



An Analysis of the Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Seafarers' Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, we hear the term “COVID-19” a lot. We knew that it affected our lungs and lead to death. It caused by a virus called “SARS COV-2”. We somehow managed the first and second waves, and people recovering from COVID also have some other diseases like black and white fungus. Everyone knew how this virus was spreading and what precautionary measures we had to take to prevent it from spreading further. We found medicine for our physical illness, but for mental illness, we didn't talk very much about the mental illness of this pandemic situation. The paper is mainly focused on the mental health of people during COVID times and how to cope with the stress during this time. It focused on the seriousness of this situation and also how we are affected mentally, because without knowing ourselves, we are slowly recovering but still affected mentally. We frequently sanitise our hands, but the thing is that we also have to sanitise our minds. At this time, many viral negative pressures are also filling our minds.

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1. Introduction.

Stress and unrestrained emotions can also have an adverse effect on mental health, increasing a person's susceptibility to anxiety and depression. They'll also find it difficult to build solid connections if they can't comprehend, accept, or control their emotions. This can therefore worsen any mental health issues they may already be experiencing and make them feel even more alone and alone. “Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. Health is the sum of all physical, mental, and disease-free conditions. If we take any survey regarding the health of the people, most of them won't be in a good state of health. Many of them are affected mainly because of mental illness, even though they are good at physique. Due to the borne of COVID, this mental illness has increased a lot in

this pandemic situation. It is a terrific situation for all the individuals across the world, because at this time we are not only affected physically but also mentally. Numerous studies have examined the risk factors that impact the mental health of seafarers, indicating that working at sea exposes them to stress and psychological injury (^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5}). ⁶Tang L et al (2022) describes that the number of people who have had mental health problems while working at sea is difficult to estimate because the problem is still ‘hidden’ behind stigma. This could be explained by the “machismo” ethos that exists among mariners, who view any kind of illness as a sign of weakness. ⁷Vairavan C (2022) Seafarers' working conditions and mental health deteriorated as COVID-19 expanded and border lockdowns were implemented for a variety of reasons.

2. What is Health?.

Everyone know the proverb “what health is? And what is not health? Now will I first see what is healthy?” ‘Health’ is a state of being well and free from physical and mental illness. Now we will see what wealth is. ‘Wealth’ is a state of being rich and having an abundance of valuable financial assets. “Heath is

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wealth”. It stated that your highest financial assets are going to be your physical and mental well-being. We didn’t value this proverb as much two years ago, but as you can see, we now understand its meaning, as many wealthy people have died as a result of COVID. Everyone have greed or sometimes a need to run day and night without looking after our own health. People are giving more priority to increasing our wealth; we don’t even care about our own health. Without our lives, what else matters a lot? Whoever is reading this essay, please keep this in your mind. Without a wall, we can’t paint, right? Likewise, without your health, you can’t enjoy your wealthy lifestyle.

3. Mental Health.

Why is mental health more important than physical health? First, what is mental health? Why do we have to care about our mental health? Mental health refers to a person’s condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being. How can I know whether I am mentally strong or ill? If you accept someone scolding you, insulting you, or assigning you work with time constraints under working conditions, it means you are mentally strong! But opposite to this, when somebody treats you like that, it means you feel embarrassed or not well or crying or shouting at others, which will indicate your mental illness. We have to take care of our mental health because the only thing we have in our hand in this pandemic situation is “hope”. We have to make ourselves mentally strong, and then only then will we create hope inside of us. And that hope will give a positive mindset to the fight against COVID.

“If there is a mind, there is religion!”

It states that if you have the attitude that you can manage any situation, then automatically you will start to create a path for that. If you start to be mentally strong regardless of obstacles, then your physical health will also automatically strengthen along with your mental health. ⁸Vairavan, C. (2023) portrayed that the poor mental health among seafarers can have significant consequences, both for the individuals affected and the ship-ping industry as a whole.

4. Role of Seafarers in Covid.

Fluvial transport is the foremost transport system recorded in history. Even though there is huge technological development in the aviation field, 90% of world goods transportation is done by ship only! The main backbone of this giant field is seafarers. Their job is impossible to explain. They are working now without seeing their family and friends. We are all facing a very rough and tough time because of this COVID VIRUS. We have all talked about the work of frontline workers like doctors, policemen, and sweepers. But we forgot to talk about the main pillars that have connected all these frontline workers and people. Now the greatest challenge in this COVID pandemic situation is the crew changes. Even though we have a good number of seafarers, we aren’t able to repatriate them. For the

sake of controlling COVID-19, lockdowns, border closures, and also international restrictions have been imposed by the respective government authorities. Because of this inability to change crews, many seafarers are working far beyond their contract, and because of that, many of them are still waiting to get on board.

