

Research Paper

Seafarer's Psychology: A Traditional-Modern Paradox of Self-Reliance and Emotional Stability

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ABSTRACT

The Self-Reliance has always been an important part of a sailor's life. It is the virtue that is applauded and is considered an attribute of a good sailor. Due to this, rescue work was considered discouraging as seafarers took pride in emotional stability and emotional regulation in tough conditions. The present investigation was designed to study the correlation between Self-Reliance and Emotional Stability in Indian Seafarers, however, there is a dearth of review of literature to validate the same. The sample for the study consisted of 315 Indian adults employed in the Merchant Navy. The Form-C of 16PF Questionnaire by Raymond B. Cattell was used to measure the Self-Reliance and Emotional Stability. One sample t test and Pearson Correlation was used to study the correlation between the two variables t test. The results indicate that there is weak positive correlation between Self-Reliance and Emotional Stability. Therefore, the hypothesis of the study which stated that "seafarers who are emotionally stable are high in self-reliance" was proved to be true however the bond between the two variable was found to be weak with respect to the sample taken for the current study. However, these outcomes can also be substantiated with further quantitative studies and qualitative studies for a more in-depth insight into this scenario.

Keywords: *Self-Reliance, Emotional Stability, seafarers, Indian context*

Seafarer's Psychology: A Traditional-Modern Paradox of Self-Reliance

Baumeister (1987) described self-reliance as a reliance on internal resources to provide life with coherence (meaning) and fulfilment. In psychology, self-reliance is the characteristic of feeling content and secure with oneself. It develops higher self-worth and self-esteem. It allows an individual a sense of emotional stability. At extreme times, those with higher emotional stability are less vulnerable to be destabilised under traumatic circumstances. Individuals who are emotionally self-reliant can navigate through trying times independently because they tend to possess inner emotional stability. Self-reliance is associated with strong internal locus of control. Individuals who show higher self-reliance tend to be individualistic and prefer independent decision making over social conformity.

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Received: July 30, 2023; Revision Received: August 20, 2023; Accepted: August 23, 2023

Self-reliance and seafaring:

Historically, the most honourable and dedicated sailors, were believers of the principle that they would preferably drown rather than cause any danger to the lives of their fellow sailors or even cause petty inconveniences to them in any way whatsoever. This especially pertained to the matters of rescuing as being rescued was rare, to say the least. It was an indication of terribly poor seamanship and incompetence to sail. Thus, the code of self-reliance in seafaring was developed. Due to these beliefs, rescue work is considered to be very discouraging for an activity, seafaring which seemingly takes pride on itself for its ability of sensible emotional-regulation of self, and derives satisfaction from overcoming arduous circumstances without assistance.

In the present context, not much has changed, except for better built of the ship, decent growth in network connectivity and more advanced rescue tools and techniques. According to Zhao et al. (2020) due to the remote geographical location, strange and closed environment, monotonous life, critical work-place requirements, and other peculiar environmental factors, seafarers are susceptible to develop psychological stress responses that cause anxiety, depression, and other uncomfortable emotions, and take a negative response. As an important mediating and regulating factor in the process of psychological stress, coping plays a regulatory role between stress and response results (Folkman et al., 1986) and regulates the mental health of the seafarer. Studies have shown that a positive coping style is one of the protective factors of mental health (Meng et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2013; Liao, 2014). Quick et al. (1992) proposed a work-related measure of self-reliance which also incorporates the two insecure, unhealthy strategies for achieving felt security. These strategies are the dismissing strategy, which results in a counter-dependent pattern of behaviour, and the preoccupied strategy, which results in an over-dependent behaviour pattern.

Seafarers are trained to be independent and they maintain self-reliance as their moral; often they do not ask for help when required or actively seek professional services for their mental health and welfare. According to Jagosh et al. (2017) this mind-set may extend into retirement when ex-seafarers are in stages of life when medical attention is increasingly required.

Throughout history, the very nature of the seafaring escapade has been the one of separation from sailors' social and personal networks and a special attachment with shipmates based on their common yet exclusive seafaring experience. This very essence is still preserved in the 21st century.

