

**Navigating Emotions - Exploring Interpersonal Emotion Regulation in Isolated Work  
Environments**

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## **Abstract**

The process of interpersonal emotion regulation (IER) at work involves employees regulating each others' emotions to uphold professional norms and preserve well-being. Despite its importance, only a few studies on this topic exist. This qualitative interview study explores this novel research topic to generate a more comprehensive and contextualized understanding of this important phenomenon. Specifically, this thesis investigates how workers in isolated work environments regulate their own and each other's emotions to maintain positive relationships at work and enhance their emotional well-being. Drawing from participants' narratives through thematic analysis, this thesis reports a distinct process pattern of interpersonal emotion regulation. In this process pattern, emotional triggers, sharing and recognition of emotions, as well as regulation strategies and their adequacy amidst the unique conditions in which yacht crew work in are distinguished. The thesis shows that the extreme environment of yacht work both exacerbates the need for- and restricts the initiation of IER. Expanding on previous models of IER, the findings imply that IER is a polyadic and context-sensitive process phenomenon.

*Keywords:* interpersonal emotion regulation, isolated environment, extreme environment, seafarers, yachting, emotional well-being, social support, emotional contagion

## Introduction

When looking at the global workforce, nearly 45% of employees indicated high stress levels on the previous workday (Gallup, 2023). Congruently, Work and Organizational Psychologists seek to understand how these detrimental impacts on employee well-being can be addressed. Recently, a specific expression of social support termed interpersonal emotion regulation (IER) has gained attention. Within IER, employees approach or get approached by others to regulate their or other's emotions by making use of a range of different strategies (Troth et al., 2018). IER is known to potentially bolster the mental health of employees (Williams et al., 2018) and improve the regulators' and the receiver's emotional well-being (Niven, et al., 2012a). Additionally, in managing their emotions together, co-workers can both enhance the quality of their interactions and ultimately their relationships and contribute to effective teamwork (Niven et al., 2012b; Troth et al., 2018). Similarly, the quality of IER has been linked to higher quality customer service and higher productivity of followers when regulated by their leaders (Côté et al., 2013; Vasquez et al., 2020). Given the need for- and the positive effects of IER, understanding this process phenomenon is important.

Despite its importance, IER as a dynamic process remains insufficiently understood for several important reasons. First, there is a lack of consensus on what IER exactly is (Troth et al., 2018). This is problematic, as the few, typically quantitative, studies that exist use different measures and operationalizations that potentially cannot cover the richness of the phenomenon in one study. For example, most study designs investigate only one interaction partner's experience without considering the dynamic exchanges over time (Dixon-Gordon et al., 2015; Troth et al., 2018). Similarly, while researchers have started to map IER for instances in which individuals aim to regulate others, the notion that people approach others when they want help with the

regulation of their own emotions remains underexplored (Dixon-Gordon et al., 2015; Troth et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2018). Furthermore, the feelings and thoughts of regulation receivers in response to regulation and their reactions that feed back into the interpersonal exchange need to be studied (Dixon-Gordon et al., 2015, Troth et al., 2018). Thus, the existing approaches do not embrace the complexity and multi-level nature of this intrapersonal phenomenon. Additionally, most studies on the topic are quantitative and use pre-determined measures for aspects of IER. This is problematic, as the full process of IER has never been mapped out exploratively, and these studies might therefore omit crucial aspects of the phenomenon. Lastly, while some initial studies have recognized the importance of context, such as Lidell and Williams' (2019) work on broader cultural differences or Niven et al.'s (2012b) study which associated the isolation context of prisons with IER well-being outcomes, it remains largely unclear how contextual factors play a role in the IER process in general and in working populations in particular. This appears particularly relevant as IER is a social phenomenon that is embedded in the specific work contexts and the context in which individuals are situated is commonly known to shape behavior and experience. In sum, for a complete understanding of IER, strong exploratory approaches that contextualize the IER process adequately are needed.

To date, no research has studied IER in isolated work environments. This is problematic, as the ability for and performance of IER of employees in these work environments may be even more relevant for the abovementioned individual and organizational outcomes (van der Merve, 2022). The yachting industry is one such environment in which employees experience high isolation (ISWAN, 2018a). Crew frequently experience periods of work-related stress, fatigue, report low morale aboard and have difficulties accessing mental health care (ISWAN, 2018b). Moreover, yachting has been alluded to fall into the category of risk tourism, where personal

harm to crew such as mental health issues but also sexual harassment and verbal abuse are prevalent (Wyatt, 2023). Similarly, privately registered yachts have no legal obligation to comply with minimum requirements for working conditions (van der Merwe, 2022), making crew more reliant on the quality of IER. Finally, seafarers' real-time emotions have been associated with their performance and decision making, which necessitates research from a pure safety standpoint (Fan et al., 2018). Despite recent efforts of professional networks and associations to shed light on the state of crew well-being and the provision of emergency helplines, the emotional well-being of crew remains under-researched. Research on IER can therefore yield valuable insights for developing targeted support mechanisms to address the unique emotional challenges of this vulnerable employee population.

Answering the need for exploratory approaches to IER, this study aims to delineate the dynamic process of IER in a specific context using a qualitative design. Concretely, it poses the research question: How employees in isolated work environments regulate their and others' emotions to maintain positive relationships at work and support their emotional well-being? With this, we aim to uncover the varying strategies of the interaction partners and the receiver's emotional experiences and sense making of the interaction. Moreover, we want to explore the phenomenon in an isolation context as employees in these environments may particularly rely on IER as a personal resource. To this end, semi-structured interviews were conducted with yacht crew in which they were asked to provide reflective narratives of past situations where they have received regulation by others at work and to elaborate on the context in which IER at work occurs. Grounded in empirical phenomenology, the rich accounts provided by the participants are systematically examined through thematic analysis, where the data is analyzed to find recurring patterns of meaning across participants.

With the aforementioned approach, this thesis makes several meaningful contributions to the literature. First, by choosing a qualitative approach, this study does not need to rely on pre-determination of process mechanisms through hypothesizing (Wilhelmy & Köhler, 2021). Rather, we can take advantage of a methodology that is particularly useful for the exploration and theory building of novel research topics and may help efforts to create a conceptual process model or framework for IER. Furthermore, this methodology allows for a contextual examination of such an underexplored process (Wilhelmy & Köhler, 2022). Second, we can gain insights on the dynamic process of IER in terms of how strategies are jointly employed and how the different intrapersonal processes (affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions to regulation by others) and IER (choice of strategy and strategies received) are connected. This could potentially assist in resolving the measurement issues that currently exist at the different levels as the interviews may yield rich and nuanced non-numeric data that cannot be captured in quantitative surveys. Third, findings from this study may inform science on the underexplored notion of individuals seeking help from others to regulate their emotions. Lastly, in practice, these findings may stimulate discourse in the yachting industry on the value of IER and inform the development of IER training.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **Theories on Interpersonal Emotion Regulation**

As the study of IER is still relatively recent, there is no consensus on the conceptualization of IER and several approaches exist. Troth et al. (2018) note that theorizing at this level is mostly influenced by individual level theories and models such as Gross' (1998) ER process model, work on emotional labor and emotional intelligence. Consequently, theorizing on

IER is faced with a blurring of related concepts and processes from these theories, for example in the form of differing conceptualizations of strategies depending on different theoretical foci (Troth et al., 2018). Aiming to bring clarity to the field and differentiate between intrapersonal and interpersonal ER, Zaki and Williams (2013) propose a theoretical framework for the dyadic interactions of regulatory episodes. They define IER episodes as “a) occurring in a context of a live social interaction and b) representing the pursuit of a regulatory goal, consistent with the broader definition of regulation” (Zaki & Williams, 2013, p. 804). Accordingly, episodes can be classified into intrinsic regulation, where individuals seek out others to regulate their own emotions, and extrinsic regulation, where individuals attempt to influence other people’s emotions. Additionally, these authors suggest that episodes can be either response-dependent or response-independent, indicating whether their affective goal can be achieved with or without a particular response from the interaction partner. Thus, it remains to be decided whether specific individual-level theoretical approaches will prevail or broader interpersonal approaches such as Williams and Zaki’s (2013) will be (further) developed and adopted.

Building on the framework by Zaki and Williams (2013), scholars take different approaches to conceptualizing extrinsic strategies. For example, Gagnon & Monties (2023) conceptualize extrinsic strategies as consisting of Gross’ (1998) strategies of situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, and cognitive change and added the authentic expression of emotion without modification that are enacted either consciously or unconsciously. Contrastingly, Niven et al. (2009) categorize extrinsic strategies as conscious cognitive or behavioral affect improving or affect worsening strategies. For intrinsic strategies that individuals may use to seek and maintain regulation from others, several authors agree that there is much less conceptualization, theorizing, and empirical investigations available (Dixon-Gordon

et al., 2015; Troth et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2018). In terms of strategic recruitment of support, Williams et al. (2018) have pointed at behaviors that involve seeking advice, sharing bad news and sharing good news. Taking an explorative approach that stays open to the discovery of novel strategies and categorizations thereof can aid in bridging gaps between existing approaches.

As Williams and Zaki (2013) have indicated, IER is a “messy” phenomenon, where intrapersonal and interpersonal processes co-occur throughout a regulatory episode. Given the need for further theoretical elaboration on the topic, this study does not presume a fixed theoretical framework but rather explores the phenomenon in a qualitative way, to lead to a more open and nuanced understanding of IER. This study adopts Williams and Zaki’s definition of IER as “regulatory episodes occurring in a social context that are in the pursuit of a regulatory goal” as it captures the dyadic (and possibly polyadic) and contextual nature of IER. More specifically, this understanding of IER makes the least assumptions about what the IER process looks like when compared to competing definitions. For example, the competing approaches of Niven (2017) and work applying Gross’ (1998) framework to IER have a selective focus on the agency and intent of the regulator. Thus, an exploratory approach that adopts Williams and Zaki’s definition may allow for a more neutrally positioned and comprehensive overview on this underexplored process in which multiple partners interact.

### **The Isolation Context of the Yachting Industry**

To answer the need for a more comprehensive understanding of IER and support theorizing on this topic, a context-sensitive view that recognizes IER as a social and situationally embedded phenomenon involving at least two individuals with their respective emotions and



cognitions is required. When studying IER at work, considering the organizational context in which employees navigate their professional lives is vital. As previous research has shown, normative expectations drive interpersonal exchanges at work, both with clients and colleagues, however, further aspects of the organizational context need to be considered (Troth et al., 2018).

Isolated work environments, such as those in which offshore oil rig personnel, seafarers, or scientists on polar expeditions operate, present a unique context with particularly demanding working conditions. Employees in these environments live and work in remote locations, are separated from their private support system of friends and family for long periods of time, share close quarters with their co-workers, and are continuously exposed to environmental stressors (Brasher et al., 2010).

An isolated work environment in which IER might be particularly complicated is the luxury yachting industry. In luxury yachting, employees – or ‘crew’ – cater to the wants and needs of high-net worth individuals who own or charter these yachts for a personalized luxury experience (Gladkikh et al., 2022). While crew report that their positive experiences aboard these vessels far outweigh the negative ones (Dudzinski, 2018), the so-called “yachting bubble”, where crew work and explore the world in isolation, poses unique challenges. Crew lose personal agency over their time and location, their co-working relationships often blend into private ones, their private support networks are not readily accessible, and interactions with demanding guests can be emotionally straining (van der Merwe, 2022). Studying this particular employee population might offer important insights into the IER process and parameters of the context in which it occurs. Moreover, qualitative explorations on this context are adequate for theorizing on IER for several reasons. As Hällgren et al. (2018) pointed out, extreme environments bring about intensified work processes. More concretely, living in the places where they work, yacht crew

may suffer from emotional stresses more intensely than employees in regular work environments (Spence, 2017). Additionally, the IER process to address these emotional strains may exhibit specific features that may be impacted by the isolation context, for example through the yacht's culture and the affective climate that crew are exposed to around the clock. Furthermore, participants' narratives on the periods of guest trips, a time where crew tend to be most confined to the working environment, could shed light on the impact that emotional labor may have on the IER process. Furthermore, given the unique relationships between co-workers that live together and yet adhere to the maritime hierarchy on board, unique support patterns may emerge and relational antecedents and outcomes of IER might bear more importance for crew. Therefore, this study may highlight specific features of IER, which can inspire more comprehensive theory and model building, bringing a clearer view on this dynamic process to also benefit other working populations ultimately.

