

Determinants of Work-life Balance among Myanmar Seafarers on Ocean-Going Vessel

Moe Kyaw^{1*}, Zina Kyriakou²

ABSTRACT

For Myanmar seafarers on ocean-going vessels, work-life balance is a critical concern shaped by prolonged separation from family, confined living and working spaces, intensive watchkeeping, and dependence on company support for rest, communication, and welfare. This study examined determinants of work-life balance among 154 Myanmar seafarers, focusing on contract duration, shore leave, stress relief, communication, and rest hours, using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. Reliability, descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses were used. All scales showed strong internal consistency, and mean scores indicated generally favorable perceptions of working conditions. Correlation analysis found significant positive associations between all predictors and work-life balance, with communication and stress relief showing the strongest links. Regression results identified communication, shore leave, rest hours, and stress relief as significant predictors, explaining 74.2% of the variance in work-life balance, while contract duration was not significant. The findings highlight the need for stronger connectivity, shore leave, and rest-hour protections for seafarers.

Keywords: Myanmar Seafarers, Work-Life Balance, Communication, Shore Leave, Rest Hours

Maritime transport plays a crucial role in the global economy, carrying the majority of international trade and connecting shippers, consignees and traders worldwide. Maritime transport relies on the international shipping industry which carries a significant large volume of goods between countries over worldwide, and the effective operation of ocean-going vessels depends on the competence, resilience, and well-being of seafarers (UNCTAD, 2024). Seafarers are therefore essential workers in a global supply chain, yet their working lives are characterized by long contractual separation from home, confined work and living arrangements, multicultural crews, safety-critical responsibilities, exposure to fatigue, and limited access to ordinary family and community life (Oldenburg et al., 2010; Sampson & Ellis, 2019).

Work-life balance generally refers to the extent to which people can meet work and non-work responsibilities without persistent conflict, depletion, or dissatisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 2003). In land-based employment, work-life balance is often discussed through working

¹International Executive School, Strasbourg, France.

²International Executive School, Strasbourg, France.

*Corresponding Author

Received: August 27, 2026; Revision Received: September 25, 2026; Accepted: September 29, 2026

© 2026, Kyaw, M. & Kyriakou, Z.; licensee IJSI. This is an Open Access Research distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any Medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

hours, flexible schedules, commuting, childcare, organizational support, and role conflict (Allen et al., 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For seafarers, however, the issue is more distinctive. The workplace is also the residence, the work schedule is shaped by watchkeeping and vessel operations, communication with family depends on onboard or port-based connectivity, and rest and recreation are constrained by vessel manning, port stays, and company welfare policies (Brooks & Greenberg, 2022; Thomas et al., 2003).

Myanmar seafarers who employed on ocean-going vessels face the physical and mental challenges of their employing during onboard with duties and responsibilities on their tasks and also families' obligations and communities at home. Long periods away from family can create emotional challenges for seafarers, while financial benefits and career opportunities provide strong reason for them to stay in that profession. Understanding which workplace and contract-related factors most strongly influence Myanmar seafarers' work-life balance is therefore important for shipowners, Masters, Chief Engineers, maritime authorities, seafarers' Unions and seafarers' families.

The Maritime Labor Convention, 2006, as amended, provides an international labor-rights framework for decent work at sea, including provisions on seafarers' employment agreements, hours of work and rest, accommodation, recreational facilities, food and catering, repatriation, health protection, medical care, welfare, and social connectivity (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2024). The convention establishes minimum standards, but the real-life condition of work-life balance depends on how these standards are implemented on board, how companies support crew welfare, and how seafarers notice the adequacy of such support. Recent maritime well-being research has also emphasized that mental health, chronic fatigue, internet access, peer support, shore leave, and quality social interaction are central to seafarers' overall welfare (Jonglertmontree et al., 2022; Pauksztat et al., 2022; Senbursa & Dunder, 2024).

The study contributes to maritime human-resource and seafarer-welfare literature in three ways. First, it focuses specifically on Myanmar seafarers, a group that is underrepresented in published work-life balance research. Second, it integrates contract, shore-based, psychological, communication, and rest-hour determinants in one empirical framework. Third, it provides practical evidence for company-level welfare policy by identifying which factors remain statistically significant when analyzed together.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-life balance is commonly understood as a satisfactory fit between work demands and non-work roles, including family, social relationships, health, leisure, and personal development. Greenhaus et al. (2003) emphasized that balance includes time, involvement, and satisfaction across work and family domains. Work-family conflict theory explains that conflict arises when time pressures, strain, or behaviors required by one role make participation in another role more difficult (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In seafaring, time-based and strain-based conflict are especially visible because work requires physical absence from home, long periods of continuous shipboard residence, and limited ability to respond to family needs in real time.

