

A Needs Assessment for the Creation of a Seafarers' Centre in Newfoundland

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Abstract

There has not been a seafarers' welfare centre in Newfoundland (NL) since the early 2000s. The present study assesses the need for a seafarers' welfare centre in NL. In doing so, we conducted 60 semi-structured interviews with seafarers, employees of Seafarers' Centres, and volunteers. Our analysis focused on identifying emergent themes in a semi-grounded approach where themes were derived from the data while theory remained informed by prior knowledge. Findings evidenced the need for a dedicated space, particularly one that has an awareness of the maritime community's needs and consideration for key aspects such as sustainability, reliability, and safety. Our findings provide a foundation for a complete feasibility study on establishing a Seafarers' Centre in NL, with the potential to impact seafarers' livelihoods and their families positively.

Keywords: Needs Assessment, Collaboration, Maritime Community, Seafarers' Centres, Seafarers' Welfare, Human Factor, Fatigue, Maritime Labour Convention.

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Introduction: A Seafarers' Needs Assessment

The growth of seaborne trade has expanded customer service worldwide (International Chamber of Shipping, 2023). According to the International Chamber of Shipping, in our present-day, "There are over 50,000 merchant ships trading internationally, transporting every kind of cargo. The world fleet is registered in over 150 nations, and manned by over a million seafarers of virtually every nationality" (2023).

According to the International Maritime Organization (IMO, 2023), shipping is the most international industry worldwide, albeit it is one of the most dangerous. There are substantial risks to seafarers' well-being, particularly those concerning mental and physical health (Carol-Dekker et al., 2019). Seafarers' well-being has garnered increasing attention in recent years across media, policy, and practices nationally and internationally. This response can partially be attributed to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on seafarers, who were stranded on board vessels with no rights for shore leave, lived in confined spaces for extended periods, or were not offered fair treatment (Stannard, 2020). However, this pandemic has also brought to the forefront certain pre-existing challenges, such as excessive time on board, limited internet access, incomplete/missing wages, and difficult workloads in which seafarers find it difficult to return to pre-pandemic conditions (Schuler, 2023).

These challenges faced by seafarers, including their well-being amidst factors like pandemics and pre-existing issues such as excessive time on board and difficult workloads, underscore the relevance of international maritime regulations and conventions. The 2006 Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) underpins standards for seafarers' rights. The convention refers to rules and regulations that set all requirements for seafarers' working and living conditions (ILO, 2023). Accepted by more than 97 countries, the convention has undergone multiple amendments (ILO, 2023). There are many other kinds of legislation for seafarers,

internationally and domestically. The IMO's Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) established minimum safety requirements for the design, installation, and functioning of ships worldwide (SOLAS, 2023). For seafarers, minimum training requirements, certification requirements, and watchkeeping standards are set down in the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) (International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 2023). All these pieces demonstrate the need for specific policies and places tailored to the maritime community if welfare needs (e.g., stressors, illness, anxiety, etc.) are to be managed. According to an International Transport Federation (ITF) survey, 58% of seafarers desire a centre or space tailored to the maritime community in the ports (Kahveci, 2007).

Purpose Statement and Research Objectives/Questions

A "seafarers' centre" is an establishment that offers assistance, support, and resources to individuals in the maritime community. The concept of a "seafarers' centre" can encompass diverse forms, such as infrastructure located near harbours, welfare associations, or even a worldwide network that prioritises the welfare of seafarers (Sampson, 2022). These facilities are crucial for the mental and physical welfare of seafarers, as the space provides the seafarers with a haven for unwinding, assistance, and a means of connecting with loved ones. While the specific amenities and services offered may differ across locations, the primary objective remains the same - to enhance the well-being and contentment of individuals employed in the maritime sector (Sampson, 2022).

In the current study, we investigate the need for a centre in Newfoundland by listening to the current perspectives of seafarers, as well as mission volunteers or employees, to discern their insights on the potential requirement for such a space. Specifically, we investigate the services and resources desired and the challenges inhibiting the centre's creation. Thus, in our qualitative study, seafarers and employees of existing centres or volunteers were asked how

they envision the space, what constitutes an effective centre, how to design its functional space, and how best to meet the needs of seafarers.

Background

In this section, we explore the factors affecting seafarers' welfare (e.g., stressors, fatigue) and highlight the value in their recognition for positively informing welfare needs. As we navigate through these multifaceted factors, our objective is to illuminate the necessity for a comprehensive approach that considers both personal and systemic elements (habitus and stigma), challenging societal norms and biases to cultivate an environment pushing for the well-being of seafarers.

Stressors

To comprehend the pressing need for dedicated welfare initiatives, we delve into the stressors faced by seafarers. Stressors faced by the maritime community tend to be organised into five general categories: work environment, organisational structure, culture, physical aspects, and psychosocial aspects (Slade, 2022). Specifically, work environment stressors can be found in how people deal with workplace safety. The physical/psychosocial stressors emerge in experiences of fatigue (Slade, 2022). An organizational structure/cultural stressor can be found in the hierarchical structure of command on ships and the stigma inherent to wellness discussions.

This high stress environment contributes to a propensity for workplace errors, particularly in the context of fatigue, which can ultimately lead to maritime accidents as a result of human error. The effects of fatigue illustrate an underlying problem in the current regulatory measures for addressing the concerns of seafarers regarding work demands and fatigue (Shan & Neis, 2020). Furthermore, fatigue affects professional judgments, decision-making, and reaction times (Woods et al., 2015). In turn, fatigue can increase the risk of mistakes, increased inattention and even crew fatalities. Fatigue mitigation is necessary for improving seafarers'

well-being and safety. The author Jepsen (2015) suggests fatigue mitigation strategies such as including naps, blue light glasses, more breaks, and a better cabin environment.

Habitus and stigma: A framework for interpreting seafarer wellness

We employ Bourdieu's (1996) concept of habitus and Goffman's theory on stigma to interpret seafarer welfare (1963). The habitus within the maritime community is steeped in hierarchical structures and cultural norms, and ties into the perpetuation of stigma surrounding seafarers' welfare. Thus, by understanding these ingrained habits and stigmas one can create a space that promotes a more supportive environment that encourages open discussions and seeks to destigmatize certain beliefs in the maritime community.

