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## THE IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH ON THE PROFESSIONALISM OF MARITIME WORKERS

*The study investigates the influence of mental health on the professionalism of upcoming ship captains, with particular attention given to the development of a comprehensive knowledge and skills system that can foster a positive moral and psychological atmosphere on board. In order to guarantee efficient, accident-free and conflict-free work from the crew, it is essential for captains to consider stress factors, psychological fatigue and the unique psychological well-being of seafarers during management activities on board the ship. At the same time, an important factor that helps crew members endure the conditions of exposure to negative psychogenic factors and maintain high performance is a favorable moral and psychological climate in the team. The main directions of optimizing the moral and psychological climate on the ship are: preservation and support of the professional potential of the ship's crew members in order to increase the level of motivation of sailors; to create a favorable psychological atmosphere and reduce conflict situations, it is suggested to use a flexible leadership style, apply an individual approach to each crew member; use the potential of the team to achieve the set goals; the formation of positive relationships in the ship's crew, which contribute to strengthening interaction and maintaining a favorable atmosphere in the ship's crew. The article emphasizes that the creation of a favorable moral and psychological climate on the ship is greatly facilitated by the analysis of individual and group thoughts, as well as those moods that create a collective psychological state and determine the conformity of the moral and psychological climate with the management style of the top manager of the ship.*

**Key words:** maritime complex, employees of the maritime complex, stress, mental health, future captains, moral and psychological climate.

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## ВПЛИВ ПСИХІЧНОГО ЗДОРОВ'Я НА ПРОФЕСІОНАЛІЗМ ПРАЦІВНИКІВ МОРЕГОСПОДАРСЬКОГО КОМПЛЕКСУ

*У статті проведено дослідження впливу психічного здоров'я на професіоналізм працівників морегосподарського комплексу, до яких в статті віднесено капітанів торговельних судів. Акцентовано увагу на формуванні у майбутніх капітанів системи знань і вмінь, яка сприятиме створенню сприятливого морально-психологічного клімату на судні. Капітанам у процесі управлінської діяльності на борту судна для забезпечення ефективної, безаварійної та безконфліктної роботи екіпажу необхідно враховувати вплив стресових факторів, наявність психологічної втоми та особливості психологічне благополуччя моряків. При цьому важливим чинником, який допомагає членам екіпажу переносити умови впливу негативних психогенних факторів і зберігати високу працездатність, є сприятливий морально-психологічний клімат у колективі. Основними напрямками оптимізації морально-психологічного клімату на судні визначимо: збереження та підтримка професійного потенціалу членів екіпажу судна з метою підвищення рівня мотивації моряків; для створення сприятливої психологічної*

атмосфери та зменшення конфліктних ситуацій пропонується використовувати гнучкий стиль керівництва, застосовувати індивідуальний підхід до кожного члена екіпажу, використовувати потенціал команди для досягнення поставлених цілей; формування позитивних взаємин в екіпажі судна, що сприяють зміцненню взаємодії та підтримці сприятливої атмосфери в екіпажі судна. В статті наголошується, що створенню сприятливого морально-психологічного клімату на судні багато в чому сприяє аналіз індивідуальних і групових думок, а також тих настроїв, які створюють колективний психологічний стан і визначають відповідність морально-психологічного клімату зі стилем управління топ-менеджера судна.

**Ключові слова:** морегосподарський комплекс, працівники морегосподарського комплексу, стрес, психічне здоров'я, майбутні капітани, морально-психологічний клімат.

### Introduction

Maritime transport is a complex industry that requires a high level of professionalism, knowledge and skills. Working on a ship requires heavy physical labour in very specific conditions with a high degree of danger to the life and health of the specialist. The negative side of this work is the separation from family and friends, from the native culture, as well as the rejection of many other components of psychological comfort. Given these characteristics, it is essential that future seafarers are aware of the emotional challenges they will face and are prepared to deal with their consequences.

In order to be successful in their work, future captains must have professional knowledge and skills. The job offers excellent career prospects, good pay, long holidays, the opportunity to travel and, of course, job satisfaction. On the other hand, some of the specific characteristics of working on a ship can lead to serious stress situations, which can subsequently affect physical and mental health.

### The analysis of recent studies and publications

An analysis of recent studies and publications. Recently, there has been a surge of interest in mental health among researchers. The pandemic that swept the world in 2020–2021 forced the attention of the world community to this problem. Clinical psychologist Charles Watkins stresses the importance of solving this problem, especially for cadets who have no practical experience and no survival strategy of their own [1]. Samantha K. Brooks and Neil Greenberg, among our researchers, have made recommendations for improving the mental health of seafarers. Recommendations through increased mental health education; increased control over the level of well-being of personnel; increased attention to healthy lifestyles of the ship's crew; noise reduction; compliance with the rules on the distribution of working time on board; improvement of the level of interpersonal communication on board; active use of the leadership qualities of the command staff to improve the management of the ship's crew [2]. Olena Bezlutska focuses on the need to increase the level of psychological preparation of future and current captains by improving psychological support after a long voyage [3]. Olena Soroka studied the stress resistance of seafarers as a function of flight duration and age [4].