## **Methodology**

### **Study Design**

This qualitative study takes a thematic approach and follows thematic analysis. It is of an explorative, descriptive, and contextual nature as it aims to uncover the strategies used and the subjective experiences of this sensitive phenomenon within a specific isolated work environment. Counter to most qualitative studies in Work and Organizational Psychology (Wilhelmy & Köhler, 2022), this study is primarily aimed at the advancements of qualitative insights, to generate a deeper understanding of this complex and still not fully understood phenomenon. This study made use of in-depth semi-structured narrative interviews in which crew were asked to elaborate and reflect on a past situation in which IER occurred.

## **Sample**

The interviews were conducted with seventeen yacht crew who work on sailing or motor yachts. Participants were recruited through personal contacts of the author and one of the biggest online-crew platforms for Europe. This resulted in a demographically diverse sample. The ages of participants ranged from 24-48 years, with a mean of 33.4 (SD = 7.62). Concerning gender, the sample consisted of ten male and seven female identifying participants. Moreover, the interviewees occupied different roles, resulting in a group of six captains, three stewardesses, three chefs, three deckhands and two engineers that were either living full-time or part-time on a yacht. The nationalities were predominantly British (eight participants) and South African (five participants), however three crew were from other European countries and one was from New Zealand. The sample can be considered representative of the yacht crew population, considering the industry-typical age range, employment conditions and living arrangements, nationalities, and the job role distribution.

## **Procedure**

As the participants were geographically dispersed, the interviews were conducted online through the end-to-end encrypted software Microsoft Teams. The author, who has previous professional experience as yacht crew, conducted the interviews. Before each interview, participants read and signed an online-consent form, along with a set of demographic questions (see Appendix A). Furthermore, participants were asked to find a calm and private setting where they would feel comfortable discussing their emotional experiences. The interviews lasted between 39 and 88 minutes, with an average interview time of 57 minutes. The resulting anonymized transcripts of the audio recordings were stored safely on the university server. The structure of the interview followed an approved interview manual (see Appendix B). The

**Table 1***Study Participants*

Participant Pseudonym	Rank	Gender	Age <sup>1</sup>
Tom	captain	male	X
Keith	captain	male	X
Leo	captain	male	X
Sandra	captain	female	X
James	captain	male	X
Mike	captain	male	X
Sarah	chef	female	X
Kelly	chef	female	X
Ellie	chef	female	X
Tara	stewardess	female	X
Emily	stewardess	female	X
Leah	stewardess	female	X
John	deckhand	male	X
Timothy	deckhand	male	X
Henry	deckhand	male	X
Frank	engineer	male	X
Ryan	engineer	male	X

*Note.* <sup>1</sup> = Redacted to prevent identifiability

conversation opened with a general introduction, which outlined the topic of the research and ensured confidentiality. This was followed by four sets of questions. Firstly, participants were asked to describe their job, followed by a description of their emotions at work. Then, they were asked for a recall of a situation in which the participant had experienced a negative emotion at work and one or more people at work had in some way responded to this emotion. Finally, the interview concluded with a set of questions about the culture around emotions at work and participants had the opportunity to ask questions. Participants received no compensation for their participation. The study was approved by the university's ethics board and no risks or discomforts were anticipated. In fact, multiple participants noted a positive experience of their reflections at the end of the interview.

## **Data analysis**

The data analysis followed the steps of thematic analysis. This qualitative method enables researchers to generate rich descriptions of complex phenomena in specific contexts (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). This thematic analysis was structured according to the guidelines provided in the reiterative steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Castleberry & Nolen (2018). First, the data was compiled by transcribing the recorded interviews, which allowed for familiarization with the data. Secondly, initial codes were generated in a data-driven fashion. This resulted in a codebook (see Appendix C), which could then be applied to the transcripts in the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti 23. In a third step, the codes were grouped into categories and candidate themes were explored. Here the focus was on identifying semantic themes, where the explicit meanings of data are first organized into descriptive patterns, which were then reviewed until data saturation was reached. The first orientation of the author was aided by an initial co-occurrence analysis of all codes of the data set and then, codes were grouped into categories and the co-occurrences between them were explored. This was done to gain a more refined understanding of the connections between the different steps of the process and to explore different aspects of the research question. Finally, these patterns' significance, broader meaning, and implications in relation to previous literature were interpreted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this report, the names of participants have been replaced by pseudonyms.

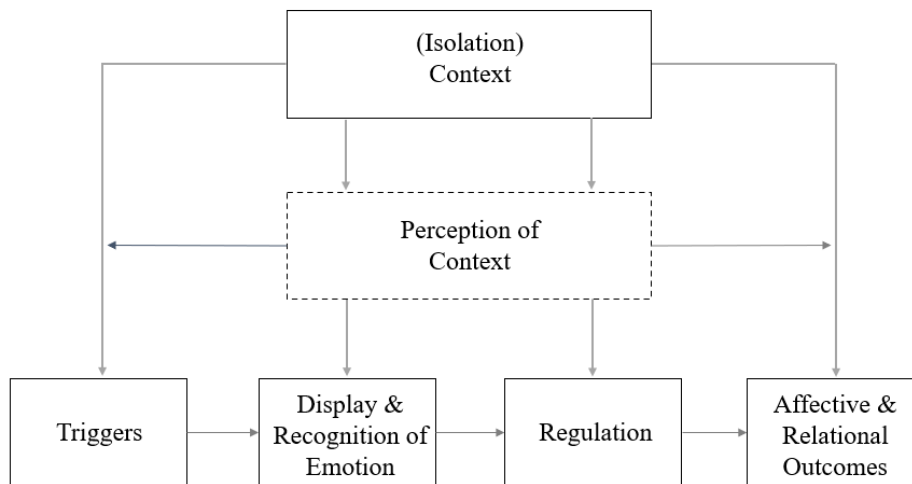
## **Results**

In exploring how employees in isolated work environments regulate their and each others' emotions, a distinct pattern of the IER process emerged from the interviews. As shown in Figure 1, the process started out with the presence of emotional triggers, which evoked the

emotions that could be regulated interpersonally. Second, the emotions were displayed (verbally or nonverbally) and could be recognized. In response, the interaction partner would, based on their motivations, employ a range of different regulation strategies which resulted in either long- or short-term affective and relational outcomes. Finally, the context and the perception thereof were found to affect the different elements of the process in several meaningful ways, which specifically related to the isolation setting. The following section discusses relevant themes at the different stages of the IER process (see Table 2 and 3 for the coding tree).

### Figure 1

#### *Conceptual Process Model of an Interpersonal Emotion Regulation Episode*



### Triggers of Emotions

Triggers are the events or conditions eliciting the emotion as prerequisite for the IER process. When looking at the narrative recall situations of specific IER episodes (see Appendix D) and other specific mentions of typical IER triggers throughout the interview, most triggers related to interpersonal issues and specifically various forms of incivility as discussed below.

Even though a few triggers related to the nature of the job, such as technical issues, time pressure and fatigue, they mostly appeared in combination with interpersonal issues.

### *Interpersonal Issues*

Some of the interpersonal triggers stemmed from guest interactions, where crew were (or were catastrophizing about) being judged or criticized by the guests for failing to meet service standards. Moreover, participants reported triggers from issues with co-workers or superiors, such as conflict, witnessing thereof and dealing with inexperienced co-workers. Especially mistakes, either their own or those of others, unfair treatment, a lack of recognition or exigent demands of the owner were a source of negative emotions. In response to these triggers, participants mostly reported anger, annoyance or frustration, anxiety, and fear.

Nearly a third of participants reported different forms of incivility or the witnessing thereof as triggering their negative emotions at the start of the IER episode. Some participants reported being bullied, insulted, shouted at by their co-workers or owners/guests and one participant received unfair treatment in response to experiencing physical and sexual harassment. Deckhand Timothy reported being excluded by fellow deck crew and Frank dealt with “condescending comments” from his head of department. Similarly, Tom described the behavior of the yacht's owner who “was (...) pretty aggressive to us at times, pretty derogatory” and Leah reported being shoutingly insulted by guests for spilling wine. Observers of uncivil acts equally needed IER. One stewardess reported that “one of the leaders came into the laundry room and was negatively speaking and verbally abusing one of the girls that he was leading right in front of me (...) it made me feel isolated and it made me feel that I’m not in an emotionally safe environment and it made me feel that I wanted to leave that day” (Tara). Similarly, a captain was distressed by

**Table 2**

*Coding Tree for the Themes Related to the IER Process*

<b>Triggers</b>	<b>Display &amp; Recognition of Emotion</b>	<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Affective &amp; Relational Outcomes</b>
<p><i>Interpersonal Issues</i>  <u>Interpersonal Triggers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Betrayal of trust</li> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Conflict</li> <li>• Communication issues</li> <li>• (unconstructive) criticism</li> <li>• Dealing with inexperienced coworkers</li> <li>• Hierarchy struggle</li> <li>• Insult</li> <li>• Judgement by guest/owner</li> <li>• Lack of recognition</li> <li>• Mistakes (own or others)</li> <li>• Physical abuse</li> <li>• Sexism/sexual harassment</li> <li>• Shouting</li> <li>• Unfair treatment</li> <li>• Witnessing conflict</li> <li>• Witnessing emotional distress</li> <li>• Witnessing incivility</li> </ul> <p><u>Emotion at start of IER</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Annoyance/Frustration</li> <li>• Anxiety = self-doubt/insecurity</li> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Disbelief/Helplessness</li> <li>• Disappointment</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Feeling of loneliness/isolation</li> <li>• Guilt</li> </ul>	<p><i>Restrictive Sharing</i>  <u>Sharing Emotions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiding emotions</li> <li>• Approaching colleague about emotions</li> <li>• Getting approached by colleague about emotions</li> <li>• Apprehension on whether/when to approach regulatee</li> <li>• Openly sharing</li> <li>• Withdrawing from others/avoidant behavior</li> <li>• Non-verbal expression of emotion</li> <li>• Sharing both positive and negative emotions</li> <li>• sharing more positive than negative emotions</li> <li>• keeping up a persona</li> </ul> <p><u>Emotional Regulation Regulatee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bottling it up/suppression of emotions</li> <li>• trying to resolve emotions by yourself</li> </ul> <p><u>Job Tasks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• guest/client interaction</li> <li>• emotional labor</li> <li>• adapting to guests wants and needs</li> <li>• desire to please guests</li> </ul>	<p><i>Demonstrating Support</i>  <u>Strategies related to presence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting approached by colleague about emotions</li> <li>• holding space/offering to hold space</li> <li>• listening</li> <li>• gesture of caring</li> <li>• inquiring what they need</li> </ul> <p><i>Emotional Validation</i>  <u>Strategies related to understanding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• validating/expressing understanding</li> <li>• expressing compassion</li> <li>• sharing similar experience/feeling</li> <li>• apologizing</li> <li>• not empathizing</li> <li>• not responding/blank stare</li> </ul> <p><i>Providing Perspective</i>  <u>Strategies related to framing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reframing/relativizing</li> <li>• using humor</li> <li>• sharing similar experience/feeling</li> <li>• distracting</li> </ul> <p><i>Problem-Solving</i>  <u>Strategies aimed at the problem</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• giving concrete advice</li> <li>• offering instrumental support</li> <li>• brainstorming solutions (“sounding board”)</li> <li>• sharing similar experience</li> </ul>	<p><i>Emotional Improvements</i>  <u>Affective Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• calmed down</li> <li>• clarity about a</li> <li>• feeling heard</li> <li>• feeling less isolated</li> <li>• feeling supported</li> <li>• improved self-confidence</li> <li>• improvement of emotions</li> <li>• feeling reassured</li> <li>• feeling worse (short-term)</li> <li>• IER was not sufficient</li> <li>• improvement of emotions</li> <li>• relief</li> </ul> <p><i>Closeness</i>  <u>Relationship outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• better relationship short-term</li> <li>• better relationship long-term</li> <li>• continued IER instances with same person(s)</li> <li>• same relationship</li> <li>• worse relationship</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p><i>Demonstrating Support</i>  <i>Emotional Validation</i>  <i>Providing Perspective</i>  <i>Problem-Solving</i>  <i>Removal from the Situation</i></p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sadness</li> </ul>	<p><u>Demographics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age difference</li> <li>• Experience level difference</li> <li>• Learning/having to play the game</li> </ul> <p><i>Selective Sharing</i></p> <p><u>Sharing Emotions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selective sharing</li> </ul> <p><u>Interpersonal Dynamics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emotional ally</li> <li>• colleagues as friends and family</li> <li>• trust</li> </ul> <p><u>Relationship outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• same relationship</li> <li>• continued instances of IER</li> </ul>	<p><i>Removal from the Situation</i></p> <p><u>Strategies related to distance from trigger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (offering) to remove from situation/time</li> <li>• Distracting</li> <li>• Giving space</li> </ul> <p><i>Caring for the Person...and the Job</i></p> <p><u>Motivation (lack thereof)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no motivation</li> </ul> <p><u>Motivation (intrinsic)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• takes pride in being a chosen IER partner</li> <li>• willingness to apply higher emotional intelligence ability</li> </ul> <p><u>Motivation (relational care)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they are my friend</li> <li>• they care/feel sorry (sympathy)</li> <li>• they love me</li> <li>• they understand (empathy)</li> </ul> <p><u>Motivation (work-related)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fear of crew politics implication</li> <li>• it's part of their role</li> <li>• to enable work</li> <li>• to maintain good working relationship</li> </ul>	
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**Table 3**