Seafarers go through seclusion while on the shore, due to seafaring's special lifestyle requirements such as the sacrifices made to a domestic lifestyle, especially living away from family, spouse and children, defines their personality as a whole. Lack of emotional support from the family's front because of geographical distance along with the inability to contact them when needed due to the limited availability of network connectivity, causes a sense of loneliness which in-turn results in lack of sense of belonging. This results in the individuals turning to self-reliant strategies as a form of coping mechanism which is fundamentally a contradicting yet congruent pattern of attachment style and behaviour distinguished by bonding and flexibility in relationships along with maintaining a healthy level of autonomy. In addition to this, the lack of opportunity to take sick-leaves while at sea create a psychology of self-reliance and resistance to reaching out for help from others (Jagosh et al., 2017)

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According to Jensen and Oldenburg (2019) a severe injury or even the crew member's death is a serious psychological stress experience for the other crew members in the closed social system on board could also result in secondary mental trauma for the rest of the crew. Such traumatization is even more likely if an unaffected crew member empathizes with the primary victim and, at the same time, experiences being unable to help (Motta, 2008). The confrontation with the most seriously injured, with severely bleeding wounds, and unsuccessful rescue and resuscitation attempts can be long-lasting experiences (Galea et al., 2008). Religious support from the priests is often required so as to psychologically stabilize the crew members in such cases.

Seafarers who have experienced ship wrecks and fatal accidents, threats and experiences of violence due to piracy on board and stowaways sometimes face the after-effects such as having to unintentionally yet repeatedly think about those events, due to being reminded of them by certain stimuli such as smells, noises etc., or by dreaming of them. This adds on to their stress as well as disturbs their state of mind and is a factor that causing an imbalance and instability of their emotions.

The likeliness of somatization of psychological disorders is observed to be higher due to the way in which mental disorders and diseases are perceived in different cultures. Especially in the Asian cultural setting, where mental disorders, are labelled as a weakness and are even stigmatized, they fear losing their jobs, and along with it, their status and family reputation.

This insecure economic setting and work-place stress results in mental disorders which greatly affects the emotional, mental as well as physical stability of the seafarers.

All the above-mentioned circumstances are some common causes of distress among the seafarers' population. Each one of the fore mentioned factors result in disruption of emotional stability in the individuals on board.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The sample of the present study comprises of 315 individuals, age ranging between 17 to 65 years of age (N=315).

Instruments

Form C of 16-PF (Cattell & Eber, 1962): It was given in the year 1956 by Raymond B. Cattell Forms C are shorter and therefore, the time required for their administration is less than Forms A and B. Factor B consists of eight items, motivational distortion scale consists of seven items, and the remaining factors have six items each. Responses to the questionnaires are frequently, and reasonably, considered prone to manipulation and purposeful falsification. To find out whether the test taker has given fake or socially desirable responses, this contains one motivational distortion (MD) scale. Forms C of the test is frequently used in occupational selection work.

Objective of the study

To study the correlation between self-reliance and emotional stability among Indian seafarers

Hypothesis

Seafarers who are emotionally stable are high in self-reliance.

RESULTS

The measures of correlation between Emotional Stability and Self-Reliance were obtained using the Form C of 16 PF.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics using Pearson Correlation Method

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
Self-Reliance	315	1	10	5.22	.098	1.739	3.023
Emotional Stability	315	2	10	6.87	.098	1.738	3.022
Valid N (listwise)	315						

Table 1 shows that the mean, SD & Variance using the Correlation method i.e: Pearson r. This table shows that there is no difference between Mean of Self-Reliance & Emotional Stability and 0.001 difference between SD and Variance of Self-Reliance & Emotional Stability further rejecting the alternate hypothesis and proving null hypothesis i.e: Emotional Stability has no effect on Self-Reliance on seafarers.

Table 2. Correlation between the two variables.

Correlations			
		Self-Reliance	Emotional Stability
Self-Reliance	Pearson Correlation	1	-.147**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.009
	N	315	315
Emotional Stability	Pearson Correlation	-.147**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	
	N	315	315

