

LABOUR MARKETS FOR AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF TURKISH SEAFARERS: AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION

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Özet

Son yıllarda, küresel gemi adamları emek piyasası, küreselleşme ve bir dizi faktörün etkisiyle derin bir dönüşüm geçirmektedir. Bu dönüşüm emek piyasalarında istikrarsızlık yarattığı gibi, çalışma şartlarının da kötüleşmesine yol açmıştır. Türkiye bunun bir istisnasını oluşturmamaktadır. Emek piyasası şartlarının değişmesi gelecek belirsizliğini artırdığı gibi, Türk gemi adamlarının ücretlerinin düşmesine ve çalışma şartlarının da kötüleşmesine yol açmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gemi adamları, deniz taşımacılık endüstrisi, simsar, çalışma şartları, yabancı bayraklı gemi.

Abstract

In recent years, global seafarers' labour markets have undergone substantial changes due to a number of factors along with globalization. These changes have created instability in the labour markets and resulted in deterioration in working conditions. Turkey is no exception to this. The changes in labour market conditions have not only made the future bleak but also led to the decrease in pay level and aggravation in working conditions of Turkish seafarers.

Keywords: Seafarers, labour markets, shipping industry, simsar, working conditions, foreign flagged ship.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global seafarers' labour market has gone through considerable changes due to increasingly harsh and unpredictable business environment, privatization of national fleets and shifts in the shipping industry's pattern of ownership and finance. Although national labour markets have not been entirely declined, the labour market for seafarers has been globalized in the last 20 years and seafaring manpower has continued to move away from most of the Traditional Maritime Nations (TMNs) towards countries in Asia and Eastern Europe (SIRC, 1999: 18). All these factors have created instability in the labour markets, resulted of deterioration of working conditions and have contributed changes in the composition of the seafaring labour force.

While in the TMNs, seafaring has become an unattractive occupation, in the developing countries it is usually regarded as an occupation providing relatively high levels of pay. Turkey is no exception to this, though in recent years pay level and working conditions of the Turkish seafarers has rapidly declined. In the Turkish context, seafaring has come to be seen as a last resort occupation as a result of high levels of unemployment ashore. Not surprisingly, Turkey is one of the major labour suppliers following China and the Philippines (BIMCO/ISF 1995).

Turkish flagged ships and crews experience high port state control detention and abandonment rates. Similarly, the Turkish maritime safety record shows that the annual loss ratios have been well above the corresponding world ratios. These problems reflect the relative fortunes of the fleet and seafarers. It is not just aging fleet or technical features of vessels that result in these problems. It can be suggested that deficiencies regarding human element also play a role in the dismal safety record of Turkish shipping.

This study aims to examine the structure and the particular problems of maritime manpower in Turkey. It seeks to shed light on employment prospects and conditions, and prevailing attitudes of seafarers to their occupation and the processes and characteristics of the seafaring labour market in general.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The account, presented in this paper, was constructed from the information and evidence gathered from a number of sources including analysis

of documentary sources, semi-structured interviews with key informants in maritime agencies, shipping companies and the seafarers union, in-depth interviews with seafarers, and a survey of seafarers. The approach to the interviews was to get the seafarers to talk about their experiences of seafaring in their own terms with minimal intervention in our part which was confined to asking few questions to prompt areas of discussion. A semi-structured interview schedules was used and the interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes. 50 seafarer were interviewed in various venues including coffee-houses where seafarers assemble, company offices, training courses, union office and vessels, lasted between 45 to 90 minutes.

550 questionnaires were distributed to the seafarers through a private training course, a seafarer's coffeehouse and two ship-owning companies. Out of 255 questionnaires which were returned, 218 were classified as suitable for the analysis. 104 questionnaires were individually distributed to the seafarers while the researchers were visiting their vessels and communities ashore. All in all, a total of 322 questionnaires were examined. The survey and interviews were conducted between April 2001 and December 2001.

