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**THE DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF  
MANPOWER OF THE MARITIME INDUSTRY**

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## Introduction

In the last years the situation of the women among the world constitutes an omnipresent topic in the media, in academics and in public life. Whether it regards stories of successful women in business, academics and politics or incidents of discrimination against women the women's issue always creates a hot debate around it.

One of the fields where women are a tiny minority and many times their presence is neglected is the maritime industry. Everyone who has ever travelled on board a cruise or a passenger ship has seen many women working on board. But while passenger ships employ women in a big scale the situation in the other domains of shipping is completely different with just a tiny fringe of their crews being female.

Being a male, having read from a young age about tales of the sea and maritime incidents and accidents, the writer considers the life of a seafarer very dangerous. By combining this widespread belief with the academic knowledge already acquired during this MSc program and the lack of women on board vessels the interest was created to investigate the problems that the female seafarers face in their everyday life. With this aim, a considerable number of scientific papers was studied and analyzed in order to identify the major hardships that women face on board.

In the first chapter, an overview of the women in maritime is presented using available data on their numbers, some historical context, some notions regarding the seafarer's job, the domains of the maritime industry where they are mostly employed including an explanation of the small participation of the women in shipping and their motives to pursue a carrier at sea. In the second chapter will follow the analyze of the difficulties that women encounter on board, they are identified as sexual harassment, lack of acceptance by society an male crew, the belief that seafaring is a male occupation, the discrimination based on their gender, the lack of support from the society and the shipping companies, the working environment of the vessel, the bullying incidents and their relations to the family. The third chapter will attempt to identify some solutions based on the available literature and the fourth chapter will point the steps that have been undertaken by various stakeholders of the industry. The fifth chapter will attempt to describe how women seafarers cope with these problems. The sixth chapter will describe the view of the shipping companies regarding women seafarers. The seventh will describe the positive

impact that the technological progress may have on women employment on board whereas the eighth chapter will provide some benefits from the employment of women. The ninth chapter will go through the cases of six maritime nations, Indonesia, Taiwan, Romania, Philippines, Greece and Malaysia describing the situation of the women seafarers there regarding the aforementioned problems. The tenth chapter will present some measures that can be taken. At the end, some conclusions will follow.

## Literature review

There is a plethora of academic works related to the women seafarers in general and to their problems (Piñeiro & Kitada, 2020), (Kitada & Langaker, 2017), (Kapoor & Maxwell, 2020), (Ståhl & Hermansson, 2018), (Suresh, 2020). The studies of Kitada focus on gender related issues of women (2009) as well as ways they use to cope with problems on board (2013). The study of Theotokas & Tsalichi (2013) is mostly related to sexual harassment and the situation of the Greek women seafarers. Guo & Liang (2012) discuss the situation of the women seafarers in Taiwan giving also useful insight to the problems that female seafarers face in general. Tangi (2016) and Acejo & Abila, (2016) focus on the situation of the Filipino women seafarers whereas Bin Ahmad Ong (2019) analyses the situation of the Malaysian seafarers.

## CHAPTER 1. Overview of the situation of women seafarers

Sailor is considered a person who navigates ships or assists in the conduct, maintenance or service of ships. Sailor can be from deck side or engine side or catering department. They have to go through treacherous waters with lot of rolling and pitching often for long distances across vast oceans. Apart from touching coasts for loading or discharging of cargo, sailors are cut off from their families and the rest of the world as they sail from port to port. Generally, a contract is signed between the shipping company and the sailor which is for a particular tenure. Few companies also provide permanent employment (Rajvanshi, 2021).

According to Mathew (2015), women have contributed enormously in the development of the world, both in economic and in social terms. But for centuries women were confined to jobs that were related to the house and the family. Everywhere in the world women are contributing in the economic welfare of their families by undertaking tasks outside home.

Today, the percentage of female STCW certified seafarers is estimated to be 1.28% of the global seafarer workforce (ICS, 2021). According to Mathew (2015) shipping is a very adventurous profession and still constitutes a male dominated workplace and it seems that only a few women around the world are interested in joining. In general, due to this masculine tradition of this profession, females on board are not viewed in a positive way and their entrance is often impeded by popular beliefs and prejudice. It was widely believed that the presence of females on a vessel would provoke natural disasters and at the same time women were considered as not strong enough to cope with the everyday life on a vessel.

According to Theotokas & Tsalichi (2013), women seafarers serve on every type of vessel but most women are employed on cruise and passenger ships. This trend regarding the employment of women in the cruise industry is due to the lack of men seafarers who possess the necessary qualifications. Women on board cruise ships are employed mostly for hotel and non-technical tasks.

According to Acejo & Abila (2016), normally, the vessel as run mostly by men is full with masculine discourse and tasks. The sea has been regarded to be the place for men's work for a long time. Some kind of clothing that leaves parts of the female body uncovered may not be suitable to be worn by women seafarers before male crew who is not familiar with female presence on board. This notion is largely shared in many parts of the world, creating stereotypes for maritime professions, including seafarers (Kitada & Langaker, 2017). In this stereotypically male-dominated industry, International Maritime Organization has made a concerted effort to help the industry move forward and to assist women in achieving a representation that is congruent with aspirations of the 21st century. For ages, the role of women is primarily confined to the domestic atmosphere. The notion that women are weaker in strength and may not undertake tasks that are considered too arduous for them are flowed in a strict sense. Their productive activities are limited to less physical ones that make them perform various tasks indoors and outdoors. It is observed recently that more and more women work in difficult occupations outside their homes. Nevertheless, the number of women who are eager to enter seafaring is still limited

(Kapoor & Maxwell, 2020). According to Mathew (2015), the first historical account of a woman seafarer is that of Mary Ann Talbot, an English woman who disguised as a seaman during the Napoleonic wars. It was only in 1935 that Capt. Anne Schetinina from Russia assumed the official status of captaincy for the first time in the history. Gaining inspiration from her, many women, especially from UK and Holland, joined seafaring profession during the Second World War. The most important step to encourage the women participation in this direction was the establishment of US Merchant Marine Academy in 1974.

According to Guo & Liang (2012), the majority believes that women cannot combine the challenging tasks of seafaring with their family obligations. Women seafarers must prove wrong the stereotypes that seafaring is a profession only for men. The introduction of the automated vessels has broken the stereotypes that the vessel as a working place is a masculine job thus weakening the position of those who are against the employment of women on board.

According to Dragomir & Utureanu (2018), most scientific literature regarding gender in the shipping industry points out that in the maritime across the world, female seafarers and port workers are extremely fewer compared to their male colleagues. Several international programs issued by the United Nations, International Labor Organisation, International Maritime Organisation, at the level of European Union or within other geographical commerce communities report that there is a global movement with effective results in the direction of empowering women seafarers, capacity building and reducing maritime gender bias, but further work and commitment must be made in such direction, involving both governments and private companies.

In the recent years more and more people study the presence of women in professions that have historically been dominated by men. In many industries women were confined to jobs of secondary importance that didn't need much of academic background (Cordon et al., 2020).

