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Challenges and Coping Strategies of Filipino Seafarers Undergoing Deployment

Ace D. Gasque[1], Jhon Cedric R. De Castro[1], Jan Kim Audrey L. Encontro[1], Xyruz D. Lagunday[1], Junvy B. Ogarte[1]

[1]Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation, Asian Institute of Maritime Studies, Pasay City, Philippines

Abstract

Filipino seafarers have been a considerable part of the economy of the Philippines through their remarkable dollar remittances. This is due in part by the immense number of manning agencies that support both local and international shipping companies which in turn contributes to the development and growth of the maritime industry in the country. However, nowadays, the maritime industry in the Philippines is experiencing difficulties, particularly for the Filipino seafarers. One of which is the challenge of waiting for onboard deployment. The study therefore aims to explore the challenges encountered by Filipino seafarers awaiting deployment, and encompassing factors such as backer system, impact of Covid-19, and financial constraints. Alongside are their respective coping mechanisms employed. Utilizing a sample of one hundred (N=100) Filipino seafarers in Kalaw Avenue, Manila, data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire and deployed via Google Forms. Findings indicate that backer system and the COVID-19 pandemic are the predominant challenges experienced by the respondents while waiting for deployment. Additionally, educational qualifications, financial expenditures, and other challenges exhibit a significant relationship with coping strategies. This suggests that Filipino seafarers encounter a spectrum of challenges during deployment, and coping strategies are selectively applied to manage and surmount these obstacles.

Keywords: deployment challenges, coping strategies, Filipino seafarers, backer system, Covid-19, financial constraints

INTRODUCTION

Filipino seafarers have been a considerable part of the economy of the Philippines through their remarkable dollar remittances. This is due in part by the immense number of manning agencies that support both local and international shipping companies which in turn contributes to the development and growth of the maritime industry in the country. However, nowadays, the maritime industry in the Philippines is experiencing difficulties, particularly for the Filipino seafarers. One of which is the challenge of waiting for onboard deployment.

A contributory factor to this problem is the expenditure of Filipino Seafarers while in the process waiting for deployment. When a seafarer applied in a manning agency, they still have to look for other jobs to raise funds and sustain their application. Some may have access to financial support, but most of them have to spend out from their own pocket. An example of this is the traveling cost from the province to Metro Manila where majority of manning agencies are located. This includes training expenses as part of the requirements, although some manning agencies reimburse these expenses.

In addition, the family of the Filipino seafarer is also included as a factor due to Filipino family culture. Filipino people are known for having deep and strong family bonds. Seafarers are separated from their loved ones which caused negative effects on them and their families. They hold their family in great respect and prioritize above anything else. Another factor contributing to the challenges is the affiliation that occurs between Filipino seafarers and manning agencies. It is a privilege to have a "Backer" as an entry mechanism in the maritime industry. This affects other Filipino seafarers' chance of having a lineup due to the reason that there are some who used their backer as advantage to get lined up ahead than those who are still waiting. With this, there is a substantial number of deserving and competent Filipino seafarers being left out due to the fact that

others do not have an affiliation with their manning agency. A seafarer or cadet will work either as a utility man just to be deployed on a vessel. And it has been practiced by many Filipino seafarers, especially those who have no seafaring experience (Maido, 2022). Utility workers are those that work in manning agencies without salary for the purpose of getting a promise of a lineup. Working as a utility worker is one of the coping strategies of seafarers who give assistance to manning agencies, though not being paid, up to the completion of the process of their deployment.

Lastly, the situation of the maritime industry in the country and in the world suddenly changed due to the occurrence of the Pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the transportation sector, including maritime transportation (Pauksztat et al., 2022). COVID-19 pandemic affected the welfare and well-being of Filipino seafarers waiting for deployment. With the circumstances presented, the study aims to identify the challenges experienced by the Filipino seafarers while undergoing deployment process together with their respective coping strategies in address to these challenges.