Bourdieu (1996) describes "*habitus*" as the norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours of a particular social group that inform techniques of the body as per historical class, social class, and environment. How one behaves unconsciously evolves from "*habitus*". The maritime community has a steep hierarchical structure that provides a command-and-control system where the captain's word is traditionally not questioned – motivating unconscious actions within the *habitus*. Therefore, the captain has overarching control. This structure inevitably enables biases and stereotypes to flourish, resulting in structural stress. Captains are typically recognised as more stressed than the crew (the deck, engineering, and steward departments) due to their position's high responsibility, forced discretion, and time pressures (Mellbye and Carter, 2017). Comparatively, the non-officer crew completes more shift work and longer contracts, consequently reporting fewer positive relationships with their family (Mellbye et al., 2017). Further, Mellbye et Carter (2017) argue the more time spent at sea, the stronger the repercussions on the family life of a seafarer, resulting in more loneliness and marital difficulties. All of this equates to stress for seafarers (Slišković and Juranko, 2019). Yet, there is a stigma when discussing such topics among seafarers, and revealing compromised wellness remains taboo.

According to Goffman (1963), a stigma is an "attribute that is deeply discrediting" (p.3). Stigmatised characteristics are sometimes easily identified, like skin tone or physical type, and sometimes concealed, such as criminal history or mental health issues (Goffman, 1963). In the case of workplace stigma, the discredited attribute bearing the stigma permeates how men socialise and train novices, who are expected to be physically and mentally tough (Stergiou-Kita, 2015). Stergiou-Kita (2015) describes a lack of workplace safety in how men approach risk and deal with wellness. The environment and culture thus may create additional barriers for seafarers desiring help or well-being support. Here, stigma bars the revelation of compromised mental health. Thus, without proper coping methods or means to manage the pressure, seafarer workers' situations can lead to suicidal behaviours or symptoms of depression, anxiety, or posttraumatic stress – to name only a few (Slade, 2022).

Regulatory concerns are evident in this context; however, as per the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the responsibility for seafarers' welfare lies with the Flag State, but the Port State serves as a crucial "safety net" for seafarers (Port State IMO, 2023). The IMO recognizes seafarers' well-being, yet attention to wellness is limited among sovereign nations.

Context: History of Seafarers' Centres

The members of the seafarers' welfare associations such as the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), International Labor Organization (ILO), North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA), Canadian National Seafarers Welfare Board, Canadian Merchant Service Guild, Unifor NL Fish, the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) and many more work together to aid in seafarers' welfare. In conjunction with these efforts, seafarers' centres, or a seamen's mission, typically operate to support the maritime community when they visit a foreign port (The Mission to Seafarers, 2022). The centre helps seafarers regain a sense of stability in their work and life environments (ClearSeas, 2020). Services support seafarers' well-being through ship visits, welfare services, and transportation services.

These are primarily administered by volunteers and staff in the port centres (The Mission to Seafarers, 2022). Volunteers and staff provide support and services to seafarers during ship visits by engaging in discussions, talking about personal problems, helping with employment issues, offering help in maritime emergencies, giving transport services, and making grocery runs; and now, with the COVID-19 pandemic, providing access to vaccination (The Mission to Seafarers, 2022).

In the historical context of Newfoundland, the establishment and evolution of a centre space reflects a dynamic and transformative journey. A significant time for Newfoundland was the early cod fishery that dates back as early as 1517. This was a time when first adventurers came from Spain, the Basque, British, France, and many other places in the world. At this point, many different nationalities were trying to claim different levels of the fisheries market exclusively for profit (Willmore, 2020). This was the beginning of a strong maritime presence in Newfoundland. However, the evolution of a central space in Newfoundland reflects a transformative journey holding many different historical contexts (Willmore, 2020).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church established coastal missions that played a significant role in the Maritime community of Newfoundland beginning in the year 1893 (Heritage Newfoundland & Labrador Mission, 2020). These missions were strategically located along coastlines, serving as centres for the church's activities and initiatives. These coastal missions aimed to spread the church's message, engage with communities in a meaningful way, and serve as a hub for religious worship, education, and community development (Heritage Newfoundland & Labrador Mission, 2020).

Another organisation was established in 1865 by William Booth, called the Salvation Army. It had a primary objective of providing spiritual and material support to the impoverished urban population. After its inception in London, the organisation extended its reach to Canada in 1882, starting with Ontario. In Newfoundland the Salvation Army became

a large component of the local community by addressing diverse requirements through a blend of religious initiatives, social welfare programs, and community advancement. The organisation's remarkable methodology has enabled it to prosper and make a significant impact worldwide, placing equal emphasis on both spiritual and practical outreach (Piper, 2002).

The St. John's Seamen's Institute, opened initially by Doctor Wilfred Grenfell in 1912 (Coombs-Thorne, 2016), improved the lives of all involved in the maritime community. The Seamen's Institute later played a large role in emergencies, where, in the 1910s, the centre became a motel for victims of a significant sailing disaster in 1914 (Coombs-Thorne, 2016). Furthermore, the centre provided soldiers with a residence (since the First World War) and an emergency hospital for victims of the Spanish Flu in 1918 (Coombs-Thorne, 2016). During the Second World War, the Seamen's Institute was briefly named the Caribou Hut while being used for sheltering soldiers and a gathering place in Newfoundland; it closed in June 1945 (Loveys, 2015; Dudley, 1949). This centre ceased operations for various reasons, including a shortage of staff, the emergence of additional hostels, and financial challenges (Dudley, 1949). Around the same time, in 1942, the Officers Club was established as a place for seagoing naval officers to go and relax (History Crowsnest, 2019). Today this Officers Club is known as the Crow's Nest and the centre still stands operational (Crowsnest, 2019).

There was also the Society Oeuvre des Marins which was founded by Father Vincent de Paul Bailly and Father Emmanuel Bailly, in December 1894 (Histoire de la Société des Œuvres de Mer, 2017). The goal of this organisation was to aid the French fishermen off the coasts of Newfoundland and Iceland (Histoire de la Société des Œuvres de Mer, 2017). This organisation helped many seafarers throughout the years. In 1939, this organisation moved towards more shore-based services and started establishing hubs for fishermen (Histoire de la Société des Œuvres de Mer, 2017).

