



WOMEN SEAFARERING IN INDIAN MARINE INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Woman empowerment is a global issue and India is no exception to this. Any organization has its own norms to accept feminism. The latest Supreme Court judgment in giving the right to hold a permanent position in the Indian Army has brought the paradigm shift in the global scenario. In the same stream, there is the need of the hour to have woman seafaring in the marine industry. There is a global demand for women seafarers to contribute to the economy of the country. However, the re-presentation of a woman in the same is less than the expected. But this less representation can be fulfilled by providing an avenue to a woman in the marine industry as a seafarer.

International and national organizations are taking proactive measures for a woman to bring their representations on par to men. It is true that woman does have a representation in marine industry but not as a seafarer. Seafarers are not gender discriminatory but the participation of women is not as much as required. One of the factors contributing to this is minimal support towards onboard services to the marine industry as a seafarer.

This paper is restricted to the scope of emphasizing the need for woman representation in marine as seafarers. It is pertinent to create new avenues in the industry for a woman to choose it as their livelihood.

Key words: *women seafarer, women, maritime industry, career, growth, economy.*

1.1 Introduction

Today, women make up only two percent of the world's 1.2 million seafarers, and 94 percent of women seafarers work in the cruise industry (**International Maritime Organization**)⁵. In this stereotypically male-dominated industry, International Maritime Organization (IMO) has made a concerted effort to help the industry move forward and to assist women in achieving a representation that is consistent with aspirations of the 21st century. For ages, the role of women is primarily confined to a domestic atmosphere. This stereotype mentality needs a change. The notion that women are weaker in strength and may not undertake tasks that are 'too arduous' for them are flawed in a strict sense. Their productive activities are limited to less physical ones that enable them to do multiple roles within the family and outside. Recent studies show that number of women taking challenging jobs outside the family have increased. However, women's willingness and readiness to join shipping sector is still meagre. Women's participation in the maritime sector has been reported to be relatively small in many parts of the world, and even today, horizontal and vertical segregations can still be observed (**Momoko Kitada & Meenaksi Bhirugnath-Bhookhun, 2019**)⁷. This paper suggest that there is a need for encouraging and supporting youngsters to embrace the career in marine industry and the professional challenges faced by women seafarers. It also suggests that the participation of women in maritime industry especially as a seafarer will add to the national growth and productivity of the country.

1.2 Challenges faced by women

1. Male dominated industry: Shipping has a history of male domination over decades as for being boasting as the stronger sex. This is one of the main reasons why women never take this career option very seriously. Many women consider this as a man's world and they fear to enter in this world because they believe that they might face physical harassment and violence and low level of support from co-workers. But these are all myths as companies hiring women seafarers are having strict rules and regulations for safeguard of their rights and identity. International Maritime Organisation (IMO) made rules which are strictly followed in the ship.
2. Lack of awareness and lack of support: Unlike other career options maritime industry is not very well known to youngsters. Students generally opt for IT, science, medicine, etc. as they

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have little knowledge about the prosperous career that they can make in the marine industry. Now it is necessary to aware women students at school about the career and prosperity they can achieve in maritime industry. Family support is very essential and crucial for everyone in maritime industry. Women generally do not receive adequate support from family and society. Parents must make their child aware of the industry and motivate their children to join maritime industry.

3. Lack of acceptance by society/ companies/ practical obstacles: Many women are not allowed to choose this career in maritime industry because of the long stay away from home and family. Finding a balance between demanding work and family is very difficult and requires accurate stability. Social pressure and traditional social responsibility stop women from pursuing this career and they are forced to choose a career at land. Maritime industry demands high physical and mental strength on many occasions. Many companies having a myth that woman cannot go through those worse conditions. Each and every company should have facilities and amenities so as to facilitate the developing of a women seafarer.

