

Pining for home: Studying crew homesickness aboard a cruise liner

Carolina Bardelle¹ and Conrad Lashley^{2*}

¹International Hotel Management School, Stenden University of Applied Sciences, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands

²Academy of International Hospitality Research, Stenden Hotel Management School, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands

*Corresponding author email: conrad.lashley@stenden.com

Most people can experience homesickness at some time, when they move away from their home base. The experience of working onboard a cruise liner can intensify these feelings, because of the enclosed and controlled nature of work and living space. This study reports on the incidence of homesickness where the crewmembers originate from very different cultural contexts than the one in which they work. Findings in this research suggest that whereas a large number of crew experienced homesickness sometimes, a substantial minority feel homesick very often, frequently or always. Crew homesickness should be seen as important by both shipboard and liner company management because it can ultimately impact on customer service experiences, and can be ameliorated by sensitive management policies and practices.

Keywords: homesickness, cruise-liner, crewmembers, shipboard hotel services

Introduction

All travel, by definition, involves moving away from a home base. As a consequence many travellers experience homesickness as a longing for the people, places and experiences left behind, as well as the need to adjust to a new environment and situation. For crew working aboard cruise liners these longings and adjustments are intensified, because the ship represents a total environment from which it is difficult to escape, and where there are limited opportunities to add personal touches to the new living space. Frequently, crew are working and living in a situation that is very different to their home. The situation in this study was of a North American-owned liner staffed with crew from the Far East.

The paper reports on research undertaken by the principal author whilst working aboard a US-owned cruise liner that journey around the Caribbean as well as to Alaska. The research involved the design, delivery and analysis of a questionnaire to a significant sample of crewmembers working in an array of frontline service departments on the cruise-ship. The questionnaire, informed by prior research and published literature, suggested that research needs to explore the extent of homesickness amongst crew, the impact this has on crewmembers, and the factors in crew working experiences that either intensify or ameliorate these feelings of homesickness.

Homesickness

Various definitions of homesickness exist. Van Tilburg and Vingerhoets (2005, p. 83) define homesickness as a "cognitive affective phenomenon with intense wish for geographic and chronological changes". Another definition by Thurber, Walton and the Council on School Health (2007) states that, "homesickness is the distress and functional

impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home and attachment objects, such as parents, characterized by an acute longing for home". It emphasises that either the home environment or strong attachments to persons can initiate homesickness. Even planned separations can cause homesickness as well as possibly impacting on an individual's functionality. Hack-Polay, (2010, p. 62) states that homesickness is "the commonly experienced state of distress among those who have left their house and home, and find themselves in a new and unfamiliar environment". For this research, homesickness is defined by combining the key features of these definitions. It is, therefore, the emotional and physical distress following geographical moves, including obsessional, preoccupying thoughts about the home environment, home, life at home, as well as family and friends.

Prevalence

The prevalence of homesickness is rather difficult to assess, as it is not a continuous phenomenon (Hack-Polay 2007, Van Tilburg, Van Heck & Vingerhoets 1996). Homesickness occurs in periodical episodes, barring severe cases in which symptoms are experienced continuously. "Homesickness may strike quite suddenly and unexpectedly, in experienced travelers, or in someone who lives a happy life away from their home country, when exposed to a stressor" (Van Tilburg & Vingerhoets 2005, p. 5). The extent that individuals are experienced in being away from home, or the fondness felt for their life in the new environment, does not seem to matter. Stressors have the power to evoke homesickness in anyone. Fundamentally every crewmember can be affected by homesickness. Experienced crewmembers that have worked aboard cruise liners are as likely to become affected by homesickness as those on their first contract. Homesickness is a phenomenon that occurs amongst all age groups, cultures

and sexes. There is no evidence that demographic factors such as age, gender, social class, or culture have an impact of the proneness to experience the phenomenon (Van Heck et al. 1996).

