

Gender in Maritime Transport - A Scientific Literature Overview

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Abstract

This paper presents several relevant institutions, programs and scientific research with impact for reducing world gender bias. The emblematic scientific literature overview on the topic is highlighting the gender imbalance in the seafaring profession and the stringent need for maritime gender policies, considering women labor force represent an untapped resource that will revive the maritime industry. A statistical comparison between gender indicators recorded in Romania and the values recorded at the level of the European Union reveals that gender equality values from Romania are mostly similar to the European Union average, suggesting Romania is on the good path of reducing gender bias. The main conclusion of the paper is that further programs, policies and strategies must be established and continued at administrative and private business level to increase the number of female seafarers and port workers.

Key words: seafarer women, equality, labor, United Nations, International Labor Organization, International Maritime Organization

J.E.L. classification: J10, J16, J20

1. Introduction

With more than 80% of cargo transported by sea, maritime industry is pivotal to global economy.

Work on board ship has several particularities, occurred mainly by the particular labor environment. Seafarers work in long and very long voyages, for more months or even more than half of year, away from their family, friends and social communities. Seafarers work day and night in the same enclosed and definite space, the vessel. In most of the cases, during long voyages the ship cannot provide any internet or phone communication facilities. In such situations ships are perceived as total institutions by the one that live within. This are the cases when seafarers have no mean of communication with the onshore society and they feel isolated, especially if they work in multinational crews with further language and cultural barriers. The situation is more difficult for the one or two women who are usually working in multinational crew on board cargo ships, surrounded by male colleagues. Such particular conditions lead to depression and physical or mental health problems for seafarer women, and especially to lack of attractiveness to the seafaring profession. Lack of motivation in joining a maritime career (on board ship or in ports) is not gender sensitive.

While both genders are de-motivated in pursuing sea careers, the serious workforce gender gap, particularly in the technical-level segment of the industry, is more stringent and require adequate urgent strategies and policies to address the employment needs of the sector.

A gender balanced maritime perspective would re-new the maritime sector and would stimulate competitiveness, innovation and growth

Gender equality is defined as "equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female" (un.org).

Taking into account the contemporary social attitude to reach gender equality and gender parity in all sectors of civil society, life and administration, there are several international organisations and international programs dealing with gender inequality issues, gender bias and similar concerns. In this paper are presented some of the most such important institutions and international programs. Also, is made a review of significant scientific literature on the topic of maritime gender.

2. International organisations and programs dealing with gender inequality issues

United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, represent an universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The Sustainable Development Goals are a collection of 17 global goals and 169 targets set by the United Nations within Paragraph 54 of United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015.

In the United Nations Economic and Social Council Report of the Secretary General E/2017/66 on the Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), referring to goals promoting gender equality currently „gender inequality persists worldwide, depriving women and girls of their basic rights and opportunities. Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will require more vigorous efforts, including legal frameworks, to counter deeply rooted gender-based discrimination that often results from patriarchal attitudes and related social norms.” Women “are still underrepresented in managerial positions. In the majority of 67 countries with data from 2009 to 2015, less than a third of senior-and middle-management positions were held by women” (E/2017/66).

In maritime transport, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in 2003 was estimated that the number of seafarer women was of only 1-2% of the world's maritime workforce of 1.25 million seafarers (at that date). This means between 12,500 and 25,000 seafarer women were working in seafaring. This data was based on a working paper commissioned by the International Labor Office in 1999 and conducted by academics from the Seafarers' International Research Centre at Cardiff University (Zhao, 1999). In the cruise line sector, women seafarers were estimated to represent 17-18% of the total number of workers (Belcher *et al*, 2003).

3. Scientific literature overview on maritime gender

Following is presented a scientific literature overview on the topic of maritime gender.

Notable input from the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) related to Women in Development Programme was provided by (Tansey, 2000).

Partial results from 2018 of the GECAMET research (acronym for “Gender Equality and Cultural Awareness in Maritime Education and Training”), funded by the International Association of Maritime Universities and the Nippon Foundation suggest that, in the case of 64 seafarers employers, among the reasons for not employing seafarer women, more than half of the sample stated that female seafarers can get involved in sexual affairs with crew members and this affects the climate on board. A high share gave other reasons (19.6%, 8.2% of the answers): (1) Costs involved during repatriations and termination of contracts in case the female seafarers get impregnated on board; (2) We employ any gender as long as they meet entry standards; (3) Not applicable for our company. We hire Female seafarers only when they are competent for the job in the same way we judge our male seafarers; (4) Hire qualified people; (5) Sexual harassment by male seafarers; (6) There is a lack of qualified female officers and the issues of family and no space for separate toilets, and so on.

