

Addressing Challenges And Creating Opportunities Women In The Maritime

Harsh Kumar
BSc Nautical Science

MAHARASHTRA ACADEMY OF NAVAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
Pune, India.

10.5445204.harsh@gmail.com

Abstract

Women in the maritime sector have consistently had to struggle for their position. Historically, they primarily received support positions with minimal opportunities for advancement. Numerous individuals encountered bias, reduced salaries, and even workplace policies that prevented them from attaining leadership roles. Harassment and discrimination further hindered their ability to establish lasting careers at sea. Even if they were as skilled and diligent as their male counterparts, they needed to exert double the effort to demonstrate their worth.

Changes are occurring, but not at the pace they need to. An increasing number of companies are acknowledging the importance of including women in the industry. Policies promoting equality, mentorship initiatives, and leadership programs have enabled women to assume positions as leaders, engineers, and executives. However, the trip remains challenging. Numerous women continue to face challenges with gradual career advancement, discrimination at work, and managing family responsibilities alongside demanding maritime jobs.

To genuinely transform the maritime sector into an environment where both men and women can succeed, we must take further action. Fair compensation, improved training options, and enhanced support systems are crucial. Businesses should not only recruit more women but also guarantee they receive equitable chances for advancement. The sector has progressed significantly, yet genuine transformation requires ongoing efforts to dismantle outdated obstacles and establish a future where women are not only included but also completely empowered.

Keywords— Women in maritime, Career progression, Equal opportunities

Introduction

For hundreds of years, the maritime sector has been among the most male-dominated fields globally. Even now, women constitute merely about 1-2% of the worldwide maritime workforce, a fact that underscores a profoundly rooted gender disparity. Although advancements have been achieved in promoting diversity, women in maritime continue to encounter notable obstacles, such as gender bias, safety issues, challenges in balancing work and life, and limited opportunities for career advancement.

The belief that sailing is a "man's job" originates from historical and cultural standards, which deemed physically tough work, extended time at sea, and unstable conditions inappropriate for women. Nevertheless, improvements in technology and shifts in industry norms have lessened the emphasis on physical strength as the main prerequisite, allowing maritime jobs to be more attainable for individuals of all genders. Nonetheless, employment biases, harassment in the workplace, insufficient policies, and an absence of supportive infrastructure still restrict women's involvement at sea.

1.1 The Present Condition of Women in Maritime

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and other regulatory agencies have prioritized gender inclusivity, yet actual progress has been gradual. Reports indicate that although the number of women in maritime administration, logistics, and port operations is rising, their presence on commercial ships remains concerningly minimal. Numerous shipping firms are reluctant to employ women because of archaic policies, berthing limitations (restricted facilities for female crew members), and worries about blending mixed-gender teams.

As per the Global Maritime Forum, women encounter four main obstacles in maritime job opportunities: ted, leaving victims with limited legal options.

1. Gender and nationality discrimination – Women in maritime careers frequently face prejudices that favor male applicants, particularly in specific cultural settings.

2. Certification hurdles – Women encounter greater challenges in acquiring essential maritime certifications and licenses because of restricted training options.

3. Workplace bias and harassment – According to reports from WSJ and Safety4Sea, incidents of sexual harassment and gender-based violence on ships are significantly underreported, leaving victims with limited legal options.

4. Challenges in career transition – Numerous women exit the maritime sector prematurely due to insufficient long-term career advancement, mentorship, and leadership prospects.

1.2 The Necessity for Transformation

The maritime industry is currently experiencing a worldwide lack of skilled workers, rendering gender inclusivity not merely a moral concern but an economic imperative. Research from Maritime Trainer and Washington Maritime Careers highlights that drawing and keeping female talent can yield considerable advantages for the industry, including enhanced innovation, improved decision-making, and a better workplace culture.

For genuine progress to occur, maritime firms need to go beyond mere symbolic acts and enact structural changes that assist women throughout all phases of their careers. This consists of:

Enhancing anti-harassment measures and guaranteeing secure work conditions aboard vessels.

Ensuring equal opportunities for women in maritime training and certification programs.

Altering hiring policies to remove gender discrimination.

Developing mentorship initiatives that support women in progressing to leadership roles.

Modifying ship designs to support crews of different genders efficiently.

1.3 Scope and Aims of the Research

This study seeks to deliver an in-depth examination of the obstacles and prospects for women in maritime professions. Through the examination of industry data, expert insights, and case studies, this research aims to: Recognize and analyze the main obstacles that women encounter in maritime careers.