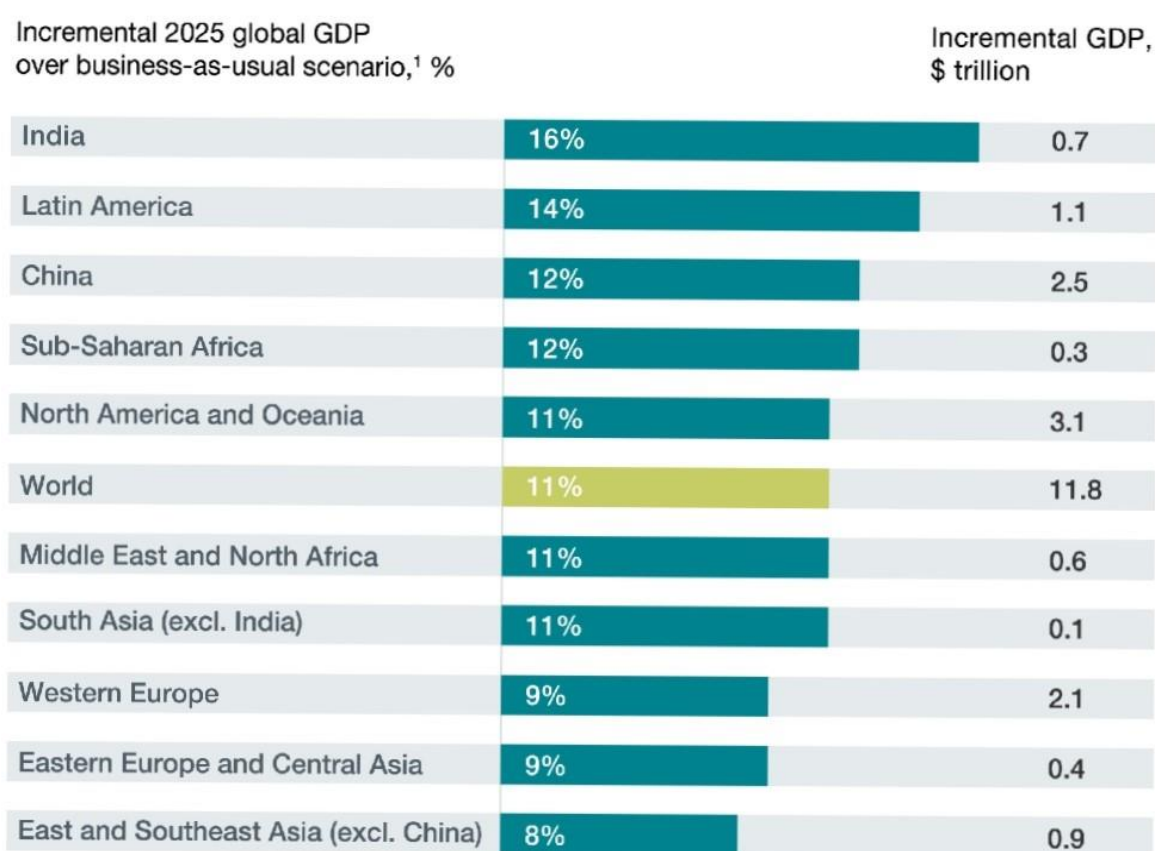
1.3 Women participation and GDP

Since 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has set in motion and established an international regulatory work program based on increasing the chances of men and women to obtain decent and sustainable jobs in conditions of equality, prosperity, security and dignity irrespective of the working environment. In today's global economy, international labor regulations are a key component of the international framework and have as their main objective to ensure that everyone (men and women) profits from the growth of the world economy (Corina Popescu & Anastasia-Elena Varsami, 2010)¹⁰.

For the betterment and economic development of family and country, women need to participate in the workforce. Recent studies conducted by “Mckinsey Global Institute” (MGI)⁹ finds that \$12 trillion could be added to global GDP by 2025 if there are advancing in women’s equality. At workplace and society the public, private and social sectors need to close the

gender gap. Gender inequality is not only a moral and social but also a very critical economic challenge.

The Mckinsey Global Institute reported ‘Best in Region’ scenario where all countries match the pace of change of their region's fastest-improving country might add as much as \$12 trillion or 11% in annual 2025 GDP. In a full potential scenario in which women play an equal role in the labour market, they can add up to \$28 trillion or 26% of the annual GDP of 2025. The disparity between men and women in the workforce remains high even after decades of growth. However, this study shows the benefits of narrowing the gap between men and women. If every country matched the progress towards gender parity of its fastest improving neighbor, global GDP could increase by up to \$12 trillion in 2025.