LITERATURES

Affiliation and Support Systems. Having connections within a company has been identified as a significant coping strategy for Filipino seafarers. Affiliations with higher-ranking employees or family members employed in the same company provide a substantial advantage. This association often results in prioritized assignments, reducing the waiting period for deployment (Lamvick, 2021). Beyond professional connections, support from family and friends also plays a crucial role. This support system motivates seafarers to persevere through the waiting period and the challenges associated with deployment, reminding them of the backing they have when times are tough (Lamvick, 2021). Such networks and emotional support are essential for maintaining the morale and determination of seafarers as they await their turn to board a vessel.

Training and Competency. The quality and accessibility of training significantly impact the readiness and employability of Filipino seafarers. The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) has raised concerns about the quality of training provided by maritime institutions in the Philippines, which has led to increased scrutiny and potential barriers to employment for seafarers (Lalu, 2022). The Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) conventions mandate specific training requirements that, while beneficial for improving competency, also impose financial burdens on seafarers (Moore, 2017). This financial strain can be particularly challenging for those waiting for deployment, as they must often find additional work to support themselves and their families. The training is essential for enhancing skills, yet it simultaneously presents a financial challenge that seafarers must navigate.

Employment and Financial Challenges. The maritime industry presents numerous financial challenges for Filipino seafarers, particularly regarding the cost of additional training and the disparities in salary compared to their international counterparts. Filipino seafarers often earn less than seafarers from other countries, which necessitates seeking better-paying opportunities (Orence & Laguador, 2013). The financial strain is exacerbated by the need to pay for additional training and accommodation, especially for those from provinces who must rent lodging in Manila while waiting for deployment (Lindgren, 2016). The practice of charging placement fees by some manning agencies, despite being prohibited by the Maritime Labor Convention 2006, further compounds these financial difficulties. These financial challenges underscore the need for regulatory enforcement and support systems to ensure fair treatment and adequate compensation for Filipino seafarers.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sampling. The population of the study were one hundred (100) Filipino seafarers working overseas and locally and presently

waiting for their deployment. Regardless of their position/rank, age, gender, and shipping companies, the respondents were in the process of joining or rejoining a vessel. Purposive sampling was applied in selecting the respondents as the study was conducted to target Filipino seafarers who are currently undergoing application for onboard deployment.

Instrumentation. The study employed a researcher-made questionnaire which undergone initial validation by the researchers' adviser. The survey questionnaire was structured to address the study's problem statements, encompassing a series of questions designed to elucidate the challenges faced by Filipino seafarers and the strategies they employed to cope while waiting for their deployment. Final content validation was done by a professional seafarer while the quantitative aspect was checked and reviewed by a statistician. Part 1 of the survey questionnaire contained information regarding the demographic profile of the respondents which includes their age, gender, and civil status. Part 2 was aimed to determine the challenges experienced by the respondents while waiting for their deployment. The last part focused on identifying the coping strategies applied by the Filipino seafarers in order to overcome the challenges experienced while waiting for their deployment. To measure the extent to which the respondents agree or disagree with the indicator statements reflected in the questionnaire, a 5-point Likert scale was applied with the following scale intervals and verbal descriptions: 1.00 – 1.80 = Strongly Disagree; 1.81 – 2.60 = Disagree; 2.61 – 3.40 Moderately Agree; 3.41 – 4.20 = Agree; 4.21 – 5.00 = Strongly Agree.

Data Gathering Procedure. Through purposive sampling, the researchers located the respondents in the vicinity of Kalaw Street in Ermita, Manila, Philippines. This is a longstanding hub of Filipino seafarers. A face-to-face approach was done to ask participation from the prospective respondents. Prior to participation, the researchers sought explicit permission from the respondents and offered a clear explanation of the study's objectives. Upon explanation of the objectives of the study, and acquiring their full consent, the researchers distributed the survey questionnaires through Google Forms, which were sent via social media platforms, such as Messenger. Throughout the answering process, the researchers provided assistance to the respondents as they completed the forms.

Following data collection, the researchers meticulously analyzed the gathered information. Throughout these procedures, the researchers ensured the confidentiality of respondents' personal data.

Data Analysis. After the researchers have gathered all the necessary data to answer the research questions of the study, data analysis was done using percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson r.

