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Maritime Education and Training - Psychological Aspects in MET

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Abstract: Maritime Environment is the workplace of seafarers and it consists of permanent elements like: life at sea, enforcement qualifications, abilities and regular observation.

The fact is that, human works in a specific environment, have a fundamental importance for psychology, therefore, it should be taken into account both when we are learning and then, working at sea.

The human activities in the course of completing tasks depends on physical conditions like health, physical strength, and mental conditions what we have. This kind of thing have a closely related to work efficiency and mind good feeling.

Maritime High Schools and Maritime Universities have a predetermined course of study, taking into account - STCW convention. We are studying mainly in practical terms, than psychology terms like how to react in risk assessment in crisis cases, stress and even how to overcome the language and cultural barrier with crew members.

The fundamental question is how to prepare for life at sea and how the training should look like in our education?

The methodology of work will be based on:

- implement psychology courses
- teach students how to cope with loneliness
- cultural studies
- international exchange program for students
- organize events with Crew Members
- know ourselves
- look at practice from psychological point

Keywords: Psychology, Education, Training, Universities, Methodology

1. Introduction

Maritime Environment is burdened by stressful situations. Stress is the inherent part of human life, accompanies us in process of adaptation to environment, dealing with the random situations and during loneliness. Dealing with problems in home is much easier than onboard, because of people around us. At sea, we can not rely on crew members like when we are in a trusted group. Of course, they are not our foes, but they do not understand us like our relatives. Sailors have to have strong psyche, owing to the fact that they experience different kind of stress that can be appreciated in other working activities, including risk of accidents, injuries and diseases. Work of seafaring is characterized by objective subjective and factors.

Objective factors rely on the conditions in which the work is done leading to psychological, mechanical, structure risks and chemical, even sleep difficulties, long separations from home and families, poor diet, changing crew every few weeks/months, working under time pressure. Subjective factors rely on the self assessment of the person's own psychological and health condition and on the degree of personal satisfaction that work produces. All these elements have a negative impact on our health and perception regarding the world and our work if the stress will enter our life permanently. The main symptoms of stress (by ILO MLC, 2006 databases) are sleep problems, sweating, loss of appetite, difficulty concentrating, headaches, worrying constantly and many other common symptoms.

The study, considered the most reliable to date, was commissioned by the ITF Seafarers Trust. It was attended by over 1,500 seamen of various nationalities, seafarers' ranks and serving various units. It turned out that every fourth sailor suffers from depression, 17% experience chronic anxiety, and 20% consider suicide or self-harm [1]. Research has also shows a comparison between depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation. Factors such as the insecurity of their skills, negative work environment, low job satisfaction and individual employee illnesses have also take into account.

2. Psycho difficulty in maritime environment

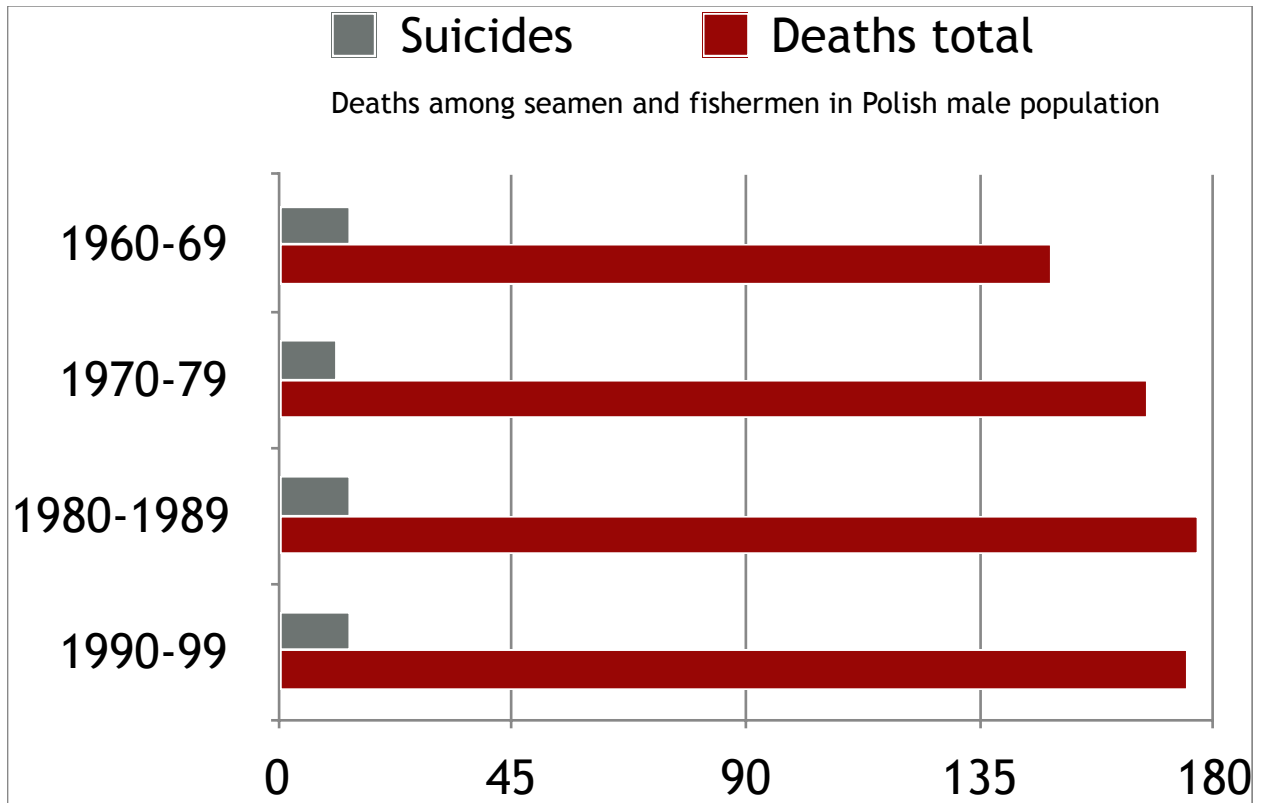
Maritime Education and Training holds a key to a successful future for the seafarers, his family and maritime industry in general. According to our viewpoint and experience, we have not been instructed how to follow with the stressful situations onboard. The one of task in Maritime Education and Training (MET) is focus on effective strategy for developing and improvement the maritime industry in every aspect of life at sea. Stress in seafarers is lately global trend in maritime environment, because of Covid-19, war and high incidence of depression. Universities education must be more focused on development of our preparation to work. How they can do it?