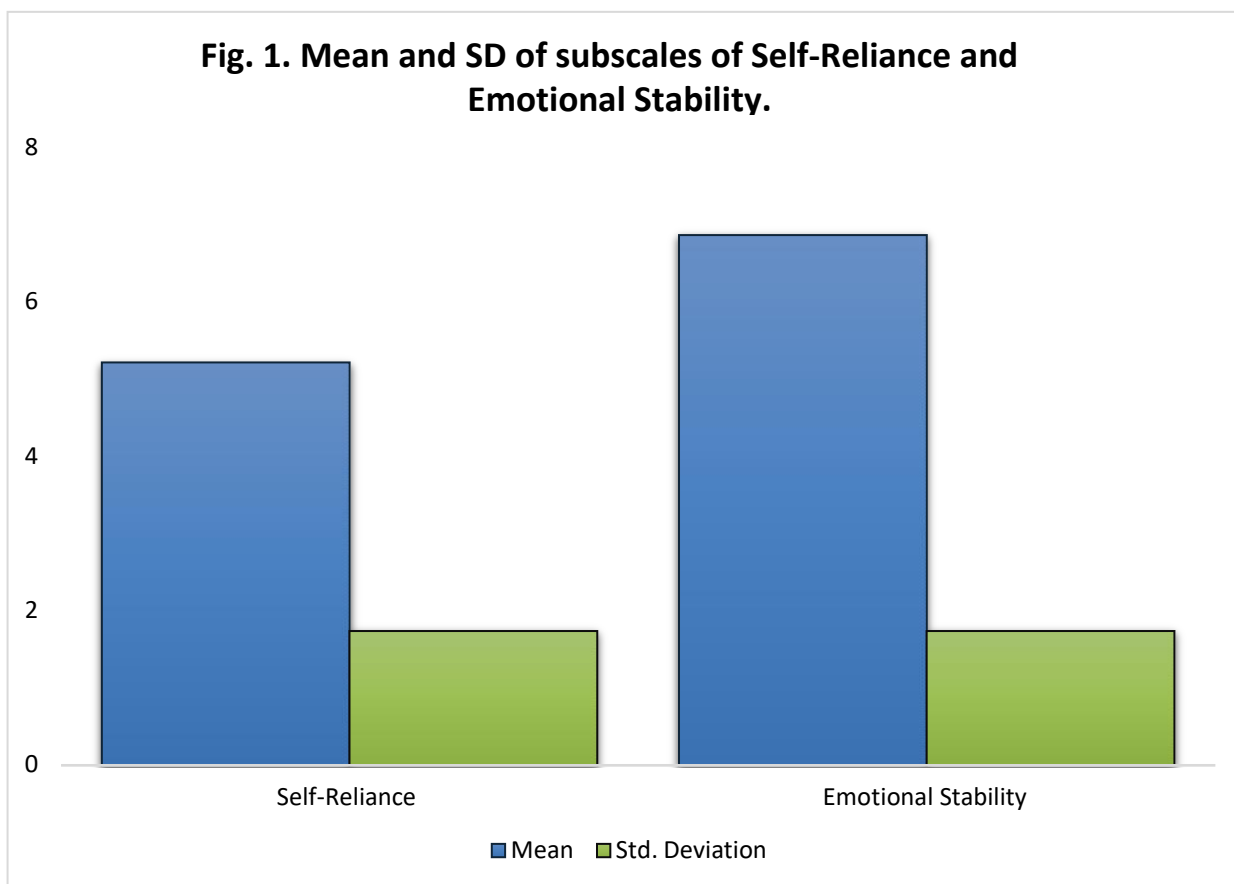
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

Table 2 shows that the Pearson's r is 0.009. Since this value is less than .05 and .07, it can be concluded that there is a weak correlation found between the two variables i.e: Self-Reliance and Emotional Stability, which further means that as Emotional Stability increases or decreases, there is a lower likelihood of there being a relationship with Self-Reliance. The significance level of .009 suggests that the relationship between the two variables is insignificant. Since, $r = -.147$, $N = 315$, $p < 0.01$, we have insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis.

Table 3. Mean and SD of subscales of Self-Reliance and Emotional Stability using t-test.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Self-Reliance	315	5.22	1.739	0.98
Emotional Stability	315	6.87	1.738	0.98

It is seen by the scores of a one-sample t-test ran on the sample, that Self-Reliance and Emotional Stability have a negative correlation with each other in case of Indian Mariners which suggests that when the numerical values of Emotional Stability increase or decrease it doesn't affect the mariner's Self-Reliance.

