

# Research on Work Stress and Coping Strategies of International Cruise Service Staff

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**Abstract:** *In the development process of the cruise industry, safety, efficiency, and high-quality tourism services have become the focus of attention. Due to the special working conditions, the psychological stress and physical health issues faced by International Cruise Service Staff have become increasingly prominent. How to cope with the increasingly fierce competition in the international cruise market, alleviate the work pressure of crew members, establish an effective stress management mechanism, and enhance passenger satisfaction have become important issues that the industry urgently needs to address. Crew members face issues such as heavy workloads, tense interpersonal relationships, and a lack of job security, which are mainly attributed to insufficient understanding of stress, the need to improve professional quality, inadequate attention to stress management by enterprises, high employee turnover rates, and imperfect stress management systems. Measures need to be taken to reduce stress, enhance professional quality, improve stress management, and optimize service.*

**Keywords:** International Cruise Service Staff; Work stress; Stress management.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of technology has driven the progress of modern society, and the cruise industry has become a prominent symbol of this era. In its development, safety, efficiency, and high-quality tourism services have become the focal points of attention. As passengers' demands for cabin service quality continually rise, differing opinions emerge, and complaints frequently occur, posing challenges to the development of the shipping industry. Among them, International Cruise Service Staff represents a distinctive service group. Due to the unique nature of their working conditions, the psychological stress and physical health issues of International Cruise Service Staff are particularly prominent. Effectively addressing the increasingly fierce market competition in the international cruise market, alleviating the immense pressure caused by excessive workload on crew members, establishing an effective stress management mechanism, and enhancing passenger satisfaction are crucial tasks that the current international cruise industry urgently needs to resolve. International Cruise Service Staff face various work-related stress issues, including excessive workload, disharmonious interpersonal relationships, job insecurity, and career predicaments. Significant factors contributing to these issues include inadequate understanding of their own stress, low professional quality, insufficient attention to stress management by enterprises, high employee turnover rates, and imperfect stress management models and systems. To alleviate the high-intensity stress on personnel, enhance their professional quality, establish a care mechanism for personnel, develop a career planning system for personnel, and improve the stress management process, thereby reducing their high-intensity work stress and enabling them to provide better services to enterprises and passengers while achieving their career goals.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF STRESS ISSUES AND CAUSES FOR INTERNATIONAL CRUISE SERVICE STAFF

### 2.1 Inadequate Self-Awareness of Staff Stress

Through analyzing the current stress status of International Cruise Service Staff, we can observe that these employees exhibit variations in perceiving and judging their own stress, which subsequently leads to differences in their stress performance. Operating in a highly tense and intense work environment daily, personnel are inevitably influenced by objective factors such as passengers, work settings, and interpersonal relationships, making it difficult for them to accurately predict the difficulty of tasks and resulting in significant work stress. Some individuals can sensitively identify stress through proactive communication and self-regulation, while most people lack effective identification and assessment capabilities when confronted with actual stress responses. People often overestimate the dangers of stress and lack sufficient ability to cope with them. If these stresses are not promptly addressed, they can lead to excessive stress reactions. The stress arising from cognitive biases among International Cruise Service Staff primarily stems from their emphasis on work outcomes. When the efforts expended by

International Cruise Service Staff in their work do not align with the achieved outcomes, the stress levels of employees who cannot tolerate adverse consequences increase. Currently, psychological consultation stations have been established for International Cruise Service Staff on international cruises, and regular stress tests are conducted. However, due to a lack of understanding of their own stress coping abilities, crew members may feel overwhelmed and unable to promptly adjust their psychological state when confronted with actual stress situations. This can result in physiological, psychological, and behavioral abnormalities, reducing work efficiency and even posing risks to flight safety.