Work/family border theory also helps explain seafarers' experiences because it focuses on how individuals manage boundaries between work and family domains (Clark, 2000). On board a ship, the boundary between work and home is unusual. The seafarer does not commute away from the workplace at the end of a shift; instead, off-duty time still occurs

inside the work environment. This creates a situation in which psychological detachment, privacy, and recovery become difficult unless the organization provides adequate rest, recreation, social support, and communication channels.

The Job Demands-Resources model and Conservation of Resources theory provide further theoretical support for this study. The Job Demands-Resources model proposes that high demands such as workload, emotional strain, and fatigue can lead to burnout, while resources such as support, autonomy, recovery opportunities, and appropriate equipment can enhance motivation and wellbeing (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Conservation of Resources theory argues that stress occurs when valued resources are threatened or lost, or when individuals invest resources without adequate return (Hobfoll, 1989). From this perspective, rest hours, communication with family, shore leave, recreational facilities, and predictable contracts are resources that can help seafarers protect energy, relationships, and emotional stability.

Seafaring is safety-critical work performed in a demanding and often isolated occupational environment. Studies have identified occupational risks such as fatigue, stress, noise, vibration, social isolation, shift work, multicultural work teams, and limited access to healthcare and recreation (Carotenuto et al., 2012; Oldenburg et al., 2010). The mental-health literature shows that maritime personnel can experience depression, anxiety, loneliness, sleep problems, and psychological strain, particularly when job demands are high and support systems are weak (Brooks & Greenberg, 2022; Lefkowitz et al., 2019; Lefkowitz & Slade, 2019; Nittari et al., 2024). Work-family conflict and job stress have also been linked to seafarer performance and stress outcomes (An et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2022).

The Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended, is a central international instrument for decent work in shipping. It links employment conditions, welfare, accommodation, recreational facilities, food, medical care, repatriation, social security, and occupational safety to seafarers' rights and wellbeing (ILO, 2024). The International Maritime Organization's fatigue guidance and the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping framework also support fatigue management, watchkeeping competence, and safe vessel operations (International Maritime Organization [IMO], 2011, 2019). These standards show that work-life balance at sea is not merely an individual preference; it is related to safe operations, employment quality, mental health, and retention.

Contract duration is a major structural feature of seafaring employment. A Seafarer Employment Agreement (SEA) defines the employment relationship, period of service, wages, repatriation rights, and other conditions. Long or unpredictable contracts can intensify separation from family, disrupt important life events, and increase psychological strain. Thomas et al. (2003) found that separation from partners and family was a significant source of stress and could affect retention in seafaring. The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) also recognizes repatriation as a core labor right, showing that the end of a contract and timely return home are central to the employment relationship (ILO, 2024).

Shore leave provides seafarers with opportunities for recovery, personal tasks, exercise, social contact, religious or welfare services, and temporary distance from the enclosed shipboard environment. Shore leave is recognized as an important welfare concern under maritime labor standards, and contemporary maritime authorities describe shore leave and access to welfare facilities as important for health, wellbeing, and fatigue-risk reduction (Australian Maritime Safety Authority, 2025; ILO, 2024).

Determinants of Work-life Balance among Myanmar Seafarers on Ocean-Going Vessel

Empirical research supports the welfare value of shore leave. Oldenburg and Jensen (2019) found that seafarers used port-based welfare facilities for communication with family and friends, distraction from shipboard stress, and social support; however, short port stays, workload, lack of information, and transport barriers could prevent meaningful access. Recent research on shore leave policy also suggests that organizational support, flexible arrangements, and practical access are important for sustainable seafaring careers (Yang et al., 2025). Thus, shore leave is not only a legal right or leisure activity; it is a recovery mechanism that may improve work-life balance and reduce the psychological burden of shipboard life.

Stress relief in this study refers to the availability and usefulness of recreational facilities, free time, onboard social activities, counseling or support systems, and supportive practices during demanding operations. The seafaring literature consistently identifies social isolation, workload, poor team cohesion, scheduling uncertainty, and limited resources as risk factors for poor mental health (Brooks & Greenberg, 2022; Jonglertmontree et al., 2022). Burnout research also shows that chronic job demands without adequate recovery can lead to emotional exhaustion and reduced wellbeing (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Communication is one of the most important resources for work-life balance at sea. Family contact allows seafarers to maintain emotional closeness, participate in family decision-making, receive social support, and reduce feelings of isolation. Traditional maritime work limited such contact, but satellite communication, port-based mobile internet, and onboard connectivity have changed expectations. The 2022 amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention strengthened attention to social connectivity and internet access, reflecting the growing recognition that communication is a welfare issue rather than a luxury (ILO, 2024).