Geographical moves bring along a series of challenges. It requires individuals to separate from attachment figures and loved homes. In addition, adaptation to new living conditions, lifestyles, roles, habits as well as routines is required. Where the new location has features similar to the home environment, there appear to be lower instances of homesickness (Van Tilburg & Vingerhoets 2005). For crewmembers, the ship is itself very different to their home environment. There are fewer possibilities to escape the work setting, and less freedom than life ashore. Seafarers normally work every day and leisure hours are limited. Cabins are typically shared with one to five colleagues and this allows for limited privacy. Fellow cabin members are typically from different countries and cultures, speak different languages, and have different tastes and interests. There are no opportunities for self-catering, and crewmembers have to adjust their eating and dietary habits to the one provided by the shipboard crew catering service. Finally, the mainstream culture will typically differ from the seafarer's home base. This requires individuals to decide whether to maintain their own culture and traditions, or to adapt their cultural identity to the new context. For crew to operate effectively, basic behaviours, values and beliefs of the mainstream culture need to be learned and practiced, so as to avoid misunderstandings and perceived bad performance.

Fisher (1989) established models summarising the distress caused by geographical moves. She developed five theories, which are not mutually exclusive, that could cause distress. These are attachment and loss; interruption and discontinuity of lifestyle; loss of personal control; role changes; and conflicts (Van Tilburg & Vingerhoets 2005). She suggests that attachment and loss, as well as interruption and discontinuity of lifestyle, are stressors arising due to separation from the home environment, whilst loss of personal control, and role changes, are stressors due to the need to adapt to the new environment. Homesickness and the resulting symptoms are caused by conflicts brought about by the separation, and/or the adaptation processes.

"Attachment and loss" as well as "discontinuity of lifestyle" are conditions that are likely to be features in all crew experiences; because the cruise liner involves travel away from home bases. Similarly, "loss of personal control" can be a source of distress for crewmembers, as the ship environment allows for very few personal touches. Life onboard is not shaped by personal needs and wants, as it might be in the home environment. The possibilities and limitations for individuals are set by the rules and regulations of the cruiser and cruise company. Joining the crew requires individuals to fully focus on work, and that implies that their self-image will require crew to be totally defined by the shipboard role. The personal definition of the individual as a family member or partner in a relationship, become sidelined. The nature of the voyage and the cruise liner context allows limited time for personal life and contact with the home base. Time zone differences, together with costly communication links, limit opportunities to stay in touch with home. Conflicts arise in the thoughts of crewmembers, as their yearning to return

home competes with the desire to overcome challenges in the new environment, and to complete the contract successfully.

The individual intensity of distress caused by each of the five elements mentioned and the power of their influence depend on the personal characteristics, character traits and given antecedent situation of each crewmember (Fisher 1989). Van Tilburg and Vingerhoets (2005) also suggest that people differ in their reactions to individual stressors, and this leads to varying responses to the impact of homesickness. Whilst crewmembers engage the same ship environment, their sensitivity to the stressors might differ. Hence one individual may be more impacted by homesickness than another.

Fisher's (1989) multi-causal model of homesickness suggests that geographical moves involve two main difficulties, the separation from the old environment and the process of adaptation to the new environment. Separation from home might cause psychological and physiological disorders and obsessive thoughts about home due to perceived loss and discontinuity of lifestyle. In contrast, the confrontation with the new environment results in either "strain and dissatisfaction or reduced commitment". Strain and dissatisfaction will intensify distress and homesickness and bring about reduced work commitment. On the other hand, increased workforce commitment may reduce or mitigate the feelings of homesickness. Hack-Polay (2007) also confirms that the level to which the new environment is pleasant and supportive will be a determining factor in the extent that international assignees will be impacted by homesickness.

Manifestation

Hack-Polay (2007) highlights the importance of recognising homesickness as an illness. He states that psychological disorders and physical symptoms caused by homesickness can affect the health and welfare of individuals. Physical symptoms resulting from homesickness that have been frequently reported are "gastric and intestinal complaints, sleep disturbances, appetite loss, headache, fatigue and a 'funny feeling in the legs'" (Van Heck et al. 1996, p. 901). Furthermore, cognitive symptoms include missing home, obsessional thoughts about home, negative thoughts about the new environment, absentmindedness, together with idealising the home environment (Van Heck et al. 1996).

Behavioural symptoms manifest as "apathy, listlessness, lack of initiative and little interest in the new environment", together with emotional symptoms including "depressive mood, loss of control, insecurity, nervousness as well as loneliness" (Van Heck et al. 1996, p. 901). Mental and physical symptoms impair an individual's functionality, and business operations may become affected. According to Hack-Polay, symptoms of homesickness impair performance, as individuals could be, "irritable, sad, uncooperative, or lacking initiative and drive" (2007, p. 11). He further states that this could lead to an overall lower business performance and productivity (2007). This view is supported by Deresky (2006), who suggests that psychological, physiological as well as social disorders following geographical moves, for example, the inability to work in a team, lower performances (Deresky 2006). Cognitive, behavioural and emotive symptoms can reduce performances standards by crew, leading to poor service quality and potentially greater customer dissatisfaction.