The samples, may be representative of the Turkish seafarers, yet, the results can be seen as indicating the trends in the Turkish seafaring workforce.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF TURKISH SHIPPING INDUSTRY AND SEAFARER WORKFORCE

Despite being a peninsula, maritime transport has not traditionally been a strong industry in Turkey. It is often said that Turkey is a marine country but it is not a mariner nation. It was not until the late 1960s that the government actively encouraged the growth of the private sector in the shipping industry. The payment of freight premium for transportation of exports by Turkish flagged vessels during the 1980s and the development of foreign commercial relationships led to increase in the number of ships and average tonnage of the fleet and created longer lines. The capacity of the Turkish Merchant fleet grew from 5.8 million dwt to 10.9 million dwt between 1987 and 1997. Similarly, the total number of vessels (over 150grt) expanded from a total of 830 vessels in 1985 to 1197 vessels in 1997. The average age of the Turkish fleet over 150 grt was 23.5 (DTO 2001: 124). This represents a relatively old average age for any fleet.

The Turkish merchant shipping fleet currently comprises 1185 ships over 150 grt and the total capacity of the merchant fleet is 8.666.575 Dwt (DTO 2003: 57) There are 553 vessels over 1.500 dwt. Dry cargo ships comprises 34.9 percent of the total fleet, though there have been remarkable increases in the number of bulk carriers, container ships, chemical tankers and Ro/Ro ships in recent years. 20.2 percent of the all vessels belongs to public and 79.8 percent to private sector (DTO 2001: 114). In terms of the size of dwt, 1.2 percent of the fleet belongs to the public sector, whereas the private sector accounts for 98.8 percent of the fleet (DT0 2001: 121).

Turkey's world ranking in tonnage terms was 18th in 2000, 19th in 2001 and 20th in 2003 (DTO, 2003: 67) and it accounts for 1.2 percent of the world's total tonnage (DTO 2001: 131). The flagged out vessels operated by the Turkish operators are approximately half of the national merchant fleet and are mostly flags such as Malta, Panama, Liberia and the Bahamas (Yercan and Roe 1999: 131).

In addition to the existing ship registry, a second ship registry has recently been established and formalized by the Turkish International Ship Registry Act. The TUGS allows that foreign seafarers can be employed in Turkish flagged ships. The main exception is master and the total number of foreign seafarers may not exceed 49 percent of seafarers in any Turkish flagged ship.

It is well-known that some registers display consistently poor safety records over considerable periods of time. Turkey is one of these countries as Turkish shipping has a rather dismal record of safety and performance. For example, Turkey came first at the worst ten flags in terms of tonnage lost as percentage of flag fleet in 1997 (IMO Casualty Statistics quoted in ITF 1999: 13). Turkey has also one of the highest records regarding the numbers of vessels detained for deficiencies hazardous to safety, health or environment amounted in Europe, Canada and in the USA. It has been placed in the very high risk group due to its very high detention rates (Paris MOU 2002: 24).

Turkish ships' main deficiency lies in safety measures. As a result, Turkey is in the black list of flags with a consistent poor safety record. It has maintained a poor performance and has been included in the top 10 for 5 consecutive years in the Paris MOU black list (Paris MOU 1999: 9 and 2000: 21). Although, not in the top ten, Turkey was still in high risk group in Paris MOU black list for the period of 2000-2002 (Paris MOU, 2002: 24).

Interestingly, Turkey was placed in the white list in 2000, which is deemed to be giving full and complete effect to the revised STCW 95.

4. THE SIZE OF TURKISH SEAFARING WORKFORCE

The concept of the number of seafarers is not an easy concept to be defined. Li and Wonham (1991) distinguish three main types of seafarers: employed seafarer, active seafarer and qualified seafarer. Employed seafarers are the number of seamen who actually maintain an employment contract with shipping companies or operators which include seamen on board ships and at shore because of holiday or illness. Active seafarers are those qualified seaman including both those who are currently employed and who are looking for jobs at sea but excluding those qualified seafarers not seeking work on board ships. Finally, qualified seafarer is someone who has an appropriate official (government approved) seaman's certificate. Li and Wonham suggest that "to be accurate the number of supply of a country should be the number of active seafarers rather the number of qualified seafarers" (1999: 296). There is a great difference between the two as not all qualified seafarers have a desire to work at sea.