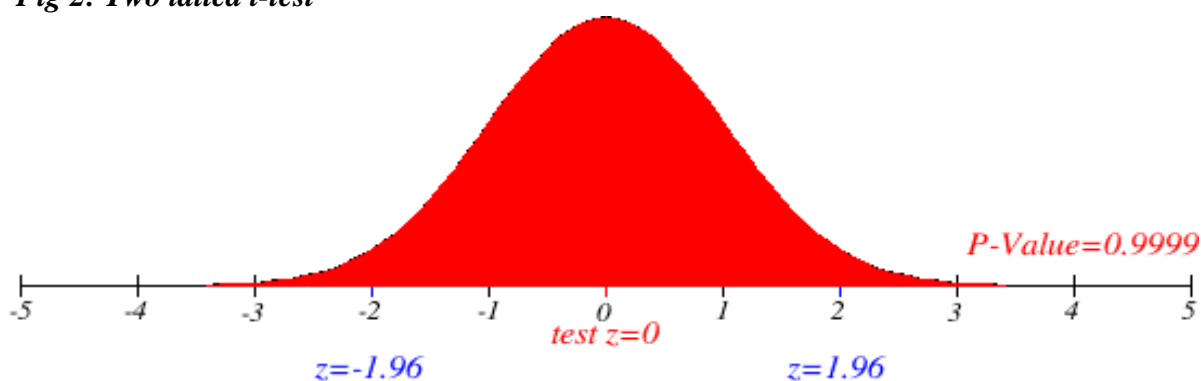


It is evident in Table 3, that the mean score of Self-Reliance for the total sample (N=315) was 5.22 with a standard deviation of 1.739. Whereas, the mean score of Emotional Stability for the total sample of 315 came out to be 6.87 with a standard deviation of 1.739. Fig. 1. Is based on the data mentioned in Table 2 which represents the mean scores and standard deviation of Self-Reliance and Emotional Stability in the form of a bar graph. It can be observed that the bar representing the mean score of Emotional Stability is not significantly higher than the bar representing the mean of Self-Reliance, which provides evidence that there is no significant difference in the two variables.

Table 4. One-Sample Test table using 2 tailed t-test

Test Value = 0				
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
				Lower
53.240	315	.000	5.216	5.02
70.170	315	.000	6.873	6.68

Fig 2: Two tailed t-test



The One-Sample Test table using 2 tailed t-test i.e: Table 4 & Fig 2 shows the degree of freedom as 315 with critical value for 95% two tailed is ± 1.96 . Table 4 & Fig 2 also indicates that there is 0.000 difference between the two variables showing no difference between the t test value of Emotional Stability & Self-Reliance traits in Indian mariners, further indicating there is no significant or negative correlation rejecting the alternate hypothesis in favour of null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The objective of this research was to identify the correlation between Self-Reliance and Emotional Stability among Indian Maritime workers. The study hypothesised that seafarers high on Emotional Stability score high of Self-Reliance. However, the results show a weak positive correlation between the two variables of the study, suggesting that as Emotional stability increase, Self-Reliance increase but the relationship is not very strong. So further to understand it in detail two tailed t test was used which proved that there is no relationship between emotional stability & self-reliance among Indian mariners.

Self-Reliant individuals tend to face challenging situations by themselves and depend on their own virtues and resources because they tend to be stable during traumatic events. Hence, the hypothesis of the current study was based on the fact that Self-Reliant individuals possess an internal emotional stability. One important factor that may contribute in the findings showing a weak or no correlation between the two variables maybe the fact that asking for help is considered as “rescuing” which has been looked down upon especially among sailors since earlier times. This stigma around rescuing has been an unsaid “tradition” and is, in a way, considered a measure of the sailor’s skills and honour. In modern times, this stigma still prevails in seafarers, up to an extent. Some stressors that maritime employees face are social isolation, isolation from friends, family and loved ones, isolation from the world due to lack of connectivity, extreme environmental conditions, difficult work conditions and environment, facing serious injuries, traumatic events such as death of a fellow crewmate or some, risk of piracy, fatal accidents etc. These stressors may lead to serious mental disorders if not taken care of professionally.

This study aimed at throwing some light on the lesser-known population that is at a continuous risk of deteriorating mental health condition which frequently result in serious mental disorders. It can act as a contributor in developing clinical interventions for the seafarers who are suffering from mental health condition. This can also be a foundation for new research focusing primarily on personality psychology for the maritime workers. Raising awareness is a crucial component of tackling issues that have not been given much importance. Hence, this study also seeks to make the seafarers aware of the risks as well as

its management. It also strives to destigmatise the areas around therapy, counselling and chiefly “asking for help”. A big leap forward in the direction of better mental health would be normalising the utilisation of mental health resources without any shame or considering it a sign of disgrace or incompetence. The research revolves around emotional stability, which can be attained if the emotions are balanced and the attachment issues are well tackled.

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Joshi, S. & Sarkar, R. (2023). Seafarer's Psychology: A Traditional-Modern Paradox of Self-Reliance and Emotional Stability. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), 2479-2485. DIP:18.01.235.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.235