Over the years, numerous other organisations have lent their support to seafarers in Newfoundland, underscoring the profound connection the maritime community shares with the region of Newfoundland. In the broader maritime context, seafarers' centres, mentioned earlier, have played a crucial role in supporting and evolving with the needs of seafarers during their visits to foreign ports, demonstrating the ongoing responsiveness and adaptability of centre spaces.

The Specifics of Newfoundland

The island of Newfoundland is located on the far northeastern border of Canada, surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, and separated from the mainland by the Gulf of St. Lawrence. This island is known for its natural landscapes, including rugged coastlines, fjords, and numerous islands (Harris & Hiller, 2023). St. John's (47.56 N, -52.70 W), the province's capital city, is a central hub for various economic, cultural, and administrative activities. The city is also integral as a hub for various industries, including offshore supply vessels, container/ro-ro vessels, Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) vessels, navy vessels, commercial vessels, cruise, smaller craft, and fisheries (St. John's Port Authority, 2023).

The port of St. John's is strategically placed between two cliffs ("the Narrows") and is one of the maritime gateways for the province due to this port's role in several critical activities, such as container, cruise, fishing, and offshore operations (Port of St. John's, 2022). There are hundreds of vessels with thousands of seafarers which call on the port every year. This port is handling an average of 1200 to 1400 commercial arrivals per year and 600 to 800 small-scale commercial arrivals, including fishing vessels and sailboats (St. John's Port Authority, 2022). In addition to St. John's various ports can be found throughout the province, in Placentia/Argentia, Petty Harbour, Stephenville, Corner Brook, Conception Bay South, Harbour Grace, Wiffen Head and Channel-Port aux Basques, to name a few. The large number of ports across the island highlights the maritime significance of Newfoundland. The potential

for a seafarers' wellness centre is remarkable given the number of seafarers frequenting the harbours.

Methods and Materials

A qualitative preliminary needs assessment was conducted. The desire was to include context around each noted need that reflected the community-based needs. This process allowed us to determine how to meet these needs and identify gaps that a centre space could remedy. The assessment was driven by core questions, such as: What would a Seafarers' Centre need to offer that would make you want to visit more often? What task or service could a Seafarers' Centre help you with in your daily life? (See an elaborated list of the core questions in Appendix A). The objective was to identify the maritime community's core priorities and develop a framework to meet its needs.

We interviewed a total of 60 seafarers in the maritime community and workers of seafarers' centres to shed light on the gap between current and desired needs, services, and aspects necessary for creating a seafarers' centre. Of the participants, 41 identified as male and 19 as female (2.1M:1F) and they ranged in age from 20-80. Participants originated from Canada or the United Kingdom. There were 45 participants from Canada (75%) and 15 from the United Kingdom (25%). By including participants from British ports our intention was to gather insights from well-established organisations, to collaborate with local entities and community leaders and to learn from established organisations.

The occupational background of participants within the maritime industry is outlined as follows. The maritime safety and security branch consisted of three participants, while the port operations sector had two participants. Four participants were involved in maritime technology and education sector. The maritime welfare support sector encompassed the largest

group at 29 participants. Additionally, four participants were engaged in maritime services (e.g., law, finance, and logistics). Only one participant represented maritime transportation and shipping. The fisheries and aquaculture sector were represented by six participants, while the offshore oil and gas sector had 11 participants. Notably, six participants, constituting 10.00% of the total amount of participants, were active seafarers.

Figure 1 – Participant Demographics

Gender	<i>Amount and Percentages</i>
Female	19 (32%)
Male	41 (68%)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Range	20-80

<i>Participant Demographics by Maritime Industry</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Maritime Safety and Security	3
Port Operations	2
Maritime Technology and Education	4
Maritime Welfare Support	29
Maritime Services	4
Maritime Transportation and Shipping	1
Fisheries and Aquaculture	6

The semi-structured interviews focused on three central areas: the need for a Seafarers' Centre in Newfoundland, the services the centre should offer, and the challenges associated with the centre's creation. Our inclusion criteria restricted the sample to seafarers in Canadian or British ports and it included other persons involved with Seafarers' Centres. We restricted our sample by selecting participants who had a minimum of two years' experience at sea since the first year at sea is primarily a familiarisation period and the second year is operational time. Participants were recruited by word-of-mouth dissemination, emails, and networking.

The Canadian National Seafarers' Welfare Board, the Seafarers International Union of Canada (SIU), the North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA), the International Transportation Federation (ITF), the ITF Seafarers' Trust, Transport Canada, Master Mariners of Canada, various other organisations in the United Kingdom, and different Seafarers' Centres across Canada supported recruitment by distributing a solicitation email to those in the communities or workplaces.

The email included study information (e.g., purpose), potential timing of interviews, and links to ethical approval. In addition, recruitment and informative posters were posted in St. John's, NL, Montreal, QC, Halifax, NS, Hamilton, ON, and British Port, UK authorities. Seafarers entering the marina could contact the researcher directly if they wanted to participate in the research project. A modified version of snowball sampling, where participants could pass researcher information on to peers, was also employed. Word-of-mouth recruitment was foundational to our solicitation of participants.

Before any interview, we secured informed consent; ethics approval was provided by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial

University of Newfoundland. We omitted participant names and relied on participant numbers and demographics in all reported findings.

We employed semi-structured, in-depth interviews to promote an open method of interviewing that created a conversational flow between the interviewer and interviewee (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). The interviews were held at an agreed-upon location in Canada or the United Kingdom and conducted by phone or digitally (e.g., Teams, Zoom). We conducted four interviews in person, with 56 interviews conducted virtually. All interviews were audio recorded, in which field notes and interview notes were documented. If a participant did not desire to be recorded, the interviewer would transcribe the information throughout the interview process.

