



THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE MARITIME UNIVERSE

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ABSTRACT

The maritime universe had always been a male-dominated industry, due to the most obvious reasons, such as men's physical predisposition to do on-board and coastal kind of work.

There's undoubtedly a "genre system" that, despite all the vicissitudes over the last centuries, still remains. Changes happened as a result of, among other factors, the women's emancipation, mainly in their careers choices and professional paths. In this genre system, which is in conformity with a specific social configuration and a historical time, we shall recognise several subtle but strong enough barriers that hinder women to occupy functions and jobs in authority institutions, exclusively due to the fact of being women.

Notwithstanding, we are now in a new stage of maritime awareness, encouraging the entry of women into the maritime universe, promoting more and more higher education and professional training in this field.

Finally, although the generational gap is already identified as one of the biggest obstacles enhancing the role of women because of the lack of experience and physical differences between genres, there is hope, in the midst of this XXI century, of equal treatment and non-discrimination based on genre, in the greatest respect from male professionals.

KEYWORDS

Maritime Security – Maritime Industry – Male-Dominated Industry – Women in Maritime – Gender Discrimination

RESUMO

A indústria marítima foi, desde sempre, dominada pelo género masculino, desde logo pelas razões mais óbvias, nomeadamente, a sua predisposição física para o tradicional trabalho no mar, quer a bordo, quer costeiro.

Prevalece, indubitavelmente, o “sistema de género”, que tem sido alvo de vicissitudes ao longo dos últimos séculos, sobretudo pela emancipação da mulher nas suas escolhas de carreira e percursos profissionais. Neste sistema de género, que está conforme com uma determinada configuração social e um determinado tempo histórico, é possível identificar diversas barreiras subtis mas suficientemente fortes, que impedem o avanço das mulheres para profissões e funções de poder nas instituições, exclusivamente, pelo facto de serem mulheres.

Assiste-se, porém, a uma progressiva entrada das mulheres no universo marítimo, nas mais variadas profissões e cargos, desde a gestão de negócios marítimos até às missões a bordo, em instituições como a Marinha e as Forças Armadas, no âmbito da segurança marítima.

Finalmente, e apesar do *gap* geracional entre superiores e mulheres com formação superior na área ser reconhecido como o maior obstáculo na valoração do papel das mulheres em matérias do Mar pela sua tenra idade, inexperiência e diferenças na estrutura

física, reside a esperança da não discriminação baseada no género, no maior respeito, em pleno século XXI, por parte do género masculino.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Segurança marítima – Indústria Marítima – Dominância Masculina – Mulheres no Universo Marítimo – Discriminação de Género

1. Introduction

Understanding women's current status in the Law of the Sea demands from the outset some historical background about the role of women in the law.

Until 1929, women could not vote and when the modern women's movement began in the early 60s, women were still legally constrained from many jobs, denied equal pay for the equal work, fired due to pregnancy, etc.¹

Law schools refused to admit women until 1950; then they started admitting a small percentage of qualified women. But in fact, obtaining employment after being graduated was extremely difficult, no matter how incredible a woman and her grades could be. Furthermore, many law firms would not even interview women and those others that hired women expect them to do massive work, namely trusts and staying in the library. We can thus understand that women were not allowed to have client contact, let alone to go to court.²

¹ *A Short History of Women in the Law*. Not-dated article. The largest collection of legal jobs on earth. Available at <https://www.lawcrossing.com/article/900014530/A-Short-History-of-Women-in-the-Law/>

² Obs. Cite Source: *A Short History of Women in the Law*. Not-dated article. The largest collection of legal jobs on earth. Available at <https://www.lawcrossing.com/article/900014530/A-Short-History-of-Women-in-the-Law/>

According to a 2013 study of 86 countries, women began to getting in the legal sector globally in the 2000s. At that time, India and China had the lowest representation of women in the law, while Latin America, the former Soviet countries and Europe had the highest.³

Although graduating from law school and being hired as entry-level barristers in adequate numbers during the past decade, women are not remaining with their law firm employers as career lawyers who aspire to partnership status. Hence, facts summarize a complex picture of women legal professionals, suggesting that women lawyers continue to face occupational barriers and gender segregation.⁴

In the United Kingdom, for instance, women now attain 61 percent of graduating law classes, so they've been more than half of graduates since 1992.⁵

In this sequence, a relevant question arises: why was the law so resistant to women? The reasons for the 'opposition' to women might have to do with the law's close relationship to power in our society. "While entry into the medical profession might be justified as a natural extension of women's nurturing role, the law was clearly an all-male domain, (...)."⁶

Fortunately, as the numbers began to increase in the mid-1970s, questions like how could women change the law were raised. At least, it is certain today that women were able to "bring national and international attention to the issue of gender bias in the courts as it affects both litigants and lawyers".⁷

As a woman and a Law of the Sea Student, I chose the role of women in maritime universe as the main topic for several reasons. First and foremost, because I'm someone who aspires to follow a maritime career in the near future; I've realized that the majority of the students of my generation don't even know these academic and professionals paths,

³ Harvard Law School. (2015) *Women in the legal profession. The feminization of law worldwide*. Centre on the legal profession. Available at <https://thepractice.law.harvard.edu/article/women-in-the-global-legal-profession/>

⁴ Paula A. Patton. (2005) *Women Lawyers, Their Status, Influence, and Retention in the Legal Profession*, 11 Wm. & Mary J. Women & L. 173, <https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmjowl/vol11/iss2/3>
Available at <https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmjowl>