Few countries maintain a complete record system on seafaring employment and closely observe the movement of seafarers in and out of the labour markets. Available data usually shows the number of certified seafarers rather than employed and active seafarers. The Turkish case is no exception to this. It is not possible to ascertain the number of Turkish seafarers currently employed on-board nationally registered vessels. To complicate the matter further, official figures do not reflect the picture accurately as they are confined to the number of qualified or certified seafarers. It is most likely that the number of active seafarers is less than the number of qualified seafarers. People who leave seafaring do not usually give back their nautical permit and as a consequence it is extremely difficult to estimate the accurate number of active seafarers. Furthermore, dead seafarers' files are still kept in the archives.

Table 1: The Number and Type of Certificates Issued by the DM (until 1997)

Deck		ENGINE	
Port Master	5.799	Sea Motorist	7.125
Coast Master	4.790	Sea Machinist	6.051
Short Sea Officer	961	Short Sea Second Machinist	686
Short Sea First Officer	616	Short Sea Engine Officer	1.747
Short Sea Master	1.387	Short Sea Chief Machinist	233
Deep Sea Officer	1.649	Short Sea Chief Engineer	888
Deep Sea First Officer	1.050	Deep Sea Second Engineer	1.873
DeepSea Master	1.692	Deep Sea Watch keeping Engineer	1.046
		Deep Sea Chief Engineer	850
		Deep Sea Second Machinist	86
		Deep Sea Chief Machinist	347
TOTAL	18.124		21.098

Source: DM 1997: 219.

The size of a country's merchant fleet can give an idea, to a certain extent, about the size of its active seafaring labour force. Assuming that all Turkish flagged ships are manned by Turkish nationals, the total seafarer employment on Turkish vessels is estimated to be about 40.000 (Akten 1998: 61). This figure was estimated on the basis of the number of minimum personnel to operate a ship safely according to technical, managerial and legal requirements, the number and size of the Turkish merchant fleet, reserve seafarers and those working for the foreign flags. Another estimate puts the figure to be around 34.000 (DM, 2000a: 5). A registry of seafarers exists but it is mostly confined to officer ranks. As of 2000 25.784 officers have been listed in the registry (DM, 2000a: 37). It should be borne in mind that these figures include all potential officers so the number of actual working officers must be lower.

The State Institute of Statistics (DİE) maritime transport statistics can be regarded as more realistic than (DM) statistics in estimating the number of active seafarers since both statistics focus on working population. A survey of sea and coastal water transportation industry was conducted by the DİE in 1995 in Istanbul, which included those working on vessels larger than 18 gross tonnes. According to this survey, the annual number of employees working in freight transportation, which includes the merchant fleet, was 17.501 (DİE, 1998: 122). The DİE estimated that as of January 1999 there were 34.286

people working in maritime transportation industry (DIE 2001: 288). This category includes all maritime related workplaces.

All these statistics do not reflect the substantial number of Turkish seafarers employed on board foreign owned and foreign flagged ships. There is no estimate of the number of these seafarers but in the late 1980s the figure was thought to be between 5.000 and 10.000 (DTO 1990: 59).

Little information is available about the level of female participation on board cargo ships, but it can safely be assumed that it is very low. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (ÇSGB) statistics there are 3,429 female workers in maritime transport sector, 570 of whom are union members (2001: 131- 136). Most of these female workers probably carry out shore-based clerical and auxiliary services. Female seafarers working onboard have mostly ship clerk certificates and are married to a seafarer. They tend to have ship clerk certificates to live on board with their spouses during journeys rather than pursuing a career in the shipping industry.

5. THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SEAFARER LABOUR MARKETS IN TURKEY

In the early 1980s, finding a job in the sea was extremely attractive as it paid relatively well compare to the jobs in land. But as the labour market conditions began to change from the 1990s onwards as the industry and labour markets become more globalized. The rapid rise in the number of unemployed in the late 1990s drove people to look for jobs in the sea where job opportunities and pays deteriorated. This has not only increased period spent for finding a job but also undermined the market power of seafarers vis-a vis employers.