¹Sample = 95 countries.

Source: IHS; ILO; Oxford Economics; World Input-Output Database; national statistical agencies; McKinsey Global Growth Model; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

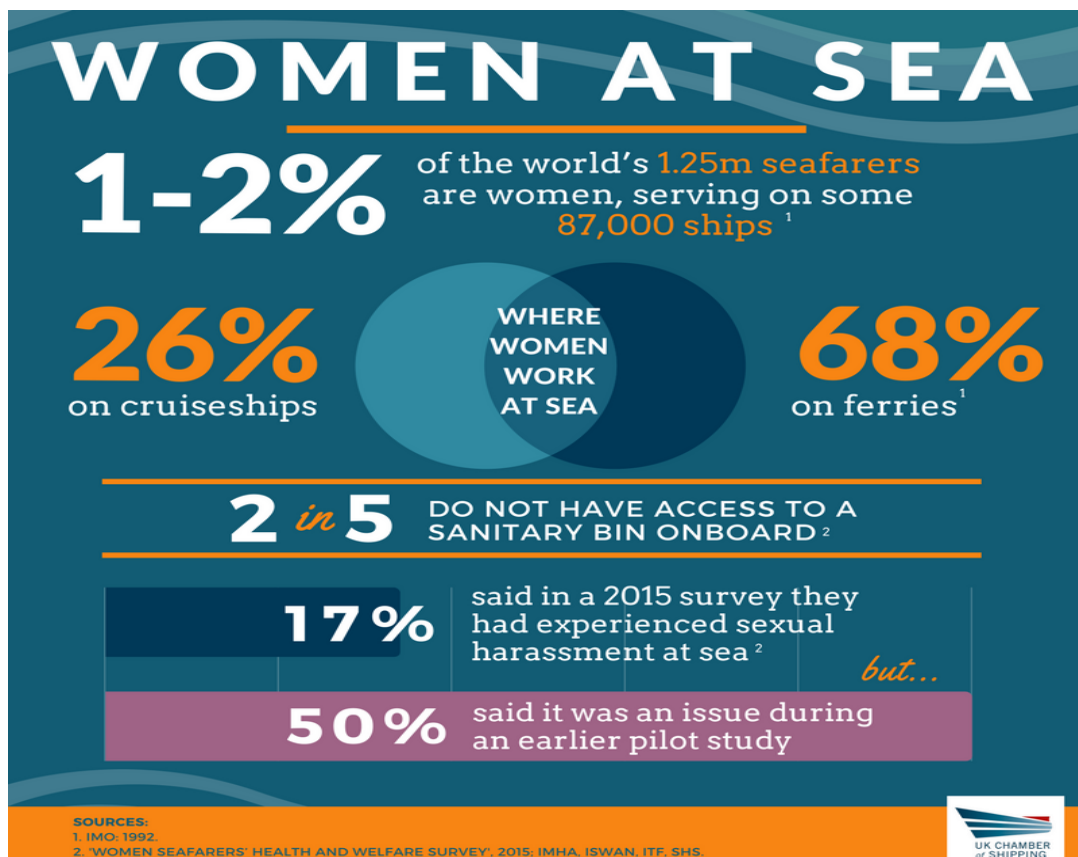
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1.4 Women Demand / Experiences As Seafarer

Approximately 1.25 million seafarers serving daily on 100,000 ships around world-wide vessels, which are transporting around 93% of the world trade. According to ‘**International Transport Workers’ Federation** (ITF) shows that only 2% are women seafarer working world-wide. **Belcher, et al., (2003)**¹ research found that women tend to make up a very small part of the seafarers 'workforce. Statistic of ‘**International Labour Organization**’ says 94% of women seafarers are working on passenger ships. In which 68% are on ferries and 26% on cruise ships. Approximately 6% are working in Cargo Ships (i.e. containers, oil tankers, etc.).

