

# Coping Behavior, Stress Overcoming, and Attributive Styles as Adaptation Resources in Seafarers

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*This article delves into the psychological aspects of seafaring, focusing on coping behaviors, stress management, and attributive styles as essential elements in the resilience and adaptation of seafarers. The maritime environment presents unique challenges, including prolonged isolation, extreme working conditions, and constant exposure to varying stressors. Understanding how seafarers cope with these challenges is crucial for their mental well-being and overall job performance.*

*The paper begins by exploring the diverse coping behaviors employed by seafarers. It distinguishes between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, emphasizing the importance of adaptability in their application. The discussion then shifts to stress management, highlighting the need for both individual and systemic approaches in the maritime industry. It underscores the significance of effective communication, work-rest balance, relaxation techniques, and the creation of a supportive onboard culture.*

*Furthermore, the article examines attributive styles – how seafarers attribute causes to their successes and failures – and their impact on resilience and stress management. It posits that an adaptive attributive style, which balances internal and external attributions, is crucial in maintaining psychological well-being.*

*Finally, the paper discusses the implications of these findings for maritime organizations and suggests directions for future research. It advocates for the prioritization of mental health in the maritime industry, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support systems and interventions tailored to the unique challenges faced by seafarers.*

**Keywords:** *Seafarers, Coping Behavior, Stress Management, Maritime Psychology, Attributive Styles, Resilience, Occupational Stress, Mental Health in Seafaring.*

## Introduction

The maritime profession, known for its unique challenges and high-stress environments, necessitates a deep understanding of the psychological resilience and coping mechanisms of those who work within it. Seafarers, who often face extended periods of isolation, demanding working conditions, and the unpredictable nature of the sea, are particularly vulnerable to various

stressors that can impact their mental and emotional well-being. The purpose of this article is to explore and elucidate the critical aspects of coping behavior, stress management techniques, and the role of attributive styles in the adaptation and resilience of seafarers.

Navigating through the rough waters of the maritime industry requires more than just physical endurance and technical skills; it demands robust

psychological coping strategies. These strategies are vital for seafarers to effectively manage the unique stressors they encounter, such as prolonged absences from family, confined living and working spaces, and the continuous need to adapt to changing conditions at sea. Understanding and developing effective coping behaviors, therefore, becomes essential in ensuring the well-being and efficiency of seafarers.

Furthermore, this article aims to delve into the significance of adaptive attributive styles as a resource for seafarers. The way in which individuals attribute causes to their successes and failures can greatly influence their resilience and capacity to cope with stress. An adaptive attributive style can enhance a seafarer's ability to deal with the challenges of their profession, fostering a sense of control, motivation, and overall psychological well-being.

Through this exploration, the article seeks to offer insights into the psychological dynamics of seafaring, providing valuable knowledge and strategies for seafarers, maritime organizations, and mental health professionals working with this unique population. The goal is to highlight the importance of psychological preparedness and adaptability, contributing to the development of a more resilient and mentally healthy maritime workforce.

### **Coping Behavior in Seafarers**

Coping behavior is a critical aspect of a seafarer's life, encompassing the various strategies and mechanisms they employ to manage the unique stressors inherent in their profession. This behavior is pivotal in determining how effectively an individual can handle the internal or external demands that are perceived as challenging or overwhelming. In the context of

seafarers, coping strategies can be broadly categorized into problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping.

Problem-focused coping in seafarers is oriented towards managing or altering the problem causing the stress. This type of coping is particularly relevant in the dynamic and often unpredictable maritime environment. It involves:

- Planning. Seafarers use planning as a tool to anticipate potential problems and devise strategies to tackle them. This might include preparing for adverse weather conditions, mapping out efficient routes, or scheduling maintenance tasks to prevent equipment failure.
- Direct Action. This involves taking concrete steps to change the situation. For instance, a seafarer might repair a malfunctioning piece of equipment or adjust the ship's course in response to changing sea conditions. It's a proactive approach to directly confront the source of stress.
- Seeking Information. Constant learning and information gathering are crucial. Seafarers might engage in researching weather patterns, learning about new navigation technology, or staying updated with international maritime regulations. This knowledge equips them to better handle challenges.

While problem-focused strategies are crucial, not all stressors in a seafarer's life can be directly altered. Here, emotion-focused coping plays a vital role:

- Seeking Social Support. This involves turning to fellow crew

members, friends, or family for emotional, informational, or practical support. Sharing experiences and feelings with others who understand the maritime lifestyle can be immensely reassuring.