⁵ Harvard Law School. (2015). *Women in the legal profession. The feminization of law worldwide*. Centre on the legal profession. Available at <https://thepractice.law.harvard.edu/article/women-in-the-global-legal-profession/>

⁶ *A Short History of Women in the Law*. Not-dated article. The largest collection of legal jobs on earth. Available at <https://www.lawcrossing.com/article/900014530/A-Short-History-of-Women-in-the-Law/>

⁷ Obs. Cit. Source: *A Short History of Women in the Law*. Available at <https://www.lawcrossing.com/article/900014530/A-Short-History-of-Women-in-the-Law/>

such as studying in the Naval School to become an official Navy. Secondly, because gender issues are more and more hot topics, in the sense that they are highly and ordinarily spoken, but in the majority of the times not properly approached, so I find this very relevant to deconstruct and make it clear. Finally, the topic will allow me to understand the time needed for realizing evolution, in this particular case, the deconstruction of prejudices, such as women's weaknesses or inabilities and the excessive value given to gender factor.

Indeed, according to Gaarsley and Line, "gender perspective is increasing in recognition, profile and application across the maritime environment." We must bear in mind the concept of gender. It consists of learned social attributes, differences and relations connected with being either male or female. Hence, it's not definitely about biological differences, as sometimes wrongly heard.⁸

I would particularly keen to highlight some distinguished women around the legal sector. Indeed, women numbers are rising in the global legal sector, but their evolution, growth and progress differs radically by culture and nation.

The first reference is Ruth Bader Ginsburg. She was the second female ever to serve on the United States Supreme Court. After being graduated in law, Ginsburg focused on academia, teaching civil procedure Law School and the most incredible fact is that besides teaching, Ruth spent a significant part of her legal career advocating for gender equality and women's rights.⁹

Second, Hillary Rodham Clinton is another legal extraordinary woman. Despite her failure to win the United States Presidential election in 2016, she served as a United States Senator and Secretary of State. After graduating, Hillary chose advocacy working for the Children's Defence Fund instead.¹⁰

⁸ Gaarslev Hansen, L., & Line, M. (2020). *Gender at Sea - Human Rights At Sea*. Retrieved 26 November 2020, from <https://www.humanrightsatsea.org/gender-at-sea/>

⁹ Barbera, Maria. (2020) *Thirteen Powerful and Famous Female Attorneys*. 2020. The national Law review. Available at <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/thirteen-powerful-and-famous-female-%3Cattorneys>

¹⁰ Obs. Cite Source: Barbera, Maria (2020) *Thirteen Powerful and Famous Female Attorneys*. The national Law review. Available at <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/thirteen-powerful-and-famous-female-%3Cattorneys>

In Portugal, Dra. Regina Quintanilha was the first Law graduated woman and barrister as well as the first judicial solicitor, first notary and first public registrar. As a barrister, Regina Quintanilha had her debut in Tribunal da Boa hora, in Lisbon in 1913, immediately after the Supreme Court of Justice gave her allowance to finally advocate. Notwithstanding, it was not until 1918 that Decree no.4676, 19th July would consecrate the full opening of advocacy for women.¹¹

The present paper has thus as its main aim to understand the evolution of women's participation in the Maritime Universe, especially in Maritime security. To do so, the first chapter (number 2 in the table of contents) addresses a brief presentation to the maritime community, because of having been a male-dominated industry, showing how women have been empowered to be positively and equally involved in this economic sector; sub-chapter two presents different conjunctures of women's role in the maritime world and sub-chapter three exposes the relevance of developed gender issues and the need of its maintenance. Following second chapter (number 3 in the table of contents), there's room to reflect about the future, especially concerning the relevance of women in the maritime business, that is, in what way can their know-how be a valuable asset (sub-chapter one); moreover, the future perspectives for women careers in the maritime world are summarized as well as the perks of studying the complex world of the sea. This second chapter is finalized with some recommendations for the new generation of maritime women.

The aforementioned analyse is illustrated with data from two interviews that I made during the month of December. Both interviews were made via Zoom, due to the pandemic conjuncture. It was such a great pleasure to get to know two powerful women, who are Navy officers: Dra. Helena Ramos, who is a jurist in the Portuguese Navy and Dra. Lara Alexandra Martins, the Vice-President of Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa. During about one hour, I had the opportunity to listen to their testimonies. Through these interviews, I could enrich my perception of the maritime world with regards to the role of women and gender issues. Both interviews are annexed to this paper, in the original Portuguese version.

¹¹ Ordem dos Advogados. (2017) *Homenagem - Dra. Regina Quintanilha | primeira advogada portuguesa*. 2017. Available at <https://portal.oa.pt/comunicacao/noticias/2017/03/homenagem-dra-regina-quintanilha-primeira-advogada-portuguesa/>

2. Women in the Maritime Universe

2.1 women in Maritime security: history and evolution

It was not long ago when the maritime community was narrated in masculine forms and the roles were assumed to be filled exclusively by men. Indeed, what is still assumed to be common or ordinary in the maritime community has been the product of an enduring tradition of treating seafaring and other sea-related activities as an exclusively male domain. The fair recognition of women's contribution to the maritime industry is considered to be born in 1988, when the International Maritime Organization (IMO) launched its "Integration of Women in the Maritime Sector" program.¹² At that time, only a few maritime training institutes opened their doors to female students. Since then, IMO's gender and capacity-building programme has helped put in place an institutional framework to incorporate a gender dimension into IMO's policies and procedures. This has supported access to maritime training and employment opportunities for women in the maritime sector.¹³

Since then, gradual but encouraging progress is being made in this area, particularly over the last decade. Many programmes and resolutions are now in effect, and much has been done, facilitated by organizations such as IMO, the International Transport Federation, the International Labour Organization and the International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network.¹⁴

¹² Kitada, M.; Piñero, L.; Meija, M (2019). *Empowering women in the maritime community*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13437-019-00188->

¹³ International Maritime Organisation (2020). *Women in Maritime*. Available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/TechnicalCooperation/Pages/WomenInMaritime>.