Ståhl & Hermansson (2018) identify the marketing and the bad reputation of the shipping industry as factors that prevent women from going on board. According to their study with Swedish female maritime students, there is a lack of information. The participants in their research expressed the opinion that seafaring as an occupation did not occur to people in general. As a profession that is very unusual to most people. According to them, only people who live close to the sea are aware of seafaring as an occupation, this view is

reinforced by the small numbers of this industry in their country. Also, the relation between the distance from the sea and the awareness about seafaring is inversely proportional. Bad reputation, mostly associated with masculine stereotypes that accompanies the industry has also been noted thus making it undesirable. Another point that may make discourages women from joining seafaring is the notion that seafaring is only reserved to men. Even thinking about being the only female among a male and unknown crew is another factor that makes women unwilling to go on board, especially when the everyday language of the vessel is considered sexist.

According to a study conducted by Kapoor & Maxwell (2020), the main motivational factor choosing the job in seafaring is high income followed by the career advancement in the marine industry whereas a remaining part is family encouragement and continuing family traditions among others which represents less important factors.

## CHAPTER 2. Difficulties faced by women seafarers on board

### 2.1. Sexual harassment

According to Piñeiro & Kitada (2020), ‘Sexual harassment includes a variety of behaviours ranging from physical and verbal, to non-verbal forms’. According to Theotokas & Tsalichi (2013) it is unusual that such incidents are reported.

According to the Office of the President Philippine Commission on Women, Sexual harassment is generally defined as “unwanted sexual attention that is explicitly or implicitly made a condition for favorable decisions affecting one’s employment or school standing, or that which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment in the school or the workplace”.

But women avoid to mention it publicly due to the belief that it has future consequences. Women who have faced such a problem usually do not speak about it or confess it only to their closest friends. They try to provide a solution by their own means since going public could have more consequences (Aggrey, 2000).

Many women were found to have experienced sexual harassment. These incidents could have taken the form of offers to help with difficult tasks for exchange of sex or physical contacts without prior permission or even visits to their cabin by male colleagues. It was

observed that this situation was getting worse when men were under the influence of alcohol which made them feel less fear. Also, most male colleagues weren't aware of what was acceptable and what was not acceptable (Ståhl & Hermansson, 2018).

Remarkably, according to Piñeiro & Kitada (2020), 17% of women seafarers who participated in their study expressed their concern that sexual harassment is a problem, while in a pilot survey nearly half of the respondents revealed that they had indeed been victims of sexual harassment on a vessel. The different results of these studies can be attributed to the fact that those in the pilot study executed mostly lower level tasks while in the other study women had higher level positions.

According to Piñeiro & Kitada (2020) sexual harassment is a very important problem that affects the entire society and it is necessary to be prevented and combated which is difficult to be done. Since the 1970's the issue of sexual harassment in the working places was mostly ignored. Regrettably, such behavior is still deemed acceptable by a large segment of the world population and these perceptions are reflected in laws and policies in various ways i.e. they do not mention sexual harassment, are inappropriate to combat it, are interpreted in a restrictive manner, or are mildly enforced.

The physical presence of women is a reminder of gender and sexuality on board. Even if on board there are many things that remind of sex such as posters, it is mentioned that sexuality is brought on board exclusively by women seafarers. This is the reason why women must follow certain rules in order not to provoke the existing norms. Also, it is expected by female seafarers to abandon their feminine traits. This is done in order to maintain the stability of everyday life on board (Kitada & Langaker, 2017).

Also, in a study conducted by Pike et al. (2021) it was found that it is considered inevitable for a woman to become a victim of sexual harassment or other abuse of that kind if she has a long career at seafaring. Most women seafarers of the study believed that once on board it was very possible to fall victim of sexual harassment which included: anxiety of exploitation, rape, and fear that some men would think that the women on board would be available sexual partners. After their first trip their fear about sexual harassment had been a reality for some of them. Sexual harassment includes various interpretations from illegal and violent behavior through to inappropriate language. Interesting was the fact that all women who experienced such problems were very suspicious regarding whether or not they should report such incidents. Normally, the incidents reported represent a small



action of all that have happened as most incidents are not reported. This situation makes the women try not to be perceived as such by their male colleagues.

## 2.2. Lack of acceptance by male colleagues

According to Cordon et al. (2020), men seafarers still find it difficult to accept female colleagues on board the vessels particularly for the tasks that need physical strength. This leads to the belief that women are inferior and not suit for seafaring.

According to Aggrey (2000), it is observed that women seafarers tend to work harder and try more than their male colleagues because the first issue women face on board is to show to the men that they have the necessary physical and technical skills to perform all the tasks. In this way they can gain their respect.

According to Zhao et al. (2017) there are widespread beliefs, especially among fishing and seafaring communities that women can be a 'potential source of malevolence or bad luck'.

Also, according to Theotokas & Tsalichi (2013), the rank that a female seafarer holds can affect the way the male crew can accept her. Other criteria that can affect their stance are age, nationality, education and family status.

There is a common belief among the world that women are not fit for the seafaring profession (Kitada 2010). According to Theotokas & Tsalichi (2013), even if most men seafarers considers that women are equal to men, only a few of them believe that women can cope with the tasks as good as men can. Also, even if many male seafarers esteem that they had good cooperation with women they are not willing to accept them neither as their superiors on board nor as port captains in the office. It is interesting the fact that most men seem to be satisfied with the performance of women colleagues.

According to a study conducted by Kitada (2009), making a living on board may also affect the 'gender identities' of female seafarers due to the particular characteristics of this profession that differentiate it from other jobs ashore. But only women seafarers need to manage their 'gender identities'. Many off them have tried to hide traits of their female character related to their behavior or appearance. They opted for this strategy in order to become part of the crew and to adapt to the mostly male norms of the vessel.

It is not considered a priority to change the view of the industry regarding women seafarers because the industry hasn't yet realized that women may be the solution for the deficit of trained officers. The masculine norms that prevail on board make the minorities and the women among them to adapt to these masculine traits in order to gain acceptance. This is considered a prerequisite for the women who aspire a career at sea (Kitada, 2020).

### 2.3. Male-dominated occupation

According to Guo and Liang (2012), traditionally, the life on board is thought to be difficult and challenging and that seafaring is a job only for men, this notion leads to the concept that women are not able to enter seafaring. Regardless of nationalities and age, it is observed that the norms of the vessel are characterized by masculine values in every aspect of the life on board and normally female seafarers feel different from their male colleagues because of their gender (Kitada, 2013).

According to Mishra & Trivedi (2021), the belief that the vessel is a men's place with all the norms of this kind affects the career that women seafarers choose. It was found that they mostly tend to opt for navigation rather than engineering. But it is common that fall victim of prejudice by the shipping companies and face difficulties in their process of finding a job on board. More surprising is that a woman teacher in a seafaring academy is not considered as such by the male students.

According to Kitada (2016), the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' is omnipresent in seafaring in the form of speech that constantly reproduces the masculine character of the profession. Because of this, it is possible that the presence of women on board disturb the current situation.

According to Kapoor & Maxwell (2020), most people still believe that seafaring is exclusively a male profession, to which the access is forbidden for women. This notion has a longstanding history that prevents women from getting involved. This is why most women are still afraid to join due to the fear that they may fall victims of harassment and violence.

This particular problem is observed generally in all jobs where men are the majority: a lack of awareness and stereotyping about women's ability to work. It is widely believed

that women are made for jobs that are related to care and that men are more appropriate for managerial tasks (Kitada, 2020).