*Coding Tree for Themes Related to the Context and the Perception of the Context of IER*

Context	Perceived Context
<p><i>Importance of Interpersonal Relationships at Work</i></p> <p><u>Job Tasks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high interdependence</li> <li>• overlapping responsibilities</li> <li>• jumping in (helping)</li> </ul> <p><u>Interpersonal Dynamics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• colleagues as friends and family</li> <li>• emotional ally</li> <li>• feeling supported</li> <li>• role conflict friend/colleague</li> <li>• comradery</li> </ul> <p><u>Emotional Demands (isolation context)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being away from home</li> <li>• inability to leave work</li> <li>• small private space</li> <li>• lack of emotional support at work</li> <li>• work-life blur</li> <li>• leaving/settling into a job</li> </ul> <p><u>Work outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• turnover for emotional reset</li> </ul>	<p><i>Apprehension About Emotional Contagion</i></p> <p><u>Interpersonal Dynamics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional contagion</li> <li>• Banter</li> <li>• Venting</li> </ul> <p><u>Environment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative environment</li> <li>• Positive environment</li> <li>• Fun environment</li> </ul> <p><u>Sharing Emotions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiding emotions</li> <li>• Withdrawing from others/avoidant behavior</li> <li>• Sharing more positive than negative emotions</li> </ul> <p><u>Emotion Regulation Regulatee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bottling up/suppressing of emotions</li> <li>• Trying to resolve emotions by yourself</li> </ul> <p><i>Perceived Organizational Support</i></p> <p><u>Environment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fun environment</li> <li>• Negative environment</li> <li>• Positive environment</li> <li>• Safe &amp; open environment</li> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Lack of psychological safety</li> <li>• Complaining</li> </ul> <p><u>Interpersonal Dynamics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling supported</li> <li>• Comradery</li> <li>• Jumping in</li> </ul>

<p><i>Interpersonal Trust</i></p> <p><u>Interpersonal dynamics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• trust</li> <li>• distrusting colleagues</li> <li>• betrayal of trust</li> </ul> <p><u>Emotional Demands (interpersonal)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• worry about reputation</li> </ul> <p><u>Interpersonal dynamics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional ally</li> </ul>	<p><u>Sharing Emotions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hiding emotions</li> <li>• Apprehension on whether/when to approach regulatee</li> <li>• Withdrawing from others/avoidant behavior</li> <li>• Approaching colleague about emotions</li> <li>• Selective sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blaming</li> <li>• Insult</li> <li>• Shouting</li> </ul> <p><u>Sharing Emotions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approaching others about emotions</li> <li>• Getting approached</li> <li>• Openly sharing</li> </ul> <p><u>Strategies (mix of all strategy types in “Regulation”)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offering instrumental support</li> <li>• Offering to hold space</li> <li>• Validating/expressing understanding</li> <li>• Sharing similar experience/feeling</li> </ul>
<p><i>Presence of Yacht Owner and Client</i></p> <p><u>Emotional Demands (interpersonal)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Unconstructive) criticism</li> <li>• Betrayal of trust</li> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Communication issues</li> <li>• Conflict</li> <li>• Dealing with ego</li> <li>• Dealing with inexperienced coworkers</li> <li>• Emotional labor</li> <li>• Insult</li> <li>• Judgement by guest/owner</li> <li>• Lack of recognition</li> <li>• Living up to other people’s standards</li> <li>• Macho culture</li> <li>• Sexism/sexual harassment</li> <li>• Shouting</li> <li>• Unfair treatment</li> <li>• Witnessing conflict</li> <li>• Witnessing incivility</li> <li>• Working harder than others</li> <li>• Worry about reputation</li> <li>• Living with colleagues</li> </ul> <p><u>Motivation (relational care)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are my friend</li> <li>• They care/feel sorry (sympathy)</li> </ul>	<p><u>Emotional Demands (isolation)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling of loneliness/isolation</li> <li>• Inability to leave work</li> <li>• Being away from home</li> <li>• Lack of emotional support at work</li> <li>• Lack of privacy</li> <li>• Small physical space</li> <li>• Small private space</li> <li>• Unfamiliarity</li> </ul> <p><u>Space</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pub</li> <li>• No space/time for emotions</li> <li>• Small private space</li> <li>• Small physical space</li> </ul> <p><u>Emotional Demands (nature of job)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• No space/time for emotions</li> <li>• Having to carry on as if nothing happened</li> </ul> <p><u>Emotion Regulation Regulatee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bottling up/suppression of emotions</li> <li>• Trying to resolve emotions by yourself</li> </ul>	<p><u>Strategies (negative)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructing to suppress emotion</li> <li>• Not responding/blank stare</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They love me</li> <li>• They understand (empathy)</li> <li>• Willingness to apply higher EI ability</li> </ul> <p><u>Motivation (work-related)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enable work</li> <li>• To maintain good working relationship</li> </ul>	<p><u>Tasks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional Labor</li> <li>• Guest/client interaction</li> <li>• Adapting to guests' wants and needs</li> </ul>
<p><i>Organizational &amp; Industry Norms</i></p> <p><u>Professionalism Norms</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionalism formal</li> <li>• Professionalism informal</li> <li>• Keep it to your cabin</li> <li>• Leave if you are not happy</li> <li>• Mental health stigma</li> </ul> <p><u>Emotional Valence Norms</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No negativity informal</li> <li>• No negativity formal</li> <li>• Positivity norm informal</li> <li>• Positivity norm formal</li> <li>• No drama</li> </ul>	<p><u>Gender(ed) Norms</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender roles (the boys/the girls)</li> <li>• Macho culture</li> <li>• Emotions as vulnerability</li> </ul> <p><u>Opinions &amp; ideal handling of emotions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's better to hide emotions</li> <li>• It's better to hide negative emotions</li> <li>• Bottling up = unhelpful</li> </ul> <p><u>Strategies (negative)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructing to suppress emotion</li> </ul>
<p><i>Leadership Role</i></p> <p><u>IER experience leaders</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional isolation</li> <li>• Loneliness</li> <li>• Expectation of emotional strength</li> <li>• Off-site IER</li> <li>• Responsibility over others' emotions</li> <li>• Role conflict friend vs. boss</li> </ul>	

witnessing one of his crew members leaving several crew “breaking down a little bit in tears” (Keith).

### **Communication and Recognition of Emotion**

The second part of the process involves how individuals dealt with their emotions, whether and how they displayed their emotions and communicated them, and how IER was initiated. Here, the two themes of restricted and selective sharing were identified.

#### ***Restrictive Sharing***

In examining the responses on how emotions are generally handled at work, a general pattern of hiding emotions emerged. As one participant put it, “in front of guests, you never ever complain or let them see you are upset” (Tara), while another pointed out that crew hide their emotions “mostly around guests, whether it’s with colleagues or guests or managers” (Sandra). When guests are off the yacht, participants reported that “people feel a bit more able to voice their emotions” (Kelly). However, some participants were firm in pointing out that showing and sharing emotions amongst crew is uncommon. Sarah explained that “when somebody’s not in a good place, they will withdraw and rather go sit on the opposite side of the boat and do their own thing or just not talk to anybody else”. When possible, they would remove themselves from the boat “to process everything” (Ryan). In contrast, about one third of participants reported sharing their emotions openly with co-workers, some of them daily. Similarly, there was a division between crew in which emotions they would be willing to share with others. Some would share positive and negative emotions in equal measures, and some would share negative emotions less than the positive ones. Moreover, several crew members noted an age difference in sharing emotions in that the “more junior crew are much more into vocalizing it than the senior members

of the crew” (John). The senior participants found that senior crew know “how to look after themselves and keep their emotions in check” (Sarah).

The narratives of specific IER processes reflected this inhibition to share as their first regulatory action after experiencing the trigger would often involve hiding the emotion and withdrawing from the situation or others, attempting to regulate their emotions by themselves first. Nevertheless, most participants reported expressing their emotions nonverbally, by “rushing” (Sarah, Frank & Ryan), “huffing and puffing”, “fidgeting” and “slamming hatches” (John), “crying” or making other facial expressions (Leo, James, Ellie, Emily, Leah). In some cases, participants reported that these signs were picked up by colleagues who then approached them to initiate regulation. Finally, the severity of restriction became apparent while conducting the interviews. Participants struggled to identify situations in which they felt bad at work and a person had responded to this emotion. Some took over 20 minutes and multiple attempts for this, often realizing that they had not shared, and no one had reacted to their emotions after all.

### *Selective Sharing*

When participants approached colleagues themselves, they typically shared their feelings with one or two colleagues they felt close to (e.g., romantic partners at work, work friends, or close work relationships). Relatedly, some participants reported that the narrated IER instances were part of a series of recurring IER instances involving the same interaction partner(s), particularly relating to persistent problems or as manifestation of relationship quality. Henry, who was part of a crew that was continuously frustrated with the leadership style of the captain, explained that sharing their frustrations “was a common thing (...) we’d come down and then, and all just give our two cents and talk about what happened”. Indeed, the sharing of similar frustrations among crew was common and brought feelings of validation and temporary relief

from distress. Additionally, two stewardesses facing persistent incivility had “daily check-ins because we thought that it was kind of us, the two of us, in this situation together” (Tara). A captain who shared his worries about incivility amongst crew with his wife reported: “I’ve been with her for 20 years, it’s how we interact” (Keith). Moreover, Ellie said that “I wouldn’t have had that conversation with a captain that wasn’t my partner”. Finally, in some cases where the negative emotions stemmed from (witnessing) incivility, employment concerns, or technical problems, crew would recruit the help of crew or managers of higher authority.

