucial aspects in fostering resilience. This approach serves as a protective barrier to prevent potential risk factors. One’s ability to draw on his past experiences provides him with a sense of comfort and solace, which ultimately enhances his psychological well-being. In the story, Ernie’s past near-death experiences are an inspiration for him to face obstacles that come his way. Ernie draws strength and motivation from his previous experiences. This approach allowed him to be focused on any obstacles that arise during the journey. By recalling his past experiences and his own capabilities, he motivated himself to continue his journey with determination. Despite the dangerous situation he faced in his life, he somehow overcame them. When he was a child, he was struck by a car; however, he miraculously came out with only minor injuries. He also remembered the scene where he fell into freezing water while fishing on Dudley Pound. Fortunately, he managed to pull himself to safety by grabbing a tree branch. The hardships Ernie endured in the past align well with Nietzsche’s famous statement “What does not kill you makes you stronger”. Ernie resolutely refused to succumb to despair, believing that he could now surmount the challenges he defeated in the past. He gradually gained strength as he faced challenges. Ernie’s initial acceptance of what was happening to him did not prevent him from continuing to struggle. In this sense, the author expresses the character’s ideas to us in the following ways:

There is a fine line between acceptance and resignation. He simply kept an open mind, and was honest with himself that he had no idea of the final outcome, telling himself that he had done—and would continue to do—the things that would help his odds. (Tougias, 2007, p.96)

Ernie comprehended that accepting did not mean giving up but rather embracing the reality of the situation. He acknowledged that there were limitations and factors beyond his control. Despite the uncertainty of his situation, he used his power to achieve a better outcome. It is possible to say that Ernie’s approach to challenges shapes his cognitive process. In this context, Singer explains the correlation between cognitive process and behavioral outcomes as follows:

When a blockage gets hit, it is a good think. It is time to open up internally and release the blocked energy. If you let go, and permit the purification process to take place inside, that blocked energy will be released... So let of all of your blockages and disturbances become the fuel for the journey. That which is holding you down can become a powerful force that raises you up. (Singer, 2007, p.90)

In the above quotation, Singer emphasizes the importance of embracing blockages. By allowing ourselves to release blocked energy, we can use them as a source of growth. Thus, obstacles can turn into opportunities for strength. Ernie showed a desire to release his limitations. Thus, he understood that embracing difficulties and using them as a source of motivation was key to rising above any limitations.

Moreover, his endeavours to remain vigilant in the midst of the rough sea is another survival strategy. He knew that he had a slim chance of being rescued in the midst of the vast ocean. He had to be prepared for ant sign of a passing plane. Keeping the flares ready and easily accessible and survival bag unzipped were crucial in this regard. (p.99). Even if he found himself in a challenging situation where he fought against the storm in complete darkness, he reassured himself that he could find a way to overcome the night and storm. His determination pushed him to keep moving forward.

He knew the odds were now against him, and he knew any number of events, from a major leak to a new storm, could end his life within hours. But when he started to dwell on such things, the steely voice inside him would speak up. Come on, Hazard, keep it going. Don't go soft now. (Tougias, 2007, p.96)

Fortunately, a group of Coast Guard prepared their lifeboat and approached the orange speck. They maneuvered the boat closer and carefully pulled Ernie and wrapped him in a blanket. As his body temperature had dropped and his limbs were numb, he was struggling to stand up straight. There was the risk of heart attack until his temperature stabilized. The crew carried him inside the ship. He was given dry clothes and warm soup to raise his body temperature (p.110). He was taken to hospital and the doctors were amazed by his physical condition (p.111) On the other hand, he was diagnosed with immersion foot due to the prolonged exposure to wet and cold conditions (p.113).

Towards the end of the story, the following question posed by the protagonist makes the readers question their own resilience in the mid of the challenging circumstances. “Why did I make it, he wondered, when the others did not, and so much of my survival depended on luck?” (p.112). Could we exhibit the same level of resistance if we were in Ernie's position?

Conclusion

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the various factors influencing psychological resilience and their impact on character development. The correlation between the character’s experiences and his ability to show resilience is explored in an insightful manner. Throughout the research paper, the protagonist’s strategies for overcoming obstacles are highlighted, which emphasized his resilience and his belief in his ability. Thus, the findings of the study suggest that it is crucial for an individual to accept their current conditions and take proactive steps to overcome difficulties rather than ignoring them. Throughout the story, Ernie successfully resolves the challenges he encounters on his ocean voyage by employing his problem-solving and self-regulation skills, and brainstorming. He used his inner power to challenge difficulties came his way. He accepted the things as they are and find ways to challenge the adversities. By approaching situations with a realistic mind and objectively evaluating the situation, he was able to survive. With the agency within himself, Ernie got through challenges and came out stronger.

In this study, the protagonist serves as a case study to understand how cognitive processes and their effect to overcome obstacles. By examining external factors that interact with protagonist’s strength, this study provides insight into the mechanics of psychological resilience and factors leading to its growth. Thus, it acts as a stepping stone for a better understanding of personal growth.

Readers were reminded by the character Ernie that life is full of ups and downs and that we should always be ready for the unexpected. The unforeseen circumstances and adversities that befall us are often beyond our control, yet it is in our agency to handle them, adjust to environmental conditions, derive valuable lessons from both successes and failures, and transform adversity into advantage and potential growth opportunities. In this regard, psychological resilience is not a static concept that can be attained but rather a dynamic process calling for continuous attention and effort. While individuals may demonstrate resilience in certain circumstances, they may not cope with other events. Given the circumstances, being able to create and devise our own strategies for psychological resilience at every point of our lives is important. Thus, just like Ernie who found himself stranded alone in the middle of the ocean, we too enhance our strength by courageously confronting challenges and endeavoring to achieve success with the abilities we have learned.

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