Assess the impact of current policies encouraging gender diversity within the industry.

Suggest practical measures to enhance inclusivity, safety, and job prospects for women in the maritime industry.

Showcase effective instances of gender diversity programs in prominent shipping firms and organizations.

The main aim of this study is to aid in creating a more

fair, diverse, and sustainable maritime sector, where skills are acknowledged irrespective of gender and where women can chase maritime careers without obstacles.

Objectives—

1. Recognize the Obstacles Encountered by Women in the Maritime Sector- Recognize the obstacles like gender bias, insufficient safety, workplace abuse, and restricted professional advancement. Analyze how conventional gender roles and cultural prejudices affect women's involvement in the maritime sector.

2. Evaluate the Existing Representation of Women in the Maritime industry- Examine worldwide data concerning women's employment in maritime jobs, covering both onshore and offshore positions. Examine which maritime industries showcase stronger female representation and what insights can be gained from them.

3. Assess the Efficiency of Current Policies and Initiatives- Examine gender inclusion policies established by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and maritime companies. Recognize shortcomings in policy execution and sectors that require enhancement.

4. Discover the Advantages of Gender Diversity in Maritime- Describe how boosting the number of female maritime professionals can contribute to alleviating the worldwide shortage of seafarers. Examine the beneficial effects of diversity on collaboration, decision-making, and overall efficiency.

5. Suggest Ways to Enhance Women's Involvement in Maritime- Propose mentorship initiatives, leadership development, and hiring practices to promote the entry and advancement of women in maritime professions. Promote enhanced safety protocols and amenities designed specifically for women in maritime occupations.

6. Promote Cooperation Across the Industry for Lasting Transformation- Foster collaborations among governments, private shipping firms, and maritime organizations to enhance gender diversity. Emphasize the importance of education, scholarships, and awareness initiatives in challenging stereotypes and motivating young women to embark on maritime professions.

7. Create a Structure for Upcoming Gender Inclusion Initiatives- Offer suggestions for enduring strategies that can guarantee ongoing advancement towards gender equality in the maritime sector. Highlight the significance of consistent evaluations, policy revisions, and accountability strategies to monitor advancements in women's involvement.

Women Working at Sea Face Special Challenges—

[1] Women have made considerable progress across different industries; however, the maritime field is one where their involvement is notably minimal. Among the 1.2 million seafarers globally, only 2% are female. Although the industry has gradually become more accessible to female employees, women in maritime continue to encounter specific challenges that obstruct their advancement and achievement. To foster a more inclusive and equitable industry, it's crucial to understand these challenges and strive for solutions.

Absence of Exemplars

A significant reason women are reluctant to enter the maritime sector is the lack of prominent female role models. Many men in maritime careers emulate their fathers or other male relatives, motivated by iconic sailors. Nonetheless, women often do not have this guidance available, as there are few female leaders in the maritime field to admire.

To end this cycle, the industry needs to actively recruit women and emphasize their accomplishments in leadership positions. Although certain organizations and institutions are beginning to advocate for gender diversity, the progress is too slow to create a widespread effect. Until there is greater female representation, women aspiring to maritime careers will continue to find it challenging to envision themselves in those roles.

Absence of Assistance

Women at sea frequently encounter a lack of support systems, leaving them in precarious situations. Incidents of sexual harassment and assault are disturbingly common, and many women express feelings of powerlessness due to insufficient resources and safety measures. When incidents occur, female seafarers often lack a clear method to pursue justice or ensure their safety.

In addition to social support, the sector also falls short in providing sufficient facilities for women aboard ships. Many vessels are still designed with only male crew members in mind, making it challenging for women to work comfortably.

Absence of Support

Another obstacle women encounter is insufficient support to pursue maritime professions. In contrast to male students, female students seldom regard the industry as a realistic career option. Even when they demonstrate interest, they frequently do not receive the same amount of training and skill development opportunities as their male colleagues.

Moreover, when they join the industry, many women often sense a lack of welcome. Rather than receiving mentorship and support, they might face discrimination or be excluded by their male counterparts. This unwelcoming atmosphere drives many women away from the field, prompting them to

pursue careers in sectors where they have greater opportunities for success and advancement.

Global Issues Affect Women More Severely

Every seafarer encounters challenges such as loneliness, employment uncertainty, and the possibility of injury. Nonetheless, these difficulties are often even more intense for women. Male sailors frequently develop strong bonds with their coworkers aboard, fostering a sense of camaraderie. Conversely, a woman who is the sole female crew member on a ship might feel utterly alone, lacking anyone to rely on for emotional support.