## **Regulation**

In the third step of the process, several regulation strategies could be observed, and the motivations of regulators as identified by regulatees were explored. Examining the participants’ responses, a wide repertoire and a range of combinations of emotion regulation strategies were employed by interaction partners. Specifically, the themes of demonstrating support, emotional validation, providing perspective, problem solving and removal from the situation emerged and the motivational theme, caring for the person...and the job, was identified.

### ***Demonstrating Support***

The theme of demonstrating support encompassed strategies that convey care for and understanding for others by showing presence and a willingness to assist one’s interaction partner’s emotional needs. Even though sometimes apprehensive of whether or not to approach a person that appears upset “because you don’t want to make them even more stressed or them to, like, snap at you” (Ryan), interviewees reported that they would either give their regulatees space or decide to approach them as they would “gauge the severity of it by how long it lasts (...) whether you need to get involved” (Keith). The approach would usually occur in the form of a

statement that the emotional state was noticed, followed by an inquiry of whether they want to talk about it, what is going on and what they could do to help. Additionally, some interaction partners would offer to hold space. This would often be accompanied by a display of non-verbal gestures of caring such as making their regulatees a cup of tea or showing physical presence, i.e. hugging. Once sharing was initiated, listening to show an interest in the regulatees emotional well-being was commonly reported.

### ***Emotional Validation***

Several participants reported a validation of their feelings, where the interaction partners signaled an acceptance of and empathy for the regulatee's emotional state. Emily, who was challenged by her junior stewardess, spoke to her first officer, and said that "he was validating my emotions as well, because he was saying to me, you know, 'I can see that she's difficult to work with'". Some interaction partners also expressed their compassion and shared their emotions and thoughts on the triggering issue. For example, John, who wanted to resign for a lack of recognition by his superior, received validation by his captain who "was incredibly understanding, (...) said he knew where I was coming from (...) he knew how [superior's name] could be".

### ***Providing Perspective***

About a third of participants reported receiving strategies to readjust their perspective on the triggering issue. For this, their interaction partners either shared a similar experience or relativized the gravity of the issue. In addition to the validation that Timothy received, his friend also shared a story mirroring his experience in her department and told him how she dealt with the situation, what she thought about his situation and pointed out where he was overthinking. In



two cases, where crew were in anxious self-doubt about the way they had served their guests food and drinks, their interaction partners relativized the mistakes they made and added a humorous statement. For example, in a situation where a stewardess had spilled wine over a guest, her chief stewardess reframed the incident to be a “little slip up” that all crew encounter at some point and a chef, who was also in the room added “don’t worry, it’s just some wine. It’s all good. Like, I can throw them that dinner over the laps or on the floor” (Leah).

### ***Problem-Solving***

Recounting their IER episodes, yacht crew reported to have experienced several strategies where they were either given concrete advice, could brainstorm solutions together and received instrumental support by their interaction partners. One chief stewardess recounted an IER instance at a new job where her first officer found her in distress over managing two junior stewardesses: “We went through everything, and he has a lot of experience managing different people. He was giving me, you know, tools, I guess, in ways that I could manage her differently” (Emily). In another case, a manager helped to address the root cause of a captain’s negative emotions, a broken generator that was negatively impacting the guest experience, by giving technical advice and support and advice on how to manage the guests’ expectations.

### ***Removal from the Situation***

In their narratives of receiving and providing IER during guest trips, participants reported offers or orders to remove oneself from the triggering situation or the yacht temporarily. This would either be done during the initiation of IER or the interaction itself to provide a private space for regulating emotions together or alone and safeguard a positive guest experience. As Emily described, “In an ideal world, I wouldn’t have been on the bridge [pilot house]. I wouldn’t

have had guests on board. (...) I'd have been able to wander off the boat or something. But, you know, he sent me down for a break after and he was like 'go and take an hour's break, so you can switch off a bit'". In combination with this strategy, interaction partners would often offer to take over the workload, to "take over the pressure of the entertainment side of things (...)" (Sandra) and let regulatees "compose" themselves (Leah).

### ***Caring for the Person... and the Job***

The interviewees attributed a wide variety of motivations to their interaction partners' regulation behaviors. Most crew reported that their interaction partners acted out of an element of genuine care for them, with many also attributing motives of friendship and empathy. This would often also be reflected in a higher motivation of interaction partners to apply their higher emotional intelligence.

Nevertheless, interviewees also reported that, in cases where guests are on board, motives of care would be intertwined with motives to enable work. In the case of James who received regulation from his manager as he fixed the generator, James was aware of mixed motives: "I think he really wants me to succeed, partially because it means that he will succeed, right? If I run great charters, then there will be more charter bookings (...). But I think, beyond that, there's also a strong interest on both sides to maintain a friendly and fun working relationship (...). We've really grown as friends in a way". Leah also noticed that on a personal level, her colleagues would not want to see her upset but that on "the work side, (...), they wanted the service to go smoothly, so the boss had a good trip (...). They didn't want it to look bad on the guests and on the crew". When interaction partners did not provide (sufficiently helpful) regulation, interviewees attributed the lack of motivation for IER to being "quite wrapped up in their lives" (Kelly) or wanting to avoid strain on their end (John & Sandra).

## **Regulation Outcomes**

To address the question on how regulation impacts yacht crew on an emotional level and in the perception of their relationships the themes of emotional improvements and closeness were found.

### ***Emotional Improvements***

Most strategies, except for negative reactions (i.e. not responding, invalidating or giving instructions to suppress emotions, leading to feeling worse in the short-term), led to a short-term improvement of emotions. A range of positive effects such as participants feeling calmed down, having improved self-confidence, feeling supported and experiencing a relief (and calmness) for having clarity on an issue were closely associated with this. In terms of feeling supported, the strategies of offering instrumental support, relativizing, brainstorming solutions, listening and gestures of caring were often mentioned and, with the addition of offers to remove oneself from the situation, also gave relief. Several participants would feel calmed-down sufficiently and confident enough to tackle problems, which ultimately resolved remaining negative affective states and resulted in improved self-confidence.

With regards to the specific strategy themes, several observations were made. In terms of demonstrating support, participants appreciated when others approached them and inquired about their feelings, as “it is always nice to know that someone else is noticing, even if they can’t help” (James), but found this unhelpful if they were busy with a job or wanted to be left alone. Equally, being listened to by their interaction partners would help them as “it feels like they’re present” (Timothy), making them feel “seen and heard” (Kelly) and gestures of caring and physical presence made them feel supported and soothed. All participants found emotional validation to

be helpful and perspective taking made participants feel heard, reassured and less alone. Additionally, adding humor to relativizing statements was helpful as “you just sort of pull yourself out of this tunnel vision of stress and overwhelm (...)” (Ellie). Problem-solving approaches also improved emotions for all participants, even if proposed solutions were not a viable option in their opinion. Finally, removing regulatees from the situation was often found to be helpful for their emotions as they could get privacy for IER, gain distance from the trigger and calm down. Notwithstanding these short-term improvements, their longevity was negatively affected when the triggering problem was or could not be (sufficiently) addressed by the interaction partner. Similarly, affective improvements would also not last when participants were re-exposed to the same trigger on a continuous basis. For example, Timothy said that after IER, he felt “more ready to deal with situations (...) but then, if you keep going back to the same environment, there’s only so much that talking can do”.

### *Closeness*

When considering the outcome patterns of relational impacts that were reported by the interviewees, it was found that successful IER could lead participants to feel closer to their interaction partner. For example, Emily who was new in her job and had not shared her emotions with her first officer before, said: “I was thinking, you know ‘he’s going to think that I’m not good at my job’ (...), but actually, he wasn’t like that at all (...) it kind of made me question, if I was silly for not speaking to him earlier”, adding “we definitely became closer and, I guess, better colleagues (...). I suddenly, like, felt ‘oh, I’ve actually got the support of my crew here’”. On several occasions, participants would also express increases in closeness as a growing friendship. If the IER episode was reported to be an expression of a routine behavioral pattern of their relationship, participants reported either no impact on their relationships or growing slightly

closer, as they felt gratitude for being able to rely on their interaction partner. Conversely, when participants deemed the IER episode as unsuccessful, for example upon receiving negative reactions or not (sufficiently) following through with instrumental support, the relationship most often deteriorated in the long-term, as regulatees lost trust and did not initiate IER again.

### **Contextual Factors**

The context was a driver for the importance of interpersonal relationships at work and at the same time restricted the sharing of emotions and with whom, when and where they were shared. Furthermore, it impacted the assigned motivations for IER and in some cases the adaptiveness of individual strategies. Here, the themes importance of interpersonal relationships at work, interpersonal trust, presence of yacht owner and clients, organization and industry norms and leadership role were identified.

### ***Importance of Interpersonal Relationships at Work***

From the participants' descriptions of their work, it became clear that work and life in the context of yachting is characterized by high levels of interdependence. More specifically, they reported high interdependence for work tasks, acknowledging that “you have to get along to make your job work” (Leo). Similarly, crew expressed emotional strain coming from the isolation from private support networks, and sometimes any other social contacts when at sea, indicating high social interdependence amongst crew. In line with this, “crew in the industry are very tight, like, if you are good to crew and you help people out and you’re friendly with them and you make an effort, you very quickly get a family of friends” (Tom), and social cohesion and support “in order to stay sane, stay happy” (Tara) was reported by multiple crew.

In contrast to the aforementioned interdependence and resulting cohesion, other crew who were the most immediate source of emotional support aboard were, next to guest interactions and fatigue from being overworked, a major source of the crews' emotional strain, bringing about difficulties for IER. Ryan explained that "where most people go home and can, (...) have a rant with their wife about how bad the day was at work, we're stuck on board and usually (...), a lot of things that are causing you to feel that way are caused from the people that you're now stuck with". Participants reported that interpersonal issues with crew would limit the number of potential regulation partners to approach, that "if you don't have a close connection (...), suddenly you're very alone in this world on the boat" (Ryan), placing pressure on establishing connections where IER will be provided. Relatedly, participants indicated that it is common to resign due to insufficient emotional support, leaving the remaining crew distressed as the process of establishing supportive relationships for IER must be started anew.

### ***Interpersonal Trust***

In their narratives, participants indicated that they required a sufficient level of trust in their regulation partners for initiating IER. Ryan remembered: "When I first started, a guy said to me (...) 'when you get on board a boat, the best thing you can do is find one crew member who you really trust and who you really make your friend. Because very quickly, there'll be a time where you need someone who you can just off-load to and share with' and (...) that stuck with me quite a lot.". Indeed, when contemplating approaching others for regulation or getting approached, crew would sometimes be "distressed because a lot of people have negative experiences with opening up and what that means, especially in a small industry where everyone's working so close together" (Timothy), that opening up "can be of assistance, or can

be used against you” (Mike). Thus, the level of interpersonal trust would restrict the level of sharing and make interviewees selective about their interaction partners.

### *Presence of Yacht Owner and Clients*

Despite the high levels of joy, pride, and excitement that crew reported for times where owners or guests were on board, this operational context presented higher emotional demands for crew (compared to time without guests), while presenting fewer opportunities to express themselves and therefore initiate regulation. The heightened emotional demands stemmed from providing service with a smile, where crew “put on a persona and hide emotions” (Leah) and are available for guests between 14-18 hours a day, resulting in fatigue and oftentimes frustration with guests and crew. The pressure to hide (mostly negative) emotions from guests is high, as Ellie put it, “if you aren’t making their life nice, there is no point in you and that plays on your mind”. Tom described that during guest trips “you will see crew, like, dry heaving in a corner for like 15 minutes and then stand up, wipe their face, put a little make-up on and come out with a big smile”. Other crew reported struggling with feelings of being trapped due to the isolation from the outside world, frustrated that “you can’t create a road where there is water” (Ellie).