Data analysis was based on emergent themes elicited from participants, from which dominating interpretations and justifications were consolidated (Lumivero, 2023; Charmaz, 2021). After transcribing each interview, which ranged from 45 to 120 minutes, data was coded using QSR NVivo (Lumivero, 2023). We used precise memoing functions in NVivo to organize data and occasionally used the auto-coder function (Zamawe, 2015). We then created parent and child nodes, presenting emergent themes across levels of analysis. For example, when looking at the code "GENDER," the researcher inputs the code in the search bar, which allows them to view how many times "GENDER" was mentioned in the sixty interviews and to locate these items for more focused coding. This review process involved initial coding by one researcher, followed by a critical review by another researcher to ensure consistency and to achieve consensus on the coding process. The only point that arose was the length of the codebook, but this was resolved by implementing various levels of analysis and adopting a thematic approach to coding.

The central themes identified by nodes include but are not limited to needs, gaps, services, domestic vs international, experience, gender, and location. The principal emergent

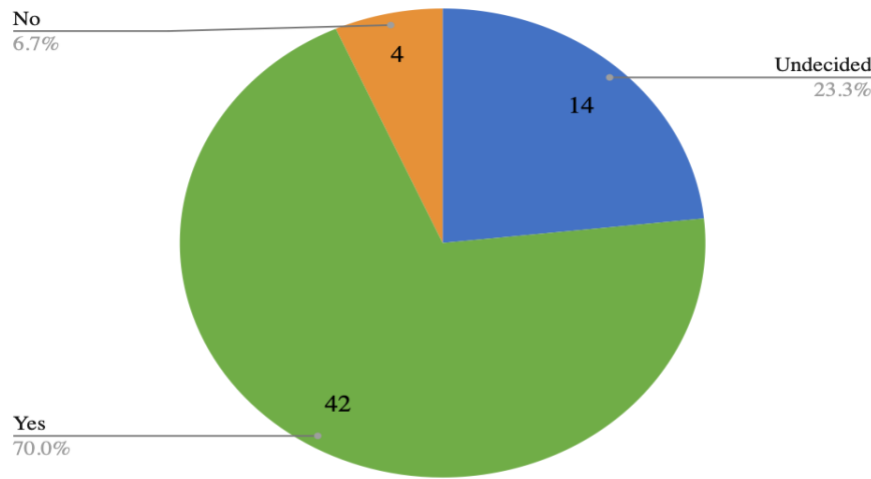
codes are location, services, needs, challenges, and experience. We used the memo function in NVivo to write notes regarding the concepts and key points emergent in each theme. While memoing, the researcher refined concepts and their relationships with each other. Memos were also used to add information about an analytical concept related to other factors (DeCuir – Gunby, 2011).

Results

This section presents key findings from participant interviews, elaborating on the needs and challenges associated with a centre and its possible location of the centre in Newfoundland. Specifically, we categorise insights into the themes of Awareness, Justification and Sustainability, Legislation and Safety, and Centre Conditions/Centre Space.

For or Against the Creation of a Centre

Seafarers and employee/volunteers of centres were asked whether they supported the establishment of a Seafarers' Centre in Newfoundland. As represented in Figure 2, 42 participants warmly welcomed the idea of a centre and said yes, while four said no. Those who said no cited a lack of sustainable funding and concern about the number of seafarers visiting the centre space. The majority of participants affirming a need for a centre also voiced the benefits of a centre on seafarers' physical and mental well-being. Specific themes are the centre's location, possible challenges and the needs the centre must support to be effective. The following subsections will discuss these themes in greater detail.



For or Against a Center

Figure 2 – Results for Yes/No Question Regarding a Seafarers’ Centre in Newfoundland

The Centre’s Location

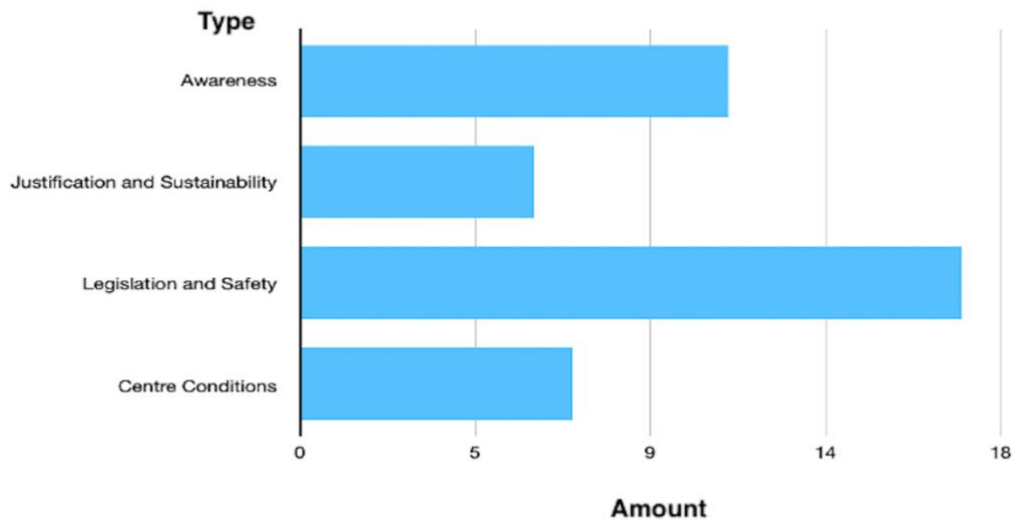
Participants were asked where a centre should be located in NL. Some named the capital city of St. John’s, but some mentioned Wiffen Head, Corner Brook, and Placentia/Argentia as these ports have more international seafarers. But more notably, 19 participants desired a mobile centre because they recognized the fact that Newfoundland has many ports located at different sites around the island.

This is illustrated by the comments of participant P2 (male, CA), who stated:

I don't think so... I think there are specific places in the world and specific types of ships and types of clientele that still would need and benefit from... I love what you just said about a mobile centre because I've never seen one of those, but the idea would work, and I can see that really being useful.

P2’s words reveal some scepticism about the traditional stationary model for seafarer centres, implying a lack of fit within the maritime community of Newfoundland. The mobile centre model was interpreted as offering flexibility and adaptability to ensure the centres reach seafarers across the island. Also, 21 participants describe region-specific challenges (e.g., geography, domestic maritime communities).

Whether static or mobile, participants felt the centre needed to meet certain requirements: awareness, sustainability, justifiability, and safety, in a space where seafarers could gather, relax, and recover their balance.