The basis for success is to be for Student, not against him. We are the moderate, technology generation and our mentality is different from people from older generations. Nowadays, we are taught to be the most successful and the best, so we are more vulnerable to criticism. The best way to keep the modern generation most stronger and immune to stress is conversation or lessons about self-worth.

Also, we should be more trained for other culture from the world. You never know from which country will be crew members in your vessel. We can find out new interesting things about any country and people who lives there. This will be help to organize life onboard together. A national cross-sectional study on seafarers of two different countries (Lithuania and Latvia), demonstrated that factors associated with psycho-emotional stress are essentially depression and disorders of sexual life.[2] Future seafarers should be tackled using standard approaches, regulation with any increased risk dealt with in a similar way to other breaches of health and safety. It is so important to treat this fatigue as a serious safety problem, so one of best idea is to organization a Student exchange to shows a cultural differences. Erasmus or other exchange organization may teach us how to coping with the new environment and how behave in learning are customs.

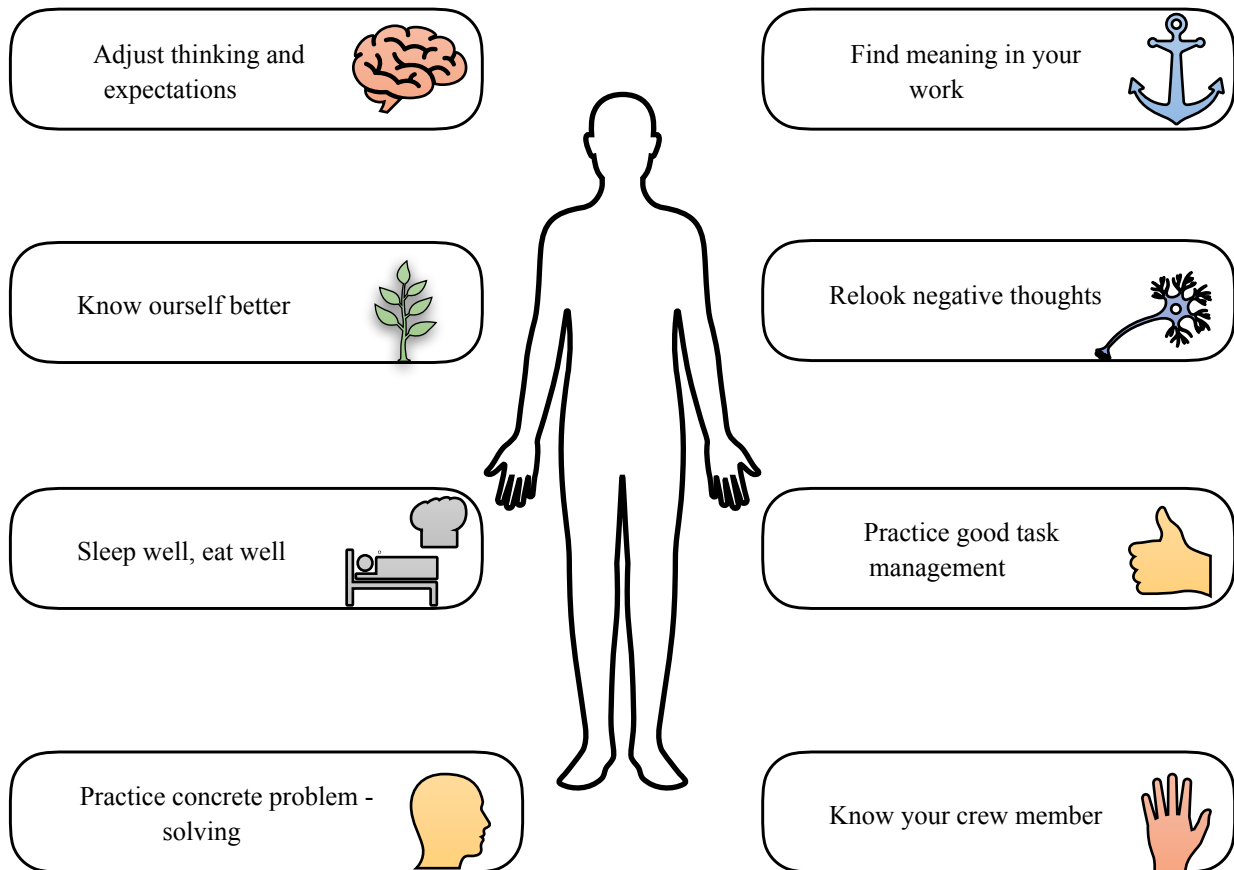
Everyone knows that sailors are one of the most isolated groups in the whole world. Social isolation is a major cause of psychological problems. Many seafarers may compensate the feeling of loneliness with excessive smoking or/and alcohol consumption.[3] Studies show that more than half of stress onboard is by long separation from family. Stress can increase levels when contacts with family are difficult. The loneliness is the most significant factor contributing to stress at sea. The stress level is increase when additional factors intervene such as illness of a family member or difficulty in having telephone contact.