## 2.4. Discrimination based on gender

Gender discrimination is generally defined as the different treatment given to women compared to men. As a result, females lack resources, opportunities and control over policies. Regarding particularly the shipping industry, gender discrimination is a product of the widespread belief that seafaring is an only male profession. Most seafarers and shipping companies believe that work on board requires heavy lifting and technical expertise. On board there are plenty of tasks that are dirty and physically challenging in a way that women are not regarded able to cope with them. This is the reason why females who choose to enter the seafaring profession or maritime schools are often challenged, and their capabilities are often underestimated by male colleagues and male students with that kind of discriminatory behavior being observed as early as during their initial training (Tangi, 2018).

According to Theotokas & Tsalichi (2013), the type of ship where seafarers work defines not only the ratio of males and females in the crew but also the type of the relations among the crew. The nature of discrimination is affected by the position and the environment where it takes place. For example, in passenger vessels male and female seafarers live closer together because male colleagues accept it and this is why problems among them occur very scarcely.

According to Ståhl & Hermansson (2018), there is a different treatment reported by the female students questioned when they were on board with other male cadets. They expressed the opinion that a different treatment was reserved for them. It was reported that some duties were given to the male students and not to their female colleagues. This proves that there is a notion that in seafaring women are not allowed to undertake some tasks, like those who require a physically tough job because women are considered more 'fragile' and consequently less adequate for this jobs than their male colleagues.

Also, there is a very common practice in the cruise ship sector, to force women to pregnancy testing before their employment. This practice constitutes not only a discrimination against them but also a violation of their human rights (ILO, 2019).

## 2.5. Physical and emotional isolation

The seafaring profession has several differences from other professions that are linked to the particular working environment. Seafarers work for long trips, many months away from home and family and they both live and work in the same confined place. Many times the communication that the vessel can provide to the crew is very limited. In this case it is normal for the crew to feel isolated. This sense of isolation is getting worse in multicultural crews where the different language is an extra problem. Even more difficult is the situation for the few women that are among men seafarers. These difficult conditions may lead also to health problems (Dragomir & Utureanu, 2018).

According to Ståhl & Hermansson (2018), it is very important to feel that they are part of the crew because seafarers are obligated to live all together, close to each other and with scarce privacy. The long journeys they undertake mean that they are far away from friends and families with limited opportunities to keep in touch with them. So, it is understood that whatever happens on board impacts directly the well-being of the seafarers.

This kind of occupation means also that women seafarers share the same enclosed and fixed space with their men colleagues and as a result everything they do is constantly under the view of their colleagues (Guo and Liang, 2012). Also, being in a minority group working at sea, such as being the only one of your gender or nationality, was recognized as having the potential to compound feelings of isolation (Pike et al., 2021).

According to Pike et al. (2021), the experience of being a woman seafarer is recognized by many from across the industry as potentially lonely and isolating, which has serious implications for their occupational safety, mental health and their wellbeing.

## 2.6. Lack of support from society

According to the results of the analysis of Ståhl & Hermansson (2018), it is observed that the combination of the fulfillment of the maternal duties with the career, particularly on board is proved very stressful for most female seafarers. The pressure by the society that these women feel because of this notion may also discourage them from pursuing this career in shipping and make them opt for another land-based profession.

More recognition and more support are needed. The difference of seafaring in relation to other professions is that young people don't have a very good opinion about it. In general women lack the support from family, factor that is very crucial for all seafarers. It is up to the family to make their children get to know the shipping industry (Kapoor & Maxwell, 2020).

## 2.7. Particular conditions of the working environment

Many times, seafaring is considered to be the most stressful profession. Also there is a notion that women cannot stand stress, that's why they are discouraged from entering the maritime academies (Suresh, 2020).

There is a big difference between working on a vessel and exercising a different occupation on land. It requires too much physical effort, especially in the engine room when you try to walk in a straight line or when it comes to moving heavy objects or walking on narrow and slippery ladders. All these increase the danger of slip or fall. It is also important to mention the noise even if it is a more intense issue for the engine room personnel than for their colleagues on deck. To this the constant vibration of the hull must be added. This combination can cause many health issues to the crew such as pain in the back, hips and knees. Cancer can also be caused by this way of life (Ståhl & Hermansson, 2018).

These particular conditions of the vessel may also affect the health of the seafarers. According to Stannard et al. (2015) seafarers suffer from many health problems that are related to the particular working environment of the vessel. About half of the participants of their research expressed that they suffer from joint/back pain. This kind of health problem was closely followed by 'stress/depression/ /anxiety'. It is interesting to observe that more ratings than officers reported 'joint/back pain' while 'Stress, depression and anxiety' was reported mostly by the officers. Also, three out of four who responded 'joint/back pain' are younger than 40 years.

Seafaring has some particular norms so that seafarers need to adapt to these norms in order to fit into the seafaring mentality. In every vessel there are some things that should be avoided. So, it is very important for women to adapt to all these in order to fit into the seafaring community. Also, it is observed that women tend to change some traits of their

character in order to fit into the working environment, this strategy is not observed only in shipping (Kitada, 2013).

## 2.8. Bullying

According to Tangi (2016), bullying is an issue that affects all seafarers on board, regardless of their gender but it is more intense among the lower ranks and ratings. Because some male seafarers consider women to be ‘the weaker sex’, women are in general more prone to fall victim of such a behavior on board. Also, women junior officers who work hard may experience bullying by some male colleagues who feel threatened by their achievements.

## 2.9. Family related problems

According to Kitada (2009), there is an important difference between working in seafaring and working in an other male dominated job. Seafaring requires from women to work far from home and relatives for a long period of time. Such kind of absence minimize their ability to perform their family tasks like those of wife or mother.

More recognition and more support are needed. The difference of seafaring in relation to other professions is that young people don’t have a very good opinion about it. In general women lack the support from family, factor that is very crucial for all seafarers. It is up to the family to make their children get to know the shipping industry (Kapoor & Maxwell, 2020).

Also, according to Kapoor & Maxwell (2020), women seafarers don’t enjoy the acceptance neither by societies nor by companies. Being for a long time separated from family and home makes women reluctant to choose seafaring. It is very difficult to combine family obligations with this kind of occupation. Many women are forced to opt for a land based job because they feel pressure from their social entourage. It is also believed that women don’t possess the mental and physical capabilities required by shipping companies to allow them work on board. That is why all shipping companies should help the development of female seafarers.

In relation to their bonds with their family, Kitada (2009) found out that many women expressed their belief that the most challenging issue of being both a seafarer and a mother was the maintenance of the bonds with their family. Due to their long trips they would miss important moments of their family life that could not be compensated by the time that they could pass with their children when they are on vacation.

According to Kitada (2009), women seafarers who also were mothers had a constant feeling that they behaved in a 'selfish' way if they chased their career on board while their children stay behind. In contrast, traditionally, male seafarers are viewed with compassion, pity and admiration for not being able to be with their families for a long time. Women who try to combine seafaring with motherhood are victims of criticism. In some cases couples of seafarers requested to serve on board simultaneously in order to be able to spend their free time together with their children. Also, most times, women are those who chose to abandon seafaring in order to raise the kids.