Research has repeatedly shown that external support and internet access are associated with better seafarer mental health. Pauksztat et al. (2022) found that internet access, peer support, and external support were beneficial for mental health and chronic fatigue during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Hayes-Mejia and Stafstrom (2023) similarly emphasized the continuing relevance of psychosocial work environments after the pandemic. The Seafarer Mental Health Study also identified social support and organizational climate as important components of wellbeing (Lefkowitz & Slade, 2019). The Seafarers Happiness Index also treats family contact, working life, physical wellbeing, mental health, and welfare access as recurring indicators of seafarer welfare (Mission to Seafarers, 2025). Recent work on work-life balance and effectiveness among seafarers further recommends communication services, social activities, shore time, and limitations on excessive work hours to strengthen wellbeing and work outcomes (Senbursa & Dunder, 2024). These findings suggest that communication may be among the strongest determinants of work-life balance in a seafaring context.

Adequate rest is central to work-life balance because it protects physical energy, psychological recovery, and safe performance. Fatigue is a persistent maritime safety and health concern associated with long work hours, irregular schedules, sleep disruption, manning levels, port operations, paperwork, and night work (Dohrmann & Leppin, 2017; Jepsen et al., 2015). Recent scoping-review evidence continues to identify workload, sleep quality, work schedules, and organizational conditions as factors influencing seafarers' fatigue (Ma & Liao, 2025).

The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) and the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) frameworks establish

minimum expectations for hours of rest, but compliance depends on manning, workload, operational pressure, and accurate recordkeeping (ILO, 2024; IMO, 2011). In practice, a seafarer may formally receive minimum rest hours yet still experience poor recovery if rest is fragmented, disturbed by emergency work, or reduced by administrative tasks. Rest hours therefore operate as both a legal standard and a lived resource that influences work-life balance, mental health, and quality of life.

The conceptual framework of this study proposes that five determinants - contract duration, shore leave, stress relief, communication, and rest hours - influence work-life balance among Myanmar seafarers on ocean-going vessels. This framework is consistent with the Job Demands-Resources model because each determinant can be understood as either a demand-reducing resource or a condition that shapes exposure to demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001).

Based on the literature, the study tested the following hypotheses:

- **H1:** Contract duration has a significant positive effect on work-life balance.
- **H2:** Shore leave has a significant positive effect on work-life balance.
- **H3:** Stress relief has a significant positive effect on work-life balance.
- **H4:** Communication has a significant positive effect on work-life balance.
- **H5:** Rest hours have a significant positive effect on work-life balance.

The Purpose of This Study

This study examines five determinants of work-life balance among Myanmar seafarers on ocean-going vessels: SEA or contract duration, shore leave, stress relief, communication, and rest hours. The central research question is: Which factors significantly determine work-life balance among Myanmar seafarers on ocean-going vessels? The objectives are to (a) describe the demographic profile of the respondents, (b) assess the reliability and descriptive levels of the study variables, (c) examine the correlations between the five determinants and work-life balance, and (d) identify the strongest predictors of work-life balance using multiple linear regression.

METHOD

Design

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. A quantitative design was appropriate because the study aimed to measure seafarers' perceptions of five determinants and statistically examine their relationships with work-life balance. Cross-sectional survey research is commonly used when researchers seek to describe a population or analyze relationships among variables at one point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study was guided by a structured questionnaire and a conceptual framework linking five independent variables to one dependent variable. The dependent variable was work-life balance. The independent variables were SEA or contract duration, shore leave, stress relief, communication, and rest hours. The research design allowed descriptive analysis, reliability testing, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression.

Respondents Profile

The target population consisted of Myanmar seafarers associated with ocean-going vessel employment. The available dataset included 154 valid responses. The respondent group was entirely male ($n = 154$, 100%), reflecting the gender composition of the collected sample.

Determinants of Work-life Balance among Myanmar Seafarers on Ocean-Going Vessel

rather than the global seafaring population. Most respondents were between 26 and 40 years old (44.7%), followed by 41 to 50 years old (29.3%), over 50 years old (16.0%), and 18 to 25 years old (10.0%). The education profile showed that 44.8% held bachelor degrees and 38.3% were high school graduates. Professional certificates and ranks included deck officers, engineer officers, able seafarer deck ratings, able seafarer engine ratings, and pre-seafarers ready to join onboard.