In turn this is likely to lead to increased complaints, and fewer customer returners. Negative guest experiences may lead to bad stories being circulated in the passenger's culture, and poor public relations that ultimately jeopardise the reputation of the company.

Physical impacts may lead to crewmembers being unable to work leading to shortages in the staffing levels in various departments. As there is no availability of agency or temporary staff whilst at sea, shortages cannot be covered, thereby increasing the workload for the remaining crewmembers and intensified feelings of tiredness and stress of those still working. The extra workload may lead to negative service experiences for passengers, and ultimately to customer dissatisfaction.

Homesickness therefore has the potential to impact on both the crew themselves and on the service experiences of passengers. Each has the potential to generate extra costs and reduced profits to the cruise organisation. Unhappy and homesick crews are more likely to want to cut short their employment aboard, and leave the ship before the contract ends. This has a replacement cost implication that adds to operating costs and reduced profits. Even when crewmembers remain, the psychological and physiological impacts may reduce crew performance levels. In some departments this might cause reduced upselling and lower sales and profits. For frontline service staff the impact of homesickness might lead to reduced service levels and customer dissatisfaction. Increased customer dissatisfaction may impact on the cruise line's reputation; lower repeat business, and greater costs in new customer generation.

The nature and purpose of cruise liners involve crew working away from their home base. This can in turn lead to crewmembers feeling homesick. Published research suggests that all crew are capable of experiencing homesickness, given the right stressors, but that individuals do vary in the impact that these stressors have on homesickness. This research explores three broad themes arising from the literature. The first examines the extent of homesickness experienced by crew aboard this cruise liner. The second investigates the impacts of homesickness on crewmembers, including the physical, cognitive, behavioural and emotional impacts. The third theme reports on the factors in crew working experiences that can intensify or reduce the experiences of homesickness.

Research approach

This research reports on research undertaken by the primary author whilst undertaking a forty-week placement undertaken in the final year of the Bachelor's degree in International Hotel Management at Stenden University of Applied Science in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. This work placement involves full-time work in a hospitality organisation, in this case, whilst working aboard a cruise liner.

Research aim

The research explores the experiences of homesickness amongst crew aboard a cruise liner.

Objectives

- Identify the extent of homesickness amongst crew.

- Determine the symptoms of homesickness.
- Highlight the extent that feelings of homesickness are due to absence from home, or the different environment that shipboard living involves.
- Identify conditions of shipboard living that intensify or mitigate feelings of homesickness.

A quantitative data collection method was selected as this allowed data analysis of a large sample (Verhoeven 2011). A self-administered questionnaire containing predetermined questions was used as this allowed for a significant proportion of the crew to be studied. Apart from being able to gather data from a large number of crew, the anonymous questionnaire was likely to result in respondents being less likely to give socially desirable answers. As the researcher was a crewmember, it was felt that questionnaire would also reduce the risk of personal influence that might occur with face-to-face interviews (Verhoeven 2011). Given that respondents originated from many different nationalities with differing cultural expectations about emotional openness, anonymity was thought to be of particular importance. By distributing self-administered questionnaires within the population on board the cruise liner, there was a good chance of a higher accuracy of responses than with the use of face-to-face interviews (Verhoeven 2011).

The survey contained twenty-five questions and took approximately ten minutes to complete. The questions aimed to explore opinion, behavioural, and attribute variables. The questionnaire design included closed, multi-choice, semi-open, and open-ended questions (Lewis, Saunders & Thornhill 2012). Semi-open questions and open-ended questions were important as they allowed for qualitative responses, and the possibility to capture crew insights not anticipated in the questionnaire design. The questionnaire therefore allowed for quantitative data analysis, but also enabled respondents to expand upon the themes being explored.

Population

The ship's complement was normally one thousand and seventy-eight crew, although over the period of the study (7 September 2013 to 6 April 2014) there were eleven hundred and thirteen individual aboard, due to crew leaving and being replaced. Just over three quarters (76%) were males and just less than one quarter were females. Table 1 highlights the national origins of the crew. Whilst crew originated from fifty-eight different countries, the largest number came from the Far East. The biggest single national group were Filipino, and they with Indian and Indonesian nationals comprised around two thirds of all crewmembers.