- **Self-Consolation.** Seafarers might engage in self-consoling activities like listening to music, reading, or other hobbies that help them relax and recharge emotionally. This also includes maintaining a positive outlook and practicing self-compassion in the face of difficulties.
- **Emotion Regulation.** This is the ability to manage and modify one's emotional response to a situation. It might involve techniques such as mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, or even structured relaxation techniques. Emotion regulation helps seafarers maintain their composure and decision-making abilities under stress.

In conclusion, the coping behavior of seafarers is multifaceted, involving a blend of problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. These strategies are not mutually exclusive but are often used in conjunction to effectively manage the unique challenges faced in the maritime environment. By mastering these coping mechanisms, seafarers can maintain not only their professional performance but also their mental and emotional well-being.

### **Overcoming Stress in the Maritime Environment**

The maritime environment presents a unique set of stressors that can significantly impact the mental and emotional well-being of seafarers. Factors like prolonged isolation,

extended periods away from family, and demanding working conditions create a challenging atmosphere. To effectively navigate these challenges, it is essential for seafarers to develop resilience and flexibility, which can be achieved through various strategies:

- **Open Communication.** Encouraging open and honest communication among crew members and between the crew and the captain or management is vital. This creates an environment where concerns can be aired and addressed promptly, reducing the sense of isolation.
- **Cross-Cultural Communication.** With crews often comprising multiple nationalities, understanding and respecting cultural differences is crucial. Effective cross-cultural communication can prevent misunderstandings and conflicts, reducing workplace stress.
- **Family Communication:** Providing facilities for regular communication with family, such as internet access, helps reduce the emotional strain of separation.

### **Relaxation Techniques and Coping Mechanisms**

- **Mindfulness and Meditation.** Practices like mindfulness and meditation can be powerful tools for managing stress. They help in staying centered and calm, especially in the face of the unpredictable nature of sea life.
- **Physical Exercise.** Regular physical activity is not only important for physical health but also for mental well-being. Whether it's using onboard gym facilities or simple exercises in

personal quarters, staying active is key.

- Leisure Activities. Encouraging leisure activities like reading, playing games, or watching movies can provide a necessary distraction and a way to relax.

By addressing these key areas, the maritime industry can significantly enhance the capability of seafarers to manage stress effectively, leading to a more resilient and psychologically healthy workforce. This not only benefits the individual seafarers but also contributes to a more productive and safe working environment onboard.

### **Attributive Styles as an Adaptation Resource in Seafarers**

Attributive style, the manner in which individuals interpret the causes of their successes and failures, plays a crucial role in a seafarer's ability to adapt to the challenging maritime environment. An adaptive attributive style can significantly aid seafarers in coping with stress, setbacks, and the unpredictable nature of their work.

- Internal Attributions. This involves attributing outcomes to personal factors, such as effort, skill, or decision-making. When seafarers attribute their successes to their own efforts, it can bolster self-esteem, increase motivation, and build resilience. For example, a seafarer who successfully navigates through a difficult storm might attribute this success to their navigational skills and thorough preparation.
- External Attributions. These attributions relate outcomes to factors outside personal control, such as weather conditions, equipment quality, or team

dynamics. Recognizing the role of external factors in certain situations can prevent seafarers from engaging in excessive self-criticism or experiencing feelings of helplessness. For instance, acknowledging that extreme weather conditions contributed to navigational challenges can help maintain a balanced perspective on performance.

### **The Role of Adaptive Attributive Styles**

- Balancing Attributions. An adaptive attributive style involves a balanced approach, recognizing both internal and external factors influencing outcomes. This balance is crucial in maintaining a realistic self-assessment and emotional stability.
- Learning from Experiences. Adaptive attributions can foster a learning mindset. Instead of dwelling on failures, seafarers can analyze situations to identify what can be controlled or improved upon in the future, and what factors were beyond their control.
- Resilience in Adversity. By attributing successes to personal effort and acknowledging external factors in challenging situations, seafarers can maintain a sense of competence and resilience. This approach helps them to remain motivated and persistent, even in the face of adversity.
- Coping with Stress. An adaptive attributive style can mitigate stress. By understanding and accepting the role of uncontrollable factors, seafarers can reduce unnecessary stress and anxiety associated with aspects of their job that are beyond their control.

In conclusion, fostering an adaptive attributive style is essential for seafarers to effectively cope with the unique challenges of their profession. By understanding and adjusting the way they attribute causes to their successes and failures, seafarers can enhance their resilience, reduce stress, and improve their overall job satisfaction and performance.