## **2.2 Insufficient Professional Quality of Staff**

With the vigorous development of the cruise industry, China is gradually moving towards the global stage and ranking among the major cruise powers. In contrast to the booming shipping industry, there is a shortage of International Cruise Service Staff. The widespread shortage of crew members and the inability of high-quality International Cruise Service Staff training to meet the demands of shipping development indicate that the current status of International Cruise Service Staff in China's shipping industry is not yet compatible with the trend of cruise development. The issue of professional quality among International Cruise Service Staff on international cruises refers to their lack of practical experience in specific positions, inadequate humanitarian and political qualities, lack of knowledge updating, and an unreasonable knowledge structure. The work enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity of International Cruise Service Staff (such as being enthusiastic, considerate, and polite to passengers, answering their questions) have not been fully utilized. International cruise companies prioritize safety and service, so they place greater emphasis on crew members who play a crucial role in the competition among international cruises. However, they fail to recognize that the nature of cruise work has specific requirements for employees' professional capabilities. Facing the ever-changing and increasing demands of passengers, international cruises have not promptly updated the theoretical knowledge related to their profession. Instead, they merely replicate past experiences and management systems, unable to allow International Cruise Service Staff to provide personalized service experiences in a targeted and timely manner according to passenger needs. The service concept remains self-centered.

## **2.3 Inadequate Attention to Stress Management by the Company**

In the process of continuous expansion, international cruise lines have failed to conduct reasonable overall planning for the quantity and quality of talent. Compared to Western countries, there is a noticeable emphasis on officialdom in human resource management, with more focus on talent acquisition and less attention paid to continuous talent development and retention. Through surveys of International Cruise Service Staff with unique job characteristics, we can see that this mindset has resulted in a lack of timely attention and guidance for the significant stress experienced by staff in their work. The shipping industry is a high-risk sector, and the work pressure on safety personnel is increasing. The nature of this work determines that managers pay inadequate attention to the induction training and on-the-job training for new recruits. For instance, pre-job training often leads to tension and anxiety when facing unfamiliar work positions, content, and environments, especially for new employees with weak self-management abilities. If International Cruise Service Staff realize during work that their abilities and qualities do not match the position, and the company cannot provide timely feedback and assistance, it will lead to employees being under the pressure of not being able to complete their work for a long time, which has a significant impact on their physical and mental health as well as work enthusiasm.

On international cruise ships, being an International Cruise Service Staff member is not just a workplace but also a stage for individual self-development. However, due to the lack of job security and uncertainty in career development, it often brings greater stress to International Cruise Service Staff. Examples include the absence of corresponding incentive mechanisms, compensation systems, employee assistance programs, and career planning. When the unstable working hours of International Cruise Service Staff or the accumulated work pressure lead to estrangement from family, the company should adopt appropriate care policies. These are areas that the current International Cruise Service Staff need to attend to and improve.

## **2.4 Immature Stress Management Models and Systems**

In today's society, people generally value the "people-oriented" philosophy, and the work pressure faced by enterprises is also increasingly recognized by society. Currently, research on work pressure in China mainly draws on foreign research results, and a specialized work pressure management model has not been established. Especially in the cruise sector, stress management models and systems are not well-developed. According to

research on cruise ships both domestically and internationally, it mainly focuses on controllers rather than air traffic control personnel, often conducting deep analyses of the impact on their work. Investigations have been conducted only on certain types of work without targeted measures and case analyses for all types of employees. The process of stress management is also incomplete, such as conducting stress testing, stress evaluation, and targeted adjustment measures for personnel with different job natures.

Furthermore, the stress management methods on cruise ships are based on past experience and have not been formulated in response to changes in current and future needs. For example, establishing a complete set of stress management procedures, handling accordingly based on the priority of staff at each stage, and providing timely tracking and feedback on employees' stress status. When implementing the stress management model, the company does not provide specific explanations to employees but remains in the mindset of solving problems as they arise without prior preparation. This not only increases business costs but also reduces employees' work enthusiasm, affecting their sense of belonging.

### **3. STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH WORK STRESS FOR INTERNATIONAL CRUISE SERVICE STAFF**

#### **3.1 Adjusting Stress Perception and Establishing Appropriate Work-Life Goals**

As the direct bearers of stress, International Cruise Service Staff's correct perception and coping strategies are crucial for implementing stress management. Firstly, it is necessary to discard irrational beliefs. When personal expectations deviate from actual outcomes, staff should promptly adjust their perceptions of themselves and the surrounding environment, avoid absolutist views, and establish reasonable work-life goals through horizontal and vertical comparisons. International Cruise Service Staff should actively learn about emotion management, undergo emotion control training, and enhance emotional intelligence to cultivate a positive psychological state and good interpersonal relationships, thereby improving work efficiency. At the same time, recognizing the inevitability and positive role of stress, staff should face work fatigue with a positive attitude and reduce complaining and worrying. In a changing work environment, International Cruise Service Staff need to set clear goals, maintain a positive outlook on life and self-training awareness, bravely face stress, convert it into motivation, enhance stress resistance, and calmly respond to various emergencies.