Percentage was utilized to present the gathered data, illustrating the percentage observations of each variable. This method enabled the researchers to discern the percentage frequency of each variable. On the other hand, Weighted Mean served as a measure of central tendency in the study, allowing for the determination of an average that considered the relevance of each item to the overall dataset. This method was employed to interpret and analyze the challenges and coping strategies reported by the respondents. Lastly, Pearson r was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables in the study. Specifically, it was used to evaluate the relationship between the challenges experienced and the coping strategies applied by Filipino Seafarers awaiting deployment. This coefficient, ranging from –1 to 1, provides insight into the strength and direction of linear correlations between variables (Turney, 2022).

RESULTS

Challenges experienced by Filipino seafarers undergoing deployment. Table 1 below presents the challenges experienced by the respondents in terms of educational qualifications.

Table 1
Mean Distribution of Challenges Encountered by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Educational Qualification (N=100)

2.1 Educational Qualification	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
2.1.1 I have a very low General Weighted Average (GWA) which prevented me from getting a job onboard.	2.35	Disagree
2.1.2 My school has had an issue previously with CHED-Marina that the Manning Agency is concerned of.	2.03	Disagree
2.1.3 I have a remedial class in my one subject during my academic years in school	2.05	Disagree
2.1.4 My school was not well recognized by the company.	2.54	Moderately Agree
Average Weighted Mean	2.24	Disagree

It can be seen from the table that three out of the four statements related to challenges on educational qualifications were rated "disagree" by the respondents, which include "I have a very low General Weighted Average (GWA) which prevented me from getting a job onboard" (WM=2.35), "I have a remedial class in my one subject during my academic years in school" (WM=2.05), and "My school has had an issue previously with CHED-Marina that the Manning Agency is concerned about " (WM=2.03). On the other hand, only the statement "My school was not well recognized by the company" was rated with a weighted mean of 2.54 (Moderately Agree).

One reason of the "Disagree" result could be that most of the Maritime schools in the Philippines were inspected and supervised based on the Joint CHED-MARINA Memorandum Circular No. 3 Series of 2022. This is why maritime institutions in the Philippines are gearing towards the required standard. As a whole, the respondents disagree about the challenges related to "educational attainment", as shown by the average weighted mean of 2.24 (Disagree).

Table 2
Mean Distribution of Challenges Encountered by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Training (N=100)

2.2 Trainings	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
2.2.1 I lack training which causes me to not get deployed.	2.73	Moderately Agree
2.2.2 Some of my trainings are not accredited by MARINA.	2.13	Disagree
2.2.3 The training/s that I have finished is/are not acknowledged by my manning agency.	2.66	Moderately Agree
2.2.4 The training center that I have taken my training is not acknowledged by my manning agency.	2.15	Disagree
2.2.5 The trainings that I have did not match with the required trainings of the manning agency.	2.62	Moderately Agree
Average Weighted Mean	2.46	Disagree

Table 2 outlines the challenges experienced by the respondents in terms of their Training. In this table, it showed that three out of five statements associated with the challenges, the training of Filipino seafarers were rated "Moderately Agree" which include, "I lack training which causes me to not get deployed" (WM=2.73), "The training/s that I have finished is/are not acknowledged by my manning agency" (WM=2.66), and "The training that I have did not match with the required training of the manning agency" (WM=2.62). On the other hand, two statements were rated "Disagree" which are, "Some of my trainings are not accredited by MARINA" (WM=2.13), and "The training center that I have taken my training is not acknowledged by my manning agency" (WM=2.15).

It could be noted from the responses that respondents "Disagree" on certain challenges. The reason could be that the respondents are aware to take trainings, and were further advised by their employers to take trainings from accredited maritime training centers. In general, the respondents "disagree" with the stated challenges related to training, as shown by the average weighted mean of 2.46 (disagree).