¹⁴ Pacific Community (2019). *Regional Strategy for Pacific Women In Maritime 2020–2024*. Available at:

As the seafarers' bill of rights, the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC, 2006) is the framework that establishes minimum working and living standards for all seafarers working on ships of its ratifying countries. This document complements the key Conventions of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) dealing with safety and security of ships and protection of the marine environment.¹⁵

While some authors may consider the Convention to be insufficient in its references to gender issues, this is covered by the inclusion in the MLC of the provisions on fundamental principles and rights at work, where discrimination on the basis of gender is prohibited by the Convention. Also, this statement is complemented by requiring the development of policies and programmes targeting the recruitment of women seafarers, wage parity, and access to shore-based facilities in a non-discriminatory manner.¹⁶

Between 2005 and 2010, there was a 2% increase in the number of women employed on board ships, fundamentally on cruise ships, and women became an increasingly large proportion of shore-side employees in the global maritime sector.¹⁷

In 2019, the IMO's Third Women Conference took place and it was entitled "Empowering Women in the Maritime Community" - the theme chosen by the International Maritime Organization for World Maritime Day 2019. Two basic objectives were pursued for this Conference: the first, to increase awareness of the work done by women in the maritime and ocean communities; the second, acknowledging the importance of inspiring future generations, highlighting role models and encouraging women to engage in all sea-related

<http://prdrse4all.spc.int/sites/default/files/t8 - annex a regional strategy for pwm 2020-2024 0.pdf>

¹⁵ International Labour Organisation (2020). *Basic facts on the Maritime Labour Convention 2006*. Available at:

https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/maritime-labour-convention/what-it-does/WCMS_219665/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁶ Kitada, M.; Piñero, L.; Meija, M (2019). *Empowering women in the maritime community*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13437-019-00188->

¹⁷ Pacific Community (2019). *Regional Strategy for Pacific Women In Maritime 2020-2024*. Available at: <http://prdrse4all.spc.int/sites/default/files/t8 - annex a regional strategy for pwm 2020-2024 0.pdf>

activities.¹⁸ Throughout the whole year of 2019, IMO worked with various maritime stakeholders to develop an atmosphere in which women were to be identified and selected for career development opportunities in maritime administrations, ports and maritime training institutes and to promote more conversation for gender equality in the maritime space. The Women in Maritime programme pushed forward with numerous activities, including premiering the film “Turning the Tide”, launching online profiles of women in the maritime sector and providing support to the women in Maritime Associations (WIMAs) launched through the program.¹⁹

As stated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations’ specialized agency for the maritime sector, nowadays women represent two percent of the world’s seafarers and 94 percent of the female seafarers are working in the cruise industry.

IMO is vigorously committed to help its Member States achieve the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.²⁰

According to Harper *et alli*, in many cultures or/and countries around the world, fishing is linked to an expression of masculinity, perpetuating an idea that fishing is only done by men. However, both men and women are involved in fisheries, but often in different roles and activities. Fisheries research, management, and policy are often dominated by men, while indirect, informal, and/or unpaid work in fisheries is where women are concentrated. This has led to a state where men’s and women’s contributions to fisheries are not equally valued or even recognized and has resulted in women being largely excluded from fisheries

¹⁸ Kitada, M.; Piñero, L.; Meija, M (2019). *Empowering women in the maritime community*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13437-019-00188->

¹⁹ International Maritime Organisation (2020). *Women in Maritime*. Available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/TechnicalCooperation/Pages/WomenInMaritime>

²⁰ International Maritime Organisation (2020). *Women in Maritime*. Available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/TechnicalCooperation/Pages/WomenInMaritime>.

decision-making processes.²¹

2.2. Europe vs. other parts of the world's conjunctures

After acknowledging the history and evolution of women's role in maritime security, it is important to distinguish between some different conjunctures in which women are inserted, given that in each geographical area, women have different challenges ahead to get into a career related to the maritime world.

In Europe, according to Ramos and Martins (2020), the number of women in maritime careers, even though is still small, might change in the near future, as women are beginning to open up to these sorts of careers. Also, opportunities for women are arising in a slow but steady way, according to these navy professionals. For them, the key element to get more women into sea-related careers has to do mostly with providing opportunities to women to step in, since both men and women have a lot of potential and each contribution (both men and women's) is equally important.

Regarding Africa, according to Tifuh, some West African women seafarers choose to go to sea in order to become the first so as to open the way for others. Furthermore, most women seafarers and non-seafarers view seafaring as a good job as it is an area which strengthens the economies of most countries.

