



A Review of Maritime Women in The Global Arena

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Abstract

World Maritime theme for 2019 has been selected as "Empowering Women in the Maritime Community" by International Maritime Organization in order to increase the awareness of women in the global arena. Even though the number of female students and graduates in Maritime Education and Training institutions (MET) is increasing across the globe, the gender gap in the maritime industry like in many other sectors is still notable. Despite the continuous efforts of female seafarers trying to demonstrate their existence in the sector, women still face obstacles and glass ceiling in their career development and promotion in shipping - a male-dominated industry. In recent years, gender studies in literature about maritime women gain speed but still limited. This review article aims to reveal today's scenario to focus on specific researches which are well known in the field. For this reason, this review article not only evaluates leading articles of gender literature in the maritime industry and methodologies that are used; but it also reveals the status quo of the maritime women and maritime sector's viewpoints.

1. Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that a gender gap and subsequent inequality have always been a global issue. In today's world, still upon certain countries culture in the world, gender disparity is considered as normal since it arises from society and religion traditions. Yet current socio-cultural structure of so-called countries is not encouraging in terms of women rights to work under equal conditions (Dragomir and Senbursa, 2019: 272-277). By adopting the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development global leaders and pace under the Goal 8, target 8.5, leaders are dedicated to enhancing gender equality in order to sustain fair environment for men and women. By 2030, strengthening all women and girls is another scope of United Nations within Goal 5. Based on the data of Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services of Turkey 2019 (General Directorate on the Status of Women), men between 18 and 29 years old, women older than 18 for 24 to 54 months depending on their specific conditions employment opportunities are observed (<https://ailevecalisma.gov.tr/media/5262/women-in-turkey-2019.docx>). Additionally, on a global level, women are faced with similar problems regarding workforce opportunities. Depending on the statistics, women forms 35 % of the workforce in which 24 % consists of top management executives (Grant Thornton International Business Report, 2013). In recent years, the urgency of increasing awareness of Women Seafarers have become an important issue in global arena. The acceptance of maritime women by the maritime sector has ever since been issue. Yet, first accepted female students of the maritime colleges claim that the gender bias discussion and the problems against females initiated with the acceptance of women in maritime colleges (Thomas, 2004: 309-318) The year 2019 has been nominated as "The Year of Maritime Women & Increasing Awareness of Maritime Women" by International Maritime Organization. In male dominated maritime industry, for a long while the gender gap has been the focus of non-governmental international organizations such as International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Labor Organization (ILO) and The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). The role of these three organizations on regulating rules and putting laws into force on behalf of more than one million maritime workers in the maritime sector is vital. In particular, continuous efforts have been made up by IMO in order to support the industry to promote gender in maritime and take a step to move forward. As per the latest data, according to IMO, out of the world's 1.2 million seafarers' population, women seafarers constitute only two percent of it. It forms 94 percent of female seafarers who are mostly working in the cruise industry (IMO, 2019). According to International Labor Organization, within the cruise line sector, women seafarers contribute 17-18% of the workforce. Therefore, the need of an increasing number of maritime women working on board has become indispensable. The maritime industry remains a male dominant society across the world as it is in Turkey, comprising of only about 2 % female seafarers. However,

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industry should be conscious that gender equality can be only reached by obtaining sustainable development. As per the latest report published by World Economic Forum (2019) women in shipping is far from being fair. It is apparent that exploring and expressing the challenges that women seafarers face in the maritime field have so far been overlooked staying in the shadow of dominant stereotypical thinking. There is also evidence showing that these approaches are nothing more than prejudices. Influential positions matter. According to Mc Kinsey & Company Report (2019) top-quartile companies that have gender diversity on executive teams outperformed more likely 21% on profitability and 27% in all probability to hold superior value creation. Thus, this report demonstrates that the role of women at managerial positions not only in terms of profitability but also regarding company diversity is crucial. Therefore, the crucial mission of the women managers to relieve maritime economy in maritime clusters located in Southern and Eastern Africa is underlined (Bhirugnath-bhookhun and Kitada, 2017: 1229–1238). It is crucial to understand along with the career of women seafarers; the negotiation of their gender occurs to prove their identity on board. Although women on board continuously succeed in reaching their career as Chief Engineers or Master Mariners, cynical disbelief of women is still existent. Although the findings do indicate that some of the prejudicial stereotypes regarding women working are decreasing and as a result, the current status of women in the maritime industry is slowly gaining acceptance. Moreover, women have always felt under pressure to present their physical appearances with more of a masculine stance in order to change the existing negative stereotypes and negotiate their gender in authoritative positions such as captains/engineers and ‘proving morality’ to gain acceptance in the sector. The aims of this review are; 1) to reveal considerable amount of literature about maritime women 2) to understand the status quo of the maritime women in the shipping business industry, 3) to reveal the position of maritime sector’s and industry’s viewpoints regarding gender issues.