The **object** of the research is mental health on the professionalism of future captains.

The **aim** of the research: to reveal the role of mental health in the professional activities of the future captain.

The tasks of the research are:

1. To study stress as a major component of mental health.
2. The main ways to improve the level of mental health on the ship.
3. Conclusions and recommendations.

The **research methods** include the expert judgement method, the comparative method, analysis and synthesis.

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### The main theoretical thesis

The ship is an autonomous closed system with a high level of danger. The ship operates as a transport unit in the field of complex industrial, commercial, financial, legal relationships under the influence of global legal norms and rules. Future captains will have to perform many tasks in the face of decreasing crew numbers and commercial pressure from shipping companies. These conditions require professionalism, responsibility and a creative approach to solving the tasks set for future captains. Working at sea is associated with increased risk and most accidents are not caused by technical or human factors. Low stress resistance of crew members can lead to the presence of errors that lead to an accident on the ship. Each crew member is a person with his own character, views, habits and attitude to the world around him. Unfortunately, agencies do not recruit crew members on the basis of compatibility, and it is up to the captain to create an effective team on board.

When a future seafarer embarks on his first voyage, he may experience a great deal of stress. This situation can later lead to mental illness. In order to solve this problem, we are going to carry out some studies that will help us to make some recommendations of a theoretical and practical nature.

Types of occupational stress:

information stress occurs under conditions of information overload, when the employee cannot cope with the task and does not have time to make important decisions;

emotional stress occurs when there is a real or imagined threat, feelings of guilt, anger, resentment in the face of contradictions with management, colleagues, subordinates;

communicative stress is associated with problems of business communication, manifested in increased irritability, ignorance of methods of protection against manipulation, an imbalance in the pace of communication.

There are several techniques to reduce stress levels on board. Research into stress must begin with the factors that cause it. It is stress that affects the mental health of professionals in any industry, and in the maritime sector this aspect must be given increased attention.

Consider the main factors that can cause stress. The study [5] identified three groups of factors:

Social: separation from family, friends, cultural and social environment; the presence of barriers (cultural, linguistic, social) associated with a long stay on the ship; the development of a sense of isolation (unwillingness to talk about their problems and concerns) on the ship.

Professional: the intensity of work on the ship can reduce the desire for good rest; limited access to resources and sources of support in cases of discrimination.

Personal: the presence of psychological trauma experienced before the first flight; the stress associated with the first voyage on a ship.

Stress can also be caused by specific conditions on board: extreme weather conditions, piracy, fire; death; aggression; harassment.

A person reacts to certain conditions with stress, which has four types of reactions:

psychological – confusion, disorientation, anxiety, obsessive thoughts and images, guilt, haunting memories (when a person seems to relive everything that happened over and over again);

emotional – shock, sadness, grief, despondency, fear, anger, irritation, guilt, shame, or conversely emotional numbness;

physical – fatigue, headaches, abdominal pain, muscle tension, rapid heart rate, high/low blood pressure, trouble falling asleep or sleeping, difficulty concentrating;

behavioural – withdrawal into oneself, detachment and alienation from other crew members, intrapersonal conflicts, attempts to avoid conversation, loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities, anxiety.

Is it possible to solve the problem of stress on the ship? What should the captain do to reduce stress on the ship? What knowledge should future captains have to solve this problem? In order to reduce the level of stress, the captain must learn to identify crew members who are prone to such a condition. This requires an individual approach to each crew member.

The captain can use techniques such as:

– showing interest, concern and care for the physical and mental well-being of all seafarers, simply by taking the time to ask how they are doing and listening to their response in a briefing format;

– assist in overcoming psychological reactions to stress through individual communication;

– talking about common reactions to stress and trauma and discussing and encouraging healthy ways of dealing with them; and expressing confidence that the person will be able to cope.

The future captain must have the knowledge and skills to:

– communicate with crew members;

– make decisions related to the efficient operation of the ship's crew;

– provide psychological support to crew members to increase their resistance to stress;

– motivate crew members to achieve their goals.

The use of stress-reduction techniques will help a crew member to cope successfully with psychological pressure, which may disappear over time. To overcome stress, it is also necessary to seek the help of professionals who can be recruited by the shipowner. Crew members who feel comfortable reporting mental health problems and receiving appropriate treatment will be more reliable workers. With appropriate help, crew members will be able to return to performing their duties effectively.