However, there is an insignificant number of women working in maritime careers in Africa. In her study, this author figured out that this happens because there are problems related to recruitment and limited access, as well as issues related to national gender equality legislations. In addition, the percentage of female students enrolled in seafaring programmes at the Regional Maritime University, states Tifuh, is insignificant and there is insufficient support to encourage more female students to take up these programmes. The

²¹ Harper, S. et alli (2017). *Contributions by Women to Fisheries Economies: Insights from Five Maritime Countries*, Coastal Management, 45:2, 91-106.

research suggests that to enable more women in West Africa to go to sea, it must start by granting access for more female students to the seagoing courses at the RMU which is currently the only internationally recognised maritime institution in West and Central

Africa that offers training for both male and female students in the seafaring careers. Also, policies or measures must be created and put in place to encourage women to take up seafaring.²²

When it comes to the Asian continent, women comprise only four per cent of the maritime workforce in Asia and the Middle East, compared with 51 per cent for OECD countries and 24 per cent for Europe.²³ The Pacific Community states that, across the Pacific, women employed in the maritime sector women are over-represented in informal, unregulated, low-wage and low skilled jobs, and do not fare any differently from those in other sectors, like aviation, agriculture, commerce and healthcare. The challenges and obstacles Asian women face are mainly the restrictions to the labour market; violence against women; and legislation that is gender-sensitive and discriminates women.²⁴

Since 2005, IMO and the Pacific Community (SPC) have associated to create a Pacific women in maritime network and support activities to facilitate equal education and training opportunities.

²² Tifuh, A. (2014). *Women merchant mariners: empowering West African women*. Available at: https://commons.wmu.se/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1481&context=all_d

²³ Ye, A. (2018). *More women needed in maritime sector*. Available at: <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2018/08/398806/more-women-needed-maritime-sector>

²⁴ Pacific Community (2019). *Regional Strategy for Pacific Women In Maritime 2020–2024*. Available at: http://prdrse4all.spc.int/sites/default/files/t8_-_annex_a_regional_strategy_for_pwm_2020-2024_0.pdf

This led to the establishment of the Pacific Women In Maritime Association (PacWIMA), which has demonstrated its capacity to support Pacific women in maritime at the national level and identify women's development opportunities through its network.²⁵

Recognizing the impact of the Pacific women in maritime programmes and network, the Third Pacific Regional Energy and Transport Ministers' Meeting organised by SPC in Tonga in 2017 urged governments, development partners, civil society and local communities to support and build an enabling environment that will contribute to achieve gender equality. The ministers also called for the development of a regional strategy for Pacific women in maritime to guide partners in this objective. In April 2018, during the Second Regional Conference for Pacific Women in Maritime held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, the conference established a Drafting Committee to create a regional strategy with an all-embracing objective of regional coordination and providing guidance towards a progressive gender equity and equality in the Pacific maritime sector.²⁶

The regional strategy establishes a vision for the Pacific region, supported by three key strategic pillars²⁷:

1. Recognition of leadership and contribution of women in the maritime sector;
2. Visibility of women in the maritime sector;
3. Capacity building for women in the maritime sector

²⁵ Pacific Community (2019). *Regional Strategy for Pacific Women In Maritime 2020–2024*. Available at: <http://prdrse4all.spc.int/sites/default/files/t8 - annex a regional strategy for pwm 2020-2024 0.pdf>

²⁶ Pacific Community (2019). *Regional Strategy for Pacific Women In Maritime 2020–2024*. Available at: <http://prdrse4all.spc.int/sites/default/files/t8 - annex a regional strategy for pwm 2020-2024 0.pdf>

²⁷ Pacific Community (2019). *Regional Strategy for Pacific Women In Maritime 2020–2024*. Available at: <http://prdrse4all.spc.int/sites/default/files/t8 - annex a regional strategy for pwm 2020-2024 0.pdf>

To sum up, even though the conjunctures are different, there is a common point that crosses them all: due to it being a traditionally male-dominated sector, women are either unaware of the diverse and rewarding career prospects within the maritime sector (like, for example, in African countries) or are discouraged from participating because of entrenched social and cultural biases against them in maritime careers as well as gender discrimination and sexual harassment (like, for example, some countries in Europe).

2.2. Why is the development and maintenance of gender policies needed and important?

The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment has been a goal of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, within each one's particular scope of competencies. During the so-called United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), many specialized agencies of the UN sought to implement programmes to assure the advancement of women and to promote gender equality.

One of the eight Millennium Development Goals established in 2000 is focused on gender equality and empowerment of women, with focus on education, employment and political decision-making. Gender equality is, however, also important for the achievement of all other Millennium Development Goals. Included in the declaration, it is about education for career building which emphasizes all member states to:

- Encourage all stakeholders in the maritime sector to recognize that education is the key to promote the integration of women in the maritime sector;
- Encourage the international exchange of students towards improving cultural awareness, tolerance and understanding and towards improved job opportunities for women;
- Support leadership and mentoring alongside male sensitivity training to

facilitate career development for female professionals.²⁸

Moreover, on leadership, mentoring, and networking; member states should:

- Identify existing female networks in shipping in order to make women in shipping more visible as role models, paving the way for the next generation of women in shipping;
- Support and encourage the development of mentoring, sponsoring and networking schemes for women as maritime leaders for today and tomorrow; and
- Encourage the maritime industry to take active steps to attract talented young people to the industry.