The results should be interpreted as evidence from a survey sample of Myanmar seafarers rather than as statistically representative of all Myanmar seafarers. This limitation is addressed in the discussion and future research sections. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to evaluate internal consistency. In organizational and social science research, alpha values above 0.70 are generally interpreted as acceptable, while values above 0.80 indicate good reliability. The results showed alpha coefficients of 0.781 for contract duration, 0.720 for shore leave, 0.867 for stress relief, 0.833 for communication, 0.863 for rest hours, and 0.885 for work-life balance. These values indicate that the items within each scale were highly consistent and that the resulting composite scores were suitable for further analysis. The reliability results also strengthen confidence in the study's construct operationalization, especially given that all key variables were measured through multi-item scales rather than single indicators. Comprehensive demographic and professional characteristics of the final sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Samples Characteristics (N = 154)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	154	100.0
Age	18-25 years	15	10.0
	26-40 years	67	44.7
	41-50 years	44	29.3
	Over 50 years	28	16.0
Education	Secondary school graduate	3	1.9
	High school graduate	59	38.3
	Postgraduate diploma	21	13.6
	Bachelor degree	69	44.8
	Master degree	2	1.3
Professional certificate / proficiency	Deck Officer Class I (Master)	14	9.1
	Deck Officer Class II (Chief Mate)	8	5.2
	Deck Officer Class II (Chief Mate), Deck Officer Class III (Officer in charge of Navigation Watch)	1	.6
	Deck Officer Class III (Officer in charge of Navigation Watch)	14	9.1
	Deck Officer Class III (Officer in charge of Navigation Watch), Marine Engineer Officer Class III (Officer in charge of Engineering Watch)	2	1.3
	Marine Engineer Officer Class I (Chief Engineer Officer)	7	4.5
	Marine Engineer Officer Class II (Second Engineer Officer)	17	11.0
	Marine Engineer Officer Class III (Officer in charge of Engineering Watch)	25	16.2
	Pre-seafarer ready to join onboard	8	5.2
	Rating at Able Seafarer Deck	40	26.0
	Rating at Able Seafarer Deck, Pre-seafarer ready to	2	1.3

Determinants of Work-life Balance among Myanmar Seafarers on Ocean-Going Vessel

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
	join onboard		
	Rating at Able Seafarer Engine	16	10.4
Monthly salary on board ship (USD)	Under 1,000	25	16.2
	1,000-2,000	40	26.0
	2,000-3,000	19	12.3
	3,000-4,000	20	13.0
	4,000-5,000	11	7.1
	5,000-8,000	19	12.3
	Above 8,000	20	13.0

Instruments

The questionnaire had two main parts. The first part collected background information, including gender, age, academic education, certificate of competency or proficiency, and monthly salary on board ship. The second part measured factors associated with work-life balance using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The contract-duration scale included five items regarding the reasonableness of the SEA duration, repatriation period, mental-health effects of long contracts, balance between time onboard and at home, and the usefulness of fixed contracts for life and financial planning. The shore-leave scale included five items regarding frequency of shore leave, company policies, positive job attitude, time ashore for personal needs or recreation, and stress from lack of shore leave. The stress-relief scale included six items on recreational facilities, leisure time, social events, access to counseling or support, motivation through recreation, and additional food during emergency work.

The communication scale included six items on limited internet service, affordability of communication services, emotional connection with home life, paid personal phone calls at sea through satellite communication, mobile internet availability in ports, and ability to self-purchase internet packages. The rest-hours scale included five items on receiving minimum required rest hours, manageable workload, being physically and mentally rested before the next watch or shift, sufficient manning level, and not sacrificing sleep to complete tasks. The work-life-balance scale included ten items on overall balance, family responsibilities, energy after work, participation in important family events mentally or physically, exhaustion, quality of life, family support, switching off from work stress, company undertaking of responsibility for wellbeing, and overall work-life balance as a seafarer.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression. Cronbach alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of each scale. Alpha values of .70 and above are generally considered acceptable for research purposes, although interpretation should also consider the number of items and construct validity (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic variables and the mean scores of the study constructs. Pearson correlation analysis assessed bivariate associations between each determinant and work-life balance. Multiple linear regression was used to determine which variables significantly predicted work-life balance when all five determinants were entered together. Standardized beta coefficients, significance values, tolerance, and variance

inflation factor (VIF) values were interpreted using common applied-statistics guidance (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2019; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

RESULT

Reliability analysis confirmed acceptable to good internal consistency across all scales, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.720 (shore leave) to 0.885 (work-life balance). Descriptive statistics showed generally favorable perceptions of the study variables. The mean score for work-life balance was 3.996 (SD = 0.367), indicating that respondents reported relatively high levels of balance. Among the predictors, contract duration had the highest mean (M = 4.051), followed closely by communication (M = 4.025) and rest hours (M = 4.023). Shore leave had the lowest mean (M = 3.846), suggesting comparatively lower satisfaction with this dimension. Table 2 presents the reliability statistics.