Sampling

Random sampling was applied as the research was aiming to gather data from all crew segments (Lewis, et al. 2012). This

Table 1: National origins of crew

National origins	Crew (%)
Filipino	43.5
Indonesian	11.4
Indian	10.9
Other nationals	34.1

included data collected across the intensity of the experience of homesickness – never through to always. A total of two hundred usable questionnaires were collected and analysed. Table 2 reports on the nationality profiles of respondents. There are some small differences between the origins of respondents, compared to the nationality profile of the normal complement; they do broadly reflect national crew profiles.

The gender profile was slightly skewed towards females (36.5%) than to males (63.5%) compared to the typical crew profile highlighted earlier. In part this might be due to the sensitivity of the topic, and male respondents being more reluctant to admit to feeling homesick. Even though the questionnaire was anonymous, some male crewmembers might have just avoided admitting it, by not filling in the questionnaire.

The age profile of respondents confirms that crew tends to be under forty years of age. Eighty-five percent of respondents were under forty years old. Table 3 reports on the breakdown of the age profile of respondents.

Most crew members' home base was with shared with either parents (57.5 per cent); their own children (22 per cent); or with a partner (19 per cent). Whilst some respondents recorded also stayed with siblings, friends and grandparents, most were covered by these aforementioned main categories.

Data collection

The questionnaire was developed in line with the analysis of the literature and was distributed to a large sample size so as to assure reliability and validity of findings. Prior to general distribution, the questionnaire was pilot tested with a group of ten individuals and followed with a short interview with this group so as to evaluate the instrument. This helped to identify improvements in the sequence of questions, the formulation of questions as well as to identify mistakes and gaps (Verhoeven 2011). The questionnaire was introduced with a participation information sheet that gave participants an idea about the importance and purpose of this research, as well as clarifying participant rights and ethical principles.

Internal validity of the research findings was ensured as the sample consisted of randomly respondents from the population (Lewis et al. 2012). The data collection was

completed within a short time frame so that respondents took part in the survey while having a similar setting within the ship environment. External validity was ensured, as the randomly selected large sample automatically reflected similar dimensions in the gender and nationality distribution in comparison to the population (Lewis et al. 2012). Confidentiality and anonymity were the guiding ethical principles of this research. As mentioned earlier, the survey was completed in an isolated and quiet place to assure anonymity. Survey questions were designed in a way that individuals could not be identified based on given responses. The survey did not, therefore, include the position of crewmembers nor did it ask for national, regional or city origins.

Findings

Homesickness is an experience potentially shared by all those who travel away from their home base. For those working on board cruise ships there are limited opportunities to remove themselves from the total environment that cruise ship represents. Whilst at sea, there is no chance to escape from the work environment, and there are also limits on the extent that crew can personalise their living quarters. The paper reports on research undertaken by the primary author whilst undertaking a work placement aboard a cruise liner. It follows broad themes suggested by prior studies by exploring the extent that homesickness is experienced by crew respondents, the physical, cognitive, behavioural and emotional impacts of homesickness; and the impacts of various crew experiences that either intensify or reduce the impacts of homesickness.

The extent of crew homesickness

Most respondents reported that they suffer from homesickness at some point. Whilst homesickness impacts on most crewmembers, the reported frequency and extent varies across the crew in this study. Some reported that they never feel homesick whilst others said they always feel homesick. This reinforces the observations by Van Tilburg and Vingerhoets (2005) that people differ in their reactions to stressors causing the level of homesickness. Results of the survey suggested that just under half (48.7%) of the respondents felt homesick "sometimes", whilst almost three in ten reported that they felt homesick "frequently" (13.1%), "very often" (8%) or "always" (6.5%). Those who were less affected accounted for almost a quarter of all crew. Some stated that they "never" (11.6%) or "seldom" (12.1%) experience homesickness (see Table 4). These different levels of impact by homesickness confirm that individual circumstances are likely to vary in the way they are affected by being separated from their home environment.