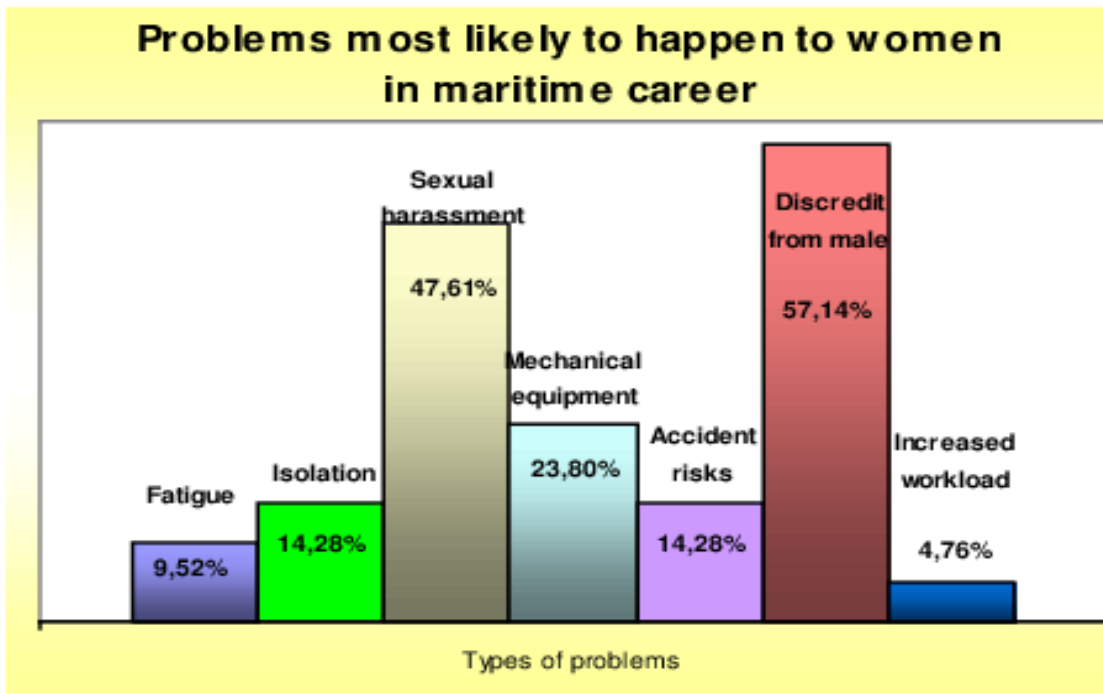


Source: Safety4Sea (2018)¹¹

The current report of ‘**BIMCO/ICS Manpower report**’² predicts a potential shortage of almost 150,000 officers by 2025. This report was launched at international Labour

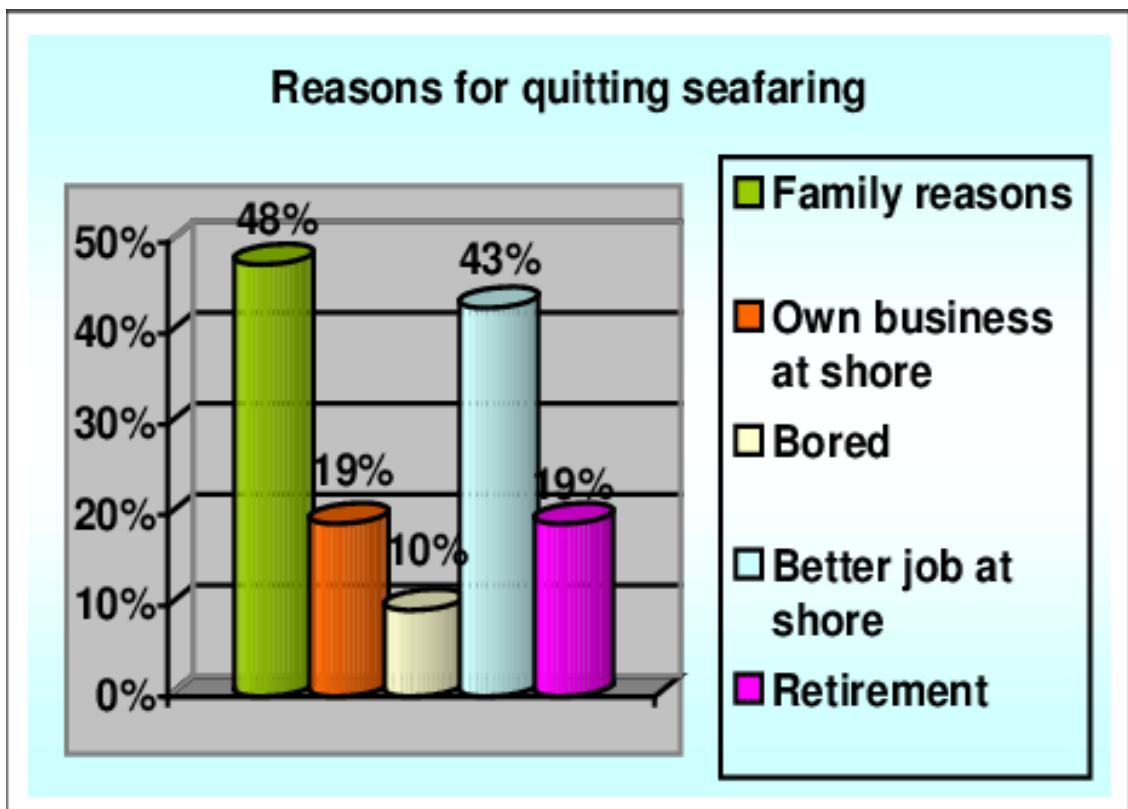
Organisation meeting. The current shortage is about 16,500 officers (2.1%) but there will be need of an additional 147,500 officers by 2025 to serve the merchant's vessels. Many statistics claim that women employment as seafarer can resolve this issue of shortage up to a great extent. Organisations like International maritime organisation (IMO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), International Transport Workers Federation, etc., already taken initiatives for women employment in maritime sectors and training required to match the specific needs and requirements of women.