Several dissertation master program thesis on the maritime gender topic, including women empowerment, were conducted within the World Maritime University by Aggrey (2000), which considers most often, women are faced with reading discouraging articles and this discourage them from going into the maritime industry; by Jo (2010) and Azirh (2014). A more recent

research on Gender Empowerment and Multi-cultural Crew (GEM) was delivered by (K. Pike *et al*, 2016) and concluded that lack of training and mentoring were frequently mentioned as contributing to the issues surrounding gender and multi-cultural crews

In 2009 were published the results from a large survey made in 1993 entitled Navy Equal Opportunity/Sexual Harassment (NEOSH) (Rosenfeld *et al*, 2009, pp.69-85). The main results showed evidence of widening perceptual gaps between majority and minorities and between men and women. Both officer and enlisted personnel women who were sexually harassed perceived that there was less equal opportunity in the Navy than women who had not been harassed (Newell *et al*, 1995).

A cross-sectional study on different aspects of seafarer's employment contract and job and life satisfaction and health showed the importance of two specific psychosocial work characteristics – employment contract and the internet access – in the explanation of satisfaction and self-rated health measures in seafarers (Slišković *et al*, 2016, pp. 351-361).

A women seafarers' health and welfare survey delivered between 2014-2015 indicate that seafaring industry should become more „women-friendly” and is necessary the introduction of means for disposing of sanitary waste for all female crew on all ships and the improved availability of female specific products e.g. sanitary products in port shops and welfare centres worldwide. (Stannard *et al*, 2015, pp. 123-138).

Research on gender and leadership has both patterns and contradictions in their findings. (Fjærli, 2015, pp.26-27) has studied if female leaders are perceived different than male leaders in a maritime context as compared to a land based work environment. The study concluded that male and female leaders differ when they are rated as a CEO of marketing but not when rated as a Captain. Female CEOs need a lower average of leadership attributes than male CEOs to be considered outstanding leaders (p.27).

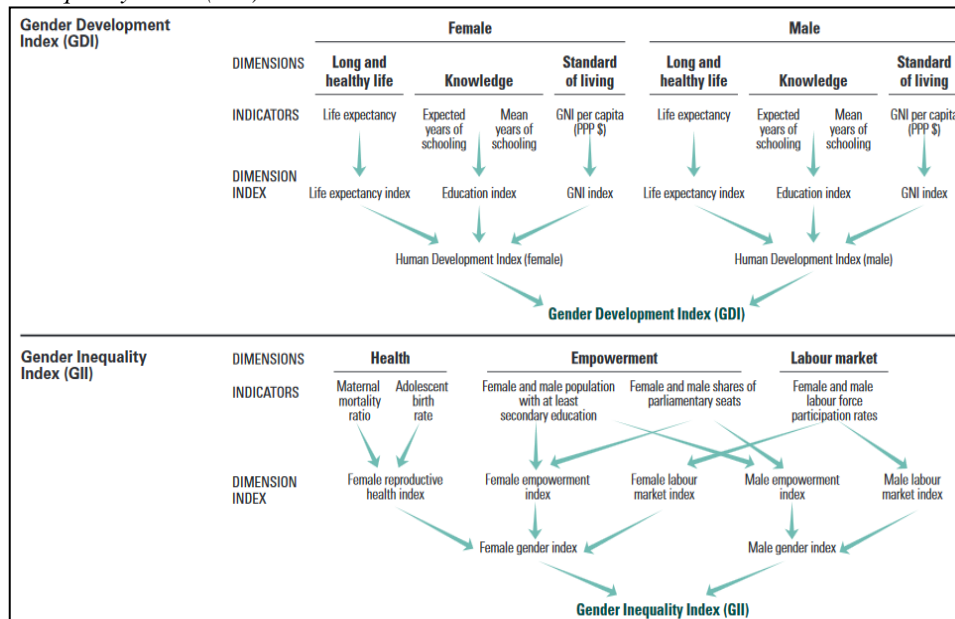
Several works of Kitada are enriching the knowledge on the maritime gender topic. Women face gender related challenges when working in male-dominated environments (Kitada, 2013, pp. 213-217). In the occupational culture of seafarers, there seems to be standard ways of behavior that are deemed appropriate only when at sea. Seafarers have a type of “micro” culture with accepted jargon, laws, traditions, and working conditions. This way of behavior reflects masculine norms and values. For instance, although physical strength is no longer needed at sea, the use of muscle power demonstrated the traditional image of a strong man at sea. As the maritime industry is male dominated and the mental representation of a seafarer often is male, it is likely that the most people automatically think of a Captain as male, and that a female Captain is a distinction or exception from the norm (Kitada, 2010).

According to (Barbare, 2014) the majority of women finding jobs on passenger ships, it would seem that they are being pushed towards the roles that are more traditionally felt to belong to women (i.e. caretaking).

4. Gender equality level in Romania

There are several statistical ways to measure the „level” of gender equalitarism in a country, which must be analyzed in relation with the Human Development composite Index (HDI) proposed within the United Nations Development Programme. The HDI measure three key components of human development: health, living standards and access to education (knowledge). Under the umbrella of Human Development Index, two composite indexes measure gender inequality between men and female: Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII), with distinct dimensions as described in Figure 1.