The intensification of the competition for jobs among Turkish seafarers led some seafarers vigorously defend their occupation and jobs against the new comers and foreigners by arguing that they were not "proper or genuine" seafarer with seafaring family backgrounds. Those, considering themselves "genuine" seafarers, believe that "new comers" and foreigners (particularly Filipinos and Romanians) take their jobs from them as they are willing to work for low wages.

Table 2. The Length of Time Spent for Finding a Job

	N	%
Less than 1 month	32	10
1-3 months	131	41
3-6 months	94	29
6-12 months	41	13
12 months +	13	4
No answer	11	3
Total	322	100

In such competitive labour markets, the risk of being unemployed is a very genuine threat for even well-educated officers. Most interviewed officers complained that retired and discharged navy officers look for jobs for less wages and take their jobs. They claimed that employer prefer them because they believe that they have better education, experience and discipline. This outcry vividly illustrates that even for the officers, some of whom have a university degree, labour market conditions are tight. In the survey, we asked our respondents how long it takes to get a job on average.

The Table 2 illustrates that it took at least three months and more to find a job for nearly half of the respondents. Tight labour market conditions have given rise to a situation where seafarers have reluctantly come to work for lower positions than their certifications or qualifications entail. For example, an engine donkeyman we spoke to was willing to work as an oiler.

The depressed labour markets have also resulted in hatred against foreign seafarers. In consequence, racist remarks against seafarers from this or that nation are not uncommon. In recent years, Turkish ship owners increasingly make use of foreign seafarers, mainly Filipinos, Azeris and Rumanians. Although there is no official statistics available, when we examined a crew list of a Turkish flagged vessel we saw that out of 18 crews, 14 were Filipinos. Only master, 1st officer, chief engineer and electrician were Turks. Large number of undocumented foreign workers from Romania, Moldavia and Azarbejacan and Russian and Nigerian is well known in Turkey. Thus it was not surprise for us to see many Azeris who are looking for a job in ship around Karaköy, where seafarer markets existed. Racist remarks particularly towards

Filipinos are widespread soon among Turkish seafarers. About one third of the interview seafarers made racist comments as below.

"Filipinos are idiots. They look like monkeys" (a deck boy).

"Filipinos should not be treated with respect as they are too dirty and unhygienic" (a wiper).

"Filipinos are better paid than us. When I started working at sea, we made fun of them, now they make fun of us" (an able seaman).

These remarks clearly show the pervasive existence of racist attitudes among some segments of Turkish seafarers. This may be an alarming fact for the future.

In the Turkish Seafarer labour markets, on the other hand, the absence of a transparent and well-organized employment service and recruitment system is clearly noticeable. Therefore informal organization and relations have to a large extent characterized the recruitment system.

In terms of recruitment patterns and methods, it is possible to distinguished two groups of companies regarding their recruitment pattern in the light of the interviews and company visits. In the first group, which mainly consists of those companies that have secure lines and freight, ships comply with good standards of safety and employment conditions. These companies are few in terms of quantity and constitute only the 5 percent of the shipping companies. Some of these have recently began to develop their own labour pools and employ formal recruitment procedures. All recruits are asked to fill in job application forms, meet health requirements, and present certificates of good conduct from the local public prosecutors' office. For example, one of these companies, commenced to employ only officers who have a university degree and plans to employ ratings who have completed a vocational high school on the grounds that they did not trust the education provided by the state and certificates issued by the relevant public bodies.

The second group is mainly composed of smaller companies that tend to apply the lower standards of employment and safety. Most of the Turkish shipping companies fall into this category. Most of these companies operate on the Mediterranean and Black Sea lines and their ships are not likely to be

seaworthy. There are also a large number of seagoing companies as well. They do not tend to have much care about their crews' educational qualifications. Employment conditions in these companies are likely to be substandard. These companies seem to use the traditional sources informal (illegal) employment agencies and *simsars* to recruit seafarers.