Many participants reported a lack of time for IER during guest trips. Equally, they would find themselves with a lack of space to have privacy for IER. Leah described the different areas of the yacht from guest areas to crew common areas, to crew cabins as increasingly safe for displaying emotions. Conversely, when no guests were aboard, crew would have more opportunities to leave the yacht and call home, reporting more IER under these conditions. Pubs were used to engage in IER with other crew or members of the yachting community, “for the sake of confidentiality and privacy” and it also being “just an easy way to switch off when you’re not sitting (...) on the boat” (Frank).

About a third of participants (who mostly occupied the most guest-facing roles) reported receiving regulation while on a guest trip and these were either related to difficult guest interactions or issues with other crew members. This context was the only one in which the motivation to enable work was found. Next to motives of relational care, crew were aware of the collective effort that was needed to create a positive guest experience. In terms of strategies during guest trips, the strategy of offering to remove oneself from the situation was more frequently applied and perceived as helpful, while another strategy, namely hugging closely before a guest interaction, was perceived as unhelpful as “that just allows you to sort of go into yourself a little bit (...) too much and then it’s difficult to carry on” (Leah).

### ***Organizational & Industry Norms***

In describing their work context, crew alluded to a set of norms on board their specific yacht and from the wider industry that would impact their decision whether to share their emotions with others, namely those of professionalism and emotional valence.

All participants mentioned a norm for professionalism, which was prevalent throughout the industry and in some of their contracts was expressed formally, to perform “duties in a professional manner at all times” (Kelly). Especially when guests were aboard, this enforced norms of emotional display towards guests and suppressed the initiation of IER. When guests were not aboard, this norm remained to a certain extent as participants felt that they were still in their workplace, making sharing of emotions still not entirely appropriate. Emily explained: “people act maybe less professionally and with their emotions than they would do in, say, an office. Which is OK, because, you know, we live and work together and we’re here to be supportive of each other, but I think you need to be able to keep your emotions in check”.



In close connection to the professionalism norm, norms for the valence of the emotions displayed to others at work were found. While expressing negative emotions was reported to be discouraged, the positive display of emotion was fostered. In reference to guest interactions, Tom said that “you can’t be a grumpy person and work on a boat. You have to be naturally happy”. Moreover, Sandra pointed out that this also extends to interaction with crew as “it’s definitely seen negatively if you are (...) upset at work or frustrated or angry, or if (...) you’re not taking a situation calmly” and Kelly said that it was generally understood that “it’s better that you leave than bring everybody else down”. This was also reinforced by the informally and formally expressed “no drama rule”, where the emotional display of strongly negative emotions (on a frequent basis) is condemned. Similarly, crew of all genders reported experiencing gendered norms of “manning up” to inhibit sharing. Conversely, sharing positive emotions with crew and guests and to create a positive working environment was frequently reported. Crew generally agreed with the aforementioned norms as they were seen to enable a positive guest experience or a manageable working and living situation. However, they felt that hiding and bottling up of emotions was damaging their mental health in the long run.

### ***Leadership role***

Leaders represented a special case for IER and they would show their emotions less than the rest of the crew. Captains would feel emotionally isolated from others on board. As one captain said: “If you’re needing attention, who gives you attention? You’re on top” (Mike). Except for one captain who worked together with his wife onboard, all other captains reported sharing with people that were not employed on the yacht. This lack of sharing aboard was linked to several conditions. Some captains were concerned that engaging in IER with their crew would make them more of a friend than a boss, worrying about losing authority. Furthermore, they felt

responsible for the crew's emotions, expecting that their emotions would be filtered through them, dissuading them from sharing. Finally, captains felt an expectation of emotional strength, as they are "the person they're looking for guidance" (Keith) and "you don't tend to share much because you have this expectation of the one that solves things. You cannot be broken or stressed" (Mike).

### **Perceived Organizational Context**

Next to impacts on IER as a direct function of the context, the perception of the context appeared to influence IER of crew. More specifically, they were apprehensive of emotions being contagious and their perception of organizational support also impacted IER.

### ***Apprehension About Emotional Contagion***

Interviewees' narratives tapped into the collective dimension of IER, namely emotional contagion and its implications for restrictive sharing. Almost all interviewees expressed an awareness of emotional contagion in this "microcosm" (Sandra), saying that "you feed off of each other's emotions" (Sarah), and when people express their emotions "it's like a chain" (Henry) where "emotions spread" (Leah). Sarah explained that she does not like to share her negative emotions with people aboard, because they "are contagious, and you don't want to turn your work-life environment into a melting pot of negativity". Accordingly, sharing positive emotions was mentioned as part of trying to build an enjoyable work environment. Additionally, this awareness of emotional contagion also appeared as a driver for helping behaviors. Effective IER would make their colleagues "act differently and then it's nicer to be around them. So then, the whole environment improves" (Sarah). This motivation would especially be visible during

IER on guest trips, one crew explaining that “if one of us is down, it affects everyone and it affects the success of both of us” (James).

Two group-level phenomena could be linked to IER. Banter and venting aboard would often be described as creating a positive and negative work atmosphere aboard respectively. As Keith and John described it, banter and putting on happy music keep the mood up. In contrast, venting was often frowned upon, since, if the underlying problems were not addressed over time, this practice would evolve into a “gossipy and toxic” atmosphere (Emily), keeping crew away from initiating IER.

### ***Perceived Organizational Support***

When asked how emotions are typically handled at work, crew often drew comparisons between the different yachts they had worked on. In these comparative narratives, a connection between participants' perceptions of a yacht's supportiveness and the implications for IER crystallized. On boats and during times where crew provided high levels of instrumental support to others, and high levels of trust, comradery and a fun atmosphere were reported, participants felt supported and approaching and getting approached about emotions appeared to be more common. Furthermore, interaction partners would more often offer instrumental support, offer to hold space, validate the other's emotions, and share a similar experience to provide perspective.

When describing unsupportive work contexts and time periods, participants felt a lack of psychological safety, and described increased complaining, blaming and incivility. Here, the crew would report that it would be common to hide emotions, bottle them up and share them very selectively, as they would distrust their colleagues and superiors. In this context, IER was sometimes reported to be maladaptive, as interaction partners would often not respond to

emotional display, instructed to suppress emotions or did not address concrete problems (sufficiently).

## **Discussion**

The present thesis aims to offer a fine-grained understanding of the IER process and it is affected by contextual factors in isolated work settings. The results reveal a process pattern of IER, unfolding from emotional triggers, to sharing and recognition of the emotion, regulation itself, and culminating in various affective and relational outcomes. Triggers seem to reside mostly in the interpersonal sphere, but also include some factors related to the job such as time pressure, fatigue, and technical issues. Sharing negative emotions seems to be restrictive and typically only occurs with select interaction partners. In terms of regulation strategies, demonstrating support, emotional validation, providing perspective, problem solving and removal from the situation are identified as most relevant themes. IER generally seems to result in improved emotions for all strategies, but improvements only last if interaction partners address concrete problems sufficiently. Additionally, perceived successful IER is associated with greater closeness among the interaction partners as an outcome. Regarding work context, isolation from private support networks increases the need for positive interpersonal relationships and IER while the potential regulation partners also represent the main emotional triggers. This might explain the restricted nature of IER as well as why it predominantly occurs in high-trust relationships only. The presence of guests seems to increase emotional demands while sharing decreases along with the availability of time and space to do so. Organizational and industry norms of professionalism and emotional valence are experienced to further restrict sharing, especially during guest trips. A final set of themes relating to the organizational context suggest

that crew are concerned about the infectiousness of emotions in a small space and therefore share less or feel motivation to provide IER to others. Relatedly, when the environment is considered supportive, IER and some specific strategies are applied more frequently.

These main findings of this study from the thematic analysis can be placed into the context of literature on IER. First, the process pattern of IER as found in this study shows similarities with but also differences to existing models of IER. Concretely, this study found strategies in line with the broader notion of intrinsic and extrinsic regulation strategies as proposed by Williams & Zaki (2013) and interaction narratives that fit Dixon-Gordon et al.'s (2015) summary model of IER. However, given the narrative situations involving up to three individuals, and contrary to Williams & Zaki's (2013) and Dixon-Gordon et al.'s (2015) accounts, IER was found not to be of a strictly dyadic nature. The process found provides new information on the immediate situational context (i.e. the triggering events) and the broader context (relational, environmental & cultural) and how these impact the decisions to approach others, strategy adaptiveness, regulator motivations and regulation outcomes. Consequently, while some overlap was found with individual-level conceptualizations of extrinsic strategies (e.g. Gross), some strategies found here, such as demonstrating support and emotional validation, were found to be an expression of the polyadic nature of IER. Similarly, the categorizations made by this study did not fit with Niven et al.'s (2009) distinction between affect-improving and affect-worsening strategies, as, depending on the context, the same strategy could improve or worsen affect.

Regarding the application of a broad range of strategies in IER episodes, interaction partners would engage in a combination of demonstrating support, emotional validation, providing perspective, problem-solving and removing the regulatee from the situation. This

finding corroborates Gagnon and Monties' (2023) wide and flexibly applied repertoire of IER strategies used among police officers. While all strategies seemed to improve affect, their relative and combined effects across situations remain to be explored. The strategy themes found in this study match the strategies in the Interpersonal Regulation Scale (IRIS) by Swerdlow and Johnson (2022). Specifically, their categories of problem-focused coping, cognitive reappraisal, empathic concern and validation, physical presence, distraction, and hostility are largely reflected in the strategies found in this study. This considerable overlap can serve as a form of triangulation in the conceptualization of extrinsic strategies and aid in the development and refinement of empirical frameworks that include conceptualizations of extrinsic strategies within their models.

Concerning perceived motivations, a genuine desire to improve the other's emotions is most identified in our data. This finding matches motivations as ascribed in Gagnon and Monties' (2023) study of police officers. Beyond that, work enabling motives are identified in our sample as well, as crew regulated each other for performance and to uphold professional norms. This finding aligns with Campo et al.'s (2017) observation that professional rugby players provide IER "to avoid negative consequences of the teammate's emotion on performance" (p. 390). Opposite to Niven et al. (2019), who report potential negative impacts of such motives on the emotional state and relationship quality, in cases of mixed motives, participants still reported improved emotions overall. This indicates that motives to enable work may not eradicate IER benefits entirely if motives of genuine care are still assigned.

Regarding outcomes of IER, the finding that affective improvements do not last if instrumental support was not (sufficiently) provided resonates with Dixon-Gordon et al.'s (2015) comment on IER adaptiveness. Indeed, it should not be measured merely by the level of

emotional distress but also the facilitation of goal-directed behaviors. The impact on closeness partially aligns with findings by Niven et al.'s (2012b) prisoner sample, where improvements of affect were linked to increased perceptions of friendships. However, evidence for increased levels of trust, like in these authors' sample, was minimal, possibly due to crew deciding to share only in relationships that were already marked by higher levels of trust. Moreover, the finding that in some cases the improvement of relationship quality was reported to persist over time even though the affective improvements did not, supports these authors' idea of the possibility that "a change in affect may not be a necessary condition of a change in perceptions of friendship and trust". Thus, IER may be, regardless of whether long-term emotional improvements are attained, an effective means of building positive relationships at work.

The work environment in which IER occurs facilitates and inhibits emotional sharing, which aligns with prior research on reduced support-seeking in isolated confined environments (Sandal, 2007). Themes related to the working conditions and environment of yachts highlighted the increased significance of interpersonal triggers and IER outcomes, as emotional labor undermined the initiation of IER during a time which is the most emotionally taxing for crew. This is in line with a study about emotional labor on cruise ships which showed that negative working situations (lack of personal and rest time) aboard exacerbate and social support buffers emotional exhaustion from EL (Sina, 2018), the narratives pointed to the importance and limited availability of IER during these times. Furthermore, the finding of interviewees' conceptualization of yacht space, where effective ER and IER are inhibited, expands on Glakikh and Gladkikh's (2023) finding that additional "recreational spaces" for crew may improve crew well-being. Additionally, the timing of IER appears to be linked to these space perceptions, with increased sharing when the environment appears less professional and more private. Possibly, the

professionalism and emotional valence norms and the emotional display rules, depending on the operational mode and emotional culture of the yacht, create varying normative climates that impact sharing and adaptivity of regulation partners' reactions to negative emotions. Relatedly, the unique motivation for IER to enable work can be understood as what Bolton (2005) calls "prescriptive emotion management", where workers manage emotions, in this case with another person, to adhere to the norms of their professional role.