International Maritime Organization (IMO) guidelines define fatigues as: „A reduction of physical and/or mental condition, resulting from physical stress. It may impair almost all psycho-physical abilities including power, speed, reaction time, coordination, decision making and/or emotional balance” [4]. Fatigue is the consequence of inadequate qualification of the subordinate crew members, long working days with work shifts and insufficient number of personnel [5]. Working long hours had an impact on all group and as a consequence, poor decisions are made and safety is compromised, particularly when handling and maneuvering vessels in bad weather close to fixed structures. Long work hours associated with a poor quality of sleep can affect mental health and lower sense of emotional wellbeing.



All seafarers need to take care of their own mental health while onboard . The key steps to overcome stress onboard are think positively. We should always keep in mind positive and do more what makes us happy. Usually after work, seaman should turn mid off and calm down. In order to reach inner peace is to do meditates and watch a subtle activities.

3. Methods for stress management



The above graphic shows us only a few methods of decrease stress at work. All we know that, if the stress is prolonged or repeated, many of the changes in our body can have longer term effects on our physical health and our wellbeing. For all these reasons, it is important to recognize stress and take measures to manage it. The one of most important things is relax and control breathing. These work by calming your body and mind and reversing the physiological changes which happen in our bodies at times of stress. If we control our breathing, the heart slows down and the body returns to its resting state. Another one is muscular relaxation. It is the easiest method for learning how to relax your body.

4. Preparing for stress and other psychological aspects in MET

In Poland are located a few Maritime High Schools and two Maritime Universities, but there are not class which can prepare you for stress and mental problems in work as a seaman or officer. We suspect that, in many countries is similar situation. Universities should provide better preparation for that issue and gives mental support before graduate collage. From our observations as students and apprentices from deck department, we can suggest several ideas:

- teach students how to cope with loneliness - it is very important to know that loneliness is does not mean end of the word and mentally strong person can cope with it, even change sense of loneliness into time self-improvement,

- implement psychology courses - which should be available for students at least once during all education, it will arrange young people who want to work on vessels for better dealing with their on psyche problems,
- international exchange program for students - will help to learn about other cultures and know their view of the world, which can avoid many arguments and unpleasant situations,
- organize events with Crew Members - young people can learn a lot from older seamen and officers about their work, draw conclusion from their mistakes and get ready for many incidents from their stories,
- know ourselves - it is obvious, but many youth have a problems with accept their own feelings, preferences and defects. Humans learns knowing himself every day, but talking about that in education period can speed up this process and give better results,
- look at practice from psychological point - practice is the best time to test yourself in future work. Despite the practical training, you can make decision, about that what you are doing for several weeks are that what you want to do for many years of life. Are your head ready for it or should you can look for something different.
- system of counseling and support at a distance - through the web, which would be an opportunity to expose feeling.

Conclusions

Maritime Environment is burdened by stressful situations and the stressful conditions lead to unhealthy lifestyles. Especially, in present time young people have a weaker psyche, so they should be better prepare for critical situations. Appropriate previous training will improve mental health onboard and stop factor of suicides. It is very important to act now instead will be to late.

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