Table 3
Mean Distribution of Challenges Encountered by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Health/Medical (N=100)

2.3 Health / Medical	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
2.3.1 I have a problem with a system on my body. (Immune, Respiratory, Digestive, Reproductive, Urinary, Skeletal, Muscular, Nervous, Endocrine, Cardiovascular)	2.17	Disagree
2.3.2 I get sick easily which is a concern of my Manning Agency.	2.35	Disagree
2.3.3 I have an in-borne illness which my Manning Agency is concerned on me.	1.93	Disagree
Average Weighted Mean	2.15	Disagree

Table 3 shows the challenges experienced by the respondents in terms of their Health or Medical. In this table, it showed that all the statements were rated "Disagree." These are, "I have a problem with a system on my body. (Immune, Respiratory, Digestive, Reproductive, Urinary, Skeletal, Muscular, Nervous, Endocrine, Cardiovascular)" (WM=2.17), "I get sick easily which is a concern of my Manning Agency" (WM=2.35), and "I have an in-borne illness which my Manning Agency is concerned on me" (WM=1.93). It can therefore be inferred that most of the respondents take good care of themselves as all of the statements related to challenges on health and medical condition gained an average weighted mean of 2.15 (disagree).

Table 4
Mean Distribution of Challenges Encountered by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Financial Expenditures (N=100)

2.4 Financial Expenditures	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
2.4.1 I am renting a boarding house near my Manning Agency which adds to my daily expenses.	2.90	Moderately Agree
2.4.2 It is costly nowadays to process necessary documents during onboard application.	4.04	Agree
2.4.3 The fare that I spend every time that I commute going to Manning Agency is costly.	3.92	Agree
2.4.4 I spend a lot of money buying food during my application.	3.55	Agree
2.4.5 Enrolling in a training center for a specific training is costly / expensive.	4.11	Agree
Average Weighted Mean	3.70	Agree

Table 4 presents the challenges experienced by the respondents in terms of Financial Expenditures. It can be seen from the table that four out of the five statements related to challenges on Financial Expenditures were rated "Agree" by the respondents. These statements are, "It is costly nowadays to process necessary documents during onboard application" (WM=4.04), "The fare that I spend every time that I commute going to Manning Agency is costly" (WM=3.92), "I spend a lot of money buying food during my application" (WM=3.55), and "Enrolling in a training center for a specific training is costly/expensive" (WM=4.11). On the other hand, only the statement, "I am renting a boarding house near my Manning Agency which adds to my daily expenses" (WM=2.90), was rated Moderately Agree. It appears that a substantial number of respondents agreed to have been challenged with finances while undergoing onboard manning placement. Even more so with the statement "It is costly nowadays to process necessary documents during onboard application," which gained a weighted mean of 4.04, for the training required by the Standards of Training, Certification and Watch Keeping (STCW). Though this would help Filipino seafarers to improve their competency and be prepared before going onboard, this also affects them negatively because it costs them a lot of money just to afford training (Lalu, 2022). In general, the respondents "agree" on the challenges they experience in terms of financial expenditures, as reflected by the average weighted mean of 3.70 (agree).

Table 5
Mean Distribution of Challenges Encountered by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Seafaring Experience (N=100)

2.5 Seafaring Experience	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
2.5.1 I am a fresh graduate therefore I do not have a Seafaring Experience / I have lack of Seafaring Experience.	2.57	Moderately Agree
2.5.2 My sea service is interisland (local) only but my Manning Agency prefers those with International Seafaring Experience.	2.75	Moderately Agree
2.5.3 I do not have experience on a certain type of vessel which required by manning agency before joining that another certain type of vessel.	3.11	Moderately Agree
Average Weighted Mean	2.81	Moderately Agree

Table 5 outlines the challenges experienced by the respondents in terms of their Seafaring Experience. The table showed that all three statements associated with the challenges of the seafaring experience of Filipino seafarers were rated "Moderately Agree." These are, "I am a fresh graduate therefore, I do not have a seafaring experience or I lack seafaring experience" (WM=2.57), "I do not have experience on a certain type of vessel which required by manning agency before joining that another certain type of vessel" (3.11), and "My sea service is interisland (local) only but my Manning Agency prefers those with International Seafaring Experience" (2.75). It is understandable that only some experienced challenges on seafaring experience while undergoing deployment as others have already earned a number of years working in the maritime industry, particularly being a seafarer. Generally, the respondents "moderately agree" on the challenges in terms of seafaring experience, as shown by the average weighted mean of 2.81 (moderately agree).