Regarding sustainable development issues in shipping, all member states are required to:

- Encourage all maritime stakeholders to create an enabling environment for women allowing them to understand career opportunities, and providing advocacy and mentoring opportunities;
- Encourage more women to enter engineering and technical fields of maritime professions;
- Encourage all stakeholders to adopt consequence analysis and values-based evaluation methodologies when exploring and addressing sustainable development of the industry. ²⁹

²⁸ International Maritime Organisation (2020). *IMO and the Sustainable Development Goals*. Available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/SustainableDevelopmentGoals.aspx>

²⁹ International Maritime Organisation (2020). *IMO and the Sustainable Development Goals*. Available at:

Empowerment of women is critical for the achievement of all the goals related to equality, human rights, development and peace and security established by the United Nations over the past six decades.³⁰

Within this historically male dominated industry, IMO has been concentrating efforts in order to help the industry on the mission to support women to achieve a more equal representation. Within the framework of maritime development, and through the “Women in Maritime” programme, IMO has taken a strategic approach towards strengthening the contribution of women as key maritime stakeholders, while continues to support the participation of women in both shore-based and sea-going posts.³¹

According to Harper *et alli*, although some important progress has been made very recently on developing gender-sensitive fisheries policies and programs in certain countries and contexts, much still needs to be done to address gender inequalities in the fisheries sector and to promote the social and economic well-being of men and women in fishing communities around the world.

In the fisheries’ sector, “an overall lack of attention to gender dimensions in fisheries policy and management may be compromising the outcomes of valuable efforts to rebuild fisheries and to improve the livelihoods and well-being of all those in fishing communities (...) Developing more inclusive and representative management processes and policies in fisheries first requires identifying all those involved (...) and the full length of the fish value chain. Only then can we start to tackle gender inequalities in the fisheries sector and

<https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/SustainableDevelopmentGoals.aspx>

International Maritime Organization (2019). Supporting gender equality, empowering women - World Maritime Day 2019. Available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Pages/20-World-Maritime-Day-2019.aspx>

³⁰ United Nations (2020). Goal 5: *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

³¹ International Maritime Organisation (2020). *Women in Maritime*. Available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/TechnicalCooperation/Pages/WomenInMaritime>.

contribute to more equitable and sustainable fisheries.”³²

To sum up, all gender policies that we might see implemented now and in the future are needed and important for several reasons. We live in a *status quo* which is male-based regarding the sea world, where women’s contributions are valuable but sometimes forgotten, as women are often allocated to more informal and indirect work. The lack of opportunities given to women to ascend on sea’s careers ladders impact not only women themselves but the whole system, since we need everyone’s contributions both to decision-making processes and sustainability in the realm of the sea world.

3. The future: maritime environment for women

3.1 Why should maritime business be taking note of gender?

According to Harper *et alli*, the know-how and experience of women who have throughout several years been involved in the fishing sector are valuable assets to fisheries management and decision-making. Since these assets are not valued in a proper way nowadays, future work on gender dimensions of fisheries should be taking note of gender by focus on the role of women in fisheries decision-making and identify barriers to their participation, in order to underline important contributions by women and expose gender inequalities. In order to do so, there’s the need to have more information to identify gaps and, in a further step, to develop policy measures to mitigate those inequalities.³³

A good way to get information on these issues is by studying gender perspectives with emphasis on the maritime community, which is an important interdisciplinary research area that can contribute to effectiveness in maritime operations and management. Within

³² Harper, S. et alli (2017). *Contributions by Women to Fisheries Economies: Insights from Five Maritime Countries, Coastal Management*, 45:2, 91-106.

³³ Harper, S. et alli (2017). *Contributions by Women to Fisheries Economies: Insights from Five Maritime Countries, Coastal Management*, 45:2, 91-106.

maritime gender studies, the available literature covers gender issues in terms of maritime education and training.³⁴ This research area happens to be useful, since it allows the debate on gender inequalities at the maritime world to be done and the decision-makers to have some insights on the gender gap that must be ended, as it is prohibited by the Maritime Labour Convention since 2006.

Also, according to IMO, “to achieve a more diverse workforce, it is essential that women are visible – both within the maritime community and, more widely, in representations of the maritime sector in news reports and marketing material. “In order to put these ideas on practice, IMO has invited women of the maritime sector to take and share photos of themselves at work, using the hashtag #MaritimeWomenPhotoShare. Thanks to contributions from people around the world, IMO is creating a bank of images of women in maritime careers, where external audiences can search realistic photos for use in news stories and social media posts, for example.³⁵ With these representations, it is easier for young girls and women to visualize themselves doing that sort of work, such as captain, chief engineer and seafarer are also portrayed by women. Plus, these image materials might be used as a tool to deconstruct those biases that women can’t play some roles in society, which will contribute to women’s emancipation in a certain way. This will be essential in inspiring young women to get into maritime careers, by showing them there is a place for them in the maritime sector.

3.2 Career prospects

According to Tifuh (Tifuh, 2014),

³⁴ Kitada, M.; Piñero, L.; Meija, M (2019). *Empowering women in the maritime community*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13437-019-00188->

³⁵ International Maritime Organisation (2020). *Women in Maritime*. Available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/TechnicalCooperation/Pages/WomenInMaritime>

“Some women in developed countries choose careers at sea because they belong to seafaring families or communities, while others prefer seafaring because of the opportunity to visit different countries. However, most women in developing countries choose seafaring careers mainly because of high earnings to support their families financially.

In addition, women seafarers face many challenges including difficulty gaining access to ships, rejection from their male colleagues on-board, sexual harassment, and menstrual and maternity leave problems. These issues appear to be more apparent and significant on cargo ships than cruise vessels, in terms of the number of women on a vessel, which affects the design of on-board facilities and people’s behaviour”.³⁶

More than in any other career, women’s access to the seafaring profession poses one of the greatest challenges. Many of the reasons why they are left out of other professions include unfounded beliefs that women are incapable or unsuited to seafaring due to the physical demands of the work; ideas that women are responsible for family and household responsibilities, which make long periods away from home problematic; and apprehensions related to occupational safety and health as well as pregnancy.³⁷

Female role models and mentors are one of the keys in making the maritime industry more reachable to women and girls, especially in the seafaring profession. That’s why governments, industry and educational institutions must remove barriers and support women’s participation in the maritime sector by incorporating gender equity and inclusion into their policy-making agendas.