Table 2: National origins of respondents

National origins of respondents	Crew (%)
Filipino	38.9
Indonesian	15.6
Indian	11.6
Other nationals	33.8

Table 3: Age profile of respondents

Age profile of respondents	Crew (%)
Under 21	1.5
21-30	41.1
31-40	42.6
41-50	11.7
51-60	3.0

Table 4: Reported experiences of homesickness

Crew experiencing homesickness	Respondents agreeing (%)
Never	11.6
Seldom	12.1
Sometimes	48.7
Frequently	13.1
Very often	8.0
Always	6.5

Furthermore, the experience of homesickness at all levels confirms that these feelings are episodic. They intensify and reduce over time and few reported feeling the same way continuously. This is consistent with Van Heck's findings, suggesting that homesickness typically occurs in periodical episodes. Only in severe cases are the symptoms experienced continuously (Van Heck et al. 1996). This research indicated a minority responded that they "always" experience homesickness, that is, on a continuous basis. According to Van Heck, crewmembers that always suffer from homesickness can be considered to be severe cases. These results also suggest that a small minority of crewmembers are severely impacted by homesickness.

The research reported upon here was not based upon a scientific definition of homesickness but was informed by respondents' self-assessment of feeling homesick. Females were more likely than males to report feeling homesick frequently. Male participants were more likely to indicate never feeling homesick. On balance, though, gender was not found to be a major signifier as both males and females reported feeling homesick at some point. At the extremes, those who reported feeling homesick more frequently were more likely to be female; whilst those reporting never feeling homesick were more likely to be male. That said, it could be that the reporting of feelings is skewed by male respondents being less willing to admit to feeling homesick due to self image, and loss of face issues. The findings of Van Heck et al. (1996) suggest that there are no differences between the occurrence of homesickness amongst age groups, cultures and sexes. Observations from this research confirm these findings.

Given the nationality profile of the crew, reported upon earlier, Filipino, Indian and Indonesian members were specifically focused on in this research and responses of crew from these countries were compared within and between crew from other cultures. The results of this research showed that crew from all nationalities sometimes experience homesickness, although trends become visible that Filipinos as well as participants from "other nationalities" feel homesick less than sometimes. Moreover, this study revealed that Indian and Indonesian crewmembers were more likely to report experiencing homesickness at the extremes when compared with other crewmembers. Van Heck's research suggested, however, that there are no differences in the prevalence of homesickness between different age groups, cultures, and sexes (Van Heck et al. 1996). This sample included fewer responses from Indonesian and Indian participants, and this may have impacted upon the results. It is recommended, therefore, that follow-up research is conducted to include a larger sample of Indian and Indonesian respondents.

Homesickness can affect everyone when exposed to the appropriate stressor (Van Tilburg & Vingerhoets 2005). The results of this research confirmed this general tendency, though females, Indonesians and Indians reported being slightly more prone to homesickness. The majority of respondents did not think about quitting due to homesickness. However, the more frequently crewmembers feel homesick, the higher the likelihood that they think about leaving the ship. The increasing occurrence of homesickness also causes the symptoms of homesickness to occur more frequently, or more severely. For some crewmembers, the

symptoms are experienced to such a high level that they return home.

Even though, the majority of respondents did not to think about quitting the contract, approximately 35% of participants did think about it, and this should be of concern to the organisation because of the costs associated with crew replacement. In addition, the liner company would face a serious recruitment problem. On this ship alone, approximately three hundred and seventy-seven new crewmembers would need to be hired, based upon an average crew complement of one thousand and seventy-eight. Homesickness therefore has to be recognised as a serious issue for the cruise industry, and one that this company must manage to ensure successful operations in the future.

The manifestation of homesickness

The symptoms of homesickness are manifested in a number of ways. There are physical, cognitive, behavioural, and emotional manifestations of the phenomenon. The respondent in this research were asked to rank these various manifestations using the scale indicated above linked to an numerical scale – 1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, 5 = very often and 6 = always.

Tiredness as well as changes in appetite seem to be more common than other physical symptoms (Table 5), though results did vary between groups, and muscle tension, insomnia and headaches were experienced more intensely by some respondents, though the sample overall registered as seldom experiencing these symptoms.

Cognitive symptoms included increasing thoughts about home, considering life at home as ideal, and feelings of missing home are also experienced frequently, very often or always. These are more commonly thought of than the remaining cognitive symptoms (Table 6).