In specific maritime industries, like the cruise sector and superyachts, a detrimental culture of heavy drinking and partying poses additional dangers for women. Some female crew members experience pressure to engage in sexual activities with specific crew members solely to avoid harassment from others. These harmful workplace dynamics further complicate women's ability to feel safe and valued in their professional environments.

Women's Safety in Maritime Industries

Women in the maritime sector deserve a secure and equitable workplace, free from harassment and discrimination. Various legal entities and advocacy organizations, including Latti Associates, are striving to safeguard women's rights and ensure that offenders are held accountable for their actions.

Through education, awareness initiatives, and stricter regulations, the aim is to ensure that women in the maritime sector have equal opportunities and protections as their male counterparts. For women who have faced abuse at sea, pursuing legal action may provide relief and restitution. Raising awareness of these issues is the first step toward implementing lasting changes that will allow more women to enter and thrive in the maritime sector. By addressing these concerns, the industry can move toward a future where gender equality is the norm rather than the exception.

Literature Reviews—

From the insights gathered, I understand that women in the maritime industry face significant challenges, including gender discrimination, limited career opportunities, and inadequate workplace support. Despite ongoing initiatives, deep-rooted biases and structural barriers persist. Below is a literature review summarizing key studies and reports that highlight these issues and efforts toward gender inclusion in the maritime sector.

Women make up only 2% of the seafaring workforce, facing societal biases, lack of facilities, and limited support from companies. Initiatives like awareness campaigns and highlighting successful female seafarers are essential to breaking stereotypes and promoting diversity.[3]

Despite a shortage of seafarers, women remain underrepresented due to gender bias, certification hurdles, and career progression challenges. Wage gaps and difficulty transitioning to land-based roles further limit opportunities, highlighting the urgent need for gender equality in the industry.[4]

Women seafarers face 15 major challenges, including lack of career advancement, limited training, social isolation, workplace harassment, long contracts, inadequate maternity leave, and improper safety equipment. Addressing these issues is crucial for an inclusive industry.[5]

Women constitute only 1.2% of seafarers globally. Efforts like the IMO's Women in Maritime initiative focus on scholarships, technical training, and career visibility, aligning with UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 to promote gender equality.[6]

Limited mentorship and leadership training hinder women's career growth in the maritime industry. IMO, WISTA International, and WMU introduced a leadership program to bridge this gap, with specialized training in AtoN management to enhance women's representation.[7]

While female leadership in C-suite roles has risen to 29%, maritime leadership still lacks representation, with women making up only 2.5% of the workforce. Workplace bullying and inequality remain persistent challenges.[8]

Sexual harassment is a major issue in the male-dominated maritime industry, with inadequate legal protections. The #MeToo movement has highlighted the need for stronger policies and enforcement against workplace harassment at sea.[9]

Despite increased female enrollment in maritime education, hiring biases persist. Shipping companies hesitate to employ women due to perceived gender-related risks, reinforcing discriminatory hiring practices that limit women's opportunities.[10]

IMO has promoted gender inclusion through capacity-building programs and regional networks, improving career prospects for women. These initiatives aim to foster a diverse workforce and address gender disparity in shipping.[11]

Research on women in maritime leadership highlights the importance of role models for aspiring female seafarers. Encouraging leadership and mentorship can improve career prospects and equality in the maritime industry.[12]

Women contribute significantly to fisheries but are often unpaid or undercompensated. They lack representation in decision-making roles, indicating a

need for policy changes to ensure fair wages and opportunities.[13]

The article explores gender equality in maritime and scientific fields, examining historical trends of gender discrimination. It discusses the need for new gender strategies to enhance female participation.[14]

Maritime culture, influenced by patriarchy and masculinity, marginalizes women. Marxist feminism links capitalism and gender oppression, showing how traditional seafaring norms exclude women from the workforce.

Women in UK maritime training schools struggle with gender bias, limited institutional support, and masculine workplace norms. The study stresses the need for structural reforms to improve gender inclusivity.[15]

Research Methodology—

This research employs a qualitative methodology to examine the challenges and prospects for women within the maritime sector. Qualitative research is suitable for understanding social experiences, perceptions, and structural barriers faced by women in this male-dominated field. Information was gathered from two main sources: semi-structured interviews and document reviews. Interviews were conducted with female seafarers, maritime educators, shipping executives, and policymakers, focusing on workplace challenges, career advancement, and the impact of policies on promoting gender inclusivity. The analysis of documents included reports from the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and scholarly research articles to explore existing policies and gender-related trends in maritime professions. Secondary data sources included peer-reviewed journals, government reports, and industry publications sourced from databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate.