2. Material and Methods

Gender studies in the maritime field is multidisciplinary research area. It is becoming an agenda topic since the field is ready to be discovered. Due to insufficient number of global data about women seafarers and maritime women in the sector, researchers have serious difficulties to be guided in terms of the women employment's share in the maritime world. At the Third WMU International Women’s Conference, all stakeholders have suggested to make such data and information available (Kitada, Piñeiro & Mejia, 2019: 525–530). Also, a research held in Brazil about maritime women underlines the lack of systematic and chronological data in the maritime sector (Medeiros Evangelista et al, 2019: 557–578). Research conducted upon gender literature in the maritime field, depending on the purpose of the study both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are observed to be used in the literature. Applied methods in the literature of gender studies in the maritime industry are as following: face-to-face interviews, online interviews, questionnaires, surveys and online surveys. The usage of both questionnaires and interviews are complementary methods to be used in gender studies. In the research conducted on Women’s Role in the Turkish and Global Maritime Industry, two methods have been followed as face-to-face interviews and an online survey. Interviews are considered as a transparent, self-explanatory and clear method for participants. Also, these methodologies facilitate to understand women’s professional life both on board and on shore and reflects real stories of success, experiences, obstacles and commendations from the first person (Basak, 2015: 103–111). In the research of Acejo and Abila (2016) on maritime women and merchant ships have applied self and cluster structured interviews on board. However, in this study one shipboard voyage is one of the research limitations (Acejo and Abila, 2016: 123–138). Surveys are aimed to reveal current obstacles of maritime women which provide crucial input to their empowerment progress. In the research conducted on Caribbean Community: Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Jamaica, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Suriname, women survey with twenty four (24) items together with socio-demographic questions such as age, marital status, children, professional obstacles and dealing ways, advices and necessary actions have helped to understand the evaluation of professional analysis and managerial and executive level positions in the maritime sector (Grant and Grant, 2015: 83–101). In the surveys to use different variations of Likert scale is up to researchers’ preference. Two main particularities of a Likert scale are stated as (1) the gradation of approval with expressions in the survey and (2) by stating uneven number response alternatives therefore permitting a neutral response (Tullis and Albert, 2008). In an expressive research with a cross-sectional investigation approach in the first round applying 5-point Likert Scale overview survey and in the second-round interviews to accumulate information from some respondents. Therefore, applying interviews together with surveys, is effective to get more narrative information parallel with responses in the survey (Fitriangraeni et al, 2019: 595–616). Coleman (1958) adopted two models of survey methods. The first model is the snowball sampling. The mentioned method is a nonprobability sampling technique. In this technique a group of respondents suggests and determine potential participants for a study. Those members preach extra members, and the circle goes on like a chain. In this way developing like a snowball moving down a slope. This is considered as domino effect. Therefore, this sampling helps the researcher to have a notable number of participants. The spillover effect of social networks forms the part of the results. On the other hand, the study of Bhirugnath-Bhookhun and Kitada (2017) related to maritime women’s professional career in Eastern and

Southern Africa contains 45 respondents which can be considered as limited number of participants. However, despite the reduced participation of the survey, results are still meaningful. Taking into consideration the sources of the information derived from qualitative research and the results on how work-like balance is linked to job success in terms of public interpretation of the study.

