

# Seafarers' Distress and Coping Mechanism: Basis for Support Program

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**Abstract** – *This study aimed to assess the seafarers' distress and coping mechanism as they faced their lives working in seafaring. Specifically, it sought to identify then profile of the response in terms of age, gender, civil status, position, length of years onboard, and income; identify the factors that caused distress among seafarers in terms of physical, emotional, psychological, social aspect, personality traits, physical factors, and personal reason; determined the coping mechanism they used in terms of personality traits, physical factors, and personal reason; test the significant difference and factors group according to profile; and propose an action plan based on the result. The study made use of descriptive and utilized an adapted questionnaire which was partially modified and distributed among 24 cruise line operations graduate currently onboard. It was found out that majority of the respondents are single 18- 35 years old males, working as staff for 1-3 years and earning 40,000-60,000 agreed that factor such as physical oppressiveness, long absence from work, high level of stress and long and unsociable working hours that caused distress when they are on board. They always cope with distress in terms of personal reason, physical factors, and personality traits. There is significant difference on factors that caused distress as to psychological when grouped according to position. Examination to assess the seafarer's coping mechanism before deployment may prevent future problems.*

**Keywords** – *Seafarers, Distress, Coping Mechanism*

## INTRODUCTION

Life at sea is a very critical aspect of the work environment of seafarers. Stories of distressed seafarers getting much needed assistance from cruise ships are commonplace. Negligible social life, monotonous routines, and harsh working conditions are some of the many difficulties faced by seafarers on board ships. This leads to both physical and psychological stress. Maximum of the shipping companies employ multinational crew, which brings along its own set of

problems such as language barrier, group formation etc. All these factors along with the reducing number of crew members on board ships have been one of the main reasons for increase in physical and psychological stress on board ships [1].

The seafarers are independently doing their job because the work environment of seafaring needs different manpower and skills in order to be a success in maritime industry. Furthermore, the seafarers were competent in doing their designated jobs because they need to fulfil their responsibility and obligations as seafarers. They are dedicated and hardworking so that they will earn for their family [2].

The Cruise Line Operations in Culinary Arts Program and Cruise Line Operations in Hotel Services Program is a Bachelor of Science Degree Program that provides the knowledge and skills necessary for the students to ensure efficiency and to prepare the students to be supervisor in the Cruise Line industry. The program is designed in two-depth areas in the Cruise Line Operations: operations and management, which is to prepare students for employment in a variety of hotel positions in the growing cruise line operations [3].

However, even they are working in a work environment they are accustomed and prepared for, they still feel different stress and distress that could and may affect their performance and productivity as competent seafarers. They have the sense of leadership and adapt the environment through good communication as the key survival techniques. They can communicate with co-employees since Filipinos are known to be good communicator and conversationalists. Knowing how to solve problems (and not problem-blame or problem-avoid), plus the ability to thrive under pressure, make one a valued seafarer [4].

The concept of distress and coping mechanism has been addressed many times, and advancement in communication technology was also established to help the coping strategies of seafarers, there are still factors that is not emphasized by different studies regarding the

distress experienced by them. This study will benefit many people, especially the seafarers who themselves are the ones experiencing such events. By conducting this study, the seafarers will be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses while working on-board. This will benefit the University for it can provide insights of cruise line industry and what programs may be developed to enhance the competitiveness of students. This will help the CITHM, since they are integrating cruise line industry to their curriculum, then being knowledgeable about distress experienced at sea will allow them make support and plan of action to prepare cruise line operations students about this in the future. Further, this will be beneficial to the faculty and instructors for it may give insights on how the cruise line environment may affect the performance of the seafarers when they are on-board. The cruise line operations students will learn many things in this study, especially about the stress and coping strategies that they may employ when they encountered different distress. The researchers may use this study as future reference in case they wanted to align their study in seafaring distress and coping mechanism.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to assess the seafarers' distress and coping mechanism as they faced their lives working in seafaring. Specifically, it sought to identify the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, position, length of years on-board and income; identify the factors that caused distress among seafarers in terms of physical, emotional, psychological, social aspect, personality traits, physical factors, and personal reason; determine the coping mechanism they use in terms of personality traits, physical factors and personal reason; test the significant difference on factors that causes distress when grouped according to profile; and propose an action plan based on the result of the study.

### **METHODS**

#### **Research Design**

This study uses descriptive method to assess the seafarers' distress and coping mechanism. Descriptive method tends to identify the current population and the existing condition they are engaged in using statistical tools. The goal of this method is to gather information which gives the study a comprehensive perception. It is used for the analysis of people and sometimes in other fields of science [5].

#### **Participants**

The participants of the study were 24 Cruise line Operations Graduates of Lyceum of the Philippines University who are currently working as seafarers. The researchers sought help from Alumni Office of Lyceum of the Philippines University which has the data about cruise line operations graduates working on board.

