



Lived Experiences of Women Leaders in a Male-dominated World of Work: A Phenomenological Study

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Received: 21 Juny 2022; Revised: 14 July 2022; Accepted: 20 August 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.37905/aksara.8.3.1769-1784.2022>

Abstract

The maritime industry is still considered to be a male-dominated field. Nevertheless, there are a few women who still managed to emerge victorious in the field, defying the stigma that women cannot embrace the maritime world. This phenomenological study focuses on the lived experiences of women leaders in the maritime field while ascending to their current position. It utilized a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide about the journey of each participant to leadership. Eight participants were purposively selected to shed light on the matters being sought. This study also clustered the challenges these women leaders individually encountered as they rose from the ranks. Values and principles which helped and guided the participants to triumph over the challenges were also discussed. Job excellence is common among the participants as their way to overcome any challenge. They eventually gained the respect of their male colleagues by proving their worth and doing their best.

Keywords

Women in Maritime Industry; Women Leader; Phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

The maritime industry is male-dominated. Accordingly, the Shipping sector has the lowest number of women in their workforce. Around 2017, there were only more than 17,000 female seafarers out of the total 449,000 working during that year. Despite the numerous studies about women and the quality of work they provide, there are still many who are oppose to having women in the industry (The Manila Times, 2017).



The maritime industry continues to be a male-dominated field, especially onboard. May it be that the physical structure of women could not cope with the task requirements? But do these really hinder women in dreaming to become part of this industry, much more to lead?

There are more men than women, with a 65,998,630 estimated world population difference between the two, and approximately 107 boys are born for every 100 girls born (Misachi, 2017). In this case, can women still thrive in the world of men?

Much has been said about women empowerment. Papa Seck of UN Women explained it as “There is no empowerment without rights, so women’s empowerment needs to be anchored in human rights which provide a universal framework for monitoring. For women to be empowered, they need resources, respect, and voice. This requires redressing women’s socioeconomic disadvantage, addressing stereotyping, stigma, and violence, and strengthening women’s agency, voice, and participation” (Rogers, 2018).

Men and women, when working together, can reap better results. The breakthrough research conducted by the University of Pennsylvania supports this. Their research states that women’s brains are wired differently than that of men. It also mentioned that women have the underlying ability to use both their intuitive and logical thinking in problem solving, while men are inclined more to stimulus and action. And when women are faced with very complex and uncertain situations, they have the ability to draw out more solutions, which can be very valuable (Chisholm, 2015). Thus, when they work together, logical thinking with immediate response and action can be expected. Unfortunately, there are only an estimated 2% of the maritime seafaring workforce populations that are women. This means that only about 23,000 women work in the maritime industry worldwide (Ozdemir & Albayrak, 2018).

In Philippine maritime schools, there are women enrollees in the maritime courses – Marine Transportation and Marine Engineering. At the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) alone, there are 63 female students from 1st year to 4th year during the second semester of school year 2020-2021. But, placing them onboard for shipboard training remains to be challenging. The fact is, the PMMA has already numerous memoranda of agreement (MOA) with other shipping companies. Now, could you imagine other maritime institutions which do not have enough MOAs?

On the other hand, there are women professionals who pursue maritime career although they did not specialize in maritime programs. According to Turnbull (2013), women seafarers experienced gender issues such as sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, unequal access to premium wage rates, etc. This proves that working in maritime industry is challenging for women. Also, the respondents in the study of Dela Cruz (2017) continue to feel that the glass ceiling remains for women working in maritime industry although there had been some improvements.

In comparison, women and men lead with different styles. It is recommended that companies hire a good mix of both genders to be able to harness a wide diversity of views that will help in making better decisions (Chisholm, 2015). Despite this, according to Thomson (2017), women are still struggling to climb to the top of the ladder in this very male-dominated field, and the percentage of female CEOs has dropped to 4%. However, there are still those who were able to break the glass ceiling.