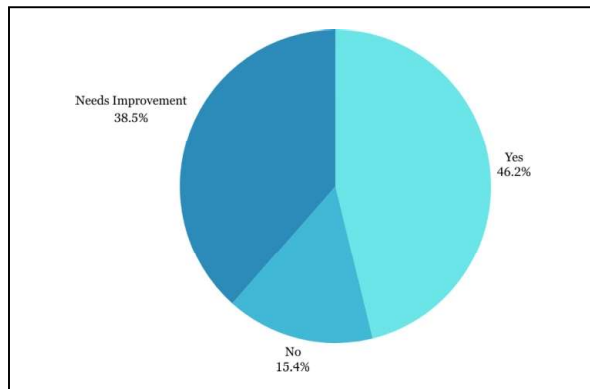
A purposive sampling approach was used to select participants with direct experience in maritime professions, including female deck and engine officers, students from maritime academies, HR personnel from shipping companies, and representatives from maritime unions and regulatory bodies. A total of 25 individuals from various maritime sectors were interviewed to ensure diverse perspectives. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes and patterns within the qualitative data. Interview transcripts and document analyses were categorized into gender bias, barriers to career advancement, work-life balance, and the effects of policies. The NVivo software was utilized to analyze qualitative data systematically. Ethical principles were strictly upheld throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the study's objectives and willingly consented to participate.

Their identities were anonymized to maintain confidentiality, and all responses were protected. Additionally, interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored, accessible only to the research team. However, this research has specific limitations. It is confined to participants from specific maritime sectors, which may not fully represent global experiences. [16]

Data analytics

The question was asked by our alumni, and here's the response.

- 1 Do you think the maritime industry is doing enough to support women seafarers?
1. Yes, the industry is becoming more inclusive.
 - 2 Some progress has been made, but major challenges remain.
 - 3 No, women still face significant barriers in the maritime sector.
 - 4 Not sure /Need more awareness on this issue.



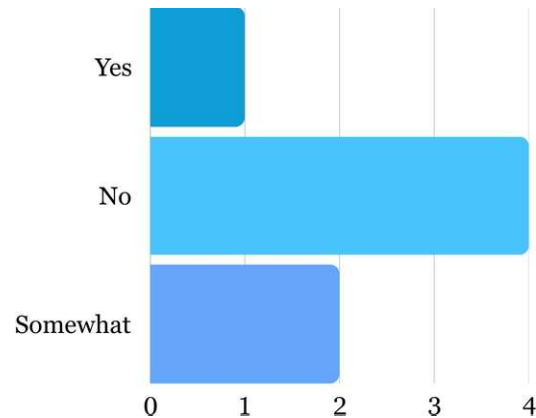
Response Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	6	46.2%
No	2	15.4%
Needs Improvement	5	38.5%

2 Do you think the mindset of male officers is a barrier to female seafarers growth?

- Yes, traditional bias still exist
- No its depends on the individuals
- Somewhat, but its improving

Shattering Limits: An Engaging Dialogue with Tulsi Diwakar on Women's Roles in Maritime

The maritime sector has traditionally been dominated by men, with women encountering various obstacles in obtaining employment, advancing in their careers, and receiving equal treatment on vessels. In a thought-provoking interview with Tulsi Diwakar, a graduate of MANET, she discussed her journey as a woman in the field, highlighting both the advancements and ongoing challenges in maritime careers.



Employment Prospects: A Split Viewpoint

Tulsi conveyed that although some companies are open to employing female cadets, others remain cautious due to stereotypes regarding their skills and workplace safety concerns. Firms like MAERSK and BW have made strides in employing women, yet numerous others continue to hesitate. "Half of the industry is prepared to welcome female seafarers, but the other half continues to view us as a liability instead of an asset," she explained.

She shared a story about an incident where a male cadet on board was assigned the majority of the duties while female cadets received only a few responsibilities. This disparity obstructed their learning process, resulting in a gap in skill development. "How can we possibly learn if we aren't even given the opportunity?" she asked.