#### **Instrument**

The instrument of the study was an adapted questionnaire from the study of Survival Characteristics as Perceived by The Experienced Seafarers [1] that is partially modified for part II from different studies which was composed of three parts. The first part of the questionnaire identified the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, position, length of years on-board and income. The second part of the questionnaire include the factors that caused distress among seafarers in terms of physical, emotional, psychological, and social aspect. And the third part of the questionnaire determined the coping mechanism they use in terms of personality traits, physical factors and personal reasons.

#### **Procedure**

The researchers provided a letter of request for the Alumni office asking for the number and the names of cruise line graduate of Lyceum of the Philippines University currently on-board or working on different cruise. Addition to this, another letter was provided for the respondents asking permission to participate in the study. They distributed the questionnaire using google docs and send the link to the respondents using Facebook and email address. It took time for the respondents to answer the questionnaire due to internet access and availability of their internet signal. The google doc was monitored and tallied it through downloading excel format of the responses of the respondents. The researchers submit it to the statistician to produce a statistical output. It was then tabulated, interpreted, analysed, and supported by literature and study.

#### **Data Analysis**

To be able to analyse the gathered data, the following statistical tools were used; Percentage and Frequency distribution was used to identify the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, position, length of years on-board and income; Weighted mean was used to assess the factors that caused distress among seafarers in terms of physical, emotional, psychological, and social aspect and determine the coping mechanism they use in terms of personality traits, physical factors

and personal reasons; and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the significant difference on factors that causes distress when grouped according to profile.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1. Percentage Distribution of the Respondents Profile**

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
21 – 35 years old	24	100.0
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	23	95.8
female	1	4.2
<b>Civil Status</b>		
Single	20	83.3
Married	4	16.7
<b>Position</b>		
Staff	18	75.0
Supervisor	1	4.2
Manager	1	4.2
Others	4	16.7
<b>Length of Years Onboard</b>		
below 1 year	6	25.0
1 – 3 years	16	66.7
4 – 6 years	2	8.3
<b>Income</b>		
20,000 and below	2	8.3
20,001 – 40,000	7	29.2
40,001 – 60,000	12	50.0
60,001 – 80,000	3	12.5

Table 1 presents the percentage distribution of the respondents' profile according to their age, gender, civil status, position, length of years onboard and income.

The table shows that all the respondents belong to 21 – 35 years old with the highest frequency of 24 or 100.0 percent. This means that seafarers who graduated cruise line operations at Lyceum of the Philippines University belong to the age that are considered as young adult because the cruise line operation program of the university is very new. It also implies that the program is an effective program where it gives opportunity to the students to be equipped with knowledge about seafaring.

According to Macatangay, Andal, Pangpang, Suayan, Pana, and De Leon [6] found out that the age of the students may influence their choice of taking Cruise line courses. It also depicted that the students are motivated to take Cruise line operations course because of its opportunity to the cruise industry. Since the start of the curriculum, more and more students are engaging to seafaring.

Most of the respondents were male with 23 or 95.8 percent while only one female with 4.2 percent. It implies that cruise line and seafaring is appealing to males compared to females because of gender sensitivity issues and physiological aspect of the seafarers. The maritime would prefer to hire male compared to female because of the physical strength which will be useful in seafaring. Even cruise line graduates are more on the hospitality aspect of the industry, their physical and mental strength are an advantage. In addition to this, gender issues are also considered due to work harassment that female counterparts experienced in seafaring.

Tolentino and Quiden [7] found out most of the students taking courses related to seafaring are males because the nature of the work is a very active type and requires physiological strength among men compared to women. Moreover, the safety and security of life aboard is suitable for males due to threats of being in the middle of sea.

Most of them are single with frequency of 20 or 83.3 percent while married with 4 or 16.7 percent. It means that the respondents are single which implies that they are working on-board because they wanted to help their parents and siblings before getting married and build their own family. This has been the behaviour of the students since they knew that their parents support them in taking cruise line courses. The course and being able to be a seafarer require a lot of financial assistance due to trainings that is needed to be taken before they can be deployed on-board.

McAuliffe [8] stated that students tried to find a work after they graduated to specifically start to use their knowledge and learning acquired from their program. They also wanted to earn and start their career path to increase their skills more and may be able to provide for their family and help parents with the financial aspect of the family.

Most of the respondents' position onboard is staff with 18 or 75.0, some answered "others" with 4 or 16.7 percent and supervisor and manager got 1 or 4.2 percent. It means that most of them are employed as staff members only because they are still new in the industry and seafaring.

Erlano, Bayer, Atip, Ancajas, and Rodriguez [9] study found out that majority of the population of personnel in a cruise or passenger vessel are cabin crew or staff. This is because they are the ones with direct contact with the passengers and customers and since there is a higher number of the customers/passengers so there should be enough staff that the cruise should employ.

The respondents have been on-board for 1 – 3 years with 16 or 66.7 percent, followed by below 1 year with 6 or 25.0 percent and 4 – 6 years with 2 or 8.3 percent. This implies that the respondents are new in the seafaring life and they are starting to get accustomed to the profession they chose. Further, they experience the life at sea and can identify the hazards and distress that a seafarer is experiencing.