Type	Amount
Awareness	11
Justification and Sustainability	6
Legislation and Safety	17
Centre Conditions	7

Figure 3 – *Primary Needs identified by Participants (e.g., centre employees/volunteers and seafarers)*

Awareness

In total, 11 participants felt seafarers needed to be made aware of the centre, most suggesting a need for accessible information about the services the centre offers. As well, some desired better public awareness of seafarers in their occupational role in an effort to diminish sea blindness (e.g., unawareness of the mariner industries and employees).

A misconception emerged among some potential users of the centre. For example, participant P3 (female, CA) mentioned an anecdote about a domestic crew member and their experience at a centre:

We recently had some Canadian seafarers that came in, out of the blue, and they said that they never realised ... they were under the impression that this (centre) was just for foreign seafarers, and they didn't realise that it was for Canadians as well. So, I am telling them no, no, it's like, for all of you.

Here, the seafarer was under the impression that the centre was exclusively for foreign seafarers and was unaware it was also intended to serve Canadian seafarers. In total, 10 participants mentioned there may not be a specific centre model tailored to the needs of domestic crews. Thus, there is a need to share information about the objective of the centre to ensure that potential users, both foreign and Canadian seafarers, are aware of the centre's inclusive nature. Participants also believed outreach and awareness campaigns should be integral to the seafarers' centre activities to clarify its purpose and availability to all seafarers.

Awareness-building, education, communication, and advertising were noted as essential strategies to ensure the centre could effectively serve the intended population and meet their needs. For instance, participant P5 (male, CA) said:

You're looking for the people that are using this...because people may not even be aware that you exist and so you have to educate, communicate, advertise. As the users need to understand the centre is available and to be ready to assist with anything at all.

Awareness was also desired for seafarers, referring to awareness of their role, their profession, and their service to societies. P48 (male, UK) said:

I think the recognition that the seafarers are key workers and if they can be recognized worldwide, they have to be able to be treated with dignity and responsibility.

P48 expresses a longing for acknowledgment — a recognition of their integral role in the global economy. P48 aspires for seafarers to be treated with dignity and have their rights, well-being, and contributions acknowledged/recognized. Under this perspective, the relevance of ensuring seafarers rights is evidenced and could be a consequence of injustices experienced.

Justification and Sustainability

When creating a seafarers' centre, "justification" and "sustainability" were mentioned by six participants as central considerations. The former refers to a centre's long-term profitability and efficacy in fulfilling the requirements of Newfoundland's seafarers and the necessity of the centre in the community.

Most notable was the discussion around the financial aspects of establishing a seafarers' centre, which was mentioned 31 times among participants who felt the costs associated with setting up the centre required thought and the assurance the centre would be utilised and achieve the objective of supporting seafarers' wellness.

In addition, eight participants, speaking to justification, highlighted the need for sufficient ship traffic in a specific region, such as Newfoundland. Adequate traffic levels were needed to ensure a proper influx of people in the centre, as this is necessary in the continuity of the space. Without an adequate influx of seafarers, the centre's feasibility and visibility would be compromised, and the ability to justify the need for the centre would be challenged. P33 (female, UK) described the value of a reliable, well-attended centre (which requires consistent and dependable services) by stating:

But for people that do want to, it's just making sure that they know that you're a reliable service or person that they can call on and you'll give them the proper advice that they might need or the information that they need.

Her words restate how the service provision and support could justify the need for the centre.

Regarding sustainability, P38 (male, UK) felt the centre "should be a self-sustained, fully funded open space that needs to be run on the community." His words demonstrate the need for the centre to be sustainable, including access to adequate financial resources to support the establishment's operation while also highlighting the role of the local community in managing and operating the centre space. This was echoed by P17 (male, CA), who said:

Number one is a sustainable funding model. You can come up with money, you can get things going, you know, you can get it off the ground, because everybody would be all

fired up about it and people will be putting some money on the table. It costs money and you have to pay for the infrastructure somehow. Even just to apply for various grants and things... it takes powerful people to do that.

The participant explains the necessity for a sustainable centre model, taking into account the associated costs and the human resources required for its operation. Thus, funds are required to secure the support of continued operations without the constant stress of determining a funding source. A business model and/or a sponsorship could help to underpin the sustainability of a centre and is the key to establishing a seafarers' centre.

Speaking to sustainability, five participants emphasised the role of volunteers in creating and operating the seafarers' Centre, underscoring the dependency on volunteers for a thriving centre. Moreover, the role of volunteers also showed community support for seafarers and reinforced the connection to communities. Concerns, however, arose around a lack of volunteers and how to retain volunteers to ensure the centre's longevity. Relatedly, 21 participants spoke of difficulties that may occur when trying to recruit volunteers and involve communities in centres. The underlying theme here was a need for a robust community engagement strategy when developing and creating the centre. The central recommendation across participants was to develop the centre in close collaboration with potential users and the local communities.

Succession planning was mentioned by P25 (male, CA), who said: "I don't think there was a good succession planning model [for the pre-existing centre model], so it's like we got a van, but we got no one to drive it." P25 reflected on the closure of the prior mariners' centre in Newfoundland and suggested that the new centre should ensure leaders are in place but also include a plan for the centre's future leadership to allow for transition and growth, which further accommodates the changing seafarer landscape in Newfoundland.

Legislation and Safety

In total, 17 participants drew attention to the influence of legislation and legislative changes on the maritime industry, including how legislation affected fatigue levels, safety aboard vessels, responsibility, and port turnarounds. Thus, there was an awareness among participants about political and policy factors that create challenges with potential effects on seafarers' wellness through creating hazardous work conditions or environments.

P34 (male, CA) posited the need for seafarers to have a safe and supportive environment at the centre and at work, where they can feel secure and receive support from connected organisations. P34 said:

I was able to go home to my family, but you know, but I've been in less supportive situations where the Seafarers' mission was the only thing you had to get away from the ship and feel safe. That was the biggest thing for me, going somewhere that you felt safe... That was always big for me and being able to talk to people.

P34 emphasises the need to find a place where one can feel secure and safe as being a requirement for seafarers' well-being. A ship space can feel unfamiliar/uncomfortable and can be a stigmatised environment. P34's words expose the centre as a necessary resource as seafarers can have distance from the ship, be in a neutral environment where there is no hierarchy, and where they feel welcome despite being in a familiar or a foreign area. P34 also speaks to the need for human connection as part of helping their emotional well-being. The supportive community of the centre further creates an opportunity to connect with others away from the ship, where they can share experiences and receive the support needed specifically tailored to this community (e.g., safety procedures, Transport Canada requirements/regulations, structures around wellness at sea).