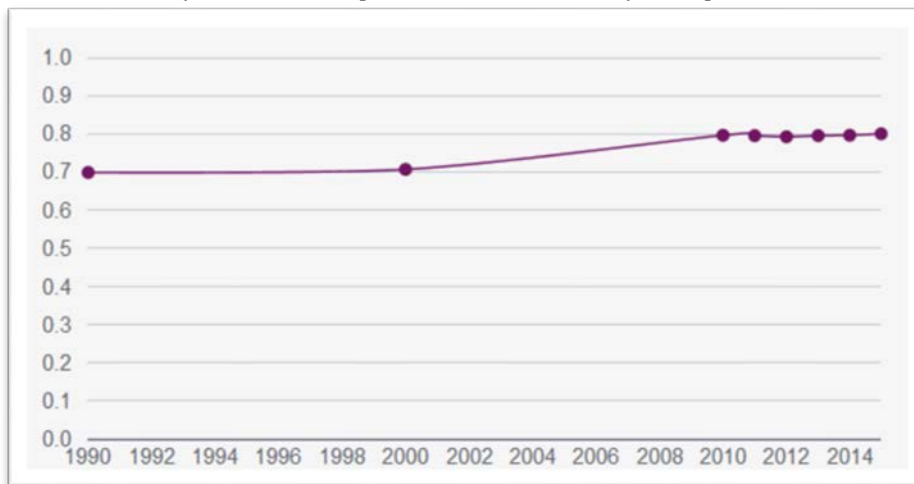
Figure no. 1. Structural comparison between dimensions of Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII)



Source: Human Development Report, United Nations Development Programme, hdr.undp.org

From the perspective of the Human Development Index (HDI), in 2015 Romania was ranked 50 out of 188 countries, placing Romania in the top 51 very high human development countries lead by Norway. The evolution of HDI between 1990-2014 is presented in Figure 2.

Figure no. 2. Evolution of Human Development Index in Romania for the period 1990-2014.



Source: Human Development Report, United Nations Development Programme, hdr.undp.org

Reported to the same period, GDI is calculated for 160 countries and reflects gender inequalities measured by female and male life expectancy at birth, female and male expected years of schooling for children and mean years for adults aged 25 years and older, and female and male estimated Gross National Income per capita. The female HDI value for Romania was 0,796 while the value for male was 0,805. The GDI value for Romania was 0,990, while the indicator for the European Union was 0,975 . This suggests Romania has a good position among the European member states that promote gene equality policies.

The second gender indicator, Gender Inequality Index (GII), measure inequalities by maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates; share of parliamentary seats held by women and attainment in secondary and higher education by each gender; and labor market participation rate for women and

men. This indicator can be interpreted as the decrease in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in the dimensions measured by the indicator. With a value of 0.339 for the Gender Inequality Index, Romania was rank 72 out of 159 countries in 2015, with only 12 % parliamentary seats occupied by women at that moment compared to 27,7% average for the European Union countries, and 86.1% of female adult having secondary level of education compared to 92.2% male. Meanwhile, the figures have improved, considering that in the period 2017-2018, the social government from Romania has highlighted the necessity to acquire gender parity at the administrative and business level. Female participation in the labor market is 47.6 % compared to 64.9 % for men. In comparison, the European Union has an average of 83,7% female with at least secondary education and 87,4% male. Labor force participation in the European Union at the moment of analysis was 51% female and 64,2 % male, indicating the values recorded for Romania have no discrepancies while compared to the European Union average.

However, statistical indicators for the rest of the world countries suggest there is still a large global gender gap and gender equality is not much improved in a significant proportion of countries across the globe. A large number of countries have low values for both human development index and gender index.

5. Conclusions

Most scientific literature on maritime gender underlines that in the maritime industry across the globe, the number of women seafarers and women port workers is insignificant compared to the number of male workers. Several international programs issued by the United Nations, International Labor Organisation, International Maritime Organisation, at the level of European Union or within other geographical commerce communities suggest there is a global movement with effective results in the direction of empowering maritime women, capacity building and reducing maritime gender bias. However, further work and commitment must be made in such direction, involving both governments and private companies.

Today, the international trade has changed and due to technological advances, state of the art training is required rather than brute physical strength. (Fjærli,2015, p.3). An industry that carries the very most of the world's goods needs the best of workers, specialists and leaders irrespective of gender (Kitada *et al*, 2015).

Romania has good statistical values for gender indicators, however, gender policies, programs and strategies must continue. In order to face the competitive environment in the maritime industry, we consider that shipping companies should update their Human Resources policies by making them gender-friendly and also by ensuring policies on gender equality and cultural awareness are communicated both on board their ships, at the on-shore headquarters of the company and to various stakeholders and community through website and social media.

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