There are no words to describe the dedication of the seafarers and all the port authorities. Seafarers are problem with their work and serving goods, medical supplies, and basic necessities to people. Many of the people in this world are taking rest in this pandemic time, but the seafarers’ community is working continuously, though they have personal feelings and emotions. For delivering goods to unknown people in this world, they are quarantined for a month and then transported for 14 days without getting paid. Hopefully, companies are reverting to crew changes and everything will go back to normal.

5. Mental Health of Seafarers.

Major contributors to impairment among those afflicted, their families, and the general public are mental health illnesses. The absence of mental disease, or more ambitiously, the existence of psychological well-being, is crucial for people to perform at their best, live longer lives, and make meaningful contributions to society. Because of the impact of crew changes and being unable to sign off, and also because the extension of the contract, turns them into anguish mode. Even though they have enough food and other necessities for work, they are unable to perform to their full potential. This is because they are mentally affected due to their longevity in the sea and also because they are away from family and friends in this tough situation. If our mind is in a good state, then our body will automatically follow the correct path.

They are stuck on ships for many months, and some seafarers are working without getting paid. They are deeply depressed, but as frontline workers, they continue to serve the people. The IMO [International Maritime Organization] established the SCAT [Seafarer Crisis Action Team] to provide mental support to seafarers. It works with other organisations like ILO [International Labour Organization], ITF [International Transport Workers Federation] and ICS [International Chamber of Shipping]. They have helped seafarers across the globe with things like crew changes, health and safety of the seafarers, etc. This team is mainly focusing on the psychological health of the seafarers.

6. COVID in Mental Health.

What if I go back three years and ask anyone what they think about the impact of COVID? They will almost certainly ask me what COVID is. Even when we ask myself too, we will also raise the same question, but unbelievably, now I am writing an essay for COVID about how it affects our mental health. From this point onwards, we can come to know how it has increased rapidly. Now if you see, all are talking about this one only. We didn’t expect such a worse situation. We have

lost many lives and are still losing... Even developed countries don't know how to handle this pandemic situation. Many lost their lives; side by side, many lost their jobs. Migrant workers don't have work and don't know what to do or how to return back to their hometown, so they just sleep on the roads. Many daily wage workers become affected. For them, the condition might be that if they work only, they will eat the next day's meal. So they mentally suffered a lot.

If you take students' lives, that's so annoying. Actually, if you take a physical class itself, a student can't pay attention for more than 40 minutes. But in online classes, it's too tough for students to concentrate, as well as during exams when they are not able to submit within the given time and sometimes network failure also happens. And also, it is too tough to learn or understand the concept of practical things. A few students have educated parents with them, but not all, right? They are suffering a lot. Even though they are capable of doing that work, without proper guidance they can't understand things properly and they underestimate themselves. Their confidence level decreases a lot and their mental health is also affected.

7. Analysis of the Seafarer's Mental Health.

The mental health of seafarers is a serious issue. By using real data from epidemiological studies, it is possible to determine the elements that either promote or impede seafarers' mental health and to provide strategies and solutions for enhancing the wellbeing of this group of employees. The empirical literature on the mental health of seafarers and its comparison to the broader population is comparatively high. But it also probably has something to do with the significant difficulties in determining the prevalence of mental illness among seafarers. This challenge takes on multiple aspects. First off, most temporary voyage-based contracts that are issued only after a successful medical test are used to attract seafarers. This has the tendency to weed out unwell individuals, creating a particularly potent 'healthy worker effect' that is insufficiently mitigated by using suitable groups for reference.

Because of this, comparing the mental health of sailors to other populations is exceedingly challenging. Second, mariners are a dispersed and isolated workforce that is very challenging to reach. Thirdly, and somewhat related, it is exceedingly challenging to get a representative sample of foreign seafarers who work for various organisations. Seafarers appear to have greater rates of psychiatric disorders and related problems like alcoholism than many other occupational categories, based on the scant research that is currently available. In a rare modern comparison study of mariners who are currently in active service.

The subject of whether mental illnesses developed as a result of working as seafarers or, conversely, if it was more common for people who already had mental illnesses or were sensitive to them to become seafarers was examined in earlier research. The latter theory received some support from epidemiological studies done on Norwegian men in a range of professions. However, more recent research (based on samples of

sailors of a single nationality) has revealed a potential link between the vocation of seafaring and psychiatric diagnoses. Additionally, data suggests that certain seafaring ranks may experience moderately greater levels of 'burnout syndrome' and higher degrees of emotional tiredness than workers in other professions.