Intermediaries, known derogatively as *simsars* (literally means cunning middleman, broker) play an important role in linking ship owners with seafarers. *Simsars* provide a significant proportion of crews for ships in all size. Many seafarers, until recently especially ratings but now seafarers of all ranks, have no choice but to go to *simsars* to find a job. Most seafarers bear, directly or indirectly, costs for their recruitment or employment. A fee mostly in the form of a percentage of the wage, which ranges from 10 percent to 20 percent, is paid to *simsar*. Some *simsars* often take an advance payment but this is no guarantee for a job. In addition, personnel managers of many shipping companies work with *simsars*. When a seafarer directly applies to a shipping company, the manager usually tells him to go to *simsar* or agent X who charges 10-20 percent of the wage and gives half of the money to the personnel manager he works with. For seafarers *simsars* are a necessary evil:

"*Simsars* are slave merchants who purchase and sell us in the market" (an able seaman).

"In the past most *simsars* were honest; but now all of them are dishonest" (an oiler).

"Even deep sea officers are in the hands of *simsars*" (a short sea 2nd officer).

"If you give all fee in advance to the *simsar*, you get f....! You should pay a small amount in advance and pay the rest when he finds a job for you" (a wiper).

Officially there is not any licensed crewing company or manning agents in Turkey. DM and DTO argue that legislative arrangements should be undertaken to set up private employment agencies (DM, 2000b: 7). The DM also suggests that heavy fines and even prison terms should be imposed on *simsars*. However, without setting up a suitable medium through which seafarers can apply for jobs on the ship, the exclusion of *simsars* from the labour market would create more problems than it solves. In the absence of legally mandated crewing agencies, *simsars* undertake an essential function.

7. EMPLOYMENT, WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Seafarers work is usually based upon fixed term contracts. Seafarers' wages and terms of employment are supposed to be clearly laid down in a written contract to be signed at the time of recruitment. These agreements should cover not only pay but also other contractual issues such as allotments, repatriation, sick, and paid leave.

The vast majority of our respondents work on the basis of contract. Typical lengths of contracts vary between 6 months to 12 months. The most common length of contract was 6 months in the survey. In the survey, 40 percent of the respondents said that they usually worked on the basis of 6 months of employment contracts. The longest contract period worked by seafarers was over one year in duration. An important problem especially for ratings is that they have to stay onboard longer than the specified length of their contract due to the lack of relief system. Contracts are usually signed for one trip so leave periods are often unpaid which causes financial hardship to the seafarer and his family. In the survey, only 23 percent of the respondents said that they had additional income, while the majority stated that seafaring was their only source of income. Taking this into consideration, financial hardships of seafarers during their leave periods can easily be understood.

Seafarers complain that they are often required to do jobs that are not specified in the contract: "I am an able seaman but I was ordered to work as a cook when he run away." Although nearly two thirds of the respondents (62 percent) claimed to be aware of the terms of the contract, this does not necessarily mean that the work done on board is clearly specified in the contract. Nearly one third of survey participants maintained that the work done on board is not fully specified in the contract. We were told that, for example, when the ship accosts, officers call a cook or steward to "help the men". In another case a seafarer was recruited as an oiler but he was ordered to do some welding work and he damaged his left eye.

7.1. Wages

Until recently seafaring was known as an occupation offering relatively high levels of pay. For many seafarers, it was providing dollar earning employment at levels often impossible to obtain in the indigenous labour markets. However the globalization of the seafarer labour markets and

increasing level of unemployment have resulted in the deterioration of wages. The seafarers now complain about low wages. Many are paid as little as 150-200 \$. An oiler used to get 500 \$ just one and half year ago. He was paid 400 million Turkish liras, roughly an equivalent of 260\$ as of mid September 2001. It was not just ratings who were complaining about decreasing levels of pay. Officers were equally bitter about low wages. A watchkeeping engine officer claimed:

"I earned about 450 million TL three years ago. I have not had any wage increase since then".

Regarding the adequacy of payment, in the sample only 29 percent of the seafarers find their wages satisfactory, whereas 41 percent believe their wages are inadequate, 19 percent find their wages extremely inadequate. .