Self-monitoring can also be used to reduce stress. Self-control is particularly important in a seafarer's job because of the specific, complicated working conditions at sea, the increased responsibility and the increased risk. At the same time, however, there are a number of psychogenic (stressful) factors at work, which complicate self-control, negatively affect the reliable characteristics of a seafarer's professional activity, and objectively lead to an increase in the possibility of making mistakes. These are the phenomena of psychological fatigue and overwork, the monotony of life on board a ship, group isolation, difficult weather and sea conditions of navigation and much more.

If a seafarer lacks self-control, the reasons can be very different: insufficient professional motivation, disinterest in the results of the work, certain character traits, etc. Thus, lack of self-control is directly related to such character traits as laxity, indiscipline, excessive self-confidence, disorder, thoughtlessness, carelessness, alarmism, carelessness, etc. At the same time, traits such as prudence, accuracy, restraint, reliability, decency, purposefulness are signs of good self-control, the ability to control one's actions and deeds.

Another means of reducing stress on board is to create a favourable moral and psychological climate. The captain, as an effective manager, must have this ability.

It should be noted that young seafarers, recent graduates of maritime education institutions, acting as managers on a ship, often find themselves in a difficult situation. Although they have sufficient professional knowledge, they do not have the necessary experience of working with people, the ability to organise and manage their joint activities, the efficient and safe operation of the ship and the performance of voyage tasks. At the same time, junior officers are closest to the rank and file, being the direct supervisors of the seafarers and deckhands on watch at sea and in port, during mooring and cargo operations, repair and maintenance work. This means that the success of the ship's operations, the safety of the goods transported and the natural environment, as well as the safety of the people on board, depend to a large extent on their personal and professional qualities and organisational skills.

Of course, the leader himself should be a role model for his subordinates in everything. His dress, speech, behaviour, orders, treatment of people must be at the level of a cultured, educated person, a professionally competent, knowledgeable and loving specialist. As practice shows, a modern sailor-manager must have at least four specific skills for successful work in the fleet:

1) the ability to make informed and effective decisions in any situation on the ship involving increased responsibility, time pressure or their simultaneous effects:

2) the ability to independently deepen and develop their knowledge in difficult working conditions at sea;

3) the ability to effectively apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the period of study at a maritime educational institution and during further training in practice;

4) the ability to analyse and draw the right conclusions from their own experience and that of their predecessors in managing production processes and managing people on board.

The moral and psychological climate is a complex emotional and psychological state of a professional team, reflecting the degree of satisfaction of employees with various factors of life. The moral and psychological climate expresses the general mood and level of satisfaction of employees with the organisation of personal work, relations with other employees and the general level of organisation of work on the ship. A healthy psychological climate is one of the decisive factors for a person's successful life in all spheres of social relations, the most important condition for the improvement of lifestyle and personality formation.

Signs of a favourable moral and psychological climate are:

the prevalence of a businesslike, creative atmosphere on board the ship;

a sense of group cohesion;

high standards and trust among crew members;

well-developed benevolent constructive criticism and self-criticism;

free expression of crew members' views on all matters relating to team life;

a high degree of mutual support;

high level of professional training of the crew members;

uniform distribution of the workload;

timeliness and objectivity of conflict resolution.

The main directions for optimizing the moral and psychological climate on board are:

1. Preserving and maintaining the professional potential of the ship's crew in order to increase the motivation of the seafarers.

2. In order to create a favourable psychological atmosphere and reduce conflict situations, it is proposed to use a flexible management style, apply an individual approach to each crew member and use the potential of the team to achieve the set goals.

3. Formation of positive relationships in the crew, contributing to the strengthening of cooperation and maintaining a favourable atmosphere in the crew.

Thus, everyday practice confirms that the creation of a favourable moral and psychological climate on the ship is greatly facilitated by the analysis of individual and group opinions, as well as those moods that create a collective psychological state and determine the conformity of the moral and psychological climate with the manager's management style.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, it should be noted that in order to ensure efficient, accident-free and conflict-free work of the crew, it is necessary for masters to take into account the influence of stress factors, the presence of psychological fatigue and the peculiarities of the psychological well-being of seafarers in the process of management activities on board the ship. At the same time, a favourable moral and psychological climate in the team is an important factor in helping crew members withstand the conditions of exposure to negative psychogenic factors and maintain high performance. For this reason, maritime regulations constantly emphasise that the most important direction in the activities of the ship's command is the creation of a favourable moral and psychological climate, the maintenance of good human relations on board and the organisation of conflict-free work.

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