Combining seafaring with marriage and family is a very challenging problems for married female seafarers because they need to combine two gender tasks, that of the seafarer and that of wife and mother. Many of them find it difficult when they try abandon their seafaring characteristics and become mothers and wives again once they are home and to let back their family roles when they are finally on board. It is also important to mention that the way the others perceive their roles affects their behavior (Kitada, 2009).

It is very challenging to combine motherhood with seafaring that includes being far from the family for six or seven months. This situation is not compatible with the role of a mother at least as perceived by the society. But the final decision of abandoning the career on board is always up to the women seafarers and their perception of motherhood. Sometimes they realize this conflict between the two roles once they become mothers (Kitada, 2009).

It is observed that it is not an easy task to combine seafaring with stability at home. It is possible that women will feel confused with the problems that may arise from their family situation now or in the future. This can explain why women face an extra challenge in seafaring (Ståhl & Hermansson, 2018).

## CHAPTER 3. Solutions for the problems faced on board

The fact that seafaring means long journeys and absence from friends and family is very challenging for all seafarers but can be combated by minimizing the length of the journey or adapting it to their needs. Some shipping companies have already implemented a strategy of allowing seafarers to choose the length of their contract. A smaller journey even if means less remuneration can be compensated with more time with family. Also, the option of letting seafarers with children of very young age, work part time can be considered (Kitada, 2009).

Also, the technological progress can alleviate the sentiment of isolation and separation from their relatives that seafarers feel. Applying new technology such as internet and email services accessible in every seafarer's cabin and permit the constant communication between the family members and minimize the feeling of isolation and separation (Kitada, 2009).

Also, the simplest method to change the current established negative beliefs regarding the employment of women on board is the introduction of more female seafarers. Shipping companies could plan the recruitment of totally female crews for some vessels. Also, employing women could be a solution to the problem of the shortage of well-trained seafarers. It is also observed that women who are forced to stay away from the sea for a short period of time because of childcare are willing to return on board and pursue their career after that small period of maternity leave. Shipping companies could help these women by employing them for office duties during that period and by facilitating their come back on board. Efforts should also be done in order to cultivate awareness for the challenges of a crew comprised of more than one gender (Kitada, 2009).

Finally, as for the larger issue of societal attitudes towards women seafarers, campaigns to make the industry more visible may not only aid recruitment in general but increase general awareness and understanding. In addition, the family situations of seafarers could be regarded as being more or less similar to a single-parent home while they are seafaring. There will be a number of social supports which could be done by the governments, for example, a reduced rate of using the nurseries for child-care and national (or company) insurance applied to the seafarers' families. Such benefits and support will encourage both male and female seafarers to stay at sea for a longer period (Kitada, 2009).



## CHAPTER 4. Actions undertaken by organizations

The book "Women Seafarers-Global Employment Policies and Practices" was the first major try that put the issues of the female seafarers in the center of discussion in a world's scale. It includes a plethora of problems regarding the working conditions and the wellbeing of women on board in all the countries of the world and for both types of vessels. Using the extensive research commissioned by the ILO, the book considers women's participation levels in the industry, and examines policies concerning their recruitment, training, maternity and employment rights, and other aspects of work and life at sea. It also offers first-hand accounts from women seafarers describing how they have dealt with discrimination, sexual harassment, and an array of other difficulties (Mishra & Trivedi, 2021).

Also, the main goals of Women in Development Program (WID) can be identified as the integration of women into all types of seafaring tasks, the facilitation of the access of female seafarers to shipping education and technology, the proliferation of the presence of women in the senior management levels of the shipping industry and the promotion of the economic independence of women and their access to the seafaring profession (Mishra & Trivedi, 2021).

## CHAPTER 5. How do women cope with this environment

Female seafarers have developed 4 kinds of strategy in order to manage their gender identities on board vessels. According to Kitada (2013), these strategies are 'negotiation', 'construction', 'maintenance' and 'reproduction'. Many women reported that they had been the center of attention by their male colleagues because of their gender. This situation didn't make them feel safe. Some of them opted for 'negotiating' their femininity, others chose to put on some male characteristics, others weren't impacted at all by the attitude of the male crew and others decided to 'reproduce' themselves by combining elements of both genders.

According to Kitada (2013), the strategy of 'negotiating' is more common in the earlier years of the seafaring career because it is considered necessary in order to be integrated into the crew that is predominantly male. By 'negotiating', it was meant that some women

tried to hide their feminine characteristics while others tried to adopt some masculine traits. Female seafarers expressed their bad feelings that on board they were mostly considered 'women' rather than simply 'people'. That's why some of them opted for hiding their femininity by avoid wearing clothes that could be considered inappropriate or sexy. This decision didn't only affect their dress code but also their behavior and their expressions in order to be accepted by their male counterparts as equal crew members. The adoption of masculine traits was a step further because by doing so, women tried to behave like their male colleagues. The strategy of 'negotiation' is only a superficial way to be accepted as part of a male dominated crew.

A more profound and effective solution could be given by those who opted for the 'construction' or in other words, the acquisition of a more masculine gender identity. This type of strategy was implemented by most female seafarers and it was observed that lead to the most successful integration in the crew. By doing so, women completely abandoned their feminine characteristics and entered into the group of men (Kitada, 2013).

It was also interesting that some women 'maintained' their feminine characteristics by trying to make even more visible their particular traits, even though this strategy had no meaning. These women seemed to enjoy their difference and even developed new feminine traits. Following this strategy often including wearing feminine clothes during their free time and receiving compliments from the male seafarers (Kitada, 2013).

According to Kitada (2013) 'maintaining' their femininity can hardly be considered a kind of management of their gender identities. Among these women, some 'maintained' their emotions and feelings at the back of their mind in order to defend themselves from the masculine norms that were prevalent on board a vessel.

Those women who opted for reproducing their identity tried to understand who they really were in order to cope with the unpleasant feelings that accompanied their presence on board. Some of these women chose to put forward some of their characteristics such as their religion, their marriage, their rank or their age. They reported that focusing on these elements made them feel more secure. Also, it was observed that female seafarers who were married to a male seafarer enjoyed a kind of respect by their male members of the crew due to the notion that they 'belonged' to one of their kind. Some other women of this category didn't seem to care that much neither about their femininity nor about the masculine norms of the vessel as they wanted to be viewed as 'persons' and not as women or men (Kitada, 2013).

## CHAPTER 6. The opinion of the shipping companies regarding the employment of women

In shipping, the stance that the various stakeholders of the industry have towards women can impact significantly the life of female seafarers in all levels of their career. There are shipping companies that are still reluctant to employ women on board but there are also others who actively encourage their participation. Of course, the policy of these companies is shaped by the experiences they already have with the employment of women on board and ashore. Some shipping companies try to explain their negative attitude towards female seafarers based on the physical characteristics of life on board a vessel, such as the lack of single cabins and other private spaces. The inequality in shipping is due to these factors (Senbursa, 2020).

According to Guo & Liang (2012), not every people can fit into the life of a seafarer and some in the maritime industry are reluctant to recruit women seafarers because they believe that the particular life on board a vessel is not suitable for females. Also, it is a common belief that female seafarers will quit their profession sooner or later in order to start a family and become mothers. Theotokas & Tsalichi (2013) also described the notion that the women have ‘sell-by’ date because of maternity and other personal reasons. The above views are corroborated by ILO’s report (2019) according to which it is expressed by shipping companies the belief that women seafarers will abandon their career at sea quite soon because they will choose to focus on family related issues such as giving birth. It is also remarkable that even their colleagues may quite seafaring for the same family related issues.