#### **3.2 Enhancing Professional Quality and Boosting Self-Confidence**

The match between the professional quality of International Cruise Service Staff and their job positions directly influences their response to work stress. If International Cruise Service Staff are capable of their work, they can naturally cope with work challenges and reduce stress reactions; otherwise, they are prone to anxiety and stress. Addressing the "occupational anxiety" commonly experienced by new International Cruise Service Staff, international cruise lines should clarify job characteristics during initial training, such as irregular working hours, inability to spend holidays with family, and the requirement to maintain patience and a smile when dealing with irrational passengers. International Cruise Service Staff need to possess high professional quality, psychological endurance, communication skills, and emergency response capabilities, which are essential qualities for service personnel. To enhance the overall quality of International Cruise Service Staff, it is necessary to strengthen their professional quality and service awareness through training, education, and other means, while also reinforcing management to make them aware of the importance of service and create a quality service environment. Enhancing professional quality not only helps improve passenger satisfaction but also plays a significant role in shaping brand image and attracting repeat customers in the competitive international cruise market.

#### **3.3 Establishing a Care Mechanism for International Cruise Service Staff and Implementing Human-Oriented Management**

International cruise lines should establish a systematic and continuous psychological assistance program to provide necessary psychological counseling, training, and consultation for International Cruise Service Staff, aiming to reduce their work stress, maintain mental health, and improve work performance and organizational management. Companies can introduce books such as "Stress Adjustment for International Cruise Service Staff" and conduct targeted interventions to help staff cope with challenging work-life situations with a healthy attitude. Managing staff stress through EAP (Employee Assistance Programs) can effectively enhance work performance and improve enterprise management. Additionally, managers should adopt positive and effective management measures, such as ideological and political education, and foster a dedication to work and professionalism.

Managers should maintain communication with International Cruise Service Staff, understand their psychological state, and promptly address difficulties. By establishing a correct concept of personnel use, focusing on creating a corporate culture atmosphere of common development with employees, staff can be centered on the company, prioritize work, and take pride in achievements. At the same time, International Cruise Service Staff should be encouraged to express reasonable needs and provided assistance when encountering problems, creating a better working environment and promoting humanized services.

### **3.4 Improving the Stress Management Process and Reducing Talent Loss**

Stress management for International Cruise Service Staff requires both organizational departments and individuals to pay attention to work stress, with international cruise lines playing a crucial role as the management medium. This project focuses on the stress management process, including four main stages: stress testing, stress assessment, stress adjustment, and feedback results, using the stress status and existing issues of international cruise line staff as entry points. Through stress testing, methods such as questionnaires are used for qualitative and quantitative analysis of staff with different job natures; results are used to classify stress levels and determine the true stress level of employees; and experts analyze the results to prepare for targeted stress adjustment. International Cruise Service Staff with "general stress" levels are given corresponding incentives, while those with "excessive stress" levels are provided with relief measures. A complete stress management process can effectively control employee stress, enabling employees to achieve maximum work efficiency at the most appropriate stress level, thereby enhancing the overall operational efficiency of international cruise lines and reducing passenger complaints. At the same time, accurate stress management analysis facilitates personnel-position matching, provides assistance for human resources work, reduces talent loss, and ensures employee work enthusiasm. Developing the psychological stress handling process into a complete system can effectively attract talented individuals and enhance the market competitiveness of international cruise lines.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Currently, China's shipping industry is in a period of rapid development, and how to effectively compete in the international cruise market has become a hot topic. Presently, in order to adapt to the continuously evolving social environment, international cruise lines have raised higher requirements for the overall quality of their employees. As International Cruise Service Staff belong to a special service industry, stress is ubiquitous among them. Therefore, alleviating employee stress through stress management, stimulating their work enthusiasm, and reducing employee turnover rates are urgent issues that international cruise lines need to address. However, we should also view stress from two perspectives. Not all stress is negative; moderate stress can stimulate people's potential, while excessive stress can make people feel overwhelmed. This is why stress management on international cruise lines is receiving increasing attention. To adapt to the overall development trend of the cruise industry, timely changes and adjustments are necessary, gradually improving stress management, cultivating talents that meet the needs of the cruise industry's development, and enhancing the overall level of cruise services.

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