The ship is a unique environment in that it is not only a place of work but at the same time a home to seafarers working on board. Working on ships entails seafarers' absence for a long period away from home. This situation and other conditions on board such as the weather and the crewing arrangement may compound the situation of seafarers aboard ship. Seafarers who are part of the shipboard and marine industry are facing different challenges when it comes to controlling crisis due to the operation of vessels and cruise ship. They need information and abilities to function at a high level since there are always existing dangers when they are on-board which cause problems of people at shore [1].

Based on their income, majority are earning 40,001 – 60,000 with frequency of 12 or 50.0 percent, followed by 20,001 – 40,000 with 7 or 29.2 percent, and the least is 20,000 and below with 2 or 8.3 percent. This means that the respondents are compensated well and are earning enough to provide support to their families.

One of the motivational factors why students took maritime and cruise line program is due to the income opportunity it provides. When the seafarer is on-board, he/she is being compensated enough to encourage them to work at sea which is somehow life threatening and hazardous environment. Further, maritime industry is known for homesickness that hinders them to acquire employees who will work for a long time. So, it is only right that they are rewarded enough to fill in all the sacrifices and hardship of being on-board [10].

Table 2 presents the factors that caused distress as to physical which obtained the composite mean of 3.12 and verbally interpreted as agree.

It means that the respondents agreed that physical factors can lead to distress while they are working on-board. The physical factors are the place and environment where they are working and can make them feel distress and not comfortable while doing their job.

Further, the conditions of work environment in the ship are different based on the country it belongs to. As cruise ships continue to become larger and accidents continue to be reported here in the Philippines, people are left to wonder what exactly is being done to better train crewmembers in the event of an emergency at sea or in port. They sometime experience problems as they

practice safety management procedures. And the necessity for other studies to be conducted may affect the work schedules, changes and lifestyle of seafarers may lead also to distress [11].

**Table 2. Factors that Caused Distress as to Physical**

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. The conditions of sea during transport and the possible accident that will occur	3.17	Agree	2.5
2. Long term implications of the job such as exposure to toxic and carcinogenic materials that is responsible for many chronic illness	3.17	Agree	2.5
3. Physical hazards on board ship (include noise, vibration, excessive heat and cold and harmful radiation from the sun).	3.04	Agree	4
4. Physical oppressiveness due to shortage of manpower due to less crew members	3.25	Agree	1
5. Unpleasant work conditions and frequent calling at ports	2.96	Agree	5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

It shows that the item “physical oppressiveness due to shortage of man power due to less crew members” got the highest weighted mean of 3.25 followed by the item “the conditions of sea during transport and the possible accident that will occur”, and “long term implications of the job such as exposure to toxic and carcinogenic materials that is responsible for many chronic illness” with 3.17 and verbally interpreted as agree.

The respondents agreed that physical oppressiveness is the cause of main distress due to limited number of crew compared to the number of tasks they need to finish. This leads to many overtimes that make them exhausted and reduce the time of sleep and rest. And since they are staying on-board, even they have rest days; the environment is still the same.

The physical environment of the ship and its design can impact the everyday activities of the seafarers and cause by shortage of manpower that need more overtime for the staff and crewmembers. The design of the ship and its accommodation has lesser attention in many studies which lead to high level of impact to the seafarers [12].

While the item “physical hazards on board ship (include noise, vibration, excessive heat and cold and harmful radiation from the sun) with weighted mean of 3.04 and the least is “unpleasant work conditions and

frequent calling at ports” with 2.96 and verbally interpreted as agree.

The level of adaptation of people towards their work and working environment can affect the level of distress they experience. Every time that the cruise ship needs to stay in ports, the seafarers needs to coordinate with the port authority and deal with different culture which can sometimes lead to distress.

**Table 3. Factors that Caused Distress as to Emotional**

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Long absence from home/homesickness	3.17	Agree	1
2. Exposure to accident, worst cases leading to deaths of colleagues	2.88	Agree	5
3. Problems about how to maintain family and personal relationship during period of absence and on return	3.13	Agree	2
4. There is a feeling of threat and danger due to unavailability of necessary provision of safety equipment	2.92	Agree	3.5
5. Being responsible towards the crew members due to dissatisfied facilities provided on board	2.92	Agree	3.5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

Table 3 presents the factors that caused distress as to emotional, which obtained the composite mean of 3.00 and verbally interpreted as agree.

This means that the respondents agreed that emotional distress are experienced while they are on-board because of being away from their way of living, families and relatives and being part of culture that is new to them.

The Philippine Online Chronicles found out that the OFWs are experiencing mental problems due to emotional stresses as they work abroad and away from their relatives for long time period. Those seafarers who are designated in cargo and tanker are usually isolated in the sea for several months which has a large impact on the mental health. These have been the focus of the seafaring organizations [13].

It shows that the item “long absence from home/homesickness” got the highest weighted mean of 3.17 followed by “problems about how to maintain family and personal relationship during period of absence and on return” with weighted mean of 3.13.