³⁶ Tifuh, A. (2014). *Women merchant mariners: empowering West African women*. Available at: https://commons.wmu.se/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1481&context=all_d

³⁷ Kitada, M.; Piñero, L.; Meija, M (2019). *Empowering women in the maritime community*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13437-019-00188->

The good news is that there have always been people willing to defy the *status quo* and its underlying prejudices. There is still a long way to go to ensure maternity protection, which would provide more security and encouragement to women to join and remain within the maritime industry. Maternity benefits are something that can—and should—be provided to seafarers if we want to attract more women to go to sea. With the family benefit, these measures encourage work-life balance for all on board regardless of gender. In other words, pursuing a career at sea should not prevent either men or women from having a family and, taking this into account, maternity benefits are very important.³⁸

Another thing we must take into account is that most of the women that work in sea-related careers are still at the entry-level and cannot move up the career ladder. So, more than giving women opportunities to get into this world, it is also needed lots of training and education programmes, in order to make women visible and recognize their role as vital as well as it is the role of men in the maritime world.

3.3 Recommendations for potential future maritime women

Even though some efforts have been made, more solid action is required to move beyond words and to convert them into action, provisioning more maritime employment opportunities for women. It is known that the recruitment process starts with education and training. However, while most countries already provide equal access to their educational systems, there is still room for improvement, in particular in the light of the technology innovation challenge that exists nowadays.³⁹

Also, on the article “*A comparative study of the perspectives of men and women in maritime on gender issue*”, Ozdemir and Albayrak stress the importance of communication

³⁸ Obs. Cite Source: Kitada, M.; Piñero, L.; Meija, M (2019). *Empowering women in the maritime community*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13437-019-00188->

³⁹ Kitada, M.; Piñero, L.; Meija, M (2019). *Empowering women in the maritime community*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13437-019-00188->

in order to break stereotypes and their negative impacts on maritime workplace:

“Overcoming the problems caused by gender stereotypes is not easy since it requires a long time to change them. Nevertheless, it shouldn’t be forgotten that big changes start with small steps and some precautions to overcome the bias should be taken. To this end, communication among the people in maritime should be increased, as it is the best and most influential solution to the problem of misperception between the genders. By the increase in communication, people from all walks of life in maritime will have a chance to get to know and understand each other, develop the understanding among each other, indulge in their weaknesses and appreciate their strengths, which may give way to the creation of a strong and healthy working environment where all people are happy and productive.”⁴⁰

4. Conclusions

We know the role of Women in Maritime world is a recent phenomenon. According to *The Short History of Women in Law*, only at the end of the 20th century did women made an appearance in the legal sector.

Traditionally, women were legally barred from the outset to have the opportunity to choose a mere career, let alone to follow a maritime path. Throughout the last decade, we can finally realize the emerging numbers of women in this sector. However, problems related

⁴⁰ Ozdemir, P.; Albayrak, T. (2019) *A comparative study of the perspectives of men and women in maritime on gender issue*. Available online at www.anmb.ro.

to recruitment and limited access still remain as obstacles to women, especially in the African conjuncture.

Regarding women empowerment to follow these maritime world and respective careers, IMO (International Maritime Organization) played and plays a major role in this process when it launched its “Integration of Women in the Maritime Sector” program, in 1988. Through its capacity-building programme, IMO has supported access to maritime training and employment opportunities for women in the maritime sector.

As the focus of the gender policies aim to reach an effective integration of women in this industry, it’s imperative that we highlight the importance of education as the most powerful weapon to deconstruct gender prejudices, particularly in promoting equality and the idea that regardless of gender, the merit and work skills must be the relevant criteria when selecting employees. As I agreed with Dra. Lara Martins, the second interviewed, emotional and psychological resilience is the key to be successful in this industry, mainly on-board jobs.

Finally, although all the attempts such as programmes and resolutions by several organizations, women still face challenging barriers based on gender discrimination and because of that, they lack professional opportunities. Hence, getting more women involved in sea-related careers will require opportunities for women to step in, since both men and women have a lot of potential and each contribution is equally important.

A paradigm shift, according to the interviewed women (Ramos and Martins, 2020) has already occurred but there’s still a long way to go in the sense that the future maritime sector will have to move towards a more equal and diversified work environment, through for instance, the implementation of national gender equality legislations. Nevertheless, we must stress that in the 21st century, there’s much more respect from men than before, so a positive shift is effectively happening.

To sum up, I believe that Education in gender issues appears to be the effective and efficient solution for the future of Women in the Maritime sector.

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Annex I – Interviews

1. Dr.^a Helena Isabel Ramos – Jurista que trabalha atualmente na Comissão Cultural da Marinha Portuguesa

É oficial da Marinha Portuguesa, mas sempre exerceu atividade jurídica. É licenciada em Direito pela Universidade Católica do Porto, em regime pré-Bolonha e especializada em

Direito internacional. Desde que entrou na Marinha, sempre exerceu Direito administrativo, contratos públicos, entre outros, tendo também trabalhado cerca de um ano no Instituto Hidrográfico português. Atualmente, trabalha na Comissão Cultural da Marinha Portuguesa e faz, essencialmente, propriedade intelectual, Direitos de autor e Direito do trabalho. É técnica superior naval, tipo de carreira que ainda está em desenvolvimento e só há cerca de 4 ou 5 anos é que existem quadros superiores, portanto é algo bastante recente.