3. Findings and Discussion

It is observed that common research techniques used in gender studies in the maritime industry: are in-debt interviews online interviews, hardcopy, and online questionnaires. As per studies held up until now, the most effective method is observed as in-debt interviews combination together with survey/questionnaire since the chance of expressing feelings in detail is given to the respondents without any limitation or restriction of answers like in Nominal or Likert scales. Structured interviews consist of questions that are arranged in advance by the researcher. Thus, all interviewees are asked the same questions in the same order. The advantage of structured interviews is to be able to compare the replies since they are all same. Therefore, the evaluation of semi-structured interviews is fair and practical. However, problems and obstacles that maritime women face in the cluster are most likely to be insufficient to explain in structured interviews. The disadvantages of structured interviews are incompleteness of development and inflexibility of respondents' responses. It is a routinized interview meaning one-size-fits-all interviews. Unstructured interviews do not include questions that are prepared in advance by the investigator. In unstructured interviews, questions are naturally asked questions arise spontaneously and the conversation runs its course. Thus, these types of interviews address different questions to different candidates. The advantages of unstructured interviews address more to the person itself. Another advantage is that the causality of the conversation which makes the interviewee feel more comfortable. However, categorizing the vast majority of replies depending on different opinions of the respondents is difficult as a disadvantage. Semi-structured interviews are both conducted with some prepared questions and the rest arises spontaneously. It gives more flexibility to the respondents while giving opinions. Since it emerges two models of interviewing, it gives a bit of everything. While getting standard replies of determined questions also it gives a personalized approach. Albeit the categorization of the opinions is tougher. It should be taken into consideration that being able to have a face to face in-debt interview is not easy to be held in shipping since seafarers work on board. Respondent's attainability is harder. Therefore, the limitation of an in-debt face to face interview is the accessibility to the interviewee. The best way is to arrange interviews on board in their natural environment if possible, for the interviewer/researchers although applicability is quite hard. Another limitation of surveys that are sent to merchant vessels via crew management department of shipping companies is the inattentiveness of crew onboard when it comes to replying the surveys since the workload on board is quite busy. Though it is an undeniable fact that the importance of making research on board of a vessel regarding women seafarers to observe the male-dominated living space weights a lot.

3.1. Industrial Perspective

In the maritime industry, the attitude of maritime clusters towards women plays an important role from the cadetship till professional life of the candidate. While some companies constantly support the participation of women into the sector, others may be precautious about it. Problems and bad experiences that they face regarding women on and offshore may affect the approach of maritime entities. In this part of the paper, some of the world's leading maritime companies' opinions and judgements about maritime women are aimed to reveal. Company A has initiatives to break taboos about the gender gap in the organization. The company decides to cooperate with leading companies in other sectors by combining forces with three other large companies in order to drive women to the top and raise awareness of women in the maritime sector. The world's biggest maritime company's is Danish. The CEO of the Danish Group of Maritime Companies states: "We have with 2% of women working at sea, and a 35% at land. The number is too low, and we must do something to change it". Human Resources Manager of the same Group of Maritime Companies adds: "Virtually every company deals with a tapering off in the representation of women as you go up the pyramid. There's no single solution for that. Trust me, we've looked. We keep working on Strategies for Success, such as global maternity benefits". Another Danish Roll on Roll Off (RORO) Company agrees with this initiative by highlighting crucial contribution of women onboard. On the other hand, the world's second largest shipping company states in the company's Sustainability Report of 2018, "We are actively working to promote maritime careers for women as well as female employees to senior positions. Efforts include internal mobility programmes and training to increase their interest in pursuing a career in our sector therefore retaining female talent. In 2018, 35% of the promotions in our company were given to female employees and 29% of internal mobility roles were given to women". A women CEO of a dry bulk company in Turkey emphasizes the importance of maritime women as "*Women managers generally create "a company culture", "sustainability", "scalability" and "mentoring " besides cliché objectives such as "earning money" and "profitability" and, of course, they make great efforts to increase the company's market value. When there is a woman's touch in the professions like ship management, you realize that even the provision is carefully managed. We are talking about the equality of women and men, but of course the "job styles" of*

these two genera differ from place to place. Therefore, the woman understands the language of the woman. While there is a "minority psychology" that supports this solidarity, businesswomen must of course protect, watch over and understand each other". Board chairwoman of one of the leading conglomerates in terms of container shipping companies in Turkey expresses company's principles as following: *"As a matter of our company's policy, we have always considered the existence of female employees at sea and at land-based positions, I can proudly say that we started doing this not 15 years ago. Maritime is not an easy sector. But we believed that women would be successful in this industry, and we witnessed their success over time. We have female employees who started as cadets, went up to captain and chief engineer positions and worked on our ships. It is not only necessary to create employment for women, but also to allow them to rise in their careers. Our company has Turkey's the most numerous female seafarers' population".*