Table 2 Reliability statistics for study constructs

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach alpha	Interpretation
Contract duration	5	0.781	Acceptable
Shore leave	5	0.720	Acceptable
Stress relief	6	0.867	Good
Communication	6	0.833	Good
Rest hours	5	0.863	Good
Work-life balance	10	0.885	Good

Note. Alpha values above 0.70 are generally treated as acceptable for applied research, although reliability should be interpreted together with construct validity.

The descriptive statistics indicate generally favorable perceptions of the study variables. The mean score for work-life balance was 3.996 (SD = 0.367), suggesting that respondents reported a relatively high level of balance. Among the predictors, contract duration had the highest mean (M = 4.051), followed closely by communication (M = 4.025) and rest hours (M = 4.023). Shore leave had the lowest mean (M = 3.846), suggesting comparatively lower satisfaction with this dimension. Pearson correlation analysis showed that all five determinants were positively and significantly correlated with work-life balance at the 0.001 level. Communication had the strongest relationship ($r = 0.779$), followed by stress relief ($r = 0.749$), rest hours ($r = 0.716$), shore leave ($r = 0.689$), and contract duration ($r = 0.353$).

Table 3 Descriptive statistics and correlations with work-life balance

Variable	Mean	SD	r with WLB	p
Work-life balance	3.996	0.367	1.000	–
Contract duration	4.051	0.383	0.353	< 0.001
Shore leave	3.846	0.492	0.689	< 0.001
Stress relief	3.931	0.515	0.749	< 0.001
Communication	4.025	0.409	0.779	< 0.001
Rest hours	4.023	0.432	0.716	< 0.001

Note. WLB = work-life balance. All correlations between predictors and work-life balance were significant at $p < 0.001$.

Pearson correlation analysis revealed that all five determinants were positively and significantly correlated with work-life balance at the 0.001 level. Communication had the strongest relationship ($r = 0.779$), followed by stress relief ($r = 0.749$), rest hours ($r = 0.716$), shore leave ($r = 0.689$), and contract duration ($r = 0.353$).

Determinants of Work-life Balance among Myanmar Seafarers on Ocean-Going Vessel

Multiple regression analysis indicated that the model was statistically significant, $F(5,148) = 85.160$, $p < 0.001$, with $R = 0.861$, $R^2 = 0.742$, and adjusted $R^2 = 0.733$. Together, the five predictors explained 74.2% of the variance in work-life balance. Communication was the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.368$, $p < 0.001$), followed by shore leave ($\beta = 0.269$, $p < 0.001$), rest hours ($\beta = 0.170$, $p = 0.009$), and stress relief ($\beta = 0.180$, $p = 0.017$). Contract duration had a positive but non-significant effect ($\beta = 0.039$, $p = 0.419$).

Work-life balance = $0.656 + 0.037(\text{contract duration}) + 0.201(\text{shore leave}) + 0.128(\text{stress relief}) + 0.331(\text{communication}) + 0.144(\text{rest hours})$.

Table 4 Multiple regression results predicting work-life balance

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.656	0.195	—	3.357	0.001	—	—
Contract duration	0.037	0.046	0.039	0.811	0.419	0.763	1.310
Shore leave	0.201	0.043	0.269	4.660	< 0.001	0.523	1.913
Stress relief	0.128	0.053	0.180	2.415	0.017	0.314	3.183
Communication	0.331	0.064	0.368	5.184	< 0.001	0.346	2.892
Rest hours	0.144	0.055	0.170	2.643	0.009	0.423	2.362

Note. Model summary: $R = 0.861$, $R^2 = 0.742$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.733$, $F(5,148) = 85.160$, $p < 0.001$; Durbin-Watson = 2.182. Dependent variable = work-life balance.

The regression findings supported H2, H3, H4, and H5. Shore leave, stress relief, communication, and rest hours had significant positive effects on work-life balance. H1 was not supported because contract duration did not have a statistically significant effect when the other predictors were controlled. Table 5 summarizes the hypothesis decisions.

Table 5 Hypothesis testing summary

Hypothesis	Statement	Decision
H1	Contract duration has a significant positive effect on work-life balance.	Not supported
H2	Shore leave has a significant positive effect on work-life balance.	Supported
H3	Stress relief has a significant positive effect on work-life balance.	Supported
H4	Communication has a significant positive effect on work-life balance.	Supported
H5	Rest hours have a significant positive effect on work-life balance.	Supported

DISCUSSION

The findings show that Myanmar seafarers in this sample reported a generally high level of work-life balance. However, the regression results reveal that not all determinants contributed equally. Communication, shore leave, stress relief, and rest hours were significant predictors, whereas contract duration was not significant after controlling for the other factors. These results suggest that the day-to-day quality of life during the contract may be more influential than the length of the contract duration.

