

## **Learning from Global Practice: What India Can Adapt to Improve Women's Employment in Seafaring**

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### **Abstract**

Women are much underrepresented in seafaring globally, even though there is increasing policy interest and labour shortages continue to persist in the maritime industry. Study has found several obstacles in the seafaring career cycle, but little focus has been placed on global practises bearing an adaptable meaning to labour-supply situations like India. This paper discusses the perceptions of the experienced stakeholders in relation to the international practises in women seafaring employment and determines the viability of this through the Indian maritime workforce. The study uses a qualitative, interview-based research design and uses semi-structured interviews with a sample of 20 academia, policy, regulation, consultancy, port administration, and training institution specialists as a source of information. The discussion determines sea-time access, onboard working conditions, and career progressions as the key transition points determining the employability of women. The evidence suggests that better results can be related to synchronised governance structures, explicit employer roles, and plausible enforcement systems, whereas ineffective outcomes are linked to disjointed institutional structure and voluntary actions. Notably, analysts note that the policies that worked in the OECD setting cannot be copied directly onto India without any change in the regulatory capacity, labour-market practises, and employer incentives. The study makes a contribution to the scholarship of adaptation-oriented perspective to seafaring employability, and provides policy implications to the government, regulators and market actors to increase gender representation and the sustainability of the Indian labour market in the maritime labour market.

**Keywords:** Women seafarers; maritime labour markets; employability; policy adaptation; India

### **1. Introduction**

The occupation of seafaring remains among the male dominated tasks in the transport sector across the world. More than forty years of policy focus and advocacy have led to women making up only one or two percent of the global seafaring labour force and being disproportionately undervalued into junior, administrative, or support positions, as opposed to operational and leadership ones. This peripheralization is an echo of an historical marginalisation and the continuation of gendered views of physical power, technical ability and perceived naval applicability. Hegemonic masculinity influences shipboard cultures that promulgate these assumptions and limit access by women, retention, and upward mobility (Arulnayagam, 2020; Grimmett, 2024; Kitada, 2021; Narayanan et al., 2023).

The empirical studies in various settings such as China, the UK, Eastern and Southern Africa as well as multinational fleets record a uniform group of structural hindrances experienced by women seafarers. They are discriminatory recruitment procedures, bullying and sexual harassment, maintaining unequal pay, and limited access to training and compulsory sea-time positions (Grimmett, 2024; Kitada, 2021; Lyu & Li, 2024; Pike et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2017). These obstacles add up through the career cycle creating a leaky pipeline whereby women are filtered out between education, the first sea service and the senior positions. These global trends are reflected in India which is a large current and potential provider of maritime labour. There is a very small contribution of women to Indian seafaring and lack of transition between training and service on the sea and high attrition rates toward shore-based or non-maritime work (Bhirugnath-Bhookhun & Kitada, 2017; Bosanquet & Hagerty, 2021; Kitada, 2021).

In the case of India, this means that the issue of women seafaring is an equity issue as well as a strategic supply-side labour issue. International shipping faces frequent problems with the shortages of competent officers, and there is an increased requirement of more technologically and digitally advanced tasks (Bosanquet & Hagerty, 2021; Narayanan et al., 2023). Meanwhile, India is also developing its maritime and waterborne transport infrastructure by engaging in activities that would enhance the ports, logistics, and inland waterways. The National Waterways Act, 2016 has introduced changes that have expanded freight traffic and jobs in the waterborne freight system and logistics (Kumar, 2025; Kumar & Kumar, 2022). The developments cement the need to have a robust and competent maritime force. Studies indicate that recruiting and retaining women are a largely untapped opportunity to stabilise the supply of officers, especially as the traditional labour pools of men in major supplying countries are getting mature and eventually plateau (Dragomir, 2019; Kitada, 2021; Narayanan et al., 2023).