Furthermore, P42 (male, CA) felt a way to do so was by creating social connections among the crew; he states: *"What needs to be brought in is more socialising with crew members."* Speaking to the social health of the crew, P42 values a centre that fosters social

interaction among crew members, supports camaraderie, relieves stress, and enforces positivity, particularly during long and isolating journeys at sea. Thus, a centre could be designed, according to our participants, as a quiet space for connectivity, where seafarers can communicate with peers, colleagues, and loved ones, moving beyond isolation and creating a safe environment.

Seventeen interviewees drew attention to the influence of legislation on the maritime industry, affecting various aspects such as fatigue levels, safety aboard vessels, responsibility, and port turnarounds. Legislation, often tied to politics, can affect seafarers' wellness and operations.

P20 (male, CA) mentioned:

It's a commitment that the government has to make, to be able to work with the industry, with the labour and with the ship owners, to ensure that everybody understands that when a vessel comes into Canadian port that don't meet the conditions that are expected by the convention that the vessel can be detained; we need to actually detain them.

This quote delineates the need to have guidelines and policies for the maritime community, which require commitment from industry representatives, stakeholders, civil participation, and the maritime community to ensure compliance with certain conventions and standards.

Centre Conditions/Centre Space

In total, 7 participants focused their discussion on centre conditions, envisioning the space as bridging the gap between on-ship and in-port environments. Participants believed that ensuring safe, relaxing, and comfortable centre conditions would lead to a significantly improved environment for all crew members, both on the ship and in port.

When describing the conditions of the physical centre, P14 (male, CA), like others, described

A place....nothing big or extravagant. Someplace where it's quiet and isolated. You can just lay down and forget about everything. No noise in the walls. There's no noise on the floor. No vibration there. No alarms that go off, you can sleep for hours.

P14 describes, echoing others, a quiet centre space—a break from the noise of being at sea or in port—thus supporting physical and mental wellness. The centre space helps ensure seafarers are in a position to relax, as the ship can be extremely noisy due to all the machinery on it. Thus, having a quiet space away from the ship noise aids in reducing stress and creating a dissociation from the ship.

Another participant, P19 (male, CA), mentioned:

Every one (ship) has metal rattle noises... I had a fridge and what they were trying to do here ...I don't know if it was a sympathetic frequency or whatever, but the most horrible noises to the point where it affected my sleep and I just figured that was that but that didn't stop it.

P19's words reveal how disruptive noises on a ship, possibly caused by metal rattles of a fridge, which impacted his sleep. Noises, often due to "sympathetic frequency" (i.e., specific vibrations and notes of a ship), can create frustration, thus evidencing why participants desired a quiet space disconnected from noise.

Discussion

Our research delves into the stressors and challenges faced by seafarers, emphasising the impact on mental health, physical well-being, and the unique aspects of the maritime working environment. The emphasis on fatigue and its consequences on decision-making and safety contributes to the understanding of specific challenges that seafarers encounter in their work.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's (1980) concept of habitus can help illuminate the norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours within the maritime community. The examination of hierarchical structures and the authority of the captain within the context of habitus sheds light on unconscious actions and resulting stress and fatigue, which could, in turn, cause accidents on a ship and lead to many grave situations (e.g., suicide, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder). Furthermore, the application of Goffman's (1963) concept of stigma reveals the challenges seafarers face in disclosing compromised well-being. Habitus and stigma play

crucial roles in workplace culture and expectations, and these empirical insights provide valuable data for addressing not only a well-being stigma in the maritime industry but also the need to ensure that seafarers have a dedicated space for them to get help and be heard.

The current study suggests there is demand for a dedicated seafarers' centre in Newfoundland. St. John's serves as a crucial maritime entry point for various ship types. Despite mentions of alternative ports in Newfoundland as potential locations, we assert that our detailed depiction of the maritime scenario in Newfoundland offers a thorough insight into the suitable environment for establishing a seafarers' centre. Participants provided insights into the seafarers' centre by illustrating its necessity, awareness, conditions, safety, sustainability, financial considerations, and the crucial involvement of volunteers when developing a centre. A centre space, mobile or stationary, tailored to both international and domestic maritime communities supporting a relaxing/gathering environment and containing services tailored to their well-being and families did receive support.

Collaboration between maritime organisations, local businesses, and government agencies is crucial for securing funding and support for the centre's establishment and long-term sustainability and initiating discussions with potential partners, including maritime organisations and local businesses, to secure financial, community and logistical support. The need to develop a plan that outlines the centre's long-term financial viability should include diversified funding sources and regular assessments. The budget should consider the costs and promotion of services, infrastructure development, and ongoing operations. Potential revenue streams, such as donations and grants, should be explored along with other financial opportunities and strategies. Additionally, training staff to ensure cultural sensitivity and effective communication with the diverse seafaring community would be important. Lastly, evidenced in our results, the promotion of the centre would be a key piece in determining the

number of people willing to visit the centre and the sustainability of the centre in Newfoundland.

The insights provided by our study, we hope, will provide the Newfoundland maritime community with a solid basis to undertake the full feasibility study regarding the establishment of a Seafarers' Centre. Our aspiration is that this study will not only serve as a valuable resource for future research projects in maritime needs assessment but also play a pivotal role in improving the well-being of seafarers and addressing their needs. Through our research, we aimed to shed light on the maritime community, focusing on understanding their needs, exploring strategies for mitigating those needs (e.g., creating a space tailored to them), and understanding what services would be valuable to aid in seafarers' well-being.

Addressing these challenges is essential to maintaining and enhancing safety standards in the maritime sectors, as navigating complex maritime situations, and responding effectively to emergencies can change over time and impact the overall safety culture and crew well-being on ships.