Communication emerged as the strongest determinant of work-life balance. This result is theoretically and practically meaningful. From the perspective of work-family conflict theory,

communication allows seafarers to reduce the psychological distance between ship and home, participate in family life, receive emotional support, and manage family concerns despite physical separation (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Thomas et al., 2003). From a Job Demands-Resources perspective, communication is an important social resource that helps offset isolation and emotional strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Pauksztat et al., 2022). The finding supports recent era maritime-welfare discussions that treat social connectivity as an essential element of decent work at sea rather than an optional benefit (ILO, 2024).

The significance of shore leave indicates that temporary access to port environments remains important even in an era of digital communication. Shore leave gives seafarers a chance to leave the enclosed vessel, contact family through cheaper or more reliable mobile networks, access welfare centers, purchase personal needs, sightseeing, window shopping, communication with strangers (other nationalities) and recover psychologically. The result is consistent with Oldenburg and Jensen (2019), who found that welfare facilities and shore access help compensate for shipboard stress. It also aligns with recent policy research emphasizing that organizational support and practical flexibility are central to effective shore-leave arrangements (Yang et al., 2025).

Stress relief was also a significant predictor. This confirms that recreational facilities, leisure time, social events, counseling, and supportive onboard practices matter for work-life balance. Seafarers work in confined settings where off-duty time occurs near the workplace; therefore, recreation is not merely entertainment but a recovery resource. This finding is consistent with research on seafarers' mental health showing that isolation, poor team cohesion, high demands, and insufficient support are associated with psychological strain (Brooks & Greenberg, 2022; Jonglertmontree et al., 2022). It also supports the Social Interaction Matters project, which highlighted the importance of social belonging, leadership, and recreation for crew wellbeing (ISWAN, 2021, 2022).

Rest hours had a significant positive effect on work-life balance. This finding is consistent with fatigue research showing that inadequate rest, long working hours, and irregular schedules can harm seafarers' health, safety, and wellbeing (Dohrmann & Leppin, 2017; Jepsen et al., 2015; Ma & Liao, 2025). Rest hours contribute to work-life balance because seafarers need sufficient rest hours including sleep hours to restore the energy for forthcoming duties and work hours. It is essential to enjoy personal time, maintain emotional regulation, and perform safely. Even when formal rest-hour records meet minimum standards, the quality and continuity of rest may affect whether seafarers feel truly recovered.

Contract duration showed a moderate positive correlation with work-life balance but was not significant in the regression model. This does not mean contract duration is unimportant. Rather, it suggests that when communication, shore leave, stress relief, and rest hours are considered together, contract duration adds little unique explanatory power in this sample. One possible explanation is that contract duration may influence work-life balance indirectly through stress, fatigue, communication needs, and shore-leave opportunities. Another possibility is that respondents perceived their current contracts as relatively reasonable, resulting in limited variation in responses. Future studies should examine contract duration more precisely using actual contract lengths, repatriation delays, leave ratios, and family-stage variables.

The practical implication is clear: shipping companies should focus not only on the formal contract but also on the real-life experience of the contract. A seafarer serving a longer

Determinants of Work-life Balance among Myanmar Seafarers on Ocean-Going Vessel

contract with reliable family communication, meaningful shore leave, fair rest hours, and supportive onboard welfare may experience better work-life balance than a seafarer with a shorter contract but poor connectivity, limited shore access, high stress, and chronic fatigue. Thus, company policy should integrate contract planning, fatigue management, connectivity, recreation, and shore welfare into a coherent seafarer-wellbeing strategy.

For shipowners and crewing agencies employing Myanmar seafarers, several actions are recommended. First, provide affordable, reliable, and private internet access at sea where technically feasible, with transparent rules and predictable communication opportunities. Second, support shore leaves through advance port information, transport arrangements, coordination with port agents, and cooperation with seafarer clubs. Third, improve onboard recreation and psychosocial support, including safe leisure spaces, culturally inclusive social activities, peer support, and access to counseling when needed. Fourth, strengthen rest-hour compliance by reviewing manning levels, workload distribution, emergency-work compensation, and the quality of rest. Fifth, maintain predictable contracts and repatriation practices so that seafarers and families can plan financially and emotionally.

Future Research Direction

Future research should expand the sample size and use a clearer sampling frame so that findings can be generalized with greater confidence to Myanmar seafarers across vessel types, ranks, departments, and companies. The present sample was entirely male, so future studies should intentionally include women seafarers and examine whether gendered experiences of work-life balance differ in maritime employment.