These positions regarding the employment of females on board stem from the masculine concepts that are rooted into the mindset of some stakeholders in shipping. It is obvious that their recruitment policy has some masculine criteria. So, it is not surprising that the majority of the executives in shipping commonly apply some masculine pre-conceived ideas of their own when it comes to the selection of women (Guo & Liang, 2012).

But, according to Bjork (2020) none of the women who participated in his study claimed that they would stop sailing due to motherhood. Yet, the women often asked for clarity about parental benefits and possibilities to combine seafaring with family life mentioning also that flexibility and communication would support their work-life balance, whereas

the fathers on board spoke about flexible contracts, job security, additional health benefits, and the possibility for temporary land-based jobs.

The notion that the employment of women seafarers constitutes a problem is shared by both male crew and by the executives of the industry who are affected by their gender-related pre conceived ideas. This widespread notion can impact the employment of women at two levels. On board, they may face aggressiveness by their male colleagues and at the executive level, some supervisors may actively impede the recruitment of female seafarers in order to prevent this possible unrest among the crew (Guo & Liang, 2012).

Also, according to Tangi (2018) regarding especially the Filipino women seafarers there is a small number of crewing agencies that work with female seafarers. Most of these women seafarers are employed on board cruise and passenger vessels. The female seafarers express their belief that the crewing agencies don't accept their applications without even examining their candidacies while these agencies put the blame on the maritime companies, according to them, they are responsible for the final decision of hiring or not a woman.

According to Magramo & Eler (2012) regarding the women seafarers in the Phillipines, companies hire them to employ them later in duties ashore. Females are believed to be have better organizational skills and are more suitable for working in the office after they have taken the necessary field experience on how to command a vessel.

Bjork (2020) also points out that women form an untapped labor resource in an industry where qualified employees are difficult to be found and that the shortage of senior rank officers could be eased through the recruitment of more women.

## CHAPTER 7. The impact of technological progress on the employment of women seafarers

According to Kim et al., (2019) the occupation of the seafarer can change enormous in the future because of the improvement of the technology and the introduction of the autonomous shipping technologies. This can make the crew work from ashore, based in office installation for monitoring and controlling the activities of the vessel. This change will require the introduction of new jobs and tasks in shipping. This technological betterment is possible to minimize the barriers for the entrance of women. It will lift the

need for only physically capable men to operate the vessel and will also change the mentality of seafaring. The particular nature of seafaring as known today will be gone and it will most likely seem like working in an office. All these changes will make the seafaring profession more appealing to women.

The technological progress could also facilitate the close relations of the seafarers with their family, ameliorate the working conditions on board and minimize the risk to which seafarers are exposed and also the need for physically tough tasks (Kim et al., 2019).

Kim et al., (2019) also argue that both shipping companies and seafarers will be benefited from improved working conditions and opportunities both in economic and in social level. New working teams comprised of diverse personnel could facilitate the decision-making processes in the future remote shipping operations. So, the employment of more female seafarers will offer certain advantages to the new working teams but will also improve the gender balance. Changes that will facilitate the access of women will be both regarding the physical working conditions and the social environment of the vessel. This progress of automation will also enable the creation of more ashore professions related to shipping that will erase the risk exposure and the physical difficulties of the seafaring. Finally, women will be able to combine more effectively their career with their family obligations.

## CHAPTER 8. The benefits from the employment of women seafarers

According to Zhao et al. (2017) the increase of the number of women on board would improve social connectivity and enhance their overall working and living experience at sea.

In the report published in 2010 by BIMCO and ISF it can be observed that despite the fact that there is an ongoing global recession and financial crisis, there is still a big deficit of officers. Shipping companies can face this shortage only by employing more female officers and seafarers. According to the report, it is advised that shipping companies employ more women because they possess certain characteristics such as dedication at work, are better organized and can fit better in the tasks of the life on board (Mathew, 2015).

With the increased employment of female seafarers, shipping can take advantage of the various and different concepts and types of leadership that the female presence can bring on board and at the same time solve the problem of the lack of trained seafarers that the industry already faces. With all these actions, a more gender-equal workplace will be created (Kim et al., 2019).

According to Guo & Liang (2012), in general, some shipping companies are satisfied by the employment of female seafarers. In their study, it was found that even shipping companies who were reluctant to employ female seafarers changed their negative attitude after accepting a small number of women as interns on board their vessels. Due to the very satisfied reports from their superior officers these companies chose to erase all barriers they previous had regarding the employment of female seafarers. Also, the presence of women on board has ameliorated the life of the crew adding new elements and changing the monotonous way of life.

## CHAPTER 9. Selected cases

### 9.1. The case of Indonesia

According to Purnama (2018) even if women constitute half of Indonesia's population, their participation in the workforce is less than that of men. Among the world, the male employment ratio stands at 65 to 70 % of the population, while the same figure is 40 to 45% for women. Seafaring has historically been a privileged field for men and one explanation for this situation is the endurance of the hard physical conditions that prevail on board. It is common that families don't support women seafarers.

Purnama (2018) investigated the perception of a group of female students of the Maritime Institute in Jakarta regarding gender. She found out that the number of women enrolling in the maritime academies is increasing each year with the satisfying salary as being one of the explanations of this trend.

The 6 female students questioned by Purnama (2018), when they got on board reported that they felt discomfort when they upon understanding that they were perceived as

females rather than simple seafarers by the men of the crew. All of these female participants chose to hide their femininity both in terms of behavior and in terms of appearance, to this objective and as recommended by their female supervisors on board, they avoided wearing clothes that would left part of their bodies uncovered. Many believe that wearing short-sleeved shirt or pants in front of men who have not seen women so often on board ships should be avoided.

As observed by the findings, the female students expressed that they didn't feel comfortable to be the only women in an male dominated environment surrounded by men. They also reported that the jargon used by their male colleagues on board resembled to what they can observe many times in classrooms. It may be shocking that that kind of inappropriate talk sometimes came out of their own lecturers. Women recognized is as the existing situation to which they should adapt in order to advance in seafaring. More experienced students also experience gender-related problems, including sexual harassment by other male crew on board. The gender-related problems can be considered as innate to this particular working environment that reflects the occupational culture that embrace masculine norms and values, so intact that it is perceived like it was the nature of the occupation (Purnama, 2018).

## 9.2. The case of Taiwan

Guo & Liang (2012) questioning women seafarers from Taiwan concluded that among the problems they face on board the cope with the prevailing masculine attitude of the vessel, the belief that they could not do as good as men with the working environment and the separation from family, it was also found that what attracts the women the most in seafaring is the high remuneration.

Even though Taiwanese women have already access to the seafaring, their actual participation in shipping is still limited. This can be explained by the fact that the shipping industry in Taiwan, especially the bulk carriers, continues to be largely reluctant to employ female seafarers which results to an insufficient number of internships for women navigation students (Guo & Liang, 2012).