The respondents identified that the most emotional distress they encounter is homesickness and long absence from home because of being on-board for long time of travel. The sea travel is too long, and they are required to stay within the same environment for months without seeing their family and friends.

Those Filipino seafarers who are working as seafarer experience long time being isolated in the sea since they spend months on-board without seeing any land or places tend to be at risk for mental problems. The people who are not engage in such profession such the families, relatives and friends are the most priorities of seafarers. Their emotional quotients have been tested for many times and must have self-efficacy to improve their behaviours towards their profession and life at sea [14]. The long absence from home made the seafarers unable to communicate with the families, friends or significant others may cause problems and conflicts among human. Furthermore, enhance communication skills and being effective conversationalist can help people to clarify information or reduce the risk for miscommunication. Communication continuum can be the best strategy for good communication practices so no conflict will possibly occur due to miscommunication [9].

While the item “there is a feeling of threat and danger due to unavailability of necessary provision of safety equipment”, and “being responsible towards the crew members due to dissatisfied facilities provided on board” with weighted mean of 2.92 while the least is “exposure to accident, worst cases leading to deaths of colleagues” with weighted mean of 2.88 and verbal interpreted as agree.

Further, the respondents agreed that being on-board exposed them to accidents which sometimes lead to death among colleagues that became a phobia or distress to some seafarers. It was hard to handle simple stress, more so being faced with accident or death of co-workers because of the impact it brings. The mere presence of these accidents can affect the behaviour of co-worker which may lead to anxiety and fear for themselves.

Accident hazards occur within the seafaring environment which is almost 20 times greater than other occupations. Among these are the unintentional accidents that occur in the ship that might lead to disabilities, worst death. The most common damages caused by shipboard accidents are related to limbs, fingers and feet. Minor injuries include trips, falls, cuts and burns which is considered as inevitable especially when the sea is rough. Some would even think that the causes of such incidents are irrelevant trainings and insufficient knowledge among seafarers [15].

**Table 4. Factors that Caused Distress as to Psychological**

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Prevalence of low pay that could lead to dissatisfaction to work and frequent absent from work	2.83	Agree	4
2. High level of stress (associated with poor sleep quality, noise and workload)	3.29	Agree	1
3. Difficulty in adjustment from onboard to shore based life	2.92	Agree	2
4. Mental strain of accomplishing the set-task and tendency to take short cuts to finish work	2.88	Agree	3
5. Lack of self-confidence and self-motivation to work and perform their duties	2.75	Agree	5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 4 presents the factors that caused distress as to psychological which obtained the composite mean of 2.93 and verbally interpreted as agree.

The respondents experienced psychological distress due to the work environment and the nature of their work which is different compared to working onshore. There is a big difference when a person is on-board because no social network is available and even social media is limited when there are low or no signal at all. Further, even during off, the seafarers are still within their working environment which may affect their psychological aspect because of feeling of burnout and stress.

Other factors such as job demands, management control of the seafarers work and duties, the support system they received from their co-workers and management, interrelationship, their role, the changes that occur and how it is implemented are six areas of concerns that may lead to distress among them. When they are under distress, the seafarers became incompetent in making decisions making and become distracted [16].

It shows that the item “high level of stress (associated with poor sleep quality, noise and workload)” got the highest weighted mean of 3.29 followed by “difficulty in adjustment from on-board to shore based life” with 2.92 and “mental strain of accomplishing the set-task and tendency to take short cuts to finish work” with 2.88.

The result means that the respondents are encountering high level of stress in relevance to their poor sleep, noise and workload because of their environment during work and even while resting. Being a seafarer would lead to this kind of stress because they

are in the same environment during work period and rest day. Since they are on-board and do not have the access to other places for rest and leisure time, they are distress with the actual environment of seafaring.

The hazards in seafaring are the noise, temperature, radiation, radio activities, vibrations and accident hazards. But lately, there are other hazards being reported such as noise which cause their lack of sleep, coming from a cold place to a very hot one, exposure to artificial lights, chemicals, radiation and asbestos that is considered as hazards. Other health hazards are the hearing loss, balance due to swaying of ship, and sight problems. There are also cases that caused the accidents such as fire, slipped, and falls that could lead to resignation or disabilities [17].

While “prevalence of low pay that could lead to dissatisfaction to work and frequent absent from work” with 2.83 and the least is “lack of self-confidence and self-motivation to work and perform their duties” with lowest mean of 2.75 and verbally interpreted as agree.

The respondents agreed that there are times that they feel lack of confidence and motivation to work which could be because of the anxiety they feel due to the nature of their work and the status they have being away from their comfort zone can lead to feeling of fear and discomfort. They feel alienated with the environment, the kind of work they need to perform and being with people who belong to different culture.