- ✓ No que respeita à possibilidade e aspiração de navegar ou trabalhar no mar: respondeu que essa possibilidade tem que ver com aquilo que as instituições pretendem dos trabalhadores. Portanto, mesmo já tendo tido a vontade de trabalhar a bordo, dificilmente o conseguiria pois foi contratada para exercer atividade jurídica.

Mencionou que quando o navio almirante é português, normalmente vai também uma assessora jurídica. Porém, tem ido sempre uma das mais antigas da instituição e, por isso, no futuro, espera que haja oportunidade para qualquer um, independentemente da idade, género ou experiência de trabalho, possa acompanhar as missões.

- ✓ Relativamente à Indústria marítima: “ (...) para fazer a ponte para a Marinha mercante – falamos em indústria de defesa, ou seja, forças armadas. A Marinha representa apenas 30% da população, daquilo que são todos os militares, e quase todos são de áreas muito técnicas (mais na Marinha especificamente, porque nas outras forças nem por isso). A Marinha não é comparável nem ao Exército nem à Força Aérea. A tendência normal é de que as mulheres tenham quadros habilitacionais superiores. A representação feminina na Marinha é superior porque os oficiais são contratados em quadros técnicos específicos. Por exemplo, na engenharia eletrónica, existem 3 mulheres – é, portanto, um quadro claramente masculino. Mas isto porquê? Diferentemente do exército e da força aérea, a Marinha tem uma especificidade muito grande: que é a atividade ser no navio – plataforma flutuante.”

- ✓ Vida marítima para as mulheres, quão difícil? Afirma que 6 Meses no mar “significa estar com as mesmas pessoas com quem se embarca (desde o início). Não é uma vida muito atrativa para as mulheres, porque a predisposição de uma mulher para se conter num espaço pequeno é menor do que a de um homem. Mas também tem havido um número crescendo de mulheres a entrar na escola naval, o que significa maior procura por estas carreiras até menos convencionais. Essencialmente porque as condições de trabalho já são melhores, existindo mais conhecimento do que se passa; e também já não é um mundo de homens – o paradigma está efetivamente a mudar e mudará, certamente, mais nos próximos anos com a Transição digital. Já não é necessário um engenheiro estar na máquina, porque os computadores fazem as conexões. Continua a ser, porém, em termos globais, uma casa muito gerida por homens, que estão em quadros superiores e, portanto, são chefes. Não há (ainda) mulheres almirantes – poderá haver uma em breve.”
- ✓ Questão da discriminação: Helena afirma que “há tendência para discriminação sobre a mulher e sobre o seu potencial porque são, geralmente, mulheres mais novas, qualificadas em áreas em que os chefes provavelmente têm menos conhecimento; depois, o *gap* geracional continua a ser muito grande. Sendo uma realidade a combater, crê que será através de trabalho, possível a comprovar as potencialidades das mulheres. Acrescentou, ainda, que pensamentos como “É mulher, é jovem, é mãe, se calhar não tem muita perceção” dos seus superiores são ainda constantes, apesar de haver agora respeito maior do que antes.
- ✓ A nível de contribuições das mulheres no universo marítimo: Helena considera que as mulheres contribuem da mesma forma que os homens, nas suas capacidades, competências, potencialidades, naquilo que trazem, como pessoas, tal como os homens; porém, as mulheres são mais organizadas e os homens mais metódicos, embora estas características dependam muito da tarefa em que estão insertos.

- ✓ Influência das estruturas física e psicológica das mulheres: Helena respondeu que a “maritimidade” geralmente é mais associada aos homens do que às mulheres, fundamentalmente porque os trabalhos de força são menos estimulantes para a mulher. A mulher tem mais disposição para questões de logística e de administração, e os homens para a parte física, não significando isto que as mulheres não tenham apetência para operar máquinas como qualquer homem pode.
- ✓ Poucas mulheres na indústria, porquê? Afirmou que “a questão é que o nosso intelecto está mais frente daquilo que é possível concretizar. Ainda não existem mulheres almirantes porque ainda não houve oportunidade para nenhuma entrar, ainda não houve tempo para isso. E as atividades marítimas têm sofrido o mesmo impasse. Já há muitas mulheres, que fazem vela por exemplo, e muitas que têm perspetiva de olhar para o mar, nem tanto para serem pescadoras. Mas se calhar já tem capacidade de pensar que o mar tem outras potencialidades e podem estar à frente da gestão de uma empresa, por exemplo. O olhar que nós temos pode ser encarado de forma diferente: a perspetiva que se tem de que é uma carreira de homens já mudou, porque estamos num momento de igualdade. Não há é ainda predisposição para as pessoas poderem acompanhar ainda um enquadramento igualitário.”
- ✓ Sobre conselhos/encorajamento para carreiras marítimas, especialmente na instituição onde trabalha: “A Marinha é uma instituição tradicional, por isso todos os trabalhadores sabem o que têm de fazer a nível de ordem de trabalhos e a quem têm de se dirigir”, sendo assim, a organização do trabalho uma das vantagens desta instituição. Apontou, como desvantagem a dificuldade da integração feminina, devido à existência da já mencionada predisposição de que a mulher, por ser mais nova, pode ter menos experiência e conhecimento, o que pode não ser verdade. “(...) mas, de facto, as pessoas podem ser ensinadas. E isso tanto acontece com homens como com mulheres.” Entende que a discriminação de género “terá tendência a reduzir porque o *gap* geracional tende a diminuir com a saída dos mais

velhos; também o entusiasmo que as camadas mais jovens vão tendo por carreiras que eram mais masculinizadas vai fazendo desaparecer esta tendência.”