Some female respondents reported that the remuneration of the seafaring profession was a motive that attracted them on board. Also, their love for seafaring was getting reinforced

constantly while they were getting deeper with their academic courses. So, it is not surprising at all to believe that their willingness to join seafaring turns into frustration when they discover the reluctant attitude of the shipping companies towards them. According to these women, the barriers they encounter are results of the education policy and of the policy of the shipping companies (Guo & Liang, 2012).

Female interns were rarely required to participate in deck work because their male superior officers believed that women could not undertake heavy, dirty, or dangerous work. However, not all female navigation students in Taiwan have the opportunity to do on-board internships, and those who do enjoy an advantage in their future prospects in seafaring (Guo & Liang, 2012).

While some shipping company supervisors in Taiwan regard women seafarers as potential troublemakers, it was found that women, once on board had no difficulty to engage in a positive socialization process and some of them reported that they tried to abandon some traits of their gender in order to be accepted by the male seafarers as part of the crew (Guo & Liang, 2012).

It was also found that some women seafarers attempt to behave in a manner consistent with gender stereotypes, rather than allowing themselves to be perceived as feminine. However, such behavior by women seafarers may not necessarily win them a friendly working environment (Guo & Liang, 2012).

It was also observed that it is common for female seafarers to possess some traits that could give them an advantage over their male colleagues in some situations such as their superior levels of attention to detail, caution, and careful reasoned thinking (Guo & Liang, 2012).

It was found that some Taiwanese women have had good socialization experiences in the male-dominated seafaring profession. Their efforts to gain acceptance from male colleagues include “undoing” their gender. Fitting into the masculine setting is a prerequisite for women to develop their seafaring careers. Compared to the days when women first started to graduate as navigation cadets, current seafaring conditions in Taiwan's shipping industry are significantly friendlier towards women seafarers. The process by which women seafarers will gain full acceptance from their male colleagues through good socialization is bound to be slow, though not impossible Guo & Liang, 2012).



Some female navigation students were attracted by the high pay, and studied navigation with the intention of working on board ships. But, because of the hegemonic masculinity on board and the prolonged separation from partners and families inherent in the seafaring profession, women cadets and seafarers must undergo an additional selection mechanism. Consequently, those unable to adapt to the seafaring workplace are thus eliminated by themselves or their employers. But there is no significant evidence currently indicates that Taiwanese women seafarers leave the workplace earlier than their male counterparts (Guo & Liang, 2012).

It is evident that the Taiwanese shipping industry continues to prefer male seafarers based on some preconceived ideas such as that women are willing to serve less time on board than their male colleagues. This way of thinking results to a preference towards recruiting more men (Guo & Liang, 2012).

### 9.3. The case of Romania

Dragomir & Surugiu (2013) questioned the female students of the Constanta Maritime University in order to identify the perception of these women regarding the seafaring profession. As it will be seen, their results corroborated the notion that most problems are related to family issues and support, sexual harassment, the particular working environment on board and the sense of isolation.

Most female students questioned by Dragomir & Surugiu (2013) pointed out the salary as the main factor that attracted them to seafaring, which actually is far better than the salaries that are offered in Romania for land-based positions. Wages for senior seafaring positions and managerial functions are exponentially increased. Also, many of the students were attracted by the prospects that a career at sea could offer to them. There were also fewer students who chose seafaring motivated by their family tradition. It was a common belief among them they are discriminated and that they are not regarded as good and equal as men. Sexual harassment is the second issue most likely to happen, followed by difficulties in operating mechanical equipment, feeling of isolation, accident risks, fatigue and increased workload. Most of these women believe that they will abandon seafaring for family reasons, in order to get married or to have children while others would change their

seafaring profession when they encounter a land based position with higher remuneration or when they get bored of this job and they want to try something else.

#### 9.4. The case of Philippines

The studies conducted by Tangi (2018) and Acejo & Abila (2016) also verified the masculine norms that prevail on board, the problems cause by the tough physical working environment and the sex discrimination that is experienced by women seafarers.

Gender gap is highly evident both in maritime schools and in the seafaring profession, it is considered to be due to the recent lift of the barriers that impeded the access of female students to the maritime schools. Also, it is very common for female cadets to experience discrimination particularly in the first two years of their studies. This discriminations is usually perpetrated by their upper class male classmates who seem to underestimate their abilities (Tangi, 2018).

It seems that some female students couldn't stand the dominance of their male colleagues in the maritime schools and thus abandoned their maritime studies. This may be an explanation to the fact that not all of the women who enter shipping academies finally manage to graduate (Tangi, 2018).

On the professional side, the gender gap is also very wide. The number of Filipino seafarers deployed annually has been growing steadily since the 1970s. From only 23,000 deployed in 1972, the number of sea-based workers deployed in 2014 has reached more than 400,000 (Tangi, 2018).

More than nine out of ten Filipino female seafarers are employed on board passenger vessels with most of them being employed as massage therapists, waitresses, cabin girls, kitchen helpers and utility personnel. It is believed that their caring attitude toward children and senior passengers as well as their smiling dispositions are highly appreciated among shipping companies and that is the reason why they are preferred for passenger and cruise vessels. It is important to point out that there are also some Filipino female officers on board this type of vessels, but their presence is very limited (Tangi, 2018).

The stance of the crewing agencies and the shipping companies towards female seafarers is also responsible for the gender gap in the maritime industry. Although only few crewing agencies accept women, their candidacies are usually rejected by the shipping companies.

Based on some widespread beliefs regarding the caring nature of the Filipino women, shipping companies mostly employ females on board cruise and passenger vessels (Tangi, 2018).

Ordinarily, the ship as an all-male workplace allows for masculine acts and expressions. As military uniforms codify rules of conduct, certain normative assumptions of masculine repertoires involving haircut and body techniques must be internalised and exhorted. These are all necessary to exude the masculine discipline and formality encoded in it. In a workplace with such a high proportion and traditional presence of men such as the shipping industry, it is evident that the uniforms and the allowed haircuts erase any kind of distinction among genders and impose an all-male appearance (Acejo & Abila, 2016).

Thus, the wearing of similar dress code and hairstyles may appear to foster the value of being the same and belonging thus having an even playing field. In doing so, however, female cadets who had similar “treatment as the male cadets” meant it as literal as possible whereby their gender is subdued to that of the masculine gender, captured in the practices of, first, requiring them similar uniforms and hairstyle as their male counterparts, and secondly addressing the female cadets as ‘Sirs’. Rubbing out gender distinction enables women to be in equal footing with men. Symbolic vested interest in removing femininity assures a high quality of performance often seen exclusively with manliness. It allows for recasting women to be evaluated in the same terms as men (Acejo & Abila, 2016).

As women are regarded more fragile than men it is believed that female seafarers cannot endure the physically demanding life on board a vessel. This is the reason why in the initial stages of the training it is intended to deprive women from all their feminine characteristics in order to make them endure the potential difficulties of the seafaring profession. But while efforts are made to erase this gender distinction, this later is still present in the form of separate living facilities. Female cadets retire to their respective dormitory after the morning rituals and academic duties have been met. Often it is located in a different building and a few distance away from the male dormitory. The sex segregation in dorms excludes female cadets from what is a normatively male tradition of seniority and bonding (Acejo & Abila, 2016).