Limitations

Most data came from seafarers who finished their careers a few years ago but are still heavily involved in the maritime community, some that were involved in the maritime community or from active workers in Seafarers' Centres, but there were few active seafarers (13.33%). Nevertheless, we are confident in saying the results reflect the general position of seafarers worldwide and are relevant to the current industry as we hold a diverse participant sample. Furthermore, 41 participants identified as male, but every reasonable effort was made to create an inclusive and representative sample as well as understanding of the maritime community's needs and challenges. Future research with more female seafarers is warranted. It is worth noting that there was one 80-year-old participant who could have potentially skewed the average age. However, we treated this participant's age as an outlier in statistical age data.

The semi-structured interviews helped us gain rich qualitative data as they are based on a person's words. This method can cause variations in the depth and quality of responses based on the type of interview conducted (e.g., phone, in-person, virtually). We created a neutral, comfortable environment and developed a standardised interview protocol consistently applied across all formats to mitigate this issue.

Participants in the study were enlisted through diverse channels such as organisations, posters, word of mouth, and snowball sampling; this could have introduced a bias if participants shared similarities to those that referenced them to this study. However, by including randomised sampling this allowed for a mix of participants with varied opinions and experiences. Additionally, to diminish this bias, efforts were made to limit word-of-mouth influence by establishing clear guidelines with participants when asking them to pass on the research information. Thus we suggest future researchers use randomized sampling for a robust analysis of the seafarer population.

Incorporating participants from UK ports was intended to glean insights from established organisations, to partner with local organisations and community leaders, and to formulate contextually relevant recommendations for both regions. We believe we have mitigated potential biases and that our sample is representative of the maritime communities interviewed by directly engaging with the local seafaring community.

Lastly, we understand that the maritime community's needs, challenges, and services can change over time. However, as this study was conducted within a brief timeframe (a year), our research reflects the needs, challenges, and services of the current maritime community.

Conclusion

Our research investigated the daily challenges seafarers encounter, particularly explored the effects of stressors on a seafarers' daily life and the ways fatigue levels impact decision-making. We utilised Bourdieu's (1980) habitus and Goffman's (1963) stigma concepts

to uncover influential norms/stereotypes held in the maritime community that allow some to hold a fear of judgement or stigmatisation coming from steep hierarchical norms or stereotypes. This exposition demonstrated the need for a dedicated space for seafarers where they feel safe to discuss well-being concerns, allowing for the destigmatizing of mental health/well-being issues, and ultimately fostering a more supportive environment for seafarers. The findings confirmed the essential requirement for this facility to offer well-being services and support to the Newfoundland community. The city of St. John's emerged as a plausible location for a seafarers' centre. Collaborations with maritime organisations, local businesses, and government agencies are crucial for the centre space's funding and sustainability. We believe that the proposed seafarers' centre has the potential to make a positive impact on the well-being and livelihoods of seafarers and their families in Newfoundland, but the success of the centre will depend on its ability to adapt to changing needs, cultural sensitivity, and long-term financial sustainability.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Interview Guides

For Seafarers

Work Experience

1. How long have you been working in the maritime field?
2. Do you work on domestic ships (Canadian) or international vessels?
 - a. Can you tell me more about the type of ships you have experience working on?
 - b. What about the current ship you are working on?
3. What is your position (role) on board the vessel?
 - a. How long have you been in the role?
 - b. Can you tell me what your role as INSERT entails?
4. How long, on average, are your times on ship?
 - a. When away, what do you miss, and when at home, do you miss anything?
 - b. What do you value most about being away on a ship?
 - What are some of the things you DO NOT enjoy about being away on a ship?
 - a. What are some of the things you enjoy while on a ship in port?
 - What are some of the things you DO NOT enjoy while working on a ship in port?
 - a. What are your ideas about how your experiences away can be made more agreeable?

Newfoundland Criteria

5. Do you stop in port when in Newfoundland?
 - a. Where do you normally port in Newfoundland?
 - b. How do you find the amenities when you port in INSERT CITY/TOWN?
6. What are the primary amenities you seek when you arrive at port? (pharmacy, vaccination clinic, grocery store/department store, social/solitude environments)?
7. When you are docked in port, where do you spend most of your time?
 - a. Where would you like to spend your free time when in port?
 - b. How do you pass the time in port?

- c. Where would you like to spend your free time when in port?
8. Where do you go to spend time with other Seafarers' when in port?
 - a. Do you appreciate spending time with other seafarers' when in port?
 - i. Would you prefer more time independently in port (i.e., do you ever need space from your colleagues, and can you get this in port?)
9. Do you have knowledge of Seafarers' Centres in Newfoundland and across Canada?
 - a. Can you tell me about the Seafarers' centres you have visited?
 - b. What is their purpose/function?
 - c. What would you like their purpose/function to be?
10. If you are familiar with the Seafarers' Centre, have you ever been in contact with the organisation in other ports internationally?
 - a. Can you describe your experience (i.e., what you did) at the centre?
 - b. If not, would you be willing to visit one?
 - c. How would you like to spend time in the centre?
11. What do you believe is the purpose of a Seafarers' Centre?
 - a. What would you like their purpose/function to be?
12. Seafarers' Centres offer diverse services. Can you tell me if you have used these services and your thoughts on:
 - Chapel – different faiths
 - Mental health support
 - Games – pool/ Fuzzball
 - Board games
 - Books
 - General first aid
 - Phone cards
 - Stamps/envelopes
 - Clothing
 - Other
 - a. Which of these services could be of interest to you?
 - b. Can you tell me why?
 - c. Would you like internet access/computer access at a centre?
 - d. For what purposes would you use the internet?

13. What kinds of services/programs have you seen in other Seafarers' Centres?
 - a. What did you like about the services and programs offered?
 - b. What did you dislike about the services and programs offered?
 - c. Can you explain why you INSERT LIKE OR DISLIKE these services or programs?
14. What would a Seafarers' Centre need to offer for you that would make you want to visit more often?
 - PROMPT: This can be things such as souvenirs, basic necessities, well-being services, prayer services, etc.
15. What task or service could a Seafarers' Centre help you within your daily life?
16. Are there any services that you see as unbeneficial or unnecessary for you?
17. What are your challenges when you arrive at the port in Newfoundland?
 - a. Can you tell me how these challenges, from your perspective, could be resolved?
18. How could a Seafarers' Centre support your needs with these challenges?
19. Where in Newfoundland would you like to see such a centre?
20. Do you see any benefit to a mobile centre that could visit other outports in Newfoundland?
 - a. Would you choose to visit a mobile centre? (explain)
 - b. Would a mobile centre be unnecessary to you?