On the other hand, it would be wrong to suggest that all ship owners are bent on paying as little as possible to their crews. Some companies working for major oil companies are able to offer high wages and high standards of working conditions. For example, as of September 2001, in one of the largest shipping companies which have a large tanker fleet a master gets 4000 \$ and second officer was paid between 1700-3500 \$ depending on his experience and qualifications. The same company offers 1000 \$ for an oiler, 800 \$ for a fitter, 400 \$ for a deck boy, 300 \$ for a steward.

An important problem regarding wages is that they are not paid correctly and promptly in many cases. Because of this, seafarers and their families suffer serious financial hardships. Seafarers themselves attach great significance to wages than any other single issue. Thus, it is not surprising low pay levels, incorrect payments and lateness of the transfer of wages home are a constant source of criticism.

7.2. Intensification of Work and Health and Safety

The increase in workloads brought about by reduction in manning levels, faster turn-around and increased time on board has an impact on working and living conditions on board. In the survey, a significant number of seafarers (72 percent) regarded their workloads as heavy and were not happy with their working conditions.

The most common shift was 12 hours on/12 hours off. Seafarers are quite often required 10 hours work, resulting in an extreme intensification of work.

Although the ITF uniform collective agreement specifies that the ordinary hours of duty of all seafarers shall be 8 hours, Monday to Friday inclusive (40 hours), the standard Turkish contract of employment indicates that normal working week shall be 45 hours.

Many masters either tend to resort to abusing the law or emergency conduct for persuading the recalcitrant seafarers who refuse to do extra work without pay by saying that “according to maritime labour law article X, you are under obligation to do this or that without claiming any extra money”. Since most seafarers have no idea about their rights and duties under Maritime Labour Law, they find it difficult to assess whether the master abuses the law.

Despite longer hours and intensified work, managers and ship-owners believe that Turkish seafarers are lazy and do not like working hard. As a manager from shipping company put it:

“Turkish seafarers are uneducated and not well-disciplined. For example, they do not hesitate to smoking in tankers. That’s why, we prefer Romanian or Azeri seafarers”

Poor physical working conditions (such as vibration, excessive noise and heat) as well as fatigue through long working hours and shift work patterns seriously affect seafarers’ well-being. Furthermore, reductions in crewing levels are associated with broken sleep patterns and long working hours – a survey for the ITF noted that 14% of seafarers responding worked 12 hours a day or more (Bloor, Thomas and Lane 2000: 332). Similarly, 22 percent of the seafarers in our survey claimed to work 12 hours per day or more including overtime and 72 percent reported poor quality sleep at sea.

Seafaring is a hazardous occupation. As companies cut back on maintenance working conditions on many ships have become more dangerous. While a slight majority of the respondents (56 Percent) expressed satisfaction with overall safety, accidents seem to happen quite regularly. Nearly a third of the respondents (27 percent) reported witnessing an accident on board. When the seafarers have health problems during a voyage, availability of medicine may become a serious problem. On the other hand, the majority of the seafarers in the research reported that they were generally satisfied with the way in which health problems are dealt with while they were at sea.

7.3. Food and Accommodations

In addition to pay and work load, there are other factors to consider when examining seafarers living and working conditions. These include food, accommodation and social life on board. Standards of food and accommodation vary from ship to ship. Turkish vessels have one of the worst records for detentions in respect of deficiencies in food and accommodation. According to a report published by SIRC ships registered under the national flag of Turkey may have the worst record for maintaining acceptable standards of food and accommodation (SIRC 1999: 125). In fact, Turkish flagged ships came top on the list of ship detained for deficiencies in accommodation in 1997. Out of 406 ships, 69 were Turkish flagged ships (SIRC 1999: 123).

The Table 3 presents the views of the survey participants on accommodation and nutrition on board. Nearly half of the respondents seem to have been satisfied with accommodation and nutrition arrangements. Nonetheless, the others believe that there are problems in accommodation and food provisions. As an oiler put it:

“We used sea water instead of salt in our food. We even drank water from fire station..”.