The themes of emotional contagion, interpersonal trust and leadership role provide insight on the social context that restricts sharing of negative emotions. The finding that crew refrained from sharing for emotional contagion reasons resonates with recent accounts of this being common in commercial shipping (e.g. Paukstat, 2023). Indeed, hiding of negative emotions and provision of IER to others may serve to create and preserve what Menges and Kilduff call "emotional capital" (2015, p.891), the resource of a positive, collegial atmosphere. The finding of banter as a collective strategy aligns with this and may be a form of "team play" (Paukstat, 2023) to safeguard the positive climate aboard. Unlike Niven et al.'s (2012b) findings of increased trust after IER in low-trust contexts, this was merely weakly reflected in the data. This could be due to different sample characteristics. These authors had a mixed sample of prison staff and prisoners, where the latter cannot choose to leave the isolation context like yacht crew. Prisoners might have an exceptionally high reliance on interpersonal relationships, increasing the pressure for interpersonal trust. Finally, the finding of emotional isolation leaders and their off-site sharing aligns with the growing body of literature on leadership well-being (Gabriel et al., 2021; Zumaeta, 2019). However, given that for yacht captains there often is no "outside of work" possibility to regulate emotions in person, it is possible that this emotional isolation is more pronounced for leaders in isolated work environments.



## **Limitations & Future Directions**

Considering researchers' involvement in qualitative research, it is possible that some degree of subjectivity based on the author's own professional experiences, assumptions, and beliefs, impacted the construction of themes. Similarly, the lack of inter-rater reliability for the codes applied to the data could also be implicated in reducing interpretative validity. However, to verify whether the reported themes did indeed reflect the interviewees' lived experiences well, several participant validations were conducted, which confirmed confidence in the found themes. While researcher involvement in qualitative research is inevitable, future research could benefit from having multiple coders.

Moreover, as the insight on the IER episodes was based purely on recalled narratives, the data collected might be influenced by memory bias. Indeed, participants sometimes struggled to accurately remember the chronological sequence of the IER episodes, especially the sequencing of intrinsic and extrinsic strategies and intra- and inter-individual responses to them. Therefore, a reliance on reflections only might not fully capture the phenomenon. Similarly, the IER episodes were narrated from the regulatee's perspective, limiting the insights to the intraindividual processes (emotions and motivations) of regulators. Given the methodological limitations of narrative recall, future research could use mixed methods. The sequencing of strategies and regulatees' reactions to them could be observed and assessed in real-time and post-regulation interviews could be used to probe for affective and cognitive changes within both interaction partners (i.e. studies like Gagnon & Monties, 2023).

Finally, as this study was aimed at understanding IER in the specific context of yachting, no control group was present. To further our knowledge on the relative impact of different contextual factors, future studies could adopt a comparative design that systematically

investigates the similarities and differences between isolated and non-isolated employee populations.

### **Implications**

Theoretically, the IER process identified can expand frameworks for IER, like Williams & Zaki's (2013) and Dixon-Gordon et al.'s (2015), in several meaningful ways. First, the finding of this study that some IER episodes involved three people, expands the conceptualization of IER to be a polyadic phenomenon, involving at least two people. Second, the IER process pattern as described by this study allows for a more comprehensive view on IER, adding the immediate situational context and broader contextual conditions to existing models. Concretely, these findings largely outline the conditions under which IER is initiated, its strategies are adaptive and its outcomes last over time, thus, bolstering the predictive power of theory. Hence, this study showed that IER is not only "occurring in a context of a live social interaction" (Zaki & Williams, 2013, p. 804), but a highly context-sensitive phenomenon overall. Third, this study provides evidence that the categorization of IER strategies should be descriptive and atheoretical at this early stage of research. More specifically, the strategies that emerged from the data that are uniquely geared towards the polyadic nature of IER (e.g. demonstrating support and emotional validation) cannot be covered by individual-level categorizations, necessitating an open and descriptive approach for comprehensive theorizing. Furthermore, the finding that the same strategy can have different effects depending on the context has important implications for Niven et al.'s (2009) typology of affect-improving and affect-worsening strategies. As shown in the examples of this study, these categories appear to conflate cause and effect, or rather cause and intent, indicating that revision is needed for a more descriptive categorization.

Practically, the lack of discourse in yachting on the importance and potential benefits of effective IER requires a creation of educational space on this topic. Indeed, interviewees expressed a wish for training in ER, IER and handling the work-life blur. For this, a mental health module covering such topics could be integrated in the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) certificate (mandatory for all types of seagoing crew). Additionally, given the contextual impacts of individual yacht cultures on IER, yacht crew could also benefit from on-board training. Here, crew could learn to promote a supportive culture for emotions, where the variety of adaptive strategies found in this study could be discussed and practiced. Furthermore, the proposed solutions could also be monitored as intervention studies informing both practice and research. Nevertheless, given participants reports on the detrimental and sometimes exploitative working conditions in yachting, it needs to be noted that to improve emotional well-being aboard, a systematic change in formal support structures and regulation within the industry will be required.

Moreover, this study's findings highlight the importance of leadership. Leaders hold a key position from which they can - and arguably should - engage in, facilitate, and encourage IER. Importantly, they need the skills to do so and, according to captains interviewed in this study who reported missing training in managing crew and their well-being, they seem to be lacking them. Additionally, leaders themselves face severe emotional strain with fewer opportunities yet to receive IER. Thus, specifically targeted support systems and training for leaders would be beneficial. For example, leaders could learn to provide ritualized attention to emotions aboard, offering a safe forum to address emotional well-being and modeling positive IER behaviors.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis investigates how workers in isolated environments regulate their and each other's emotions and finds a process pattern of interpersonal emotion regulation, namely triggers, communication and recognition of the emotion, regulation and affective and relational outcomes. Furthermore, it identifies various contextual factors which largely restrict the sharing of emotions and also impact the other stages of the process. Overall, this study expands our understanding on interpersonal emotion regulation as a dynamic and context-sensitive process phenomenon, laying the foundation for future systematic studies that may ultimately assist employees in navigating emotions effectively while maintaining and enhancing positive relationships at work.

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## **Appendix A. Informed Consent & Demographic Questions**

### **INTERPERSONAL EMOTION REGULATION AT WORK**

#### **Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience**

Thank you for considering participation in this study. Please read the information below carefully and take your time to make an informed decision regarding your completely voluntary participation in this study.

This study is conducted by Maastricht University, and specifically executed by the master students Julia Esen and Neevati Uppal, under supervision of the responsible researcher Dr. Bram Fleuren. This study has been approved by the Ethics Review Committee Psychology and Neuroscience at Maastricht University under number 267\_60\_04\_2023.

#### **Purpose**

With this study, we want to understand how people regulate each other's emotions at work. The main goal of this project is to get insight into how people experience emotions at work and how they get support from others in regulating their emotions.

#### **Participant selection**

We are looking for working adults who are employed and have colleagues that they at least occasionally interact with at work. If that does not describe your situation well, please feel free to stop reading and stop your participation.

#### **Voluntary participation and time to decide**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to decline participation and to withdraw from the study at any time, without any negative consequences, and without providing any reasons.

**Procedure**

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to fill in a short online questionnaire. Filling in this questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes and is to get insights into some basic descriptive demographics of our participants. This short survey to this study is provided online and can be completed using your smartphone or computer. You may choose to skip any questions that you don't wish to answer. After this short survey, we invite you to participate in the interview which is the central activity of this study. The interview will take about 45 minutes. In the interview we will ask you several questions about your experiences surrounding regulating emotions at work. If you are uncomfortable with any question, you can indicate this or choose not to answer at all. You are also free to stop the interview at any time. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to be able to analyze the responses from our participants. Within a week after the interview, the audio recording will be transcribed and then deleted, and the transcript will be anonymized so that no data that are traceable to you will be saved.

**Risks and Discomfort**

There are no known or anticipated discomforts or risks associated with participation in this study. If you do end up experiencing discomfort by participating in the study, please contact the responsible researcher via the e-mail address below.

**Benefits**

There are no direct benefits or rewards for participating in the study.

**Privacy**

Personal Data and Research Data will be stored confidentially. This concerns all of the answers you provide in the online questionnaire (i.e., age, education level, gender, caring responsibilities at home, job title, job tenure, nationality, sector of employment) as well as your responses to the interview questions. Research data can be published and re-used in other research, but only in such a way that they cannot be traced back to you. Although we do not specifically ask for your e-mail address, we may communicate with you in this study via e-mail. We will use your e-mail address exclusively for communication for this study and it will not be stored anywhere or be

connected to the research data. You can withdraw your consent to the use of your personal data at any time. In that case, they will be deleted if possible.

For more information about privacy, consult the responsible researcher (see below), the website ([www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/fpn/ercpn](http://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/fpn/ercpn) under Fast Facts), or the Data Protection Officer of Maastricht University at [FG@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:FG@maastrichtuniversity.nl).

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, feel free to contact us.

### **Contact details**

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Responsible researcher:

Bram Fleuren (responsible researcher/supervisor, [bram.fleuren@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:bram.fleuren@maastrichtuniversity.nl))

Consent Declaration of Consent for participation in the research study

“Interpersonal emotion regulation at work” approved under ERCPN code: 267\_60\_04\_2023

**1) I have read the information presented above about the study and the use of my data. I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I have been able to think about my participation.**

- I am 18 years or older and I agree to participate in the study. I agree that the data as described in the information letter will be collected from me and used for the research. (1)
- I do not agree to participate in the study (2)

Thank you very much for participating in this study. On the next pages we ask you a couple of descriptive questions that we would like to get your input on before the

interview. We ask these questions to get an idea of which demographic groups are represented in the study. Your responses will be recorded anonymously and treated with full confidentiality. Still, if you do not wish to answer a particular question, feel free to skip it.

**2) How old are you?**

Please type in your age in whole years in the text box below.

---

**3) What gender do you identify with?**

- Male (1)
  - Female (2)
  - Non-binary / third gender (3)
  - Prefer not to say (4)
  - I'd like to describe my gender identity myself, namely as: (5)
- 

**4) Do you have any children or caring responsibilities in your private sphere?**

Please tick all options that apply below:

- I have children I take care of (1)
- I provide care to an adult person with an illness, injury, or disability (2)
- I provide care to an elderly person (e.g., family members) (3)
- None of the above (4)

**5) What is your current job title? (e.g., social worker, sailor, nurse, engineer, teacher)**

Please type your job title in the text box:

---

**6) How long have you been working in your current job?**

Please indicate how many years in the textbox:

---

**7) What is your nationality?**

Please type the nationality that describes you best in the textbox below:

---

**8) Which of these categories best describes your occupational group?**

- Social worker (1)
- Yacht crew (2)
- General working population (anything that is not indicated above) (3)

**9) As final question, please insert the participant number that you have been given by Julia or Neeeyati when they sent you this link. We ask you to do this to keep the responses anonymous while being able to match your responses from the questions above to the interview data after transcription.**

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## **Appendix B. Interview Guide**

### **Interview Guide**

Thank you for agreeing to join me for this interview. In the next about 45 minutes, we will be talking about your experience with emotions in the workplace. Often, people in the workplace influence each other's emotions, for example, to help another person feel better. For this study, we are interested in understanding the situations in which they do and how it works. When we talk about emotions, we mean feelings that you experience in different situations at work. They can be positive or negative and range from excitement, joy and love to sadness, fear, guilt, or anger. Sometimes emotions stay with us for a short time, and other times they last for a bit longer.