Here are some Filipino women who managed to break the glass ceiling of the Philippines' maritime industry:

(1) Captain Maria Kristina Javellana is the first Filipina to be a shipmaster of an overseas merchant ship. She currently serves the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) flagged chemical/oil products tanker. She spent years building her experience in managing specialized vessels such as oil and chemical tankers (International Registries, 2018).

(2) Myrna Galang Daite-Alvarez is the first Filipina to become a deck officer in her class. She was a member of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy Class of 1997, which is considered to be historic, as it is the first class with seven women who graduated, one of which was Myrna (Friends of WMU JAPAN Newsletter, 2021). She served PMMA in various capacities for 18 years up to her passing in 2020 (PMMA Alumni Association, 2020).

(3) Jasmin Labarda, on the other hand, is the first Filipina to have manned an offshore oil vessel. She was 17 years old when she went aboard the ship. And as of 2017, she is the first Filipina to hold a senior position in the offshore oil industry (The Manila Times, 2017).

(4) Then, Merle Jimenez-San Pedro, President of the Women in Maritime Philippines (Wimaphil) and WIMA Asia. As the president of Women in Maritime Associations (WIMA) Asia, she promoted women empowerment. Their organization, being under the guidance of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) gender program, together with 18-member countries, developed the SHE to Sea program that not only promotes women as seafarers but also being a part of all the sectors of the maritime industry (Torib, 2019).

The study of Ozdemir and Albayrak (2018), which investigated into the problems that hinder women in maritime industry from taking on leadership roles, identified ways to overcome the barriers. They recommended providing female cadets and staff with effective networks and mentors, and emphasizing authentic leadership qualities in them.

The study of Osi and Teng-Calleja (2021), which focuses on the career development journey of Filipina business executives, recommends: creating a talent group of potential leaders that consist of women whom shall undergo leadership trainings; institutionalizing programs in mentoring, career pathing and gender diversity with set targets for women; and exploring and providing extensive support through childcare programs and facilities for women.

It was, therefore, the main objective of this study to perform a phenomenological study on the lived experiences of women leaders in the male-dominated world of work. Specifically, it (1) uncovered some of the women who were able to break the glass ceiling in the maritime world, onboard and ashore; (2) documented their experiences while ascending to their current position; (3) understood the challenges they individually underwent as they rose from the ranks; (4) identified values they utilized to overcome the challenges they met; and (5) documented their recommendations to aspiring women leaders in maritime.

This study may contribute to the understanding of how some women with leadership roles in male-dominated occupation managed to strive and rose up to their roles in their respective organizations despite the challenges they experienced.



Theoretical Framework

This study is about empowerment of women who were able to break glass ceiling in male-dominated occupations in the maritime industry. An important theory to this study is the Women's Empowerment Framework developed by Sara Hlupekile Longwe (1990). This framework is also referred to as Longwe Framework. The framework identifies five levels at which women's development can be viewed in terms of equality. The five levels are arranged according to increasing importance and significance, as follows: Welfare, Access, Conscientisation, Participation, and Control.

Welfare refers to the material wellbeing of both men and women. Gender gaps at this level refer to gaps in the fulfilment of those basic needs and conditions that directly affect people's welfare.

Access is defined as women's access to the factors of production on an equal basis with men; equal access to land, labor, credit, training, marketing facilities, and all public services and benefits. The proponent, Longwe, pointed out that equality of access is obtained by applying the principle of equality of opportunity (Handout, n.d.). Equality of access is seen as essential for women's development - the first step on the path to empowerment (Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development-Uganda, 1999).

Conscientisation is the conscious understanding of the difference between sex and gender, and an awareness that gender roles are cultural and can be changed.

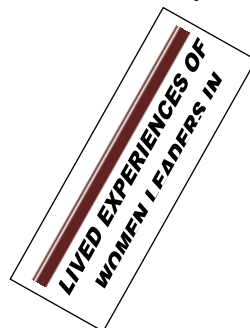
Participation is defined by Longwe as women's equal participation in decision-making process, in policy-making, planning, and administration (Handout, n.d.).

