



# Adaptability of Filipino Seafarers Towards the Prolonged Onboard Period During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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## Abstract

The study focused on determining the adaptability of Filipino seafarers towards the prolonged onboard period during the Covid-19 pandemic. A total of 81 Filipino seafarers were selected as respondents using purposive sampling technique. The study employed descriptive-comparative design. Frequency and percentage, weighted mean, T-test, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to determine the adaptability of Filipino seafarers who have experienced prolonged periods at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. The study used the three variables, cognitive, behavioral, and emotional adaptability, of Creative Adaptability theory by Hod Orkibi which served as the primary basis of the research instrument of the study. It was shown that the respondents agree on having such adaptability onboard. Moreover, it was shown in the results that there are both significance and non-significance when it comes to the grouping of respondents based on their profile. Thus, the study proves that even in the face of adversity such as the Covid-19 pandemic and prolonged periods, Filipino seafarers are shown to be highly adaptable.

**Keywords:** *adaptability, seafarers, onboard, pandemic*

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## Introduction

In today's world, where people are living their everyday lives with caution and awareness due to the constant presence of Covid-19, life has not been the same. There are restrictions and limits in things that normally would not have. But as the world progresses throughout the pandemic, people adapt. In various workplaces, adaptability is essential as it enables an individual to adjust his/her expectations, behavior, and thinking capacity in an appropriate manner in certain situations (National Institutes for Health, 2015). The restrictions strip Filipino seafarers of their precious time with their families instead of spending it with them, the inability to go home takes a toll on their family matters and psychological state. Factors such as the experiences of Filipino seafarers onboard will be explored to determine their adaptability during this time. Not only that, other important aspects such as the emotional, behavioral, and mental aspects will also be determined to further expand the concept behind adaptability.

For many years, seafaring has been one of the most sought out jobs in the world. Many people believe that life at sea can be hard, but at the same time, rewarding. Seafaring has a good reputation when it comes to building an individual's career and investment. However, not long ago, the world has been struck by a disease that will change its course for years. In the maritime industry, there have been significant changes in the workplace and seafarers have to adjust to be competent despite the emergence of the disease. On top of that, several travel restrictions which sparked the crew change crisis caused serious problems for Filipino seafarers, prolonging their stay onboard vessels. In a study conducted by Burke et al. (2006), employees who face considerable environmental changes are subject to adaptability in many ways, e.g., work performance. There have been studies analyzing the adaptability of workers in their environments, one of which is the Individual Adaptability (I-ADAPT) theory. However, the previous study mentioned only focused on the technical side of adaptability particularly, in workplaces. To fill the gap, this study took major influence from the study of Orkibi (2021). This theory further explores adaptability not just in a technical manner, but also in the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive aspects of a person. Therefore, the researchers believe that creative adaptability is the most suitable theory to measure the degree or extent of adaptability of Filipino seafarers onboard. In the ever-changing landscape of a traditionally primary sector, with innovation transforming the future, let alone the

unexpected uncertainty COVID-19 brought into our lives, adaptability appears to be an important trait for the maritime industry to possess.

## **Methodology**

To obtain data regarding Filipino seafarers' adaptability toward the prolonged onboard period during the Covid-19 pandemic, the study applied a descriptive-comparative under quantitative methods. In descriptive-comparative research, there were two un-manipulated variables to develop a formal procedure to conclude that one is superior to the other (Ayanyemi, T.,2021). A quantitative research design uses objective measurements and mathematical, statistical, and numerical data analysis. Following this research design, the data is gathered through questionnaires, surveys, or computational methods to manipulate pre-existing statistical data. The goal of quantitative research is to collect numerical data and generalize it across populations or explain a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The study used different statistical analysis such as t-test to test the significant difference between two variables and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to assess variances between mean (or average) values for several groups.

The study utilized the purposive sampling technique with the target respondents of 100 Filipino seafarers in able to meet the qualifications as follows: 1) Filipino seafarers ranging from ratings to officers; 2) They must have an experience in prolonged onboard periods from 6 months onwards during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The research instrument used was a standardized questionnaire adopted from the theory of Creative Adaptability by Hod Orkibi (2021). In the first part of the questionnaire, it comprises the demographic profile of the respondents specifically in terms of the following: gender, age, number of crew, nationality of crew, and number of months onboard during the pandemic. The second part of the questionnaire was the questions answered by the respondents wherein the three categories (cognitive, behavioral, and emotional) of the Creative Adaptability theory were used as tools to find out the extent of adaptability of Filipino seafarers. The questions answered in the second part of the questionnaire were a total of 18, with six questions each for every category in a randomized order. For the sake of easier identification of the categories used in the questionnaire, the researchers made a number coding which is: Cognitive Creative Adaptability (CCA) – 2, 4, 6, 13, 14, 16. ;

Behavioral Creative Adaptability (BCA) – 1, 3, 5, 10, 12, 18; and Emotional Creative Adaptability (ECA) – 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 17. The questions were rated by the respondents on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being strongly disagreed, and 5 being strongly agreed in a Likert scale format. As for the reliability analysis, a pilot-testing was held to ensure the legitimacy of the survey. For the description of the three categories of Creative Adaptability theory by Hod Orkibi are stated as:

Cognitive Creative Adaptability (CCA). From this category, it aims to determine how the respondent adapts to his/her situation by utilizing cognition such as critical thinking, ability to generate new ideas, and the likes.