Table 6
Mean Distribution of Challenges Encountered by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Other Challenges Encountered (N=100)

2.6 Other Challenges	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
2.6.1 The Manning Agency has a backer system which caused me to be the least priority for deployment.	4.21	Agree
2.6.2 COVID-19 Pandemic causes a Crew Change crisis in the world which delayed the deployment of Seafarers.	4.47	Agree
Average Weighted Mean	4.34	Agree

Table 6 shows the Other Challenges experienced by the respondents. It appeared that all the statements in the table were rated "Agree." It is worth noting the second highest agreement of the respondents on the statement, "The Manning Agency has a backer system which caused me to be the least priority for deployment" (WM=4.21). Premised on an unequal endowment of social capital, the "backer system" reproduces inequality, where those with merit and cultural capital fail to advance their careers because their social capital is non-existent or inadequate. (Maido, 2019).

Gaining the highest mean rank is the statement "COVID-19 Pandemic causes a Crew Change crisis in the world which delayed the deployment of Seafarers" (WM 4.47). The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unparalleled global impacts on human mobility. In the ocean, ship-based activities are thought to have been impacted due to severe restrictions on human movements and changes in consumption (March et al., 2021). At the onset of the pandemic, the future of the maritime industry in the Philippines became ambiguous as it brought challenges to the maritime industry. Many Filipino seafarers became uncertain as to how this pandemic will affect their future. Many of them struggled with their employment during these turbulent times. Overall, the respondents "agree" on the other challenges they experienced, as evident from the average weighted mean of 4.34 (agree).

Table 7
Mean Distribution of Coping Strategies Applied by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Educational Qualification (N=100)

3.1 Educational Qualification	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
3.1.1. I look for a Manning Agency that does not require a high scholastic record that will accept my academic achievements.	2.94	Moderately Agree
3.1.2 I look for a Manning Agency that accepts the fact that my school already solved the issue previously with CHED-Marina.	3.07	Moderately Agree
3.1.3 I have finished my remedial class and am able to complete my academic requirements.	2.65	Moderately Agree
3.1.4 I look for a Manning Agency that does not focus on my school rather than on my transcript of record and application process like interview and Entrance exam I look for a Manning Agency that does not require a high scholastic record that will accept my academic achievements.	3.06	Moderately Agree
Average Weighted Mean	2.93	Moderately Agree

The table above (Table 7) shows the strategies employed by the respondents to cope with the challenges they experienced in relation to educational qualifications. As shown, all the statements were marked "moderately agree", with the statement "I look for a Manning Agency who accepts the fact that my school already solved the issue previously with CHED-Marina," having the highest weighted mean of 3.07. This is followed by "I look for a Manning Agency that does not focus on my school rather than on my transcript of record and application process like interview and entrance exam" with a weighted mean of 3.06. The remaining statements, "I look for a Manning Agency that does not require a high scholastic record that will accept my academic achievements," and "I have finished my remedial class and am able to complete my academic requirements," have a weighted mean of 2.94 and 2.65 respectively. It is understandable that only a few respondents agree with the statements above as most of them did not experience such challenges, considering the result the Table 1 which is "Disagree" (WM=2.24).

Table 8
Mean Distribution of Coping Strategies Applied by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Training (N=100)

3.2 Trainings	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
3.2.1 I enrolled my remaining training in a Maritime Center.	3.86	Agree
3.2.2 I renew my training certificates and ensured that it will be accredited by Marina.	4.02	Agree
3.2.3 I took training/s that is/are acknowledged by my manning agency.	3.85	Agree
3.2.4 I took training again in another training center that is acknowledged by my Manning Agency.	3.45	Agree
3.2.5 I took training that are required by my manning agency.	4.00	Agree
Average Weighted Mean	3.83	Agree

Table 8 presents the strategies employed by Filipino Seafarers to cope with the challenges they experience in relation to Training. It can be seen above that all of the factors were marked

"Agree." These are, "I enrolled my remaining training in a Maritime Center" (WM=3.86), "I renew my training certificates and ensured that it will be accredited by Marina" (WM=4.02), "I took training/s that is/are acknowledged by my manning agency" (WM=3.85), "I took training again in another training center that is acknowledged by my Manning Agency" (WM=3.45), and "I took training that is required by my manning agency" (WM=4.00). Interestingly, the coping strategies in training here (Agree/WM=3.83) did not match with that of the training challenges in Table 2 (Disagree/WM=2.46). Perhaps, one reason could be that these coping strategies has been applied by the respondents as a way of being responsible seafarers. As per Regulation 1.3 of the amended convention, and Section 2 of DOLE Department Order 129 and 130 Training and Qualifications, only certified Filipino seafarers are allowed to work, employed and engage with ships. Those that were certified by the appropriate government agencies have met the required standards adapted from the IMO.

