

Review article on the mental health of seafarers

Capt. Mihir Chandra

mihir2211@gmail.com

1. Abstract:

'Sea the future' is coined correctly by the name blue economy. But is the future beckons wellbeing of the 'key worker'? While Covid 19 pandemic halted most of the economic juggernauts in lockdown; it could not put a spanner into the propellers of ships which kept trading for 90% of the global trade 24x7 around the COVID's variants year, seafarers mental and physical health went through tough times. The articles reviewed had never seen through this unknown tunnel of this decade. Wisdom of hindsight is common but resilience to bounce back may be grasped out of foresight with learnings of gap analysis. Awareness of factors influencing health, as a building block for seafarers' training from pre-sea level is to be envisioned in the mode of compulsory courseware. Physical fitness and mental toughness modules must be enshrined in courseware with pedagogy and soft skill development through case studies. Research work should pave the way for innovative tools to monitor seafarer health 24X7. The well-being of seafarers may then be addressed potentially.

Keywords- Covid; wellbeing; resilience; Physical fitness

2.0 Introduction:

Seafaring has been one of the most challenging occupations in a plethora of job profiles, because of its dependent and independent variables being the equally important denominators. The demographic profile with competency-based KSA module of learning and socioeconomic determinants make this profession unique to understand and so mitigate the problems related to the physical well-being of seafarers for a holistic approach towards wellness at sea which will import wellness to the shipping industry as a whole. Good mental health is a key to a healthy lifestyle and so physical well-being. The task associated with seafarers and resulting mental health degradation has been a serious cause of concern in past because of many reported incidents of suicides on board ships and many other associated effects on social latitudes, that may have gone camouflaged or gone unnoticed with different cases, need awareness enhancement services for sailors at the

stratified population of merchant marine. Following articles have been searched through to establish the study as mentioned:

3.0 Literature Review:

Robert T.B. 1 says that in the year 2002 there were cases to suicide as mental health was very poor as per accessed data by him. According to him, respective suicide cases not only to be taken as an individual loss but also to be seen in the perspective of damages to related families and fiscal loss to ship-owners due to loss in freight and insurance claims.

According to another study by Michie S 2, it is found that stress has been one of the risk determinants of poor mental health. Stress-related issues which migrate to seafarers are family problems and life crises.

A study by Roberts S.E et al 3 gives quantitative data for period '79-80 and 2001-05 for suicide rates for 30 number of global occupations. It is found that Merchant seafarers remain listed at rank 2 in both periods of studies.

Mellebye Alex et al ;4 has dwelt upon variants like seafarers' rank, age, gender, the cultural dimension of the multinational crew on board and type of voyages undertaken. He associates these factors with determining causes of depression and suicide cases. This will give remedial measures to mitigate, remove causes and therefore health enhancement in context.

4.0 Conclusion:

It is therefore concluded that the mental health of seafarers which get affected due to the following factors such as; loneliness, stress, lack of shore-leave, harassment/bullying, criminalization, abuse, cultural problems and piracy remain multifaceted risk determinants as they are the outcome of occupational profile and related statutory rules and regulations. Hence, this is viewed that an awareness of these factors may somewhat give direction to reduce the risk by utilizing various HR skills and Organizational behaviour components for commanding members on board ships. Thus, the awareness cultivated will foster a culture of well-being as it is often said 'understanding a problem in situ, solves half of the problem.' Course planning and monitoring at a presea level should include the rigours, demands of seafaring as occupation and mental toughness score must be analysed empirically; and health data of the particular individual trainee to be archived at university-

laboratories of states, as reference study for posterity –it will enhance a ‘health culture’ to deal with ‘near-misses; oft-quoted word of the safety management system. It will help in augmenting ever-evolving preventive and corrective measures in health care.

It is also suggested that individual losses due to the suicide of seafarer should not remain limited as a case of soul loss but it should be thought of as resulting damages to family and loss to ship-owners as well.

References:

1. Robert T.B, Iversion, Mental health of seafarers’, IMH -2012;63,2:78-79
2. Michie .S., Causes and management of stress at work, Occupational environmental medicine, 1st January 2002.
3. Roberts S.E., Jaremin. B, Lloyd. K, High-risk occupation for suicides, Cambridge university press, U.K, 2012.
4. Mellbye A., Carter Tim, Seafarers’ depression and suicide, I.M.H 2017