I also would like to assure you that everything you say will be treated confidentially and processed anonymously. If there are any questions that you are not comfortable answering or if you would like to stop the interview, you can let me know at any point. There are no right or wrong answers, we are simply interested in exploring your experiences. I only would like to ask you to describe your experiences in as much detail as possible.

Before we begin, I would like to ask you whether you received and completed the online informed consent form and the related survey? Additionally, I want to inform you that we record the interview. We do this is so we can focus on the conversation we will have now and later transcribe the recording to study if there are themes in the responses of everyone we speak to. We will delete the recording after transcribing it and the transcript will be an anonymized text document that is stored safely on our protected university server.

Do you have any questions before we begin? [answer any questions]. Okay, then we can start off with a few general questions.

#### **Job description**

1. Can you describe what your day-to-day work (in this job) looks like?
  1. Probe: What are your most important tasks?

- i. Do you work closely together with others? Interdependence?
- 2. Probe: How would you describe the emotional demands in your job?
  - i. Demanding or not? Why?
- 3. Probe: How would you describe interactions with others at work? (can include clients)
  - i. Supportive or not? Why?
  - ii. Work atmosphere?
  - iii. Relationships with others?
- 4. (Boat crew only) Probe: Without going into specific itineraries, would you consider your boat a traveling or stationary yacht?
  - i. Family/other social contacts that provide support in the same place as the location of the boat?
  - ii. How regularly do you maintain contact with them?
  - iii. Do you stay with family?
    - 1. Yes: How much time do you spend with them on a normal workday?
    - 2. No: How often do you stay in touch with them/travel to see them?

### **Emotions at work**

- 2. What kinds of emotions do you commonly experience at work in general **and** which of these do you talk about with your colleagues?
  - a. How often?
- 3. What makes you feel emotions like that?
  - a. What are common situations or events or other things that usually trigger these emotions?

4. How do other people at work respond to these emotions at work?
  - a. What do you think motivates them to behave in such ways?
5. How helpful are the ways others behave towards you in terms of responding to the emotions?
  - a. What makes responses helpful?
  - b. What makes responses less helpful?
6. How good are others at your work at helping you feel better when you feel bad at work?
  - a. Why?
7. What are ways in which others at work should ideally help you feel better at work?
  - a. What should they do?
  - b. What should they not do?
8. How do you personally feel about helping others feel better when they experience negative emotions at work?
  - a. Important? Enjoyable? Appropriate? Effective? Difficult?

### **Narrative Situation**

I would now like to ask you to go back to a specific and recent situation in which you experienced a negative emotion at work and another person (or several persons) at work in some way responded to your emotions. (let them think). I would like you to describe the situation in as much detail as possible, mentioning where you are, how the situation began, what happened that made you emotional, what you see around you, what you exactly feel and think, what else is happening in the situation and who are with you and what they are doing, and how it ended. Please put yourself in the situation now and begin describing the things mentioned.

- a. Where are you?



- b. What do you see around you?
- c. What happened before that made you emotional?
- d. How are you exactly feeling?
  - i. What caused these feelings (if not answered before yet)?
  - ii. How did you show these feelings?
  - iii. How do you think others perceived how you showed your feelings?
- e. What are you thinking?
  - i. What caused these thoughts?
- f. Who are with you?
  - i. What are their roles in the situation?  
Coworker/leader/client?
  - ii. What is your role in the situation?
- g. What are the other people/person doing?
- h. How are they responding or reacting towards your emotions?
- i. What do you think motivates them to respond in the way they respond?
- j. How do you think the other people feel?
  - i. What emotions are they feeling?
  - ii. What are they thinking?
- k. Did you approach the person or did they approach you? How?
- l. How did you feel while interacting with the other person?
  - i. Was it helpful? Why / why not?
- m. How do you think the other person felt while interacting with you? Why?
- n. How did you feel at the end of the situation/interaction?
  - i. How did the behavior of the other person affect how you felt?
  - ii. Could you continue working as if nothing happened or how did your work go on?
  - iii. How did the interaction with the other person affect your relationship with this person?

### ASK THEM FOR ELABORATIONS

- o. Is this situation typical of how people react to your negative emotions at work?
- p. How do you look back on the situation?
- q. What should the other person in this situation ideally have done?

### Culture around emotions

Thank you for your insights on the situation that we just talked about. Before we finish, I have a few more general questions.

2. How do people at your work typically feel, think, and behave when it comes to showing emotions at work?

- a. What are your opinions about that?

3. Are there any rules regarding showing your emotions at work?

- a. Formal rules – what is explicitly said you should and should not do

- i. How do you feel about these?

- ii. Do you follow these?

- b. Informal rules – what you know is expected you should and should not do

- i. How do you feel about these?

- ii. Do you follow these?

- c. Ways in which people typically act (IS IT NOT THE SAME AS 9? OR EMOTIONS AT WORK)

- i. How do you feel about these?

- ii. Do you follow these?

**Conclusion**

Alright, we have come to the end of this interview. Do you have any questions? [answer to questions]. I would like to thank you again for your participation. Let me know if you would like to receive information on the study findings. Then I'm happy to share them with you.

## Appendix C. Code Book

### CODES BOOK - QUALITATIVE IER

#### Tasks/Job Description

1. Guest/client interaction
2. Technical work
3. Navigation
4. Administrative
5. Household & Cooking
6. Managing & training crew

#### Interdependence

7. High interdependence
8. Trust
9. Comradery
10. Distrusting colleagues
11. Distrusting management/owner
12. Distrusting leader
13. Jumping in (helping out)
14. Overlapping responsibilities

#### Emotional demands -> if trigger for IER = add “as trigger ” tag

15. being away from home
16. living with colleagues
17. Lack of emotional support at work
18. lack of work-life balance
19. Inability to leave work
20. Small physical space
21. Small private space
22. uncertainty of employment
23. leaving/settling into a job
24. dealing with inexperienced coworkers
25. Lack of privacy
26. Emotional Labor
27. Stressful weather
28. Fatigue
29. Overworked
30. ambiguity (role/task)

31. lack of recognition
32. Working harder than others
33. Mistakes (own or others')
34. No time for emotions (demand)
35. Conflict
36. Communication issues
37. Bullying
38. Belittling
39. Shouting
40. sexism/sexual harassment
41. physical abuse
42. Witnessing incivility
43. Witnessing emotional distress
44. Lack of Acknowledgement
45. Lacking purpose
46. Technical issues
47. Dealing with ego
48. Disadvantageous contracts
49. Living up to other peoples' standards
50. perfectionism
51. (Unconstructive) criticism
52. Betrayal of trust
53. Macho culture
54. Time pressure
55. Unfamiliarity
56. Unfair treatment
57. Judgment by guest/owner

### **Relationships & Dynamics**

58. Identity dissolution
59. Keeping up a persona/suppressing
60. Adapting to guests' wants and needs
61. Humanity/Dehumanizing
62. Work-life blur
63. Worry about reputation
64. Desire to please clients
65. Understanding client perspective
66. Cultural differences
67. social time with colleagues
68. Blame

- 69. Insult
- 70. Respect
- 71. Shouting
- 72. Snappy
- 73. Banter/joking
- 74. Role conflict friend/colleague
- 75. Work role conflict
- 76. Colleagues as friends and family
- 77. Emotional ally
- 78. Difference in expectation
- 79. Drinking/alcoholism
- 80. Emotional intelligence
- 81. (lack of) psychological safety
- 82. Emotional contagion
- 83. Hierarchy struggle
- 84. Learning/Having to play the game (settling into new crew/green crew)
- 85. Age difference
- 86. Experience level difference
- 87. Them/us -> workers/clients
- 88. Yachting community
- 89. turnover for emotional reset

### **Space (time and place)**

- 90. Exploring places/remote locations
- 91. Daily meetings/Sprint system
- 92. breaks
- 93. No space/time for emotions
- 94. Tight quarters
- 95. Pub

### **Work atmosphere/environment**

- 96. Fun environment
- 97. Positive environment
- 98. Complaining
- 99. Restrictive environment
- 100.       streamlined workflow
- 101.       safe & open environment
- 102.       Macho culture

- 103. cut-throat/pressurized environment (hire and fire)
- 104. high stress environment

**Emotions at work -> tag “at start of IER” (otherwise assumed as a commonly experienced emotion)**

- 105. Anxiety = stress
- 106. Anxiety = self-doubt/insecurity
- 107. Fear
- 108. Annoyance/Frustration
- 109. Disappointment
- 110. Anger
- 111. Sadness
- 112. Disbelief/Helplessness
- 113. Guilt
- 114. Joy/Happiness
- 115. Excitement
- 116. Gratitude
- 117. Pride/Satisfaction
- 118. Feeling of loneliness/isolation
- 119. Sense of belongingness
- 120. Apathy

**Strategies (IER) -> Tag for if helpful or not: “as helpful”, “as unhelpful”**

- 121. Listening
- 122. Validating
- 123. Expressing compassion
- 124. Apologizing
- 125. Offering to hold space (I’m there for you)
- 126. Reassuring
- 127. Encouraging/Appreciating
- 128. Giving concrete advice
- 129. Offering instrumental support
- 130. Not addressing the problem
- 131. Brainstorming solutions (“sounding board”)
- 132. Reframing/relativizing
- 133. (Offering) to remove from situation/time to recompose
- 134. Showing gesture of caring (hug/cup of tea/drinks/food)
- 135. Using humor
- 136. Physically touching

- 137. Distracting (other conversation topic)
- 138. Not responding/blank stare
- 139. Reacting negatively
- 140. Giving space
- 141. Approaching the person
- 142. Reaction by third party
- 143. Instructing to suppress emotion
- 144. Recruiting help of colleague with closer relationship to help the person
- 145. Sharing similar experience/feeling
- 146. not empathizing
- 147. inquiring about what response the other person wishes for (what do you need?  
Listen/reciprocate...?)
- 148. Continued IER instances with same person(s)

### **IER effect with tags “short-term/long-term”**

- 149. Calmed down
- 150. Improvement of emotions
- 151. Relief
- 152. Feeling heard
- 153. Feeling less isolated
- 154. Feeling worse
- 155. Problem not solved
- 156. Problem solved
- 157. IER situation was not sufficient
- 158. Better relationship
- 159. Same relationship
- 160. Worse relationship
- 161. Having to carry on as if nothing happened
- 162. Resigning (IER outcome)
- 163. Re-establishing friendship with crew after resigning
- 164. Able to continue work
- 165. Clarity about a situation/issue
- 166. Improved self-confidence
- 167. feeling supported (IER outcome)

### **Motivations for IER**

- 168. M: they are my friend
- 169. M: they care/feel sorry (sympathy)
- 170. M: they understand (empathy)



- 171. M: they love me
- 172. M: moral conviction (right thing to do/be a nice person)
- 173. M: to enable work
- 174. M: for the benefit of the organization
- 175. M: willingness to apply higher EI ability
- 176. M: To maintain good working relationship
- 177. M: reciprocity expectation
- 178. M: personal gain
- 179. M: equal need for IER
- 180. M: makes them feel better
- 181. M: makes them feel valued
- 182. M: takes pride in being a chosen IER partner
- 183. M: fear of crew politics implication
- 184. M: It's part of their role
- 185. No motivation to engage in IER

### **Leadership**

- 186. L: loneliness
- 187. L: emotional isolation
- 188. L: expectation of emotional strength
- 189. L: off-work site IER
- 190. L: Responsibility over other's emotions
- 191. L: self-taught interpersonal skills
- 192. L: role conflict friend vs. boss

### **Norms with tag for "informal/formal"**

- 193. taboo around emotions
- 194. emotions as vulnerability
- 195. no drama
- 196. no negativity
- 197. positivity norm
- 198. professionalism
- 199. keep it to your cabin
- 200. leave if you are not happy
- 201. mental health stigma
- 202. corporate etiquette
- 203. gender roles (the boys/the girls)