A deckboy said:

“The manager in the office said that pillows and sheets were available in the vessel but there was not any pillows and sheets in the cabin”..

Table 3. Accommodation and Nutrition on Board

Accommodation	N	%	Nutrition	N	%
Too bad	27	8	Too bad	22	7
Not too bad	131	41	Not too bad	118	37
Good	107	33	Good	109	34
Very good	24	7	Very Good	43	13
Do not know	21	7	Do not know	17	5
No answer	12	4	No answer	13	4
Total	322	100	Total	322	100

It is interesting to note that Turkish seafarers often complained about food prepared by cooks from the Far East. They find that kind of food not suitable for their tastes. An ordinary seaman put it:

“If we have a cook from the Far East we can not have proper food”.

On the other hand, our research suggests that recreational facilities are seen by seafarers as being in greater need of improvement than either accommodation or food. It is a known fact that boredom and social isolation is a feature of seafarer's working life on board. Within this context, master seems critical in determining social life on board. A watch-keeping engine officer complained about the TV.

“Remote control is always in the hands of the master. We have to watch what he wants to watch”.

Special occasions like religious holidays, birthdays and New Year celebrations provide opportunities to reduce hierarchical divisions between officers and ratings. In religious holidays some shipowners give special presents. For example, it is the policy of several companies to donate animals to be slaughtered on board in the Feast of Sacrifice. This practice is well-received by seafarers who regard it as a gesture of good will.

The ability to maintain contact with family and relatives is also of central significance to seafarers. Good communication with families is essential to mitigate effects of the loneliness and isolation of shipboard life. Long absence from the family, long sea-time with short shore leaves, more mental isolation all cause low morale among the seafarers. An able seaman put it:

“It is too expensive to talk your family on the phone. Hearing their voices makes us keep going...”

Shore based leave time can not be considered as uninterrupted free time for seafarers to utilize according to their own wishes. When asked how they spend their leave time, only 26 percent indicated they rest. Interestingly, 19 percent said that they work ashore in their leave time to get extra income. Nearly half of the respondents said that they visit their relatives in their hometown in their leave time.

Table 4: Leave Time

	N	%
Looking for a job	39	12
Visiting hometown	124	39
Working ashore	60	19
Resting	84	26
No answer	15	5
Total	322	100

An important problem for Turkish as well as foreign seafarers calling at Turkish ports is that there is not any seaman's club in Turkey. However, DM suggests that clubs be set up in major ports. Some years ago, donations were collected from the seafarers to establish a seaman's club and a building was purchased. However, for some reason, the building which was supposed to be a seaman club became the seafarers' union headquarters.

8. CONCLUSION

The high port state control detention and abandonment rates experienced by Turkish flagged ships and crews accurately reflects the relative fortunes of the fleet and seafarers. Seafaring, in Turkey, used to be a well-paid and respected occupation. However, the emergence of depressed labour market conditions coupled with the abundance of certified seafarers seem to have changed the position of the seafarers. Low pay, uncertain employment practices, and unsafe vessels and living conditions on board may become features that many Turkish seafarers have to cope with in the beginning of the 21 century. Lower skilled crews tend to accept wage and working conditions below the minimum standards. Low levels of unionization and a lack of interest on the part of maritime authorities have left many of them at the mercy of market forces. Many companies blacklist outspoken seafarers. Not surprisingly, most seafarers are reluctant to complain about working conditions and wages because they are afraid of being blacklisted and be unable to find any job on board. In the research we have found that complaints regarding non-payment or late payment of wages, harsh working conditions and poor service conditions are widespread.

Establishing a modern seafarers list and registry is necessary to gather up-to-date information about the seafarers themselves. As we have seen existing registry only includes officers. For ratings, a separate registry should be developed and contain all necessary information in it. The existing registry is not stored in a computer system, which makes it difficult to keep it up-to date. An electronic list and registry would make information gathering on seafarers easier.

It seems to be the norm that seafarers who want to work on vessels have to pay for their jobs. *Simsars* should be transformed into proper manning or crewing agencies and should be licensed by relevant public authorities. Malpractice can be curtailed through this way.

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