## 9.5. The case of Greece

Theotokas & Tsalichi (2013) studied the views of seafarers of both sexes regarding the employment of women on board. They also identified as problems the lack of acceptance that women can perform as equal as men, the relation with their family and sexual harassment.

Regarding sexual harassment, while half of the participants do not perceive it as a problem, for the rest it was reported as such, with varying intensity: “a little” by one out of four participants and “a lot” by one out of ten participants. According to the latest published data for the employment of women seafarers working on board Greek flagged ships as well as on foreign flagged ones registered in the Seafarers Pension Fund for 2006, out of a total of 29.260 seafarers 1.496 were women. The vast majority of Greek women seafarers are employed as hotel staff. In the category for the same year, there were 49 women in the deck cadet group and 24 in the engineering cadet one. The proportion of Greek women cadets to the total number of Greek cadets was close to 3%, while women represented about one third of the total cadets in the category of Pursers. The reason why there is a very small number of women junior officers among the Greek crews is the barrier to entry into the maritime academies for women. Such barriers were lifted since 2007. That is the reason why the number of female officers is expected to rise. It is also observed that it is more common for female cadets to opt for a career in navigation rather than in shipping engineering (Theotokas & Tsalichi, 2013).

Regarding their opinion about gender equality issues, for six out of ten of them, men and women have equal chances to succeed, but for four out of ten, seafaring is incompatible with the female nature. It is also interesting to point out that even among those who believe that the female nature is compatible with the life on board, only few of them actually believe that women can cope as effectively as men with the tasks of the seafaring profession. This belief is also similar to their stance regarding the cooperation with female seafarers (Theotokas & Tsalichi, 2013).

The belief that seafaring creates certain challenges to the seafarers’ smooth family planning is shared by the majority of the seafarers. It seems that, when the majority of men seafarers consider the female nature compatible with the seafarer’s profession, they do so without taking into account the family planning angle. Also, most male seafarers

believe that if a woman wishes to advance her seafaring career she should give up any potential plans about making her own family (Theotokas & Tsalichi, 2013).

Consistent with this finding is the one related to the ability of the women seafarers to perform effectively the tasks required on board, either during training or in the course of their career. More specifically, nearly half of the respondents answer negative. The analysis of the responses per respondents' age shows that the percentage of positive responses decreases as the age category of respondents increases, this applies to both deck and engine positions. Also, many believe that a woman, unequal to man in task completion can yet perform relatively better on deck (Theotokas & Tsalichi, 2013).

Of course, when faced with the gender dilemma in partner selection, the percentage of those who would prefer women is approximately one out of three as the vast majority prefers male co-workers. One of the most critical issues potentially encountered during the employment of women seafarers on board is that of sexual harassment (Theotokas & Tsalichi, 2013).

## 9.6. The case of Malaysia

Bin Ahmad Ong (2019) conducted a survey among female students at Maritime Education and Training Institute in Malaysia. As most important problems he pointed out the incidents of sexual harassment, bullying and the difficult tasks of working on board.

The adventurous nature of seafaring seems to be the main motive for female students to opt for the seafaring profession, while others were tempted by the economic advantages of the profession rather than the adventurous spirit. Only a few women were attracted by a passion for the life on board per se while only two students were driven by a desire to get to know other places and countries. It is also interesting that one student by opting for seafaring wanted to demonstrate that there is no difference between men and women and another one that resorted to seafaring because she couldn't find a job ashore (Bin Ahmad Ong, 2019).

Bullying and harassment during study and work are another concern in all sectors. Female students at METIs are likely to become a target of bullying and harassment by their colleagues, either male or female because of the attitude and behaviour of certain male and female students (i.e., looking down on female ability, discrimination and demotivation

and being a senior student can also be a cause for them to bullying). Out of 50 respondents, nearly on third reported their experience of being victims of bullying and harassment. Approximately nine out of ten had an experienced being bullied bymales, while one of the students became a victim to another female (Bin Ahmad Ong, 2019).

Bullying and harassment experienced by female students were in the forms of sexual harassment, verbal harassment, mental torture, body shaming and demotivation which is the main type of bullying women students suffer from (Bin Ahmad Ong, 2019).

Regarding the tasks on board it seems that most female seafarers opt for deck positions rather than positions in the engine room. This results could be attributed to the fact that working in the engine room is considered dirty, heavy and require physical strength, thus is believed to be a place where men are more suitable (Bin Ahmad Ong, 2019).

## CHAPTER 10. Actions that can be undertaken

Women and men need equal access to training and education. This could be achieved through equal opportunity policies that specifically relate to women seafarers and encourage an increased intake of female trainees (ILO, 2019).

Based on the identified barriers that women face when entering the maritime careers, two implications can be generated. The correction of under-representation of female in shipping will require structural changes from a systemic perspective, to ensure that the system, from design to operations, could conform female characteristics and life patterns. Secondly, in addition to implement measures to mitigate physical and social barriers, initiatives should be taken to proactively address gender role biases and create work environments that can build self-efficacy. Based on the discussions and results mentioned above, certain proposals can be made concerning the stakeholders of shipping: 1) efforts that would combat the gender discrimination and prejudice and that would ameliorate the working facilities on board should be done in order to help the everyday life of seafarers of both genders and particularly to promote the employment of female seafarers, 2) introduce the seafarers to the emerging professions that are due to the development of the automation in shipping, 3) help the research that aims to gender diversity, problem solving and group decision making, 4) increase the interest of women to participate in seafaring

by raising awareness at the level of the society and by creating seafaring posts that would not require the characteristics of a particular gender, 5) eradicate the effect of the negative concepts that are rooted in the maritime industry on women, and 6) give women the opportunity to acquire the necessary seafaring skills both in terms of education and training in order to ameliorate their position as capable and looked-for workforce especially in view of the new technologies in shipping (Kim et al., 2019).

Shipping companies and their managements have to find the organisational bravery to lift the discussed gender issues onto the formal agenda, thereby recognising their importance within the specific organisational context (Kitada & Langaker, 2017).

In order to be aware of what is going on on board it is necessary that the incidents are all reported and addressed with the appropriate measures so that the victims feel safer. But preemptive measures should also be applied and accompany the already existing reactive measures in order to prevent the incidents of bullying and sexual harassment. Regarding discriminatory cases based on gender, they are omnipresent in many societies and the multicultural environment of the vessel is not an exception as long as it is also a male-dominated workplace. It is also important to point out that reporting such cases hasn't led to the solution of this problematic situation but it has just made it more evident and has raised awareness. In some countries, it is also a requirement to avoid employer liability for not providing a work environment free from sex discrimination. So, despite the fact that there are plenty of policies against sexual harassment it seems that the existing culture impede the solution (Piñeiro & Kitada, 2020).

It is important that the crew understand that incidents of sexual harassment or gender discrimination cannot be tolerated neither from the authorities nor from the shipping companies. This message needs to be passed to the seafarers using a language that can be understood by them and this can also refer to the use their mother language if necessary (Piñeiro & Kitada, 2020).

Measures to raise sensitivity regarding incidents of sexual harassment and the promotion of gender equality on the vessel need to be undertaken (Piñeiro & Kitada, 2020).

Finally, it is necessary that all the responsible part of the maritime industry such as seafarers, government organizations, shipping and crewing companies, seafarers' trade unions, women's organizations and the maritime education and training institutions cooperate in order to foment the employment of women on board and the gender parity.