Longitudinal research would be valuable because work-life balance may change across the stages of a contract. Seafarers may experience different levels of stress, fatigue, family conflict, and motivation before joining, during early service, near the end of the contract, during repatriation, and while on leave. A longitudinal design could test whether communication and rest hours buffer the negative effects of long service periods over time.

Future studies should use mixed methods. Quantitative surveys can identify general patterns, but interviews with seafarers and their families can explain why certain factors matter, how families adapt to absence, and what types of company support are most meaningful. Family perspectives are especially important because work-life balance involves both the seafarer and the home household.

The measurement model should also be refined. Future work should validate the questionnaire using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, test reverse-worded items carefully, and examine whether the scales operate similarly across ranks, age groups, departments, and salary categories. Researchers should consider adding variables such as marital status, number of dependents, vessel type, trade route, actual contract length, internet speed, cost of connectivity, port-call frequency, and objective rest-hour records.

Further research should test mediation and moderation models. For example, contract duration may affect work-life balance indirectly through fatigue, stress, or communication satisfaction. Rank, department, family support, income level, and company welfare policy may moderate the relationships between determinants and work-life balance. Such models would provide a more detailed understanding of how organizational and personal factors interact.

Comparative research between Myanmar seafarers and seafarers from other labor-supplying countries would also be useful. Cross-national studies can examine whether cultural expectations, remittance responsibilities, crewing systems, language, and welfare infrastructure shape seafarers' work-life balance differently. Such evidence would support targeted maritime human resource policies and welfare interventions.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the determinants of work-life balance among Myanmar seafarers on ocean-going vessels using survey data from 154 respondents. The measurement scales were reliable, and respondents generally reported favorable perceptions of work-life balance and its determinants. All five determinants were positively correlated with work-life balance, but regression analysis showed that communication, shore leave, stress relief, and rest hours were significant predictors, while contract duration was not significant once other variables were controlled. Communication was the strongest determinant, underscoring the importance of family contact for seafarers living away from home, while shore leave, stress relief, and rest hours highlighted the value of recovery and fatigue management. Contract duration may still matter, but its influence appears to operate through other conditions. Improving work-life balance requires an integrated approach in which shipowners, agents, officers, and unions provide reliable communication, meaningful shore leave, adequate recreation, and genuine rest-hour protection to strengthen wellbeing, safety, retention, and career sustainability.

REFERENCES

- Allen, T. D., Herst, D. E. L., Bruck, C. S., & Sutton, M. (2000). Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 5(2), 278-308. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.5.2.278>
- An, J., Liu, Y., Sun, Y., & Liu, C. (2020). Impact of work-family conflict, job stress and job satisfaction on seafarer performance. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(7), 2191. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17072191>
- Australian Maritime Safety Authority. (2025). Access to shore leave for seafarers (Marine Notice 07/2024). <https://www.amsa.gov.au/072024-access-shore-leave-seafarers>
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The Job Demands-Resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3), 309-328. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710733115>
- BIMCO & International Chamber of Shipping. (2021). Seafarer workforce report: The global supply and demand for seafarers in 2021. Witherbys.
- Brooks, S. K., & Greenberg, N. (2022). Mental health and psychological wellbeing of maritime personnel: A systematic review. *BMC Psychology*, 10, 139. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-022-00850-4>
- Carotenuto, A., Molino, I., Fasanaro, A. M., & Amenta, F. (2012). Psychological stress in seafarers: A review. *International Maritime Health*, 63(4), 188-194.
- Clark, S. C. (2000). Work/family border theory: A new theory of work/family balance. *Human Relations*, 53(6), 747-770. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726700536001>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16(3), 297-334. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02310555>
- Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The Job Demands-Resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 499-512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.499>