One of the studies at “**Constanta Maritime University**” scopes the perception of women regarding seafaring. According to the study, the main motivational factor choosing the job in seafaring is high income (52.38%). Then 38.09% of women think the other motivational factor is career advancement in the marine industry. And the remaining part is family encouragement, continuing family traditions, etc. which represents less important factors. According to study 57.14% women believe that they are discriminated against men and are not regarded as a good worker for same work. 47.16% of women claim for sexual harassment at workplace. 23.80% women find difficulties in handling and operating mechanical equipment. 14.28% of women are scared of accidental risk at the workplace. 9.52% of women think that work requires a lot of fatigue and stress. 4.76% believes that workload is too much to handle.



Source: Cristina Dragomir, Felicia Surugiu, 2013³

The study at ‘Constant Maritime University’ scopes the reason for quitting seafaring jobs by women. 90.47% of women believe that working as women seafarer is very challenging. Around 43% of women quit shipping as they got a better job at the shore. 19% took early retirement and started their business at shore. Another 19% got bore of the job scope. Around 10% quit shipping as they want to try something else in their life.



Source: Cristina Dragomir, Felicia Surugiu, 2013³

1.5 Conclusion

No wonder that the word 'seaman' was replaced only in 2005 at the 294th session of the International Labour Organization (ILO) where the phrase 'seafarer' was invented to make the sailors a gender-terminology (Dr. Emil Mathew, 2015)⁸. As indicated women need only motivation and encouragement to take up a job outside home for economic development of their family and society. The role played by seafarers reflects their effect on the national economy; seafarers receive foreign currency that funds national consumption, and it currently represents a large proportion of GDP. McKinsey Global Institute clarifies that to increase GDP women and men barrier needs to reduce. If this happens then \$12 trillion could be added to GDP by 2025. Presently only 2% are women seafarers across the world-wide, which is quite a meagre percentage. There are many challenges women will be facing across the ocean, but challenges make the person stronger is well known to everyone. Statistics and data clearly show there is a huge shortage of seafarers which will further increase in the coming years. This indicates the women having good scope for future advancement in seafaring. There are

Pros and Cons for every workplace but when Pros are much higher the Cons then it is better to take a chance and go towards Pros as the chance of getting success and building future is very strong. So let's get the tables turned and understand the basic fact that women are far more mentally and emotionally competent to take up the sea world and now it's our primitive responsibility as existing seafarers to help them grow and nourish as future seamen and strong sailors at sea with sails in the right direction. Let's all call for safer seas and favourable winds for women at seas.

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