Control is defined as the "ability to direct or influence events, so that one's own interests are taken care of and protected". This is the ultimate level of equality and empowerment, in which women play an active role in the development process and resources and benefits are shared equally between women and men.

Gender gaps and concerns exist at these five levels and closing these gaps is important for development to take place for the full benefit of women and men. This framework is used to analyze gender issues in development programs.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the research paradigm where lived experiences of the participants were documented based on increasing importance and significance, from Welfare, Access, Conscientisation, Participation, and Control as they move upward.



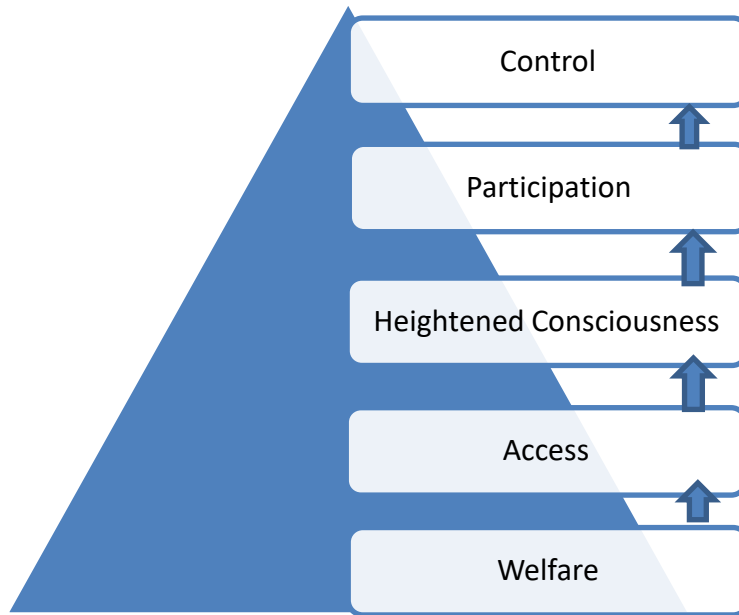


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

Central Question and Sub-questions

Central Question: What are the lived experiences of women leaders in the maritime industry?

Sub-questions:

1. What are their experiences while ascending to their current position, in terms of: (a) welfare; (b) access; (c) conscientisation; (d) participation; and (e) control?
2. What are the challenges they individually underwent as they rose from the ranks
3. How did they overcome the challenges they met?

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this phenomenological qualitative study, who were selected through purposeful sampling, were recruited and selected specifically because they can illuminate the issue being studied. The participants were three (3) women seafarers who are operational or management level officers, one (1) from maritime administration, two (2) from Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), and two (2) from shipping companies. All of them were middle to high level managers. Additionally, these participants were not necessarily graduates of maritime programs, but they have emerged as leaders in maritime-related offices.

Instrument

The instrument for this study was a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide about the journey of each participant to leadership, guided by the objectives of the study and the research paradigm.



Procedure

After the identification of the subject-participants, a letter of request was forwarded for their participation that includes date and time for the interview. Once the schedule was set, the researcher proceeded with the data gathering. The conversation was recorded since it is crucial in capturing the statements of the participants. But the researchers, at all times, took note of important statements.

The audio data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim to capture the exact words, phrases, etc. voiced by the participants. Transcripts were coded by marking the sections that indicate the categories of responses. After which, the responses were organized by combining similar themes, if needed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following provides the findings in reference to the objectives of the study. The discussions are based on the interviews and the presentation is guided by the sub-questions.

Lived Experiences while Ascending to Current Position *Welfare*

This discussion on Welfare tackles the level of workload and fulfillment of needs of the participants, in relation to those of men's.

In the case of P5, who experienced rejection for promotion, she had five (5) contracts as Second Officer, and one (1) contract as Trainee Chief Officer before she was promoted as Chief Officer. P5 believes that her success took a bumpy road and filled with challenges. She believes that the reason for not being hired twice is due to gender bias.