- Dohrmann, S. B., & Leppin, A. (2017). Determinants of seafarers' fatigue: A systematic review and quality assessment. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 90(1), 13-37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00420-016-1174-y>
- Field, A. (2018). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), 76-88. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1985.4277352>
- Greenhaus, J. H., Collins, K. M., & Shaw, J. D. (2003). The relation between work-family balance and quality of life. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 63(3), 510-531. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791\(02\)00042-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791(02)00042-8)
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage.
- Hayes-Mejia, R., & Stafstrom, M. (2023). Psychosocial work environment and mental health among the global workforce of seafarers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. *BMC Public Health*, 23, 2151. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-17035-2>
- Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist*, 44(3), 513-524. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.3.513>
- International Labour Organization. (2024). *Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended: Including 2022 amendments*. <https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/maritime-labour-convention-2006-amended-including-2022-amendments>
- International Maritime Organization. (2011). *STCW including 2010 Manila amendments: STCW Convention and STCW Code*. Author.
- International Maritime Organization. (2019). *Guidelines on fatigue (MSC.1/Circ.1598)*. Author.
- International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network. (2021). *Social Interaction Matters (SIM) project: Phase one report*. Author.
- International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network. (2022). *Social Interaction Matters (SIM) project: Phase two report*. Author.
- Jepsen, J. R., Zhao, Z., & van Leeuwen, W. M. A. (2015). Seafarer fatigue: A review of risk factors, consequences for seafarers' health and safety and options for mitigation. *International Maritime Health*, 66(2), 106-117. <https://doi.org/10.5603/IMH.2015.0024>
- Jonglertmontree, W., Kaewboonchoo, O., Morioka, I., & Boonyamalik, P. (2022). Mental health problems and their related factors among seafarers: A scoping review. *BMC Public Health*, 22, 282. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-12713-z>
- Lefkowitz, R. Y., Redlich, C. A., & Slade, M. D. (2019). Rates and occupational characteristics of international seafarers with mental illness. *Occupational Medicine*, 69(4), 279-282. <https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqz069>
- Lefkowitz, R. Y., & Slade, M. D. (2019). *Seafarer mental health study*. ITF Seafarers' Trust and Yale University.
- Liu, Y., An, J., Sun, Y., & Liu, C. (2022). Work-family conflict and job stress among seafarers: The moderating role of job satisfaction. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 27(9), 1989-1995. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2021.1996617>
- Ma, M., & Liao, R. (2025). Factors affecting seafarers' fatigue: A scoping review. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 13, 1647685. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2025.1647685>
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: Recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry*, 15(2), 103-111. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20311>

Determinants of Work-life Balance among Myanmar Seafarers on Ocean-Going Vessel

- Mission to Seafarers. (2025). Seafarers Happiness Index: Quarter 1 2025. The Mission to Seafarers. <https://www.missiontoseafarers.org/news/seafarers-happiness-index-quarter-1-2025>
- Nittari, G., Gibelli, F., Bailo, P., Sirignano, A., & Ricci, G. (2024). Factors affecting mental health of seafarers on board merchant ships: A systematic review. *Reviews on Environmental Health*, 39(1), 151-160. <https://doi.org/10.1515/reveh-2021-0070>
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Oldenburg, M., Baur, X., & Schlaich, C. (2010). Occupational risks and challenges of seafaring. *Journal of Occupational Health*, 52(5), 249-256. <https://doi.org/10.1539/joh.K10004>
- Oldenburg, M., & Jensen, H.-J. (2019). Maritime welfare facilities - utilization and relevance for the compensation of shipboard stress. *Journal of Occupational Medicine and Toxicology*, 14, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12995-019-0231-3>
- Pauksztat, B., Grech, M. R., & Kitada, M. (2022). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on seafarers' mental health and chronic fatigue: Beneficial effects of onboard peer support, external support and Internet access. *Marine Policy*, 137, 104942. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2021.104942>
- Sampson, H., & Ellis, N. (2019). Seafarers' mental health and wellbeing. Institution of Occupational Safety and Health.
- Sampson, H., & Ellis, N. (2021). Stepping up: The need for proactive employer investment in safeguarding seafarers' mental health and wellbeing. *Maritime Policy & Management*, 48(8), 1069-1081. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03088839.2020.1867918>
- Senbursa, N., & Dunder, E. (2024). The mediating effect of well-being, happiness, and trust in the relationship between work-life balance and work effectiveness in seafarers. *Inquiry*, 61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00469580241254745>
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2019). *Using multivariate statistics* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Thomas, M., Sampson, H., & Zhao, M. (2003). Finding a balance: Companies, seafarers and family life. *Maritime Policy & Management*, 30(1), 59-76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0308883032000051630>
- Toygar, A., Nart, S., & Yildirim, U. (2023). Work-family conflict and work alienation among seafarers: The mediating role of emotional exhaustion. *Marine Policy*, 155, 105759. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2023.105759>
- UNCTAD. (2024). Review of maritime transport 2024: Navigating maritime chokepoints. United Nations. <https://unctad.org/publication/review-maritime-transport-2024>
- Yang, F.-C., Chiu, R.-H., & Lin, Y.-H. (2025). Shore leave policy - Paving the path to a sustainable career environment for seafarers. *Sustainability*, 17(10), 4300. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17104300>

Acknowledgment

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

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Kyaw, M. & Kyriakou, Z. (2026). Determinants of Work-life Balance among Myanmar Seafarers on Ocean-Going Vessel. *International Journal of Social Impact*, 11(3), 272-285. DIP: 18.02.024/20261103, DOI: 10.25215/2455/1103024