Motivations in work is a very sensitive issue in an organization, thus, it is still essential in the management of employees. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is the basic factors in Motivation theory. It could be the range of behaviour, values and incentives within or internally. And the extrinsic which is outside the human psychological needs. All people must be motivated so that each duties and job will be done. Good job is also fulfilled by the employees can be source of their incentives. Desire for helping others, society and community can also instil the morals and incentives to reach their goal of helping others to make the world a better place. This kind of incentives is identified by Abraham Maslow, an organizational behaviour theorist who constitutes that there are several levels of incentives depending on the case in an organization [18].

Table 5 presents the factors that caused distress as to Social which obtained the composite mean of 2.88 and verbally interpreted as agree.

This means that social aspect can cause distress among seafarers because of being away from their social network like friends and families. They need to be with people with different culture and races that sometimes-

caused conflicts at work. However, they are doing this to provide support to their families.

**Table 5. Factors that Caused Distress as to Social**

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Long and unsociable working hours that requires most physical efforts	3.33	Agree	1
2. Insufficient benefits and rewards for accomplishment and low interest at work	2.67	Agree	5
3. No social relations and unfriendly co-workers that lead to differences of opinions and conflicts with colleagues	2.79	Agree	2.5
4. Insufficient support from the organization, co-workers and family	2.79	Agree	2.5
5. Arguments and fight with colleagues and unfriendly working environment	2.78	Agree	4
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

The seafarers who are supporting their families are being affected by homesickness, presence of other people and races, and even the physiological needs available in the ship. When they are under distress, their decision making is affected, given that they realign their priorities as well as their lifestyle that lead to unproductive activities and distractions. There are additional factors that affect the psychological and mental wellness of seafarers such as being alone, turnaround, limited leave, and separation anxiety attacks from families and relatives, retention of work and long working hours that is considered by many studies that could affect the overall wellness of seafarers. Cross culture has less impact on the social aspect of the seafarers being different with culture and practices from co-workers. Further, their being away from their own culture can also affect their social wellness [7].

It shows that the item “long and unsociable working hours that requires most physical efforts” with highest weighted mean of 3.33 followed by “no social relations and unfriendly co-workers that lead to differences of opinions and conflicts with colleagues” and “insufficient support from the organization, co-workers and family” with 2.79.

The respondents are experiencing a long and unsociable working hour due to overtime since there are tasks needed to be done to maintain the service quality as well as the safety and security in seafaring. They need to perform duties that is beyond their roles because of

limited manpower available on-board. This can be source of their distress since they experience too tiring workload.

Main and Chambers [19] argued that cruise line industry is associated with work long shifts which are often a very difficult condition. Typically, they need to work overtime due to shortage of personnel compared to the work that is needed to finish, at times work alone and isolated from other personnel. They should ensure that the overall operation of seafaring is continuous to provide services to their passengers.

While “arguments and fight with colleagues and unfriendly working environment” with weighted mean of 2.78 and the least is “insufficient benefits and rewards for accomplishment and low interest at work” with lowest mean of 2.67 and verbal interpretation of agree.

The least distress they experience is insufficient benefits and rewards because seafarers are compensated beyond the minimum wage as a means of motivation to enter such industry. The environment of seafaring is far different from the normal work environment on shore due to travel and transport activities it needs to do.

Being recompense is a need for employees and is essential to do their job at all cost. Rewards for good job and job are being compensated through cash or monetary payments. This is a good incentive because of physiological needs of every individual. Through good compensation and benefits provided by their company, the employees will perform well in the business. Receiving good amount will boost their morals and encourage them to do good, provide good service and adjust to the customers’ satisfaction because they would not want to allow the business to go down so that they will still have their job and the business will still pay them for their job.

All people must be motivated so that each duties and job will be done. Incentives can be identified through monetary such as bonuses, high pay and compensation benefits. Other kinds of incentives can be given through fame and glory, recognition, acknowledgement and rewards. A good job remark is also fulfilled by the employees and can be source of their incentives. Desire for helping others, society and community can also instill the morals and incentives to reach their goal of helping others to make the world a better place. This kind of incentives are identified by Abraham Maslow, an organizational behaviour theorist who constitutes that there are several levels of incentives depending on the case in an organization [20].

**Table 6. Summary Table on the Factors that Caused Distress**

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Physical	3.12	Agree	1
2. Emotional	3.00	Agree	2
3. Psychological	2.93	Agree	3
4. Social	2.88	Agree	4
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 6 presents the factors that caused distress which obtained the composite mean of 2.98 and verbally interpreted as agree. Physical factor got the weighted mean of 3.12 followed by emotional with 3.00 and psychological with 2.93 while the least is social with 2.88 and verbally interpreted as agree.

The respondents agreed that there are factors that caused distress to them as they pursue their profession in seafaring because of the unique kind of environment and services they provide while travelling through sea.

Seafarers who are part of the shipboard and marine industry are facing different challenges when it comes to controlling crisis due to the operation of vessels and cruise ship. They need information and abilities to function at a high level since there are always existing dangers when they are onboard which differs on the problems of people at shore. To cope with this demand, the seafarers and marine employee must undergo trainings that is congruent to the needed skills as seafarers. Trainings are essential for the cadets and officers in relation to the information on specialized and systematically education which include shipboard training or their exposure to the real ground of maritime professionals. Confidence and strong will is also an advantage in this industry, along with physical strength in the strict compliance to training procedures. In order to do so, a life at sea during shipboard training is an important process and mandated by the maritime education [21].