P4 describes her journey from being a Research Assistant to becoming the Deputy Administrator as not being easy. She explained that Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) is an agency where the personnel are highly competent, opportunities are given, competition and gender balance in workload exists.

On the other hand, P3 thinks that her journey from being a branch manager, legal branch of the discipline, law and order of the Deputy Chief of the AFP of J1 to being the Deputy Chief of Staff for Maritime Security and Services is quite easy, thanks to her always exuding positive attitude, thinking about how to be of help or service to others, giving premium to her works in pursuit of excellence and not settling for compliance alone, and commitment.

P7 was quick to say that her rise to the top was never easy, for she has endured the training in the offshore company believed not to have any Filipino go beyond the Second Officer rank. Her hard work and effort paid off when she finally got promoted as Senior Chief Officer in 2019, and finally as the First Asian Female Captain in Technic FMC last December 2020. She remembers that she has a lower salary as an officer, compared to a Caucasian trainee, and the same is true for training opportunities.

Being the owner and the President of Agile Maritime Resources for 26 years now, P2, a lawyer, considers landing a job at the maritime profession as an accident. She recognized that she did not know anything about shipping at the time she started,



but she learned the business, enabling her growth, and consequently earning the trust of the German principals and was able to buy out the company from its part owner.

During the 3rd year of her service, P8, the current Deputy Chief of Coast Guard for Logistics at the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), was nominated for a scholarship in Malmo, Sweden. The requirement from the PCG was an onboard experience. She requested for an onboard assignment, but the approval was not easy. Her World Maritime University (WMU) application was questioned by some of her peers. Thankfully, the WMU requested that she push through with her application despite the internal issues faced. At that time WMU already started the gender mainstreaming. Some of her senior colleagues would call and mention that her slot to WMU should be given to male applicants. She was thankful that it was explained to the others that the scholarship is regardless of the gender, for as long as one deserves the scholarship. She was also poised to be promoted but the promotion did not push through because she was in Sweden that time.

P1 believes that her path was quite easy, despite some challenges and discriminations she has received from her male counterparts over the years. From being an oiler of a vessel to being the President of CTI Group Phils., Inc., she believes she was lucky enough to have acquired a Second Engineer license and to be in her current position.

Based on the above experiences shared by the respondents, it is notable that the welfare of women in the maritime industry continues to be a challenge that has yet to be addressed. In terms of promotion alone, most women are kept at a level for so long, which is not the case with their male counterparts they started work with (Aggrey, 2000). As a summary, out of the eight (8) respondents, only two signified that their journey to the top has been relatively easy, while the remaining six believed that they have had rather challenging roads as they went up the corporate ladder.

Access

In terms of women's equal access to training, marketing facilities and all public services and benefits as with the men, almost all of the respondents were given the opportunities to attend trainings and schooling. Due to the gender mainstreaming efforts done by relevant agencies and offices both local and foreign, the availability of services that cater to women's needs in the maritime industry are also in place.

P1 shared that the training opportunities given to her male counterparts were also available for her, and she does not recall any instance wherein the opportunity was given to her male counterpart because of gender bias. Notably, she shares that she enjoyed the same basic salary and benefits as her male counterpart.

P3 experienced staying in the medical room during her onboard service for lack of facilities for female personnel. During that time, there were only four (4) PCG vessels. She gladly stated, however, that nowadays, the PCG was able to acquire more vessels, and they have become gender-responsive.

P4 believes that in her agency, the MARINA, balance is observed, as there are lady surveyors, lady inspectors, and in fact in the management, there are more lady directors than men. Promotion-wise, she had no experience of not being promoted due to being a woman.



P5 explained that there is no difference in workload between her and her male counterparts. Mostly, salaries are also standardized and fixed for every position being served.