3.2. Current Status Quo of Maritime Women

Throughout the history, in a male-dominant sector like maritime, women's path has always been challenging. In patriarchal societies, taboos are hard to break. Thanks to steps in the right direction together with United Nations (UN) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) raising awareness of maritime women goes through the proper organizations. Today employment of women in shipping, which is increasing day by day in the maritime sector, is still not at the desired level. One of the biggest reasons is the prejudices. It is believed that women working in this sector will not be able to provide the desired authority. It is thought that when she works on board, she will not be able to provide hierarchy in the relationships with crew on board, it can cause misunderstanding and an uneasy working environment. Another factor which maritime companies explain regarding non hiring women trainees and officers policy onboard is the inconvenience of the physical and structural features of the ship such as the lack of a single cabin in the ships and the use of toilets within the fleet. All these thoughts, prejudices and taboos have created a gender gap and inequality in the maritime industry. Women seafarers who have set their hearts on shipping and have proven themselves and women can be successful in this sector, they break all these prejudices from the past to the present and open the way for other fellows who want to have this profession. Diversity is key to success on equality onboard and ashore.

4. Results

Talking about the disputes on gender imbalance in which men dominance is severely noted is not a new issue in the global arena albeit it has been a therein hangs a tale. Thus, the common stereotyping about maritime women have been sensed as performance insufficiency of women in traditionally male-dominated jobs (MacNeil and Ghosh, 2017: 42-55). Due to copping an attitude of "Don't do a man's job!", by referring both physical and mental inadequacy to work as good as male colleagues towards maritime women causes to low share of women in the transportation sector (Kitada and Harada, 2019: 1-9). Current obstacles to gender equality in the maritime sector also impede human progress in shipping, economic development, respect and recognition of human rights. In a specific sector like Maritime, gender gap is generally perceived as taboo subjects (Dragomir, 2019: 182-192). However, a participative leadership style helps other people to involve in decision-making process instead of following an autocratic and authoritative approach (Özdemir and Albayrak, 2015: 217-227). The merchant vessel remains a "man's world" in which the marginalization of female seafarers is seen (Acejo and Abela, 2016: 123-138). In order to get concrete results on gender equality, education, integrated support networks and international efforts shall be performed in the global arena. (MacNeil and Ghosh, 2017: 42-55). On the way to remove obstacles for maritime women in the transport sector, only if the international decision-makers defend women's rights by coming to the table with workers' representatives who are educated in women's rights can be accomplished. Under these conditions, remarkable developments and a room for women's problems in collective negotiating conventions can be obtained (Turnbull, 2013: 1-49). Considering both women and men have different technical and managerial skills, one shall consider that diversity brings creativity and success. The various qualifications of both sexes should be considered as talents and not as challenges (MacNeil and Ghosh, 2017: 42-55). None of them are replicable neither in shipping nor in any kind of business. Merchant marine vessels have still a man-dominated atmosphere compare to cruise line vessels. Female cadets and women seafarers are generally oriented by the maritime sector professionals to cruise or yacht sectors which is considerably "easier to deal with for a girl" compare to bulk, tanker and container carriers. Thus, categorizing women's working area depending on vessel types (merchant marine vessels, cruise ships etc.) is like admitting obstacles of women seafarers on merchant marine vessels which is another type of discrimination in its entirety.

5. Conclusion

The evolution of women in the maritime sector has been painful throughout the history. In theory, women do not seem to have problems neither in terms of admission to maritime education and training institutions nor entrance to maritime industry as professionals. However, invisible barriers, which are put against women by maritime industry, prevent to let their presence be strongly known in the business world. If women are accepted to have equal rights to have education in maritime colleges and universities, they are supposed to start a fair career with equal rights as men. Therefore, the question is, why do some entities put women obstacles through glass ceiling? Even so, women continue to prove their existence and success in the maritime sector, which has always been a male-dominated sector in history. Women prove their existence and success in the maritime sector, which has always been a male-dominated sector in history. Women's employment; It is increasing day by day in the managerial positions of companies, ships, ports, shipyards and will continue to increase. Women's employment is increasing day by day in the managerial positions of companies, ships, ports, shipyards and it will continue to increase. In order to ensure employment opportunities and equal opportunities in the sector, many companies, organizations and authorities show sensitivity and studies are being conducted. Thus, in order to increase preferability of maritime profession as a career option and to increase the number of women who want to participate in this sector; women play a major role in breaking certain prejudices. Accordingly, women should also be in solidarity; they need to defend their rights, beliefs and successes. Within all these efforts, women factor in the maritime industry it will have a stronger and greater ground. The sustainable development in the maritime sector can only be obtained by accepting diversity and adopting different opinions. Especially the recognition of women professionals' presence in the sector is a great necessity. Last but not least, knowing that the intelligence of professionalism does not have a gender, will help maritime women to advance in their career.

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