Few crew reported behavioural symptoms of homesickness. Finding it "difficult to concentrate", and "not wanting to integrate with crew social life", were experienced sometimes. Other behavioural symptoms, such as, "lack of initiative and

Table 5: Reported physical symptoms of homesickness

Physical symptom	Weighted average
Tiredness	3.26
Change in appetite	2.94
Tension in muscles	2.79
Insomnia	2.58
Headaches	2.51
Other aches and pains	2.45
Funny feeling in the legs	2.45
Nightmares	2.29
Gastric and intestinal complaints	1.83

Table 6: Reported cognitive symptoms of homesickness

Cognitive symptoms	Weighted average
Thoughts about home	3.87
Feelings of missing home	3.81
Considering the home environment as ideal	3.36
Negative thoughts about the ship's environment	2.82
Absentmindedness	2.57

drive"; "lack of drive to work in a team"; "lack of drive to be cooperative"; "listlessness"; and "apathy" were all registered as seldom or never by these respondents. In Table 7 it can be seen that all behavioural symptoms obtain a weighted average between two and three which stands for the answer category "seldom" according to the rating scale. The symptom with the highest weighted average is "little interest to integrate into the social life" with a value of 2.69, whereas the symptom "apathy" obtains the lowest weighted average with 2.24.

The most common emotional symptoms reported were sadness, loneliness, and depressive mood, as well as being easily irritable were most frequently reported as being experienced "sometimes". These symptoms were more common than crying, insecurity or nervousness. This is also reflected in the weighted averages reported in Table 8. Sadness and loneliness obtained values above three so that they are on average experienced sometimes and thereby more common than other emotional symptoms.

Comparing the weighted averages of symptoms, including thoughts about home, feelings of missing home, considering life at home as ideal, together with feelings of sadness are the most common experienced amongst crewmembers onboard this cruise ship. As these are of cognitive nature this study revealed that homesickness mostly impacts the mental state of crewmembers. These results are consistent with the findings by Hack-Poly (2012) who defines homesickness as a "cognitive affective phenomenon".

These four common symptoms result from homesickness, and not from other emotional stress; and there is a relation between those four symptoms and the variable homesickness. The more frequently crewmembers suffer from homesickness, the more frequently each of the symptoms are experienced and vice versa. Homesickness and its symptoms can have serious implications for the health and welfare of individuals (Hack-Poly 2007, Van Tilburg & Vingerhoets 2005). In this case, symptoms are typically experienced sometimes, or less often; the majority of crewmembers experience homesickness, but it

does not cause serious health and welfare problems. However, approximately 6.5% of crewmembers are seriously impacted by homesickness; so they suffer from the symptoms continuously, and a further 13% report feeling homesick frequently, and 8% very often. Although they represent just over one in four of the crew, their experiences confirm Hack-Poly's (2007) observations that homesickness can have serious implications for the health and welfare of individuals concerned.

Influential factors

Homesickness may be due to either separation from the home environment, or the need to adapt to the new environment, or a combination of both. The literature review suggests that geographical moves bring along a series of challenges. It requires individuals to separate from loved ones and the home setting, whilst at the same time having to adjust to a new environment (Van Tilburg, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck 1999). In this research, the majority of participants reported that both the separation from the home environment, and the need to adapt to the new environment resulted in homesickness. The calculated weighted averages confirm, though, that separation from the home obtains a slightly higher value than adaptation to the new environment. Hence, the separation processes constitute a slightly greater challenge for crewmembers on board this cruise ship.

The detachment from home and the interruption of life experiences and lifestyle differences result in feelings of loss that bring about feelings of homesickness. Crewmembers who experience homesickness even at low levels of intensity report a sense of loss about the home base and key individuals they have left behind. Missing the company of parents, partners, friends, children and relatives were all mentioned by crew respondents. Adding to this, the change in lifestyle and loss of the certainties of home and living routines contribute to the sense of being separated from home. Indeed all the senses that are engaged in the certainties of the base of origin intensify the grief for what has been left behind are responsible for feeling homesick.

In addition to the sense of loss of the things, experiences and people left behind, the cruise liner represents a different environment. Crewmembers are not only pining for what has been left behind but also having to adjust to a living space that is alien to them. Crewmembers frequently have to work and live in environment where there are limited opportunities for personal space. Having to share living accommodation with other people, from different cultures, speaking different languages, eating different foods, all impact on the sense of disconnectedness.

