

Submission of abstract

Proposed title of paper : Seafarers mental health and suicides – A study of stressors affecting seafarers on merchant vessels.

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Abstract

The proposed paper will try to look at the issue of Mental health and suicides of seafarers from three aspects.

First, it will look at the trends of Mental health issues and suicides on board merchant vessels based on the data available. This will be a difficult aspect to substantiate. The data on suicides and mental health is very difficult to obtain because it is very confidential or often there is a reluctance to attribute a death to suicide when no concrete evidence is available.

The proposed paper will then try to establish why these mental health issues and suicides happen on board ships. This is proposed to involve the bulk of the proposed paper. There is common knowledge among the industry about the various stressors onboard vessels such as fatigue, work hours, excessive paper work, lack of manpower etc. Yet there seems to be not much effort done by the industry in actually collecting data from the sailing seafarers about what stressors affect them the most.

The author is currently carrying out surveys with seafarers on levels of mental wellbeing and stressors. It is hoped that by the submission time for the paper sufficient and contemporary data will be collected to give clear trends of stressors and the mental wellbeing levels so as to establish priorities in the stressors at sea. If the SMA can also assist in the survey that would be highly appreciated.

Finally the proposed paper will aim at using the first two sections to suggest solutions at how these issues might be reduced. This will include looking at what resources are available to ship owners currently and how they might best be deployed.