

Development of an Institutional Physical Training Program for Maritime Students of Our Lady of Fatima University

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Abstract

The global maritime industry requires extreme physical readiness, yet an increasing prevalence of lifestyle-related diseases—such as overweight and obesity—threatens the career longevity of Filipino seafarers, leading to a crisis termed "Sinking Careers". At Our Lady of Fatima University (OLFU), the rigorous technical demands of maritime education often leave physical conditioning unmonitored, placing cadets at severe risk of failing the mandatory Pre-Employment Medical Examination (PEME). This study aims to evaluate the physical profiles, lifestyle habits, and fitness barriers of OLFU maritime cadets to develop a specialized, data-driven Institutional Training Program that ensures graduates are physically "Fit-for-Duty". The research employed a Descriptive-Developmental design, utilizing total enumeration to sample 342 third-year Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation (BSMT) and Marine Engineering (BSME) students at OLFU. A validated quantitative survey was utilized to collect baseline demographic data, Body Mass Index (BMI), Body Fat Percentage (BF%), and Likert-scale evaluations of physical activity, dietary habits, and perceived barriers. Likewise, interviews with the maritime experts and medical professionals were consulted for this Study. The resulting data informed the development of a targeted fitness program guided by Pender's Health Promotion Model, the Metabolic Equivalent of Task (MET) Theory, and Knowles' Theory of Andragogy. The student cohort recorded a mean BMI of 24.02 kg/m² and a mean body fat percentage of 18.39% using Deurenberg Formula. While the averages fall within normal thresholds, a high standard deviation indicates a significant segment of the population is at risk of becoming overweight or obese. The data reveals that student lifestyles are largely passive and severely compromised by systemic academic barriers. Major friction points include academic-induced sedentary traps (prolonged hours in technical simulators), rigid schedule constraints (early formations resulting in skipped breakfasts and poor nutritional compensation), and compounded physical and mental exhaustion. To address these challenges, respondents strongly favored flexible training schedules, better campus nutrition, and "Maritime-Specific" High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) aimed at passing the PEME. The declining physical wellness of maritime cadets is not a motivational failure, but a systemic byproduct of a highly demanding and regimented academic environment. The study concludes that traditional Physical Education is insufficient for the unique rigors of the seafaring profession. To prevent premature career disqualification, OLFU must integrate a modular, career-centric Institutional Training Program directly into the curriculum. By implementing flexible training schedules, continuous BMI and body fat monitoring, and structural nutritional support, the institution can safeguard the health of its cadets and ensure they meet international STCW and global shipping standards, before they even take their PEME.

Keywords: *Institutional Training Program, Maritime Students, Pre-Employment Medical Examination (PEME), Physical Fitness, Body Mass Index, Body Fat Percentage, Deurenberg Formula, High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), Sinking Careers, Our Lady of Fatima University.*

