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Challenges Facing Women Seafarers in Maritime Transport in Tanzania

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A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to examine the challenges faced by female seafarers in Tanzania's maritime industry through a qualitative approach and descriptive research design. A sample size of 67 was determined using a formula to ensure reliable and valid research. Data collection involved questionnaires, interviews, and direct observations. Analysis utilized SPSS, Excel, and Python programming. The findings revealed that female seafarers face challenges related to isolation, loneliness, safety standards, job satisfaction, pay and benefits, work-life balance, and maternity rights. The study highlights the needs for the industry to address these issues and promote greater gender equality and inclusivity. The results also indicate that there may be a gender pay gap, inadequate awareness and implementation of maternity rights, and a lack of resources and support for female seafarers to manage their work and family responsibilities. Future research should focus on further exploring these issues and developing solutions to promote gender equality and inclusivity in the maritime industry.

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1. Introduction

Maritime transportation and operation activities were outstanding masculine activities. But with modification on gender equality done by International Maritime Organization (IMO) led to the enrollment of more women with passion of working in the maritime industry was done. Women are beginning to enter areas of work that were historically reserved for men. Women represent more than 70% of the poor in both developed and developing countries (The Organization of Economic, 2008). Women in history got into the industry for various reasons such as wartime duty, to support their families, to find a better life, or finding adventure, new surroundings, and exposure to the world (Wright, et al., 2022). Regardless of their exact reasons, women left remarkable on the history of the maritime industry (Grasmeier, 2022).

The IMO launched several campaigns to promote women in maritime sector during the period 1988-1996 (Tansey, 2015). Only 1.28% of 2021 total population of marine seafarers is representing women (Kitada, 2022). Most of women seafarers are working in lower ranks of career, in catering and hotel sections on cruise ships and ferries (Kitada, 2022). Stereotypically women are more suited in low-earning ranks, catering and hotel section than working in technical and operation positions (Grant & Grant, 2015). The IMO focused on the development of a gender strategy to establish the formal institutional structures to include gender balance in their strategic goals (MacNeil & Ghosh, 2016). From 1997-2004 the program entered s sensitization phase with campaigns across the regions. Since 2004, then IMO has engaged strategic development of the regional association of women in maritime transportation (Kitanda & Williams, 2015). This concluded with the Busan Declaration in Korea which refers to the promotion of female seafarers around the world. Despite these efforts and advances, only few women were employes in senior positions on deck and the engine rooms (Couper, 1999). The doors of the seafaring profession could have a wide open for women due to the current shortage of labour at sea (Chin, 2008). If the labour shortage is to be addressed especially among senior officers onboard, female seafarers are seen as under-utilized resources (Seedat, et al., 2020). The IMO has organized the need for highly trained workforce in the maritime sector to respond to the predicted global shortage of seafarers to support port activities, administrative maritime affairs, marine pollution prevention and control activities and maritime education and training (Grant & Grant, 2015). Trade unions have played a vital role in protection, arrival, and presence of female seafarers on board ships at sea (Chin, 2008). Trade unions open gates in seafaring profession to women by trying to secure the rights, that female seafarers can access as unionized employees at sea (Chin, 2008). Regardless the political and legal will to promote women in maritime transportation, population of women in seafaring career has not changed over the last 30 years (Kitada, 2022). The

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dream of good job, a secure income and exploring the world outweighs the costs and the long absence away from their family, friends, and home (Wright, et al., 2022). However, when they go on board ships, they face different reality. Also, the International Labor Organization (ILO) provided some support to women seafarers in drafting of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006 (Piniella et al., 2013), by including specific requirements to ensure the conditions of shipboard facilities for women (MLC, 2006). Even though the number of women seafarers working onboard is slowly increasing (Lischewski, 2020), there is few research regarding women seafarers.

Thus, the prime objective set for this study is to identify the challenges that hinder females in a seafaring career in Tanzania. This work not only will serve as a tool for effective decisions geared to facilitate the blue economy in Tanzania, as it aims to eliminate barriers facing female seafarers, improving their working environment, but also to draw attention to the measures that have been taken to support women seafarers in Tanzania. It will be wise for the blue economy to count potential women to fill the gap of crew shortage in marine transportation (United Nations, 2016). Female seafarers should be seen as untapped resources that is under-utilized. This work will also draw attention to the measures that have been put in place to support women seafarers in Tanzania.