### **Communicating emotions/Displaying emotions/Recruiting help**

- 204. Approaching colleagues about emotions
- 205. Getting approached by other coworkers about emotions
- 206. Venting
- 207. Selective sharing
- 208. Openly sharing
- 209. sharing both positive and negative emotions
- 210. sharing more positive than negative emotions
- 211. Non-verbal expression of emotion
- 212. Withdrawing from others/avoidant behavior

### **ER**

- 213. Differing abilities in ER
- 214. Bottling it up/suppression of emotions
- 215. Hiding emotions
- 216. Trying to resolve emotions by yourself

### **Opinions about rules**

- 217. It's better to hide emotions
- 218. It's better to hide negative emotions
- 219. bottling up = unhelpful
- 220. I can't help if they hide their emotions

### **Ideal handling of emotions**

- 221. Ideally: feeling safe to express emotions
- 222. wanting to create a safe forum for emotions
- 223. Ideally: training for IER/ER
- 224. Ideally: training on handling work-life blur
- 225. Ideally: Decency/Mindfulness of others' emotions
- 226. Ideally: not having to bottle up emotions
- 227. Ideally: offering emotional support
- 228. Ideally: addressing problems
- 229. Ideally: good timing of IER

### **Problems around handling emotions**

- 230. Apprehension on whether/when to approach so.
- 231. Mental health issues
- 232. Lack of knowledge on ER/IER

**Emotions of IER partner**

- 233. partner compassion/empathy
- 234. partner guilt
- 235. partner sadness
- 236. partner hurt ego
- 237. partner helplessness
- 238. partner anger
- 239. partner frustration
- 240. partner same emotion
- 241. partner relief to hear about similar experience

**Thoughts of IER partner**

- 242. partner thought: I'm obliged to help
- 243. partner thought: Worry is unfounded
- 244. partner thought: that's annoying
- 245. partner thought: I understand them
- 246. partner thought: I want to help

## Appendix D. IER Narrative Situations

Participant (anonymized)	Triggering Event	Emotion	Display & Recognition	Regulation	Outcomes
Tom (captain)	Being fired and removed from the yacht without notice after offering to leave due to own dissatisfaction with the job on multiple occasions. Being stranded in a foreign location. Witnessed his chef (also his wife) cry during the in-person firing situation.	Apathy, disbelief/helplessness, anger, relief	Display: remained professional (hid emotion) from owner during the situation, then shared with his wife later.	Wife: Venting, crying together, using humor  Yachting friends: instrumental support (offering a place to sleep), sharing similar experience	Improved emotions, feeling supported  Same relationship with wife (IER = expression of already existing relationship)  Better relationship with yachting friends
Sarah (chef)	Sarah initially encouraged an inexperienced crew member, who ended up challenging the hierarchy (including herself).	Anxiety (stress), annoyance/frustration, guilt	Display: hid emotions, withdrew from the conflict.	No regulation	Feeling worse short-term, having to carry on as if nothing happened  Worse relationship short-term, re-establishing friendship after inexperienced crew quit.
John (deckhand)	Wanted to quit for lack of recognition and no possibilities to develop on the boat. His superior reacted angrily and upset as he told him that he would resign.	Frustration, high anger	Display: approached the captain	Validated his frustrations with the job, expressed compassion for the difficulty of dealing with his superior, offered a good reference and reassured that he was proud of John. Also asked him to stay.	Improved emotions, calmed down and had more self-confidence in decision to leave  Better relationship short-term
Keith (captain)	Witnessed conflict and incivility stemming from one other crew member that was making work and life for the rest of the crew difficult over an extended period of time. Then had a situation where said crew member insulted and shouted at Keith (in front of others), leading him to realize the extent of the issue and regretting that he didn't recognize the problem earlier.	Anger, annoyance	Display: first retreated to deal with emotions himself. Then approached wife for an off-site meeting for IER.	Brainstormed solutions together on how to address the problem with the crew member	Improved emotions, calmed down, felt heard, had clarity about the situation, had a solution to his problem and was able to continue work  Same relationship (IER = expression of already existing relationship)  Actions that followed IER (firing said crew member) + had more internal discussions on the crews' emotions lead to a better working environment.
Leo (captain)	Communication issues with first mate, mistake by first mate (setting unrealistic expectations with guests), disappointment	Annoyance, frustration	Display: first tried to hide emotions, but unsuccessfully as guests could also notice. Approached crew (friend)	Sharing similar experience as his friend was also frustrated, offered gesture of caring (hug), distracted by talking about	Improvement of emotions, clarity that he just needs to hold on for a bit longer, able to continue work (still

	of guests in reaction to unrealistic expectation setting		working on another boat to go to bar together.	unrelated things, validated frustration, instructed to suppress emotion but offered to hold space for the rest of the guest trip.	<p>moments of neg. emotions during week though)</p> <p>Same or slightly better relationship</p> <p>Continued instances of IER</p>
Frank (engineer)	Unfair treatment and belittling by the head of his department. Had been going on for a while, had previous IER with captain about it, which did not improve the situation.	Anger, annoyance, frustration	Display: first withdrew and expressed non-verbally by rushing around. Then approached his captain.	Removed him from situation (private conversation in closed room), apologized for not being able to improve situation, validated feelings, expressed compassion, offered instrumental support.	<p>Improvement of emotions, calmed down, felt heard, felt supported, able to continue work even though problem not solved (no improvement in long-term because of this)</p> <p>Better relationship (having a friend and a boss in this person)</p> <p>Continued instances of IER</p>
Tara (stewardess)	Witnessed incivility, where head of department bullied another crew member of the same rank. This was a persistent problem. Pre- and post-regulation.	Anger, anxiety (stress), fear, feeling of isolation, sadness	Display: initially bottling up as no time to deal with emotions. Later approached crew member (also cabin mate) to provide IER. First cared for crew's emotions before showing own emotions.	Providing gesture of caring (holding crying crew in arms), shared similar experience and feelings, used humor to make a joke of the situation	<p>Improvement of emotions through providing IER, calmed down, felt less isolated, clarity about situation (decision to quit), feeling supported</p> <p>Better relationship (bonding over negative experience of work)</p> <p>Felt she had to continue as if nothing happened.</p> <p>Continued instances of IER</p>
Sandra (captain)	Witnessing incivility as captain where a drunk crew member harassed someone (witnessed their emotional distress), and she locked him from the boat to make sure the person was safe. A confrontational conversation with the perpetrating crew member ended in a hierarchy struggle, with the crew member not listening to her.	Anger, fear (of having to continue to work with the crew)	<p>Display: Approached manager via text informing him what happened, how upset she was and that he wants to remove the crew member.</p> <p>Recognition: Manager called her into office at the end of the guest trip</p>	Offered to hold space (alone in office, closed door), inquired what response was needed, offered instrumental support (writing report), offered to remove her from the situation (time-off), listened.	<p>Calmed down, felt heard, felt worse as she felt the situation was not given the respect it was due.</p> <p>Better relationship short-term, worse relationship long-term (no negative consequences for perpetrating crew felt like betrayal of trust. She lost trust in approaching management)</p>

Kelly (chef)	Unfair treatment after experiencing sexual harassment/physical abuse (details are left out to safeguard anonymity)	Anger, disbelief/helplessness	Display: Cried in the crew area  Recognition: Another crew member approached Kelly who was visibly upset.	Gesture of caring (hugged), offered instrumental support by standing up to the captain	Improvement of emotions short-term but felt worse in the long-term. Had to carry on as if nothing happened to serve owner food.  Better relationship long-term (gratitude), IER = expression of already existing relationship  Disadvantageous contract led to being terminated without cause, Kelly was removed from the boat.
James (captain)	Experienced technical issues (generator failure, essential for guest comfort) on his first ever guest trip, a situation he was unfamiliar with. In addition, the guests' behaviors (leaving tap running) led to a worsening of the situation.	Anger, anxiety (stress), gratitude (for understanding guests)	Display: he approached his manager for help via phone call.	Offered to hold space, validated, gave concrete advice, expressed compassion, offered instrumental support, encouraged and reassured him that the situation will turn out ok.	Improvement of emotions, improved self-confidence, problem was solved.  Better relationship long-term (trust & gratitude)  Continued instances of IER
Ryan (engineer)	Experienced technical issues (generator issues) and was under time pressure to fix it (to leave for a private event after work). At the same time, there was a conflict with the captain.	Anxiety (stress), annoyance/frustration	Display: non-verbal expression  Recognition: Other crew approached Ryan about his emotions. Then Ryan shared his emotions.	Expressed compassion, gave concrete advice (to try and calm down to enjoy private event)	Improvement of emotions, calmed down, felt supported, was grateful, had clarity about the situation  Better relationship  Continued IER afterwards
Timothy (deckhand)	Was bullied (excluded) by other crew members of the same department on multiple occasions.	Anger, anxiety (self-doubt), feelings of loneliness/isolation	Display: approached his friend from another department	Shared similar experience, expressed compassion, relativized the situation (for when he was overthinking)	Improved emotions, calmed down, felt heard, improved self-confidence, relief felt less isolated, was grateful, felt supported, had clarity about situation, was able to continue work (short-term, he then later quit as the negative environment persisted)  Better relationship (closer friends)
Ellie (chef)	Thought of being judged negatively by guest/owner when Ellie served fish (part of ongoing self-doubt).	Anxiety (self-doubt/insecurity), guilt	Display: non-verbal display of distress and immediately approached captain (also Ellie's romantic partner)	Reassured, reframed, encouraged, offered to remove herself from the situation for a short time.	Improved emotions short-term, calmed down, clarity about situation (that it was her self-doubt and not actual bad service which caused her worries), felt supported, was

					grateful, self-doubt issues persisted in the long-term. Had to carry on as if nothing happened (attending to guests).  Same relationship (IER = expression of already existing relationship)
Henry (deckhand)	Was under time pressure to clean the deck, had a conflict with the captain who pressured him to work faster, joined in and made more mess in the process, prolonging Henry's work.	Anger, annoyance/frustration	Display: approached two colleagues and vented to them.	Shared similar experience, expressed compassion	Improved emotions short-term, calmed down, felt heard, felt less isolated, was able to continue work. In the long-term, Henry quit the boat due to persistent issues with the captain.  Same relationship (IER = expression of already existing relationship/group venting)
Emily (stewardess)	Was challenged in managing two other crew members. One of them rebelled against her.	Anger, anxiety (stress), annoyance/frustration, fear	Display: Crying by herself on the bridge at her work desk (on an owner's trip).  Recognition: approached her after noticing the distress when he entered the room. First, Emily was fearful to open up, but then shared.	Gesture of caring (hug), brainstormed solutions, offered to remove, validated, inquired about what response was needed	Improved emotions, but still stressed. Calmed down a little, felt supported, was able to continue work and address problems with the challenging crew member.  Better relationship  Continued instances of IER
Mike (captain)	After working 10 weeks without a day of break (burnout symptoms), Mike had a weekend off and spent time with his girlfriend. On the first day, the owner texted him to ask him to get back to work the next day to prepare for a spontaneous trip.	Anxiety (stress), fear	Display: non-verbal expression (shaking) and sharing of information of having to return to work early.	Not empathizing, reacting negatively (for not getting time with her partner)	Feeling worse short-term  Worse relationship long-term (breaking up after the weekend)
Leah (stewardess)	Spilled some wine while serving, to which the guest responded by shouting at her and telling her to do a better job.	Annoyance/frustration, sadness, disappointment (all directed at herself)	Display: withdrew from guest area, tried to hide her feelings from other crew, non-verbal expression (tears in her eyes)  Recognition: head of department approached her, then the chef also reacted	Head of department: Reassured, offered to remove herself from the situation, encouraged her to continue wine service for the rest of the night, appreciated her work  Chef: reassured, reframed/relativized, used humor	Improved emotions, calmed down, but still nervous, clarity about situation, improved self-confidence after serving again, was able and had to continue work as if nothing happened.  Same relationship (IER = expression of already existing relationship)