Behavioral Creative Adaptability (BCA). This category from the said theory determines how a person adapts in terms of actions and behaviors by generating effective and potentially new behaviors to respond in a certain situation.

Emotional Creative Adaptability (ECA). The third category in the theory helps the researchers to determine the ability of a respondent to emotionally adapt through difficulties by the ability to introduce new and unfamiliar emotions.

## Findings

In terms of respondents' adaptability as to CCA, two (2) out of the six (6) statements were marked "strongly agree" by the respondents, wherein the statement "I combine my old and new ideas to better come up with a solution in a stressful situation onboard" has the highest weighted mean of 4.26. In general, the respondents "agree" with the statements related to CCA as reflected by the average weighted mean of 4.19 meaning "agree".

In terms of the adaptability onboard as to BCA, four (4) out of the six (6) statements were marked "strongly agree" by the respondents, which include the statement "My actions vary depending on the need and how difficult the situation I am in", "I set my behaviors in new ways outside of my comfort zone to effectively deal with a situation" with the highest weighted mean of 4.26. The respondents generally "agree" with the statements related to BCA as evidenced by the Average Weighted Mean of 4.20 (agree).

In terms of the adaptability onboard as to ECA, three (3) out of six (6) statements were marked "strongly agree". As a whole, the respondents "strongly agree" on the statements related to ECA as shown by the Average Weighted Mean of 4.24 (strongly agree).

The results on comparison of overall adaptability when the respondents are grouped according to gender, age, and number of crew onboard during pandemic showed that the p-value of the three data is greater than 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that the level of adaptability is the same for all respondents in terms of gender, age and number of crew onboard, that is, either from ships with few crewmates or many crewmates.

On the comparison of overall adaptability when the respondents are grouped according to nationality of crew onboard during pandemic and number of months onboard during pandemic, the computed F-ratio is 3.689 with p-value of 0.005, which means that the difference is significant. Using Scheffe's Multiple Comparisons Test, it was found that those with Filipino crewmates have significantly higher adaptability than those with Russian crewmates (mean difference=0.99, p-value=0.05). The researchers consider the possible reason for this is explained in a local literature by Cruz (2013), which states that Filipino seafarers have a reputation of being highly adaptable in changing environments and situations. Meanwhile, the computed F-ratio for the mean differences is 4.061 with p-value of 0.003, which means that the difference is significant. Using LSD Multiple Comparisons Test, it was found that those 17-20 month onboard have significantly lower adaptability than those 6-8 months (p-value=0.001), 9-12 months (p-value=0.013), 13-16 months (p-value=0.003), and 24 and above months (p-value=0.043). Similarly, those 21-23 months on board have significantly lower adaptability than those 6-8 months (p-value=0.004), 9-12 months (p-value=0.018), 13-16 months (p-value=0.006), and 24 and above months (p-value=0.021). A possible reason for this is due to the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic affects almost every seafarer particularly the proper repatriation according to their contract (Pauksztat et al., 2020). The results imply that with the months of working onboard increasing, the adaptability of the respondents is decreasing.

## **Conclusion**

Filipino seafarers are shown to be adaptable regardless of the circumstances present onboard. Despite the presence of the Covid-19 pandemic, Filipino seafarers tend to make use of their adaptability skills as way of coping up with the catastrophic effects of the pandemic particularly in connection with their repatriation, as suggested in the title of the study, prolonged onboard period. Applying the theory of Creative Adaptability, it was further

shown according to the results that the respondents “agree” on the statements correlating to cognitive and behavioral adaptability while “strongly agree” on statements correlating to emotional adaptability. Hence, this means that Filipino seafarers are highly adaptive based on the definition of the said theory. Three (3) of the factors in the profiling of the respondents have no significance in the adaptability of Filipino seafarers that have worked for prolonged periods during the pandemic such as the gender, age, and number of crew. Meanwhile, the remaining factors such as the nationality of crewmates, and the number of months working onboard, have significant differences in the overall adaptability of Filipino seafarers. The researchers conclude that having to work alongside fellow Filipino seafarers leads to greater and better adaptability skills rather than working with other nationalities. In addition, it was proven that the longer the period of months stay onboard, the more tired and exhausted a seafarer becomes, which leads to a lesser overall creative adaptability.

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