Final

Is there any other information or comments you would like to add before we conclude this interview?

Thank you for taking the time to be a part of this interview session.

Seafarers' Centre Employee or Volunteer Section

Work Experience

1. What is your position at the centre?
 - PROMPT: Have you worked in other positions?
 - Ensure the volunteer or employee is confirmed.

2. How long have you been working at the Seafarers' Centre?
3. How did you become a part of a Seafarers' Centre?
4. Have you ever worked as a seafarer?
5. Do you have a current or retired seafarer in the family or a close friend who is a seafarer?
6. Are you involved in other aspects of the Maritime community?
7. What are the needs (physical, mental, or spiritual) of the Maritime community surrounding your centre?
 PROMPT: Please elaborate.
8. How large is the maritime community served by your centre?
 - a. How tightly-knit do you feel this community is?
9. Where do the ships that are served by your centre come from?
 - a. Can you offer me an approximate breakdown of incoming vessels?
10. Do you believe that the mental needs are similar for local and non-local seafarers?
 - a. If not, what are some differences that you have seen between local and non-local seafarers?
 - b. If so, what are some of the similarities that you have seen between local and non-local seafarers?
11. Do you believe that the physical needs are similar for local and non-local seafarers?
 - a. If not, what are some differences that you have seen between local and non-local seafarers?
 - b. If so, what are some of the similarities that you have seen between local and non-local seafarers?
12. Do you believe that the spiritual needs are similar for local and non-local seafarers?
 - a. If not, what are some differences that you have seen between local and non-local seafarers?
 - b. If so, what are some of the similarities that you have seen between local and non-local seafarers?
13. Based on your experience,
 - a. What are the most frequently used services by seafarers in your centre?
 - b. Which services do you think are not needed at your centre?
 - c. Which services do you think should be added at your centre or if a new centre were to be created elsewhere?
14. Do you feel there are programs or services that should NOT be offered in a Seafarers' Centre?
15. What has your centre done to attract seafarers?
 PROMPT: Marketing, incentives, activities etc.?
16. What has worked to bring seafarers to your centre?
 - a. What has not?

Newfoundland Criteria

17. Are you aware of specific infrastructures that need to be in place in St. John's to help support the surrounding maritime community?
 - a. If yes or no, elaborate on why.
12. Where in Newfoundland would you like to see such a centre?
 - a. If deciding on one area is difficult, would a mobile centre be something that could be considered?
 - b. What challenges could you foresee with this mobile centre?
 - c. What advantages could you foresee with this mobile centre?
13. Do you believe that creating a Seafarers' Centre here in St. John's is a feasible idea?
 - a. financially?
 - b. because of demand?
 - c. because of the level of interest?
14. Do you have any knowledge that a Seafarers' Centre ever existed in St. John's?
 - a. If so, how long ago was it up and running?
 - b. What services and programs did the centre offer?
 - c. What were the benefits Seafarers experienced from visiting this Seafarers Centre?
15. Why do you believe St. John's, Newfoundland, and Labrador do not have a centre now?
16. What type of challenges do you foresee in establishing a new Seafarers' Centre in St. John's?
 - a. How do you believe these challenges could be overcome?

Final

Is there anything else - information or comments - you would like to add before we conclude this interview?

Thank you for taking the time to be a part of this interview session.

Appendix B - Ethical Details

The interview process began with the researcher explaining the purpose and procedure of the study orally and answering any questions that arose, making sure that the participants understood the process and that it was fully voluntary.

The interview itself began when verbal consent was recorded. During the oral consent, the participants were asked if they were comfortable with the data collection (using a semi-structured in-depth interview), recorded using a voice recorder. If the participants disagreed with voice recording, the interview was conducted via hand-written interview notes. Also, the participants had the option to turn off their cameras if interviewed via online platforms if they so choose.

Once participants gave verbal consent to participate in the project, they were assigned an identification number to ensure anonymity. The identification number was added to the participant's semi-structured, in-depth interview documents and kept in a locked, secure cabinet within the Ocean Safety Lab at Fisheries and Marine Institute in St. John's, Newfoundland. Any other data collected or recorded during the research was tagged using the identification number. It is important to note that electronic records are stored on a password-protected computer in the Ocean Safety Lab at Fisheries and Marine Institute, and the list of participants is only accessible to research team members.

Given the nature of conducting interviews in small, tight-knit communities, there were limitations to the extent of protection the researcher could provide regarding anonymity. For instance, interviewing in a public place removes the anonymity of participation and can cause a data breach if overheard. However, every reasonable effort was made to ensure participant anonymity, and the researcher ensured the omission of any personal information in the publications (such as vessel name, physical characteristics, etc.).

Appendix C – Services

While conducting our research, it became evident that there were several “service” requirements for the Seafarers’ Centre in Newfoundland. In conjunction with my research, I have prepared appendices outlining these discoveries.

We have discovered many common services, such as:

- Some expressed the importance of religious services within the Seafarers’ Centre.
- Some highlighted the importance of transportation services.
- Communication services, particularly access to the internet, phone services and Wi-Fi, are essential to seafarers.
- There was an emphasis on the importance of leisure and recreational activities, which included the desire for a space to relax, socialise, and engage in enjoyable pastimes.
 - E.g., a rest space, BBQs, library
- The need for a family aspect in the centre space was also mentioned.
- Some participants mentioned the desire for holiday celebrations to include things like the "Christmas bags" as they enjoyed the sense of community this activity brought and liked the opportunity to celebrate special occasions.
- There was a desire for access to food and drinks; there was interest in having a garden space and a library and a desire for a recreational sports night.
- A tech shop, potentially offering technology assistance to less computer savvy Seafarers and creating an internet cafe within the centre.
- Shopping was a prominent category.
- Some emphasised the importance of a listening ear and support services; some mentioned the need for physical well-being services, including physiotherapy and lifestyle advice (e.g., vaccination services).
- The Seafarers’ Centre being a place to gather and relax was frequently mentioned.

This information must be further developed upon establishing a Seafarers’ Centre in Newfoundland.