2. Methodology

The primary objective of this study was to examine the challenges faced by female seafarers in Tanzania's maritime industry through a qualitative approach and descriptive research design. To ensure that the research was reliable and valid, a sample size of 67 was determined using equation (1), which took into consideration an estimated population proportion of 78%, a margin of error of 0.10, and a desired confidence level of 96%. This formula ensured that the sample size was statistically significant and adequate to achieve the research objectives, and the estimation played a crucial role in determining the appropriate sample size for the study. Data collection involved the use of a well-crafted questionnaire, interviews, and direct observations, while analysis utilized SPSS, Excel, and Python programming for graph creation. Fig. 1 indicates the workflow of the methodology used.

$$n = \frac{(Z^2 * p * (1-p))}{e^2} \quad (1)$$

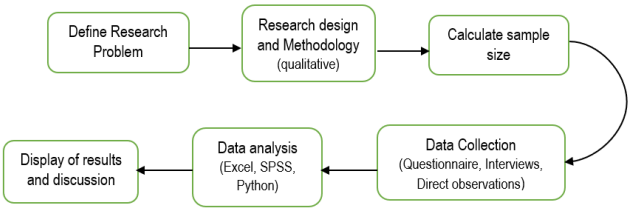


Fig. 1. Research workflow.

3. Results and Discussion

The seafaring industry plays a critical role in the global economy, transporting goods and people across oceans and supporting international trade. However, despite the industry's importance, seafaring is a challenging and demanding profession that comes with its own set of unique issues and concerns. This report is based on a survey conducted among 80 seafarers, exploring some of the key challenges and issues faced by female seafarers. The survey provides insights into various aspects of seafaring, including isolation and loneliness, safety standards, job satisfaction, pay and benefits, work-life balance, and maternity rights. The findings shed light on the specific challenges faced by female seafarers and highlight the need for the industry to address these issues and promote greater gender equality and inclusivity.

3.1. Demographic data

The report is based on a survey conducted among 80 seafarers, of which 60% were female and 40% were male. Most of the respondents were between the ages of 25-34 (46.3%) and held a Bachelor's degree (55%). In terms of experience as a seafarer, the largest proportion of respondents had 1-5 years of experience (33.8%), followed by 6-10 years (23.8%), less than 1 year (23.8%), 11-15 years (17.5%), and only 1 respondent with 16 years or more of experience (1.3%) as indicated in Fig. 2.

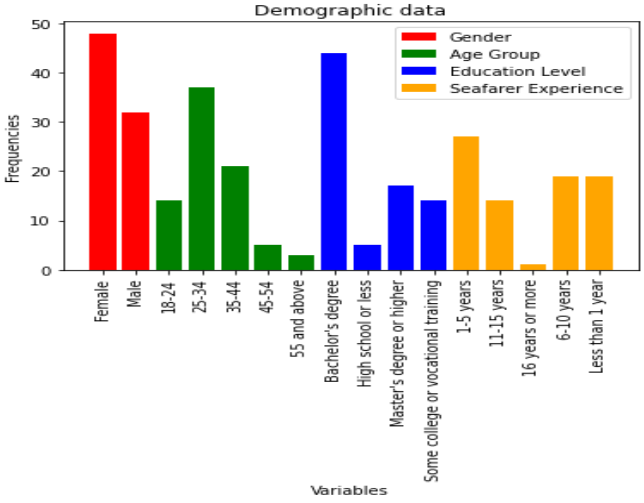


Fig. 2. Demographic data.

3.2. Isolation or loneliness, sea time standards, sexual harassment, and immoral conducts

In terms of the survey questions as indicated in Fig.3, a significant proportion of female seafarers (66.3%) reported feeling lonely or isolated while working on board, and more than half (63.8%) reported experiencing sexual harassment or immoral conduct on board. On the question of safety standards and regulations being followed properly on board, 45% of respondents reported that safety standards were only followed sometimes, and 27.5% reported that safety standards were not followed at all. The survey highlights the challenges faced by female seafarers, particularly concerning their safety, and the need for better implementation of safety standards and regulations on board. It also underscores the need for measures to address the issue of loneliness and isolation among female seafarers.

3.3. Job dissatisfaction and low pay, work-life balance and family concerns, and maternity rights

The results indicated that most of the respondents believe that female seafarers are not paid equally to male seafarers of the same rank and qualifications. Specifically, 62.5% of the respondents said "No" to this question. This suggests that there may be a gender pay gap in the seafaring

industry. Most of the respondents (57.5%) said "No" when asked if female seafarers are informed about their maternity rights and compensated accordingly. This implies that there may be inadequate awareness and implementation of maternity rights for female seafarers. Regarding the resources and support for female seafarers to balance work and family life, most of the respondents (62.5%) said "No." This indicates that there may be a lack of resources and support for female seafarers to manage their work and family responsibilities. These results suggest that there may be significant challenges and inequities faced by female seafarers in terms of pay, maternity rights, and work-life balance. The industry needs to address these issues and take steps toward promoting gender equality and creating a more supportive and inclusive workplace for female seafarers shown in the Fig. 4.