In severe situations, sadness and poor mental health can lead to suicide among sailors. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of reliable data regarding the suicide rates among seafarers, which makes assessing the current state of affairs throughout the global fleet exceedingly challenging. This is caused in part by the challenges that come with identifying suicide cases as well as the lack of current demographic data, which are essential to calculate rates. Several academics made this very evident when they discussed his study of maritime fatalities aboard ships registered in Hong Kong.

This pandemic situation is really hard for all of us. And since the whole world is now getting vaccinated, many health industries are now making efforts to reduce the shortage of vaccines. We'll all be vaccinated soon and be free of this COVID. Those who are above 18 can get vaccinated by registering themselves. Frontline workers are working for us only. They are working beyond their working period. They don't need any appreciation or applause from us. They only need our safety, so we have to protect ourselves by following the guidelines from the World Health Organization. If we are mentally strong, we will easily win this race. A good example is that a 99-year old woman was affected by COVID, but because of her mental confidence she coped with the doctors and now she is relieved from COVID. Everything is possible if we are mentally strong.

8. Suicide.

Every seafarer has regular medical examinations to get a true picture of their current emotional state, discuss strategies for addressing emotional problems if they are discovered, and recommend industry-wide initiatives to enhance seafarers' mental health. The statistics pertaining to these deaths are expressed as a proportion of mariners who died by suicide. In one expression, the number of suicide fatalities is expressed as a percentage of all deaths, and in another, it is expressed as a percentage of deaths caused by severe illnesses. However, there are two approaches to account for a thorough analysis that might cover ongoing initiatives aimed at enhancing seafarers' mental wellbeing. When figures from 1960 to 2009 about seafarer deaths are compared to the entire number of deaths (17,026), it becomes clear that suicide accounts for approximately 1,011 of the deaths, or 5.9% of the total number of seafarer deaths. In contrast, 590 seafarers died as a result of suicidal attempts, or roughly 13.1% of all seafarer deaths, as compared to 4,487 seafarers who died from illness, which included suicide deaths.

9. Healthy Ways to Cope With Stress.

Our mental health was affected a lot in this pandemic situation. Some healthy ways to cope with that are the following:

- Avoid constantly hearing death-related news; it will upset you.
- Try to avoid believing rumors.
- Follow the guidelines of WHO.
- Exercise regularly.
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Continue with regular preventive measures like sanitising frequently and wearing face masks, hand gloves, and keeping social distance.
- Get vaccinated at the correct time interval as per your doctor's advice.
- Try to spend time with your family members.
- If you have any symptoms regarding COVID, first go and test yourself. If it comes back positive, don't worry. Follow the doctor's prescription and quarantine yourself from others.
- Lend your time to spend time with nature.
- Medicate yourself.
- Commit yourself to your favourite activities.
- Utilize this time to cherish your childhood memories.

Conclusions.

This is a very tough situation for all of us. A hundred years ago, we faced the 1918 influenza (Spanish flu). That too, we had not expected. We lost many lives. We lost millions of people. They were confident at that time and they found a vaccine for that. Even though they had little knowledge of technology at the time, when compared to that, we now have many new technologies and also young minds and ideas. We also found vaccines like the sputnik V vaccine, covishield, covaxin and many others. We have to cope with our government by staying safe at home and following all the measures. We are highly populated, so the borne of disease will also increase, but that is not increasing on its own. It is only a virus. It doesn't have any legs to jump from place to place or one person to another person. Seafarers' living and working situations are typified by extended periods of time spent apart from their homes and families months at a time. Stress from a fast-paced lifestyle and severe psychological issues at work are very real. A variety of stress factors are present for seafarers who work and live aboard different types of vessels. Cordial relationships between sailors in on-shore or off-shore working situations are fostered by effective communication. Working as a seafarer demands dedication, social cohesiveness, and cooperation on a national and international level. One can succeed in their career, lead and inspire others, and negotiate the social difficulties of the workplace with the aid of emotional intelligence. Seafarers may experience major health issues if they are unable to control their stress levels. Unmanaged stress can accelerate ageing,

boost the risk of heart attack and stroke, raise blood pressure, and weaken the immune system. Learning stress management techniques is the first step towards developing emotional intelligence. Seafarers' mental health can be negatively impacted by unmanaged stress, which increases their susceptibility to anxiety and depression. Seafarers are more susceptible to mood swings if they are unable to recognise and control their emotions. We only spread it without following the preventive measures as mentioned by the World Health Organization. The only thing that we learnt from this COVID is humanity and how to make ourselves mentally strong.

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