P7 recalls that the workload is the same for her and her counterpart. On the other hand, experience on promotion was different. She recalled that there was a case of a Caucasian who has little experience but received a promotion, while the Filipinos would take years before getting promoted.

P2 had a diverse experience when it comes to learning the ropes of the industry. She is thankful for the Germans who accommodated all of her questions in order to understand the business. She had ample opportunities to talk to the principals, the crew, crewing managers and others, which she considers to be her training in order to learn the intricacies of the industry.

It can be noted that generally, these successful women leaders who have set their hearts on shipping, have equal access to promotion, training, and other necessary facilities. In the government, women are given equal opportunities as their male counterparts due to Gender and Development mainstreaming programs. The offshore and shipping sectors are also given this support, through training and fellowships as a constant element of the International Maritime Organisation's (IMO) strategies to develop women potential in the maritime business (Cristina, 2013). The implementation of the IMO Women in Development Program (WID), which began in 1989, increased the access for the women in the maritime world (Tansey, 1999).

Conscientisation

Conscientisation, in Longwe's Framework, refers to the difference between sex and gender, and an awareness that gender roles are cultural and can therefore be changed. This topic aims to discuss if women leaders were respected in the industry despite their gender.

P1 believes that generally, she was respected as a woman, although she experienced being disrespected in work. She recalls having a Chief Engineer who did not want to have female crew and did not want any help from her if it is beyond her scope of work. She also was assigned to work on the auxiliary machineries, though she was then a Fourth Engineer Officer, the main engine was assigned to the crew. She was also subjected to sexual harassment when she saw a man peeping through while she was taking a shower in a passenger ship.

P3 shared that she did not have any experience of sexual harassment. She holds a tea party every Thursday in PCG, wherein female employees join and share their harassment stories, which P3 directly reported to the Commanding Officer and eventually, harassment cases lessened. There was also a GAD Focal Point System established in the Coast Guard units, with the Committee on Decorum and Investigation investigating all sexual harassment cases.

Meanwhile, P2 had no experience of physical amorous advances in the industry. Even as she goes onboard to talk to the crew, she receives so much respect from the seafarers, perhaps due to the fact that she was sent by the ship owners onboard to talk to them.



Except for the lunch invitation from a stakeholder, wherein she later found out that they will be dining without anyone in tow, P4 did not experience any other form as harassment, and credits it to the idea that she might not issue a permit to whosoever would harass her.

P5 ignored an indecent proposal from her Captain when she was a Third Officer. She believes that if she had just entertained the proposal, she herself could have easily been promoted, but she wants to get a promotion for her skills and hard work. As she is the one who makes activities onboard, she made sure that all activities include the male and female crew, to eliminate discrimination. Overall, she felt respected in her work assignments.

P6 received verbal and abusive harassment in the sense that things were made difficult for her at work. She also received an indecent proposal from one officer, but she strongly retorted. She also encountered being in a ship where the Captain and all the other officers were Caucasian, being the only Filipino officer, they suggested that she eat at the mess hall for the crew. She, however, stayed in the area, despite not being included in the officers' conversations. The officers eventually recognized her persistence and started talking to her over meals.

P7 was alert in raising any uncomfortable jokes in order to draw the line of decency and professionalism. She recalls an instance wherein an able-bodied (AB) was cracking jokes about a woman's undergarments, which, to others, would seem like a joke, but she finds to be uncomfortable. In such scenario, she talked to the person in private and told him how she felt about it.

With gratitude, P8 believes that after her schooling from the WMU, she earned the respect of her colleagues.

Given the above experiences shared by the respondents, it is notable that effective coping mechanisms are helpful in addressing the issues of harassment, intimidation, discrimination, antagonism in the maritime industry. As they were proven to have established longer-term careers, the respondents have invariably referred to their personal resilience to better cope with the environment (Turnbull, 2013).

Participation

Participation in this area means that respondents take part in decision-making, policy-making, planning and administration. It seeks to know their involvement as they share their personal experiences and whether their opinions and recommendations are considered.