As a whole, the respondents "agree" on the coping strategies employed for training-related challenges, as shown by the average weighted mean of 3.83 (agree).

Table 9
Mean Distribution of Coping Strategies Applied by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Health/Medical (N=100)

3.3 Health / Medical	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
3.3.1 I consult to my doctor for any health problem and follow his advice in order to get better.	3.84	Agree
3.3.2 I am taking my vitamins which will boost my immune system and I also eat healthy foods.	3.92	Agree
3.3.3 I have a maintenance medicine to prevent me from attack.	2.41	Disagree
Average Weighted Mean	3.39	Moderately Agree

Table 9 reveals the strategies used by the respondents to cope with the challenges they

experience in relation to health and medical. Two out of the three statements indicated an agreement from the respondents. This includes, "I consult to my doctor for any health problem and follow his advice in order to get better." (WM=3.84) and, "I am taking my vitamins which will boost my immune system and I also eat healthy foods" (WM=3.92). Contrastingly, the statement "I have a maintenance medicine to prevent me from attack" (WM=2.41) have marked as Disagree. It is reasonable to assume that only a minority of the respondents agreed with the statements listed in this table for the reason that they did not experience such challenges while undergoing deployment, which can be seen on the result of Table 3, which is "Disagree" (WM=2.15). Physically and mentally fit seafarers is an advantage to the company due to the fact that they are able to work satisfactory and easily than the others who are not (Kabir, 2014). Obviously, when seafarers know that the company prioritizes people that have potential and be the first in the line-up, then they will definitely strive harder and become productive during onboard.

Overall, the respondents "moderately agree" on the strategies employed to cope with health/medical-related challenges, as shown by the average weighted mean of 3.83 (agree).

Table 10
Mean Distribution of Coping Strategies Applied by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Financial Expenditures (N=100)

3.4 Financial Expenditures	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
3.4.1 I budget my allowances in order to pay my bills in order to fund my daily expenses.	4.18	Agree
3.4.2 I try to pull out all of my necessary documents one time.	3.82	Agree
3.4.3 I got to borrow money in order to have a payment for my fare in taking commute.	3.45	Moderately Agree
3.4.4 I am buying foods that are not expensive.	4.00	Agree
3.4.5 I try to find training centers that are offering lesser training fees.	4.29	Agree
Average Weighted Mean	3.95	Agree

Table 10 outlines the coping strategies employed by the Filipino seafarers in countering their challenge in terms of Financial Expenditure. It can be seen above that four out of the five factors were marked "Agree," which comprised the following: "I budget my allowances in order to pay my bills in order to fund my daily expenses" (WM=4.18), "I try to pull out all of my necessary documents one time" (WM=3.82), "I am buying foods that are not expensive" (WM=4.00), and "I try to find a training center that is offering lesser training fees" (WM=4.29). The factor "I got to borrow money in order to have a payment for my fare in taking commute" (WM=3.45) was only marked as "moderately agree".

Table 11
Mean Distribution of Coping Strategies Applied by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Seafaring Experience (N=100)

3.5 Seafaring Experience	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
3.5.1 I will earn a number of years in Sea Service either Locally or Internationally for Seafaring Experience.	3.93	Agree
3.5.2 I will work hard to have more international Sea Service.	3.95	Agree
3.5.3 I undergone training regarding to the certain type of vessel that my manning agency required.	3.77	Agree
Average Weighted Mean	3.88	Agree

Table 11 illustrates the coping strategies of the Filipino seafarers regarding Seafaring Experience. It is evident above that all three statements were marked "Agree." These are, "I will earn a number of years in Sea Service either Locally or Internationally for Seafaring Experience" (WM=3.93), "I will work hard to have more international Sea Service" (WM=3.95), and "I undergone training regarding the certain type of vessel that my manning agency required" (WM=3.77). This shows that respondents tend to use these strategies to cope from the challenges of not having the required sea experience. Though the respondents "moderately agree" on this challenge as shown in Table 5 (WM=2.81). Overall, the respondents "Agree" on the use of seafaring experience as a strategy to cope from the challenges of deployment, as shown by the average weighted mean of 3.88 (Agree).