2. Dr.^a Lara Alexandra Martins – Oficial da Marinha portuguesa a trabalhar atualmente na Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa

Entrou aos 18 anos na escola Naval, onde fez a sua formação superior em Administração Naval. Neste momento, exerce funções na Cruz Vermelha, como vice-presidente, na área humanitária (dentro dos interesses da Marinha, não saiu dela). Exerceu a função de chefe de serviço de abastecimento a bordo; mais tarde, funções de gestão hospital no hospital da Marinha e no das Forças Armadas.

- ✓ Porquê o interesse pelas questões marítimas/Marinha: conheceu a Marinha por influência do irmão, pois não é de todo uma instituição falada e publicitada nas escolas, aquando da escolha do curso superior ou percurso académico. Na altura, concorreu por motivos de aventura, desafio e de saber como seria o universo militar.
- ✓ Sobre a consciência das potencialidades do mar/oceano na população portuguesa: Lara realizou um programa avançado de estudos do mar na Universidade Católica e, portanto, tem várias noções de economia do mar, mas respondeu que “ainda que sejamos uma nação dita naval, de termos um turismo muito baseado nas questões náuticas, não a vivemos como tal.” Sobre esta questão, pessoas que estudam, investigam e trabalham nesta área, têm noção; diferentemente, a população em geral, não tem noção das potencialidades do mar. Afirmamos ser um país naval, mas depois essa ideia não se materializa. Terminou, sublinhando que “poucos saberão responder sobre as questões navais, apesar de a nossa história mostrar que somos uma nação naval”.
- ✓ Domínio dos homens na indústria marítima: Lara não considera que o setor seja *male-dominated*, mas sim que é “uma questão cultural e de tradição (matriz cultural

onde as mulheres nem sequer tinham a oportunidade de escolher uma carreira marítima). Historicamente, os homens é que estavam autorizados a ir para o mar.” Lara afirma que se trata de uma questão mais tradicional do que estrutural, crendo que não se trata, assim, de uma profissão de homens. E, portanto, “chegarão a esta indústria, os que tiverem aptidão.” Lara é defensora da igualdade de oportunidades, e portanto o género não tem de ser uma questão em termos de oportunidades mas sim o mérito. Sublinhou que se os homens ainda dominam é apenas por força da tradição e da cultura. A seu tempo, mais mulheres estarão envolvidas.

- ✓ Sobre a influência das estruturas física e psicológica das mulheres: entende Lara que a questão biológica perde valor a partir do momento em que “uma mulher consiga fazer melhor que qualquer homem. Tem muito mais que ver com a personalidade das pessoas do que propriamente com o género. Naturalmente que a robustez dos homens permite mais rapidez nas tarefas mais físicas, mas não significa que as mulheres não consigam fazer, apenas demorarão mais tempo. Por outro lado, a resiliência da mulher é tipicamente maior que a dos homens. Claro que não devemos considerar estereótipos e generalizar.” Destacou o fator resiliência psicológica como o mais importante para uma profissão no mar, independentemente do género.
- ✓ Descriminação de género: enquanto anterior chefe de serviço e atual vice-presidente da cruz Vermelha, Lara respondeu que quando tem de tomar uma decisão mais difícil no que toca a ordens, “o género não influencia na forma como transmite a informação ou atribui tarefas ou comunica seja o que for.” Na sua experiência profissional, nunca sentiu mais ou menos desrespeito por ser mulher.
- ✓ Diferenças culturais do papel da mulher realidade ocidental vs. Oriental ou Africana: referiu que “em África eles vivem como nós estávamos há 50 anos. Quando muito, podemos dizer como fazer diferente, mas não se pode ter arrogância moral, como é habitual do Ocidente e dizer que o oriente é pior. Os comportamentos deles são

resultados das condições climatéricas, de recursos, e, na verdade, até fazem muito com o que têm. Em termos de profissões marítimas, as mulheres podem participar nas pescas, mas mais em países asiáticos, mas em África nem por isso. Nas forças armadas, ainda não há mulheres, mas é uma questão de tempo, questão geracional.”

- ✓ Impacto/contribuições/revoluções das mulheres: Lara defende que tudo depende do gosto que se tem pela área e também da personalidade. Considera que leva a vida muito ao desafio, é muito aventureira.
- ✓ Para encorajar outras mulheres ou raparigas nestas carreiras: sublinhou o facto de, sobretudo quando se está no processo de escolha do percurso académico ou da carreira, ninguém dever definir o que quer, mas sim o que não se quer, pois desta forma não se excluem possibilidades. No fundo, frisa a ideia de “a chave é experimentar”. Acrescentou que “Poderá gostar da carreira de Marinha quem gosta de aventura e quem tem a característica de viver pelo desafio - é preciso ter capacidade psicológica para esta área. A recomendação é estar atento a tudo o que se experiencia, porque a sensação de saber se é isto ou não, está nos pequenos detalhes, para identificar se é vocação, ambição ou necessidade.”

Concluiu a entrevista dizendo que faria exatamente o mesmo percurso na Escola Naval da Marinha novamente, se tivesse agora 18 anos.