The women in the office setting of P1 are actively involved in most of the office activities. She shares that maybe, should she not be involved, she would be disappointed because women are now contributing more to the society and she believes that men and women equally share knowledge and expertise.

Being a part of the Central Staff in the PCG Headquarters, P3 emphasized that she has a big influence on policies. Her recommendations or opinions are being considered during meetings, especially when she was an internal auditor.

Being the Deputy Administrator for Operations, P4 strongly believes that her opinions and recommendations are being respected and valued. Proud that she has already served under three generals, she is thankful that the Administrators that she



worked for listen to her inputs and contributions, and that they are grateful that she is very supportive and open to help.

P5's fellow seafarers respect highly of her. She believes this is because she, as a Chief Mate, is hands on in her job. Whenever the crew needs help, she would go to the area and help them, notwithstanding her gender or rank.

P6 strongly believes that once you reach the level of Master, the crew will always respect you because of the title. However for other senior officers like Chief Engineer, Chief Officer, Second Officer, there are situations when the way they behave sounds disrespectful. In such cases, she believes that it is not only her gender that is being challenged, but her authority as well. She said that as she showed them that she knows what she is doing, that is when the professional respect comes in.

P7 had parts in planning and policy-making onboard, since she is a management level officer. She recalls an instance when, being new in a certain vessel and coming from diverse operations, her co-workers did not listen to her as she was trying to make a point. After a few months, an incident happened, proving that the point she was making was correct.

P8 was assigned sensitive positions which entail giving good decisions and recommendations to the Commandant. As she was also previously assigned as the Deputy for International Affairs, it is an indication that her inputs are being valued by her agency, and that she has earned the trust of her superiors.

Almost all of the participants gave positive responses to the question of whether or not their voices are heard or recommendations considered when establishing policies. Due to the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, several action plans were crafted to address the need to strengthen issues on women's participation, specifically on the inequality of women's access to and participation in the definition of economic structures and policies and the production process itself (UN Basic Facts, n.d.). Also, there are women organizations which helped to improve the quality of life. By gaining access to well-paid jobs and receiving the respect due to women, it has also contributed to the advancement of women, enhanced their active and equal participation in development, and has raised the awareness to attain gender equality (UN, 1998).

Control

This area aims to determine if the women leaders were able to influence or direct events.

P1 shared that she was given a free hand in the implementation of internal policies. She feels the respect of her superiors. In order to empower herself, she made sure that she is knowledgeable in the field. Attending seminars, keeping herself updated on what is happening, and listening to her staff to know their concerns are her ways to keep herself abreast.

Being the owner and president of Agile Maritime Resources, P2 had no problems in implementing new policies in her company, and in the ways she manages the business. She asked the help of the principals during the lockdown, to subsidize the expenses of the stranded seafarers. She is grateful that they heeded her call and they were able to help many seafarers during that time.



P3 explained that all policies in the PCG should be approved by the Commandant. She further explained that she can implement new policies for as long as they are approved by the Commandant. Her authority is only limited within her office. Respect by her superiors is also felt, in the sense that they would comply with her recommendations. She considers education and social engineering to be her most effective methods to empower herself. Early on, she had established support groups which help her now in the performance of her duties.

According to P4, she had a subordinate who would not follow her direction. She addressed such scenario by talking to the person involved. Working in MARINA for 36 years and being appointed as the Deputy Administrator, she explained that she still could not feel her power, but only because it depends on how one defines power. Since stakeholders from the regional offices are still calling her for advice, she believes that power does not mean to control or to dominate someone, but to be used properly so that the stakeholders are also happy with the way they handle their jobs.

P5 has very minimal experiences of having subordinates who disrespect her. She believes that she earned the respect and confidence of her subordinates because she works hard and joins them whenever something has to be fixed, not settling for just giving orders around. She had no issues with her superiors all throughout her contracts and they acknowledge and respect her as well.