Table 12
Mean Distribution of Coping Strategies Applied by Filipino Seafarers undergoing deployment in terms of Other Coping Strategies (N=100)

3.6 Other Coping Strategy	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
3.6.1 I worked as a Utility in a manning agency to have a chance of getting deployed.	4.11	Agree
3.6.2 I strive hard during a pandemic to find a Manning Agency that hires Seafarers and have prepared myself to counter and take risks regarding COVID-19.	4.30	Agree
Average Weighted Mean	4.20	Agree

Table 12 shows the coping strategies employed by the Filipino seafarers on the other challenges they have experienced. It can be seen on the table that all of the statements were marked "Agree." Highlighting the statement, "I worked as a utility in a manning agency to have a chance of getting deployed" (WM=4.11), this coping strategy is done by seafarers without salary for the purpose of getting a lineup (Gajete, 2021). It is worth noting also the high rating given by the respondents on the statement, "I strive hard during a pandemic to find a Manning Agency that hires seafarer and have prepared myself to counter and take risks regarding COVID-19" (WM=4.30). This proves that Filipino seafarers did not let the pandemic affect their desire to be deployed. Instead, they prefer to go onboard amidst the pandemic. They just waited until the current situation gets better and went back to servicing the ships (Pauksztat & Kitada 2022).

Relationship between the challenges experienced by Filipino Seafarers waiting for deployment to the coping strategies that they have applied. Table 13 shows the relationships between the challenges and coping strategies employed by the respondents. It can be seen from that table that the challenges and coping strategies related to educational qualification (r=0.742, p-value=0.000), financial expenditures (r=0.391, p-value=0.000), and others (r=0.472, p-value=0.000) showed significant relationships. In addition, these relationships are all positive, which implies that the higher the degree of challenges, the higher the use of coping strategies. This implies that these three variables are evidently happening to Filipino seafarers undergoing deployment. This further suggests that they encounter a spectrum of challenges during deployment, and coping strategies are selectively applied to manage and surmount these obstacles. All other pairs showed no significant relationship, which include those related to training (r=0.069, p-value=0.471), health/medical (r=0.171, p-value=0.074), and seafaring experience (r=-0.034, p-value=0.728).

Table 13
Relationship between Challenges and Coping Strategies of the Filipino Seafarers undergoing Deployment

Challenges and Coping Strategies	Pearson's r	p-value	Interpretation
Educational Qualification	0.742	0.000	Significant
Trainings	0.069	0.471	Not Significant
Health/Medical	0.171	0.074	Not Significant
Financial Expenditures	0.391	0.000	Significant
Seafaring Experience	-0.034	0.728	Not Significant
Others	0.472	0.000	Significant

From Table 13, it reveals that three out of the six factor variables of the relationship between Challenges and Coping Strategies are significant namely, "Educational qualification" (r=0.742), "Financial expenditures" (r=0391), and "Others" (r=0.472) with all of them have a 0.000 p-value, meaning only three of them are significantly correlated between Challenges and coping strategies.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of the study, Filipino seafarers encounter various challenges during deployment. Notably, the backer system and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Financial expenditures also pose significant challenges, along with the requirement for extensive seafaring experience as favored by manning agencies. Coping strategies include seeking employment within manning agencies to enhance deployment opportunities and budgeting finances meticulously.

Additionally, respondents strive to accumulate seafaring experience, either locally or internationally, and undergo requisite training to address the demand for experienced seafarers. However, the study reveals that certain challenges, such as educational qualifications and financial expenditures, correlate significantly with coping strategies, while others, like training, health/medical concerns, and seafaring experience, do not demonstrate significant relationships. These findings suggest that Filipino Seafarers employ diverse coping mechanisms to navigate deployment challenges, yet certain aspects require further investigation to understand their impact fully.

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