For crewmembers, working aboard represents a total environment over which they have little control. Respondents in this survey suggested that the lack of control contributed to feelings of homesickness, with 58.7% of participants indicating that they strongly agree (15.5%), agree (20.6%) or slightly agree (22.6%) that homesickness results from reduced control over life onboard compared to life at home. Furthermore, 40.2% of respondents indicated that they slightly disagree (19.8%), disagree (11.1%) or strongly disagree (19.3%) that they were satisfied with level of control they have over their lives aboard.

Table 9 highlights the issues that respondents reported as contributing to the lack of control aboard ship. Often

Table 7: Reported behavioural symptoms of homesickness

Behavioural symptoms	Weighted average
Little interest to integrate into the social life	2.69
Having a hard time to concentrate	2.62
Lack of initiative and drive	2.46
Lack of drive to work in a team	2.41
Lack of drive to be cooperative	2.36
Listlessness	2.33
Apathy	2.24

Table 8: Reported emotional symptoms of homesickness

Emotional Symptoms	Weighted average
Sadness	3.27
Loneliness	3.19
Depressed mood	2.86
Being easily irritable	2.74
Crying	2.54
Nervousness	2.41
Insecurity	2.36
Nervousness	2.41

crewmembers work intensive periods due to the nature of the shipboard services offered to passengers. The cruise is a 24/7 operation and as a consequence crew can be working as many as one hundred hours per week. Shipboard rules and regulations and strict management, intensify the sense of difference in the work environment to which crew have to adjust, and thereby contribute to the sense of strangeness and alienation from home.

Furthermore, the nature of the ship as a total environment is intensified by the encased nature of the ship, the fact that it is often at sea for long periods of time, and in an environment influenced by the ship movement and having to cope with the pitching and rolling of the vessel when weather conditions are inclement. Even off-duty periods are spent on board, so there is no ability to escape. These adjustments to the specific shipboard environment intensify the strangeness of life aboard and the difference to their home base.

Table 10 lists the factors reported by respondents that intensify the feelings of homesickness. Just over one in three (34%) respondents said the living conditions were a contributor to feeling homesick. A negative atmosphere, bad communications, particularly between crewmembers, social isolation, working conditions, and limited free time were all mentioned as also contributing to these feelings.

Table 11 reports on respondents' views of factors that helped to reduce feelings of homesickness. Improved communication links to contact family and friends back home through free Internet links, or reduced telephone rates were all seen as important contributors to improved links with the home base.

More shipboard activities to promote a shared culture and improved social relations amongst crew were also seen as positive and beneficial to making life aboard more tolerable for crew.

Improvements to working conditions were also seen as making a positive contribution to reducing homesickness, shorter duration contracts, as well as reduced working hours aboard were felt to be ways that the cruise company could assist crew in coping with the effects of being away from home.

Conclusion

Homesickness is an experience that can impact on all who travel, but has a particular significance for crew on this cruise liner. The crew is drawn from almost sixty countries, but Filipino, Indonesian and Indian crew accounted for two-thirds of the crew aboard the cruise liner in this study. Their sense of disengagement from home is therefore intensified by a working environment not only constrained by the design of crew accommodation, but also by the diversity of the workforce and international location of the ship.

The research reported upon here suggests that the experiences of homesickness can affect a significant minority of crew. These feelings are in part a consequence of the nature of working on board a cruise liner, but also can be intensified or reduced by the actions of the shipboard management. The management style and treatment of crew can itself be a source of dissatisfaction resulting in more homesickness; but can also lead to crew satisfaction and reduced feelings of homesickness. The paper has suggested

Table 9: Reported factors reducing control

Aspects of control	Percentage agreeing (rounded)
Long working hours	34
Ship's rules and regulations	22
Lack of privacy	13
Strict management in the workplace	12
Too expensive communication tools	11
Private life/working life too close	6
Partners being sent on different ships	2

Table 10: Reported factors intensifying homesickness

Intensifying homesickness	Percentage agreeing (rounded)
Living conditions	34
Negative atmosphere at work	16
Bad communication links	13
Social isolation	13
Working conditions	11
Limited free time	11
Bad treatment by colleagues	7
Situations reminding of home	7

Table 11: Reported factors reducing homesickness

Reducing homesickness	Percentage agreeing (rounded)
Improved communication links	34
Organisation of social activities	30
Improved working conditions	19
Improved living conditions	8
Improved atmosphere at work	5
Ability to disembark at destinations	2
Family visits	2
Partners on the same ship	1

that homesickness may result in crew turnover and increased operational costs for the cruise company.

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