## Discussion

The maritime industry, while crucial for global commerce, presents a unique set of challenges that can profoundly impact the psychological well-being of seafarers. This discussion delves into the complexities of coping behaviors, stress management, and attributive styles in the maritime environment, underscoring their significance in fostering resilience among seafarers.

Coping behaviors among seafarers are multifaceted and can be significantly influenced by various factors such as cultural background, personal resilience, and the nature of their work. The effectiveness of these coping strategies is often contingent upon their appropriateness in dealing with specific stressors. For instance, problem-focused coping strategies might be more effective in situations where a seafarer has control over the outcomes, such as managing workload or navigating technical challenges. Conversely, emotion-focused coping strategies might be more beneficial in situations beyond their control, such as dealing with weather conditions or extended periods away from family.

Stress management in the maritime industry requires a holistic approach that addresses both the individual and environmental factors. The isolation and confined living conditions on a vessel can exacerbate stress, making it crucial for maritime organizations to create an

environment that supports mental health. This includes providing resources for physical fitness, facilitating communication with loved ones, and ensuring adequate rest and recreational activities. Furthermore, the role of leadership on board is pivotal in setting a tone that values mental health and encourages open communication about stress and coping.

The role of attributive styles in the adaptation and resilience of seafarers is a complex but critical area. An adaptive attributive style can buffer the negative impact of stress and failure. For example, when seafarers attribute a successful navigation through a storm to their skill and preparation (internal attribution), it enhances their self-efficacy and resilience. Conversely, understanding that certain failures or challenges are due to external factors beyond their control can prevent feelings of helplessness and maintain morale.

It's important to recognize the cultural and individual differences in coping strategies among seafarers. Different cultures may have varying norms and practices in expressing emotions or dealing with stress, which can affect how seafarers from diverse backgrounds respond to and manage stressors. Tailoring stress management programs to accommodate these differences is crucial for their effectiveness.

For maritime organizations, these insights have profound implications. There is a need for policies and practices that acknowledge and address the unique psychological challenges faced by seafarers. This includes providing training in stress management and coping strategies, ensuring access to mental health support, and fostering a shipboard culture that promotes open communication and mutual support.

Further research is needed to explore the long-term impacts of these coping strategies and attributive styles on the

mental health of seafarers. Additionally, the effectiveness of different stress management interventions and programs in the maritime industry warrants further investigation.

In conclusion, the psychological well-being of seafarers is a multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive understanding of coping behaviors, stress management, and attributive styles. Maritime organizations play a crucial role in supporting the mental health of their crew by fostering a supportive environment and providing the necessary resources and training. As the maritime industry continues to evolve, prioritizing the mental health of seafarers is not only a moral imperative but also essential for the safety and efficiency of maritime operations.

## Conclusion

The exploration of coping behaviors, stress management, and attributive styles in the maritime environment reveals a complex yet crucial aspect of seafarer well-being. This article has highlighted the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by seafarers and the diverse strategies they can employ to effectively navigate these challenges.

Seafarers benefit from a combination of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. The ability to adaptively switch between these strategies depending on the context is key to maintaining psychological well-being.

Effective stress management in the maritime industry requires both individual and systemic approaches. While seafarers can practice personal strategies such as mindfulness and physical exercise, the role of maritime organizations in creating a supportive environment is equally crucial.

Adaptive attributive styles play a significant role in how seafarers perceive and react to successes and failures. A balanced perspective that acknowledges both internal efforts and external factors can enhance resilience and prevent negative emotional outcomes.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching. For maritime organizations and leaders, there is a clear need to invest in mental health resources and training, fostering an onboard culture that promotes open communication and psychological support. For seafarers, developing a toolbox of coping strategies and a balanced attributive style is essential for adapting to the unique demands of their profession.

As the maritime industry continues to evolve, the mental health and well-being of seafarers must remain a priority. Continued research and dialogue in this area are essential for developing more effective support systems and interventions. By addressing the psychological needs of seafarers, the industry not only ensures the well-being of its workforce but also enhances the safety, efficiency, and sustainability of maritime operations.

In conclusion, the resilience of seafarers in the face of unique occupational stressors is a testament to their strength and adaptability. However, it is imperative that the maritime industry recognizes and supports this resilience through comprehensive and proactive approaches to mental health and well-being. By doing so, the industry can safeguard its most valuable asset – its seafarers.

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