An even wider body of literature on maritime clusters and the blue economy suggests that gender-balanced workforces bring about innovation, organisational stability, and alignment with global development agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality (Boström et al., 2025; Narayanan et al., 2023; Rose A Arceño, 2024). To a nation that sees itself as a maritime hub, women must be integrated into seafaring and other activities of the blue-economy, which would bolster the supply of labour and the validity of national pledges to inclusive and sustainable blue-economy development (Boström et al., 2025; Matovu et al., 2024; Rose A Arceño, 2024).

International organisations, governments of countries, and industry associations have been starting policy efforts in response to ingrained gender disparities, such as the International Maritime Organisation women-in-maritime programmes, national legislation on equality, corporate commitments to diversity, and suggestions of how to reinforce gender-sensitive stipulations in the Maritime Labour Convention (Arulnayagam, 2020; Dragomir, 2019; Grimett, 2024). Nonetheless, there is a history of the seafaring and other sectors nearby that these commitments tend to be limited in nature, and they are also poorly enforced. Gender equality is often presented as an instrumental issue, not as a substantive right, which does not have a significant effect on recruitment practises, onboard conditions, or career progression (Dragomir, 2019; Lawless et al., 2021; Tang, 2023).

This policy-practise gap is especially acute in countries that are not countries of the OECD and in large states of labour-supply, where the barriers in the recruitment and first-berth stage are acute. Even in the cases of women who successfully graduate in maritime education and training, there is a high proportion of those they cannot find initial placements in sea-time because of employer resistance, poor facilities, or unofficial discrimination (Lyu & Li, 2024; Tang, 2023; Zhao et al., 2017). As a result, educational gain is not always converted into a long-lasting seafaring career, which results in frustration and disappearance of skilled human capital.

Cross national learning provides an avenue of constructive pathway, but it should be based on adaptation and not replication. Comparative studies reveal that stakeholders in OECD settings focus on retention, leadership development, and work-life balance, whereas in non-OECD and labour-supply countries, they pay attention to recruitment barriers and a possibility to enter into sea service (Tang, 2023). The experience of Nordic countries shows that sustained, multi-level interventions involving regulation, employer engagement, and workplace culture can slowly work through their changes, at the same time proving that without monitoring and accountability, even policies are not enough (Białas & Dobrowolska, 2024; Boström et al., 2025; Tang, 2023). Additional evidence on how socio-cultural norms, education and labour-market structures influence feasibility and effectiveness of particular interventions is found in the experiences of China and Eastern Europe, as well as Africa and fisheries sectors in India (Bhirugnath-Bhookhun & Kitada, 2017; Białas & Dobrowolska, 2024; Matovu et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2017).

The current work is in response to the demands to focus the perspectives of seafarers and industry stakeholders on policy design (Narayanan et al., 2023; Pike et al., 2021; Tang, 2023), takes the route of adaptation-oriented approach to cross-national learning. It aims to determine the global and regional practises that have contributed to the employment of women at sea over the career cycle, to analyse the institutional and market constraints of the participation it has, and to suggest context-sensitive approaches to increasing the meaningful role of women in the sea by aligning the institutions of maritime India and its supply of labour with the objective of expanding and developing the blue-economy potentials.

## **2. Literature Review**

Recent research theoreticises the concept of employability of women in seafaring as being a multi-phase process and not an entry outcome. This strategy highlights the role of participation that is shaped by institutional and organisational philtres working in sequence through the career cycle, beginning with the access to maritime education and training (MET), onboard employment and placement onboard, and career advancement and re-entry into senior sea or shore positions. In a similar pattern across nations, attrition rates cluster at every phase, forming what is often termed as a leaky pipeline, whereby a very small percentage of women entering MET will eventually become long-term seafarers (Barahona-Fuentes et al., 2020; Grimett, 2024; Kitada, 2021).