P6 narrated that, when she was still a Second Officer and Chief Officer, she would hang out with her crew. However, when she became a Captain, she noticed that the crew grew some distance from her, simply because they respect her position. She believes that being a woman has not yet reached the level of being the counterpart of men in general, and that regardless of rank, there would always be hesitation. Even so, she said that in vessels manned by other nationality, she gets treated equally, not as the woman master, but as the master, which shows the difference in recognition.

P7 strengthened her position as the Captain by asking for help from the previous Captain whom she worked with for several years. The recognition and support from the directors also empowered her in a way. Likewise, when there were cases wherein others would have ideas contrary to her decisions, she would explain thoroughly until they finally understand. She had continuous plans for advancement, but she would rather keep her plans to herself at the moment.

Seniority is a concept that is being followed in PCG, hence the questions on someone's authority, and not simply because of one's gender as being female. Although such exists, P8 explained that it only happens on some very rare cases. To address the issue, she would give basis such as legal documents and references to strengthen her argument, which gives way to the person questioning to finally rest his case. She does not recall any circumstance wherein her subordinates would question her decisions and not abide by it.

Challenges Encountered

This section focuses on the challenges women have encountered in a male dominated maritime world. The following themes emerged from the analysis of the interview transcriptions: cultural adaptation, discrimination, stereotyping, and harassment.



Cultural adaptation

Transitioning to a new work environment, ascribed as masculine, is not always easy. It takes time for a person to assimilate into the new culture (Cultural adaptation, 2015). Everything has to be learned again for a person to be able to live and function within it. A respondent articulated her experience in dealing with another nationality and the expectation that work will be delivered according to their standards.

Coming from a different work background, dealing with the seafarers and the principals were all learnings for the participants.

Discrimination

Most of the women participants encountered discrimination in their work places. Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people or groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, or sexual orientation (Discrimination, 2019). Gender identity or sexual orientation discrimination is among the most common as experienced by respondents both onboard ship and in offices. According to them, this happened during employment hiring, promotion, and availment of scholarship.

Radhika Menon (Times of India, 2020 as cited in Arulnayagam, 2020) pointed out that the presence of women onboard is not welcome. This is the reason women are undermined, misjudged and ill-treaded when they foray into a male-bastion. Furthermore, Abdelall (2008) as cited in Arulnayagam (2020), attributed the unwelcomed presence of women onboard based on superstitions that women would be “potential source of malevolence or bad luck”. The present study revealed that men counterparts of the participants are not comfortable having women in their workplace, like the ship.

Participants explained that their co-workers prejudiced and stereotyped women as weak and do not know the job. Another participant expressed that her application for shipboard job was rejected twice merely because of her being a woman. She could not find any reason why they will not hire given her qualifications and work experience. A participant narrates her hardships onboard where her colleagues were trying to test her ability in work. Also, a participant also reported discrimination in one of the ships where she was the only Filipino officer.

Harassment

In addition to the individual narration of participants under conscientization where harassment was experienced, some other forms include verbal and sexual, as well as bullying like shouting, and a few of the participants had them.

Stereotyping

The United Nations Human Rights (n.d.) describes gender stereotype as a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women or men.

Kitada (2016) explained that hegemonic masculinity is symbolically positioned onboard ship and it becomes difficult when women enter into the seafaring profession. According to Kitada (2016), women’s ‘difference’ can create a chaotic situation on ships.



The climb in the career ladder of women participants has not been easy. Challenges were met along the way but for the respondents, these challenges were turned as opportunity for them to show that women can also do the job ascribed for men. Eventually, they were able to get the trust of their colleagues.

Overcoming Challenges

No one is exempted from challenges. As Kariba (2020) pinpointed, these challenges can be professional or personal in nature, which could either make or break people; that facing them could help build one's character, strengthen fortitude and shine down a light of who one truly is.