The Mental Block: A Fight for Acknowledgment

Attitudes, both at sea and on land, significantly influence the experiences of women in the maritime industry. Tulsi highlighted that biases in leadership are often gender-informed. "If there is a male captain, he may consider a female cadet to be unfit." Conversely, when a female captain is in charge, male cadets frequently resist her orders. "Whichever way it goes, it's a challenge," she remarked.

In addition to shipboard dynamics, societal perspectives also present difficulties. Families often hesitate to let their daughters go to sea due to safety concerns and traditional gender expectations. "Persuading my family to allow me into the industry was a challenge in itself," she revealed.

A Personal Misfortune: The Unjust Decision to Cancel Her Trip

One of the most notable incidents she recounted involved how her trip was canceled due to another female cadet's visa denial. Tulsi's paperwork was complete, but because her female cadet companion couldn't board, the company also canceled her trip. What was their reasoning? They were hesitant to send a single female cadet alongside 22 male seafarers.

Tulsi recognized the pros and cons of this decision. "While the company expressed concern for my safety, I couldn't understand why they couldn't ensure my safety on board instead of completely canceling my trip." Fortunately, she was later assigned to a different ship, but the incident made her question the industry's stance on gender inclusivity.

Advancing: The Need for Systemic Reform

Tulsi acknowledges the progress being made but emphasizes that genuine change can only occur through structural reforms. Shipping firms must take proactive measures to ensure the safety and inclusion of female seafarers rather than marginalizing them in the name of protection. She advocates for equitable educational opportunities on board, policies that consider gender, and a transformation in attitudes across all levels of the industry. Her experiences underscore the challenges that persist for women in the maritime industry. Nonetheless, they also serve as a prompt for industry leaders, policymakers, and educational institutions to cultivate an environment where women can thrive free from discrimination. As more women enter the industry, there is hope that future generations will not encounter the same struggles but will instead enjoy a more inclusive and equitable maritime environment.

Conclusion

The maritime sector has historically been recognized as a male-dominated domain, with women facing ongoing challenges in securing jobs, advancing their careers, and experiencing workplace inclusivity. This study has highlighted the various obstacles encountered by female seafarers, including recruitment biases, workplace discrimination, safety issues, and gender-based prejudices. Despite continuous initiatives to foster diversity and inclusion, persistent systemic problems still limit opportunities for women in the maritime industry.

A significant finding of this study is the notable gender gap in employment rates. Although the number of women enrolling in maritime education has increased, companies remain reluctant to employ women due to perceived safety and operational concerns. Numerous organizations, including MOL and Zodiac, are striving

to hire more women; however, the recruitment process remains unequal. Women frequently encounter situations in which they must consistently prove their capabilities, while their male counterparts are more readily offered opportunities. In the case of Tulsi Diwakar, it is evident that despite having all her documents in order, her journey was halted solely because the company refused to allow one female cadet among 22 male cadets. This raises a significant question: rather than preventing women from boarding ships, why aren't companies working to create safer and more inclusive spaces for them?

The maritime industry has traditionally been viewed as a male-dominated field, where women continue to face challenges in securing employment, advancing in their careers, and achieving workplace inclusion. This research has highlighted the various difficulties encountered by female seafarers, such as biases in recruitment, discrimination in the workplace, safety concerns, and gender-related prejudices. Despite ongoing efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, persistent systemic issues continue to limit opportunities for women in the maritime sector.

A significant finding of this research is the substantial difference in employment rates between genders. Despite the increase in women enrolling in maritime studies, companies remain reluctant to hire women due to perceived safety and operational concerns. Many organizations, such as MAERSK and BW, are actively working to recruit more women; however, the hiring process is still imbalanced. Women often find themselves in situations where they must continually prove their skills, while men are more readily given opportunities. In Tulsi Diwakar's case, it is evident that even with her documents properly organized, her progress was halted simply because the company would not accept one female cadet among 22 male cadets. This raises an important question: Instead of preventing women from boarding ships, why aren't companies striving to create safer and more inclusive environments for them?

Moving forward, maritime organizations must implement strong policies that ensure equitable hiring, workplace safety, and career advancement for women. Training initiatives must emphasize gender awareness, and decisive actions should be taken to address workplace discrimination and harassment. Businesses need to concentrate on fostering an environment where female seafarers feel secure, valued, and recognized. While the journey toward achieving gender equality in the maritime sector is ongoing, the strength and determination of women seafarers continue to challenge industry norms. Through consistent efforts, policy changes, and a shift in perspective, the maritime industry can evolve into a truly inclusive and diverse workforce.

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