Among the items, the respondents agreed that physical factors are the distress that is most experienced in seafaring because of the presence of different stressors such as work environment by being at sea for a long time and the risk of accidents. In addition to this, being part of seafaring environment can affect the sleep and rest because of the noise of the cruise ship and water especially when there are heavy rain and storm.

The life of seafarers at sea is a very draining situation to them. They need to be physically fit to cope with such environment and can deal with the stress it brings to them and their bodies. They are unable to take enough rest due

to the movement of the ship and the natural occurrences such as rain and typhoon [22].

**Table 7. Coping Mechanism as to Personality Traits**

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. I am flexible and adaptable to any situation	3.58	Always	9
2. I am dedicated and committed to the objectives and goals of my profession as seafarer	3.92	Always	1
3. I am determined to be the best seafarer	3.58	Always	9
4. I am disciplined and obedient to follow the procedures and standards in seafaring	3.88	Always	2
5. I am a hardworking person as a seafarer	3.87	Always	3
6. I am independent in doing my job	3.58	Always	9
7. I am intelligent enough to assess my environment and cope with the demand of my work	3.63	Always	6.5
8. I am patiently doing my work even under pressure	3.79	Always	4
9. I am responsible and accountable for my decision and actions	3.67	Always	5
10. I am a very jolly person and can socialize with my colleagues and co-seafarers.	3.63	Always	6.5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>Always</b>	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes; 1.00 – 1.49 = Never

Table 7 presents the coping mechanism as to personality traits which obtained the composite mean of 3.58 and verbally interpreted as always. The respondents always cope with their distress by having positive personality traits that help them overcome the environment of seafaring.

Personality traits of the seafarer are very important factor to survive the life at sea. This is how they can cope through their natural traits and behaviour to be able to live at sea [1].

The respondents perceived that “I am dedicated and committed to the objectives and goals of my profession as seafarer” which got the highest weighted mean of 3.92 followed by “I am disciplined and obedient to follow the procedures and standards in seafaring” with weighted mean of 3.88, and “I am a hardworking person as a seafarer” with 3.87.

They are dedicated to their work and are inspired to function well while working on-board. When they feel this commitment, they tend to work hard and forget the



distress they encounter by striving what is best for the seafaring profession. This is an internal motivation so that they will forget homesickness and their family as well as being in a different environment.

The goal of the seafaring can help a person to become inspired and find something to strive for as they provide customer service and attain satisfaction from them. This also strive for what is right and wrong and can be the value motivator for the employees to know if they are in the right path of their service as well as performance [23].

While “I am flexible and adaptable to any situation”, “I am determined to be the best seafarer”, and “I am independent in doing my job” with mean of 3.58 and verbal interpretation of always.

The respondents are flexible and adaptable as well as independent in doing their job as their coping mechanism to the distress present in their work environment. This is the least coping mechanism they have because it is hard for them to immediately adapt to the seafaring environment. Though, they are oriented before they were deployed, there is high difference between knowing the environment and experiencing the actual life of seafarers. Personal characteristics are always affected by the goal of the organization because it can influence the personalities and behaviours of its employees.

The seafarers’ skills are important in the seafaring activities including their abilities to adapt the environment. They should be flexible to do the same task in a different place and deal with different culture so that they could still be independent and become the best of what they could be [24].

Table 8 presents the coping mechanism as to physical factors which obtained the composite mean of 3.65 and verbally interpreted as always.

It implies that the respondents are coping with distress using their physical factors such as by maintaining their work area and changing their environment to allow them to adapt to the work environment of seafaring. Further, they use it to make themselves forget of their situation of being away from shore and their family.

Physical factors are very important in surviving the life at sea among seafarers because it can help them feel at home and help them to adapt to the changing environment of seafaring [1].

The item “I usually clean my place, post and room” got the highest weighted mean of 3.92 followed by “I ensure that the workplace and living accommodation is kept clean and tidy and free from slip, trip, fall hazards and from the inappropriate storage of harmful substances and fire sources” with 3.83 and “I always wear personal protective equipment’s (PPE)” with 3.79.

**Table 8. Coping Mechanism as to Physical Factors**

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. I always wear personal protective equipment’s (PPE)	3.79	Always	3
2. I ensure that the workplace and living accommodation is kept clean and tidy and free from slip, trip, fall hazards and from the inappropriate storage of harmful substances and fire sources	3.83	Always	2
3. I maintain physical activities such as exercise and sports.	3.33	Always	8
4. I am watching televisions, movies and DVDs, listening to radios, and reading books	3.42	Often	7
5. I eat nutritional foods such as fruits and vegetables	3.67	Always	5.5
6. I maintain adequate rest and sleep and use my day off	3.25	Often	9
7. I limit my vices such as drinking alcohol and smoking	3.22	Often	10
8. I usually clean my place, post and room	3.92	Always	1
9. I always maintain security awareness about my job	3.71	Always	4
10. I drink a lot of water	3.67	Always	5.5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>Always</b>	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes; 1.00 – 1.49 = Never

This means that the most coping activities the respondents do is cleaning their room to maintain it and assure that everything they need is in order. It is very important that when a person is away from home, they maintain the cleanliness of their place because it reflects their personality.