To summarize the responses of the eight participants regarding overcoming challenges, the following were noted: job excellence is something common in most of the participants, as they narrated that to overcome any challenge, they proved their worth by doing their best. Being happy of what they have is mostly implied in their narration. Dedication, discipline and commitment to work make the difference. Their practice of professionalism leads to service reputation. They also believe in respecting both their officers and subordinates, but must be straightforward when necessary. Contentment is also visible in most of them and they do not use their positions to take advantage of others. They acknowledge that their team helps them to succeed, an act of humility. For those who faced some form of harassment, most of them articulate that it happens only when one allows it to happen to them. It is noticeable that family has an impact in their lives and in their way of handling things. They are prayerful and have faith in God.

Participants' Recommendations to Aspiring Women in Maritime Industry

Believing that these women leaders can inspire other women to join the maritime field, the researchers asked them to provide recommendations as their parting statements.

1. If given the opportunity to provide employment and to give hope, one should use it in a good way, not to oppress people.
2. Never take advantage of people. If given the authority or power, use that to make a difference.
3. Have good relationship with our fellow because the people we meet in going up are the same people we meet when we go down.
4. We must live simply. Be humble. You don't have to prove your worth or who you are. If you have inner struggles, you tend to compete just to prove your best.
5. Don't stop your dream, keep dreaming. Have a bunch of discipline, collect all the knowledge and the skills.
6. Have passion for your work and don't forget to always pray and trust God in everything you do.
7. Believe in yourself and take it one step at a time.
8. You have to be more passionate about your job, and as you go up to the ladder, as you improve your skills, your knowledge and all, you have to ensure also that those behind you will also be lifted up.
9. As a woman, never ever use your gender as a form of an excuse to anything, but you are there because you deserve to be there for a certain position. You have to serve well.



10. Onboard the vessel, a simple carelessness and mistake can become a source of big disaster or an accident. You have to be emotionally and spiritually strong when you are onboard because you are always subject to a lot of situations.
11. Do not let negativities affect you. If people do not believe in you or that there is no opportunity, do not let that put you down. Instead, work hard for it. Patience will lead to rewards.
12. Never be afraid to aim high. With determination, clear mind, and a good heart, everything can be achieved.
13. There is no little or low position, you have to do your best. Put best effort when you do something.
14. Be trustworthy, serve and work with integrity

CONCLUSION

Women leaders in the maritime world experienced challenging roads as they went up the corporate ladder, but these challenges were turned as opportunities for them to show that women can also do the job attributed for men. Nonetheless, these successful women leaders have equal access to promotion, training, and other necessary facilities. Individual effective coping mechanisms, like proving their worth by doing their best, are beneficial in managing challenges of harassment, intimidation, discrimination, and antagonism in the maritime industry, which eventually made them gain the respect of their male colleagues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research study would not have been possible without the kind accommodation of the research participants. They gave their valuable time despite their hectic schedule, enabling the researchers to successfully meet the research objectives. We are grateful to Ms. Ana Piñon-Austria, President of the manning agency CTI Group Phils. Inc; to Atty. Imelda Barcelona, President of Agile Maritime Resources Inc. and to Commodore Mitzie Silva-Campo, Deputy Chief of Staff for Maritime Security and Services. Our heartfelt gratitude is also conveyed to Ms. Nanette Dinopol who serves as the Deputy Administrator for Operations of the Maritime Industry Authority, Chief Mate Zulaika Florin who is an active seafarer, and Capt. Maria Kristina Javellana who is currently serving as Technical Superintendent for Maersk Tankers Singapore Pte Ltd. Sincerest gratitude is also conveyed to Capt. Jasmin Labarda who is also an active seafarer, and last but certainly not least, to Capt. Glide Gene Mary Sontillanosa, Deputy Chief of Staff for Coast Guard Logistics.

The researchers are thankful for the support of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy, headed by the Superintendent, COMMO JOEL Y ABUTAL PMMA. The Research Council also played a very important role in making this study a success, and for this, we are very grateful. To our Department of Research, Development and Extension, we could not thank you enough for your indefatigable assistance all the time.



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