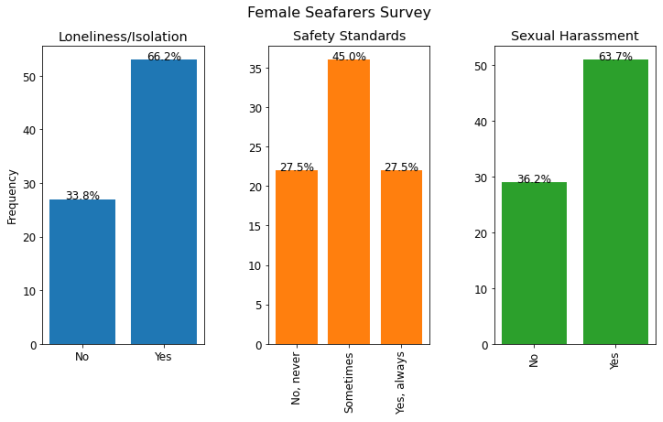


Fig.3. Isolation or loneliness, Sea time standards, sexual harassment, and immoral conducts.

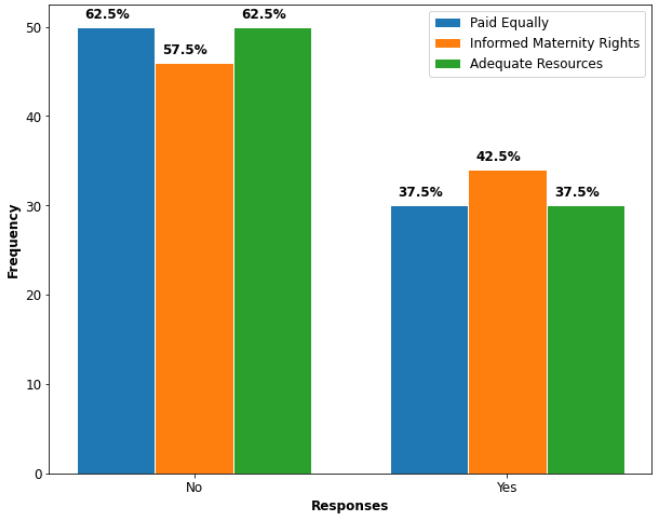


Fig. 4. Job dissatisfaction and low pay, work-life balance and family concerns, and maternity rights.

4. Conclusion

The study sheds light on the challenges faced by female seafarers in Tanzania's maritime industry. The research revealed that female seafarers face various challenges related to safety, gender-based discrimination, work-life balance, and family concerns, including inadequate implementation of safety regulations, gender pay gaps, inadequate support for balancing work and family responsibilities, and insufficient awareness and implementation of maternity rights. These challenges highlight the need for the industry to take concrete steps toward promoting gender equality, creating a more supportive and inclusive workplace, and implementing policies that address the specific needs and concerns of female seafarers.

To address these challenges, the following recommendations can be made: Promote gender equality and inclusivity through targeted policies and initiatives that address the unique challenges faced by female seafarers in the industry. Ensure the implementation of safety regulations and standards on board to protect the health and well-being of female seafarers. Increase awareness and implementation of maternity rights to ensure that female seafarers receive appropriate support and compensation. Provide resources and support to help female seafarers balance work and family responsibilities including flexible working environment and access to childcare facilities. Encourage dialogue and collaboration between industry stakeholders, policymakers, and seafarers to promote gender equality and inclusivity and address the challenges faced by female seafarers. Fellowship should be provided to female professionals to pursue post-graduate studies in maritime academy such as World Maritime University (WMU) in Malmo, Sweden, International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) in Malta and Dar es Salaam Maritime Institute (DMI) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Regarding sexual harassment and discrimination, the company management must demonstrate zero tolerance approach to harassment and establishing equality among core principles of the company. Clear punishment for harassment should be given that applies equally across the company regardless employee status. But also having anti-harassment policy and ensure all employees sign it. This policy will specify displinary sanctions that will apply when harassment has occurred including dismissal where appropriate. All employees should know about and have access to confidential reporting channels through which they can report sexual harassment and discrimination.

This study emphasizes the importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by female seafarers in the maritime industry and promoting a more supportive and inclusive workplace that promotes gender equality and inclusivity. The findings of this study can inform policy and decision-making in the industry and contribute to a more equitable and sustainable maritime sector. They will also help to alleviate the worldwide shortage of labour in maritime transportation.

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