Tolentino and Quiden [7] stated that the seafarers are trained before they are deployed and emphasize to them the importance of cleanliness to reduce the health risk among them. Since they will be on-board and at the sea for certain period, it is important that they take care of themselves and their needs.

While “I maintain adequate rest and sleep and use my day off” with 3.25 and the least is “I limit my vices such as drinking alcohol and smoking” with mean of 3.22 and verbal interpreted as often.

The least coping strategies is to limit their vices like drinking and smoking because they think that vices have detrimental effect that they feel they are relaxed while resting. But this is not true because drinking and smoking can make them more depressed and anxiety attacks increases.

Lewis [25] posited that the seafarers are encouraged to practice healthy lifestyle so that they will stay well and

healthy all throughout the journey. Further it is part of the cabin crew that must always be safe and required to have medical assessment before they are deployed to seafaring.

The seafarers posited that there are ways to increase the healthy lifestyle, however, there are instances that they are prone to unhealthy lifestyle due to coping of stress experience in the ship. It includes alcohols, smoking, exercise, diet, routine, boredom and isolation. There are times that it can lead to physical deficit such as overweight and obesity. Overweight and obesity is related to the respiratory system risk factors. Though not all have health deficit in the system, the obesity and risk for high weight may include the breathing shortness and wheezing. It is also a risk factor to the sleeping condition of a person such as apnea where he can be disrupted during sleep due to breathing and worst asthma. It is suggested that most children who always eat fast foods will heighten the risk for health illness relative to respiration such as asthma, allergic rhinitis, and congested nose [24]

**Table 9. Coping Mechanism as to Personal Reason**

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. I always have positive view to instil a sense of fulfilment	3.70	Always	6.5
2. I always believe to have a sense of leadership and adapt the environment through good communication	3.75	Always	5
3. I ensure good occupational health and safety procedures	3.83	Always	3
4. I know I should maintain my physical strength/ stamina	3.70	Always	6.5
5. I work and live decently	3.83	Always	3
6. I cope with the stress brought by the environment	3.45	Often	8
7. I am not a bad-tempered person	3.41	Often	9
8. I am emotionally attached to myself and co-workers	3.12	Often	10
9. I should maintain high self esteem	3.83	Always	3
10. I am initiative enough to do my own part in making myself and co-workers safe.	3.87	Always	1
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.71</b>	<b>Always</b>	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes; 1.00 – 1.49 = Never

Table 9 presents the coping mechanics as to physical factors which obtained the composite mean of 3.71 and verbally interpreted as always.

Personal reason depicts the inspiration of the seafarers while they are on-board. They use it as source of their strength to go on with their life and be functional while on-board [1].

The response “I am initiative enough to do my own part in making myself and co-workers safe” got the highest weighted mean of 3.87, followed by “I ensure good occupational health and safety procedures”, “I work and live decently” and “I should maintain high self-esteem” with 3.83.

The respondents are doing their part to make their environment very safe to reduce the risk for accidents and future problem. Making themselves safe as well as their co-worker will make them aware of the hazards present in the work environment of seafaring. They even wear PPE and encourage others to be safe so that no accidents will occur that could lead to future problem.

They have the sense of leadership and adapt the environment through good communication as the key survival techniques. They can communicate with co-employees since Filipinos are known to be good communicator and conversationalists. Addition to this, leadership is demonstrated through good communication skills and is another valued trait in a seafarer. Regardless the rank, a seafarer will be placed in situations where he must lead and solve problems. Knowing how to solve problems (and not problem-blame or problem-avoid), plus the ability to thrive under pressure, make one a valued seafarer [4].

While “I am not a bad-tempered person” with weighted mean of 3.41 and the least is “I am emotionally attached to myself and co-workers” with 3.12 and verbal interpreted as often.

Lastly, the respondents are attached to their co-workers and to themselves as the least coping mechanism because they need to be able to think clearly if they demonstrate confidence and independency.

The mental and mind setting of humans is very complicated and multifaceted which indicates how difficult to understand behaviour. Because behaviour sometimes deals with external factors and adapt to that current situation. Every day, as people faced different person and deals with different behaviour, their psychological, emotional and psychosocial abilities changes based on the outside stimulus. Psychology assesses the personality factors and the emotional stimulus which make the behaviour of a person too complex to understand. Theories have its own accord to make each facet of personality and personhood is addressed. The seafarer’s personality is affected by the nature of their work for being in the same routine and place could affect the way of thinking of the seafarers.

Their behaviour changes as they tried to adapt the changes of environment every time they go aboard [17].