Committees with representatives from these groups can be created for this objective, although a strong political will, wisdom, and innovative ways will be needed to articulate this (Zhao et al., 2017).

Also, governments should reconsider their policy regarding the training and education of seafarers regardless of their gender but with provisions that will guarantee the access of the female seafarers on board. It is interesting to observe that the Chinese government has already implemented measures to prohibit the use of gender discriminative discourse in the universities. This policy constitutes an important first step but measures should be undertaken to ensure the application of the aforementioned policy. Resources should also be provided to facilitate the female seafarers (Zhao et al., 2017)

A very important element for the improvement off the life of women seafarers are the high standards of education, training and mentoring. It is also important to amalgamate wellbeing and diversity during the training of the seafarers. This will help both the life on board and the supervisors in coping with problems such as harassment or isolation on the vessel (Pike et al., 2021).

The constitution of world maritime bodies to efficiently regulate and bring synergy amongst the various countries is very important considering the nature of trade involving various countries. These bodies does not only limit themselves to trade interventions but also regulate occupational and work conditions on and off the ship (Mishra & Trivedi, 2021).

It is duty of the maritime education system to make both male and female students aware of the problems faced by women on board. It is very important for both sexes and the shareholders of the industry to understand the culture of seafaring. All the aspects of the seafaring profession can affect the life of the crew (Purnama, 2018).

## CHAPTER 11. Conclusions

For centuries seafaring was an occupation dominated by men. The harsh conditions of working at sea made it a field exclusively reserved for men who possessed the physical capabilities to endure long journeys and hard work on deck or in the engine room. In the same time, women were confined to jobs ashore that required less physical strength and permitted them to be close to the family, which was regarded as their most important task.



Exception to this rule that shipping is a male dominated occupation is the cruise and the passenger ships. It is believed that it is more easy and more compatible with the traditional and historical roles undertaken by women to enter this industry, the smaller journeys are also a possible explanation for this, nevertheless, there are women such as the Filipinos who are widely considered as very caring and fit for this job. This trend is believed that can be reverted due to the technological progress that can alleviate the harsh work and conditions on board vessels as the advancement of the automation on board can decrease the need for physical force and even make seafaring look like an office job.

The harsh character of seafaring is not the only reason that prevents women from joining. Although the maritime is widely regarded as a well remunerated job it is neither very well-known nor widely known and many women think that it is an occupation only for the coastal peoples. Despite this fact women attracted by the high salary and the adventurous spirit are willing to join.

The problems from which women seafarers suffer can be identified mostly as sexual harassment, lack of acceptance by male colleagues, the belief that seafaring is only a male occupation, gender discrimination, isolation, lack of support, physical environment of the vessel, bullying and family related problems. These difficulties are very common among women seafarers regardless of nationality.

Sexual harassment is a broad problem concerning women in various occupations. It includes among others, offers for help in exchange for sexual benefits or unwanted touching. It can also take the form of verbal and non-verbal harassment such as unwanted visits and pressure from male colleagues. Needless to say that only few incidents are reported and investigated. In some cases, women are obligated to cover parts of their body as their femininity has sexual connotations that may disturb the male dominated life on board. Also, it is considered inevitable to be subjected to such treatment during a long seafaring career and many young women seafarers are sure that will face it.

Lack of acceptance by male colleagues is also a very significant problem. Many men find it difficult to accept women on board sometimes because of superstitions. Also, having a woman as a superior on board or ashore is something that very few could tolerate. Surprisingly, most men that have worked with women on board have reported positive outcomes. This lack of acceptance makes women seafarers manage their gender identities in order to fit in the atmosphere of a male dominated crew.

There is also a prevailing belief that seafaring is a profession only reserved to men because of its difficult and dirty character whereas women are thought to be more appropriate for 'caring' jobs ashore. Perhaps that is also an explanation for their high representation in passenger and cruise ships. This may also be the explanation of why women tend to enroll in navigation rather than engineering courses.

Gender discrimination is closely related to the widespread belief about the masculine nature of seafaring. Women are not allowed to do some tasks that are not considered feminine. Some of them are also subjected to pregnancy testing that violates their rights.

Isolation is perhaps the most common problem between men and women seafarers. Especially when women seafarers are a minority in a multinational crew where there cultural and language barriers it is normal to feel isolated. Also, sharing the same facilities and lacking any privacy from their male colleagues makes the sense of isolation even worse.

The working environment is closely related to the sentiment of isolation because seafarers need to live in the same narrow space where they perform the daily routines in constant move. To this there should be added the constant noise particularly for those employed in the engine rooms and other factors that may the life on board very stressful. Also, there is a code of behavior that should be respected by all seafarers.

Bullying occurs especially among seafarers and junior officers. Women are regarded as 'the weaker sex' and as a consequence they are not fit for the seafaring profession according do some male seafarers. Also, when some men seafarers feel threatened by some hardworking women it is possible to resort in bullying her.

Many would consider the relation of a woman seafarer with her family as a bug problem, especially the maintenance of the feelings and the ties. Some of them develop the sense that they are 'selfish' when they follow their career at sea. Such women also tend to be the victim of criticism whereas it is completely different for men seafarers who are treated with sympathy. It is also likely that the women abandon seafaring in order to be devoted to their families. Women are also the ones who are forced to change their behavior once ashore, leaving the elements of the seafarer's life behind.

Very relevant to the above is the lack of support from the society that stems from the belief that being a good mother and a good seafarer are not reconcilable.

The difficult life of a woman seafarer could be alleviated with the implementation of shorter or more flexible work patterns or provision in the employment contracts that may allow for women to work part-time during the early years of their children. The implementation of advanced systems of communication will give the opportunity to both men and women seafarers to stay in contact with their family and maintain their relations.

There have emerged four strategies that women seafarers employ in order to cope with these difficulties on board. Some try to fit their identity in the masculine environment, others try to achieve acceptance from male colleagues by changing some of their traits while others opt for not changing anything. Some try to hide their identity and their femininity from the male crew in order to gain acceptance and some others try to acquire some masculine characteristics.

There is not a single stance that shipping companies have before the employment of women. Some are precautionary while others support their participation on board. It is also recognized that recruiting women seafarers may be their best available option in the face of a shortage of officers. Those who opt for not recruiting women use the pretext that the vessel is unsuitable for them due to physical and structural features of the ship such as the lack of a single cabin in the ships and the use of toilets. Widespread is also the notion that women will abandon their sea careers because of marriage and motherhood. In this policy of exclusion of women, one should not underestimate that fact that those who do the crewing selection may have their own perceptions and stereotypes such as the one that women on board create more troubles than they solve. Also, some other companies hire them in order to place them later in positions ashore. It is also very important to note that companies have changed their policy against women after allowing female students to do their internships on board their vessels.

Regarding the physical constraints of the life on board, the technological progress has something to offer. The automation in shipping can reduce the level of that physically demanding job and the risk exposure of the seafarers.

It is agreed by many that the participation of women in seafaring can enhance the working and living experience at sea for both males and females. In this way shipping can be benefited from an inflow of well-trained officers who will carry their diverse perspectives and leadership styles. There is also believed that women in seafaring have added color to the previously plain and monotonous life on board.

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