**Table 10. Difference of Responses on Factors that Caused Distress as to Physical When Grouped According to Profile**

Profile Variables	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Civil Status	0.925	0.365	Not Significant
Position	1.578	0.226	Not Significant
Length of Years On-board	1.447	0.258	Not Significant
Income	2.364	0.102	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$

As seen from the result, all computed  $p$ -values were all greater than 0.05alpha level, thus the researchers fail to reject the null hypothesis of no significant differences on the factors that causes distress as to physical when grouped according to profile. This means that there were no significant differences observed and implies that the responses are the same across each profile.

The respondents have the same physical distress experienced when seafaring because of the work environment that has the same impact to them.

**Table 11. Difference of Responses on Factors that Caused Distress as to Emotional When Grouped According to Profile**

Profile Variables	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Civil Status	0.816	0.423	Not Significant
Position	3.077	0.051	Not Significant
Length of Years On-board	1.377	0.274	Not Significant
Income	2.726	0.071	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$

Based from the table, all computed  $p$ -values were all greater than 0.05alpha level, thus the researchers fail to reject the null hypothesis of no significant differences on the factors that causes distress as to emotional when grouped according to profile. This means that there were no significant differences observed and implies that the responses are the same across each profile.

The responses of the respondents do not differ in assessment of emotional distress because they all face the same situation which is far from their comfort zone and families.

As shown from the result of Table 12, there was a significant difference observed on position since the obtained  $p$ -value of 0.026 was less than 0.05 alpha level. This means a significant difference observed and it was

found out that staff has higher assessment on the psychological factors compared to the other group.

**Table 12. Difference of Responses on Factors that Caused Distress as to Psychological When Grouped According to Profile**

Profile Variables	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Civil Status	1.922	0.068	Not Significant
Position	3.804	0.026	Significant
Length of Years On-board	0.671	0.522	Not Significant
Income	3.069	0.051	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$

The position has difference on the response of psychological distress due to the level of duties and job description that the respondents need to perform while onboard. Staff has higher psychological distress because they are the one who have direct contact with different customers with different level of satisfaction and needs.

People tend to be affected psychologically depending on the extent of their duties and responsibilities. When the employee is set to be in the position where they have direct contact with the customers, there are more source of stress that is present in the work environment [22].

**Table 13. Difference of Responses on Factors that Caused Distress as to Social When Grouped According to Profile**

Profile Variables	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Civil Status	2.072	0.050	Not Significant
Position	1.802	0.179	Not Significant
Length of Years On-board	1.991	0.161	Not Significant
Income	2.203	0.119	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$

It can be gleaned from Table 13 that all computed  $p$ -values were all greater than 0.05 alpha level, thus the researchers fail to reject the null hypothesis of no significant differences on the factors that causes distress as to social when grouped according to profile. This means that there was no significant difference observed and implies that the responses are the same across each profile.

No difference is found on the social distress among seafarers because they have the same social environment and the impact will be the same. They stayed on-board for certain period and will be encountering the same group of people while on-board.

**Table 14. Proposed Plan of Action to Enhance the Coping Mechanism Among Seafarers**

Key Result Area Objectives	Strategies Activities	Outcome
<b>Personality Traits</b>		
To enhance the abilities of seafarers to become flexible and adaptable the could lead to being independent and best seafarer	Work Environment Orientation Seminar	The seafarer is flexible and adaptable to their environment while onboard
<b>Physical Factors</b>		
To allow the seafarers to have adequate sleep and rest during rest day and limit their vices to maintain healthy lifestyle	Health Education Healthy Lifestyle Practices Seminar	The seafarers are doing their best to have adequate sleep and rest The practice healthy lifestyle
<b>Personal Reason</b>		
To lessen the emotional attachment of the seafarers their co-workers	Emotional Quotient Assessment of the Seafarers  Emotional Quotient Seminar	The seafarers are not emotional attached to their co-workers and became independent in doing their task while onboard

## CONCLUSIONS

Majority of the respondents belong to age bracket of 18-35 years old, single male, working as staff for 1-3 years and earning 40,001-60,000 pesos. The respondents agreed that factor such as physical oppressiveness, long absence from work, high level of stress and long and unsociable working hours that caused distress when they are on board. They always cope with distress in terms of personal reason, physical factors, and personality traits. There is significant difference on factors that caused distress as to psychological when grouped according to position. The researchers proposed an action plan to enhance the coping mechanism among seafarers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the management of cruise ship may conduct trainings for staff and crew members about the safety hazards and implementation of safety procedures in the cruise ship. There may be suggestion box in the cruise ship where the staff and crew may

provide insights about the physical facilities and amenities to provide safety precautions and lower the distress, they feel towards the cruise ship environment. Before deployment, the cruise ship management may provide examination for the seafarer to assess the extent of their coping mechanism towards the stress that they will encounter. There should be a rigid orientation on the life at sea. The plan of action may be used to enhance the coping mechanism among seafarers. And for the future study was recommended using the other factors that associated with distress and coping mechanism of the seafarers.

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