Women are still evidently the minority in MET systems on the global level, at the entry stage. Gender stereotyping, a lack of understanding of maritime professions, family-related barriers to applications and admission, and inadequate outreach are all empirically identified as limiting women in their applications (and admissions) in diverse settings (Arulnayagam, 2020; Kitada, 2013; Lyu & Li, 2024; Tang, 2023; Zhao et al., 2017). Cruising is often viewed as physically exhausting, hazardous, or incompatible with the social role of women, so even academically qualified applicants get put off at the initial stages of the process. As a reaction, some countries have implemented gender-neutral or in support of equality policies in higher education and in maritime academies. Similar reforms have raised the number of female enrolment in MET programmes in China, Georgia and Spain; evidence points to reforms (Barahona-Fuentes et al., 2020; Mgeladze & Phutkaradze, 1970; Zhao et al., 2017). However, the literature has repeatedly warned that higher enrolment has not been reflected in corresponding seagoing jobs, especially where reform initiatives are based on a limited focus on education, neglecting downstream employment barriers (Kitada, 2021; Lyu & Li, 2024).

In the literature, the most significant structural bottleneck in the women seafaring careers is access to mandatory cadet sea-time. It usually takes twelve months of onboard experience to award cadets certificates of competency; however, because of the inability to find a berth, most women remain qualified in theory but lack professional opportunities (Kitada, 2021; Lyu & Li, 2024). This is a bottleneck that can be largely explained by the employer behaviour and institutional design as opposed to the individual capability. In case MET institutes do not have training vessels, the cadets are indeed left at the mercy of shipping companies or crewing agencies to be placed. The Asian, European, and Global South experience shows that companies often reject women cadets due to pregnancy and accommodation-related issues, safety, and perceived disruption on board (Acejo & Abila, 2016; Guo, 2019; Tang, 2023; Zhao et al., 2017). These excuses, which sound as operational risks, are usually imposed gender norms and not necessarily as constraints. Conversely, MET systems that use training ships, formal placement guarantees, or contractual employer commitments help greatly decrease this degree of uncertainty at this phase of the process, highlighting access to sea-time as a system-wide coordination problem between education providers, regulators, and employers (Kitada, 2021; Tang, 2023).

Retention is determined by onboard conditions in women who enter sea service. Studies in China, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and multinational fleets report the recurring social isolation, bullying, sexual harassment, and general scepticism of women due to their technical competence (Arulnayagam, 2020; Grimett, 2024; Kitada, 2013; Lyu & Li, 2024; Pike et al., 2021; Ewedji et al., 2024). Poor sanitary facilities, inappropriate accommodation, and segregated division of roles also strengthen discriminative settings. Based on qualitative research, women tend to undertake extensive identity work to survive in onboard cultures, which could be the act of deemphasizing femininity or excessive adherence to the requirements of masculinity (Acejo & Abila, 2016; Kitada, 2013). Although these strategies can help to survive in the short term, they have a psychological cost and lead to attrition in the long term. Notably, other studies also indicate that women also report high levels of occupational commitment when they are in respectful crews and leaders, which implies that the exits are motivated not by the character of seafaring work but by the organisational culture and management practises (Grimett, 2024; Narayanan et al., 2023; Österman & Boström, 2025).

Although women that stay in the sea do make progress to the higher ranks of officers or management it is quite uncommon. Glass ceiling and sticky floors have always been reported in the literature, and women tend to be underrepresented in the top command and decision-making positions, with most of them holding junior or support roles (Arulnayagam, 2020; Grimett, 2024; Jose R et al., 2020; Tang, 2023). Fragmented records of service in the sea, access to mentoring that is limited, and promotion systems which favour unbroken career paths support these patterns. One such limiting dynamic is that women are required to complete sea service before they can be given shore-based managerial positions, and at the same

time, access to sea service is also limited, effectively confining women to lower ranks and hindering their re-entry to senior shore positions (Arulnayagam, 2020; Grimett, 2024; Guo, 2019). Longitudinal data of Sweden show that when women are able to get stable jobs in the sea, they can stay longer in the industry than men, but the sample size is so low to change the aggregate participation trends (Österman & Boström, 2025).

On the aggregate level, the level of women involvement in seafaring is very low all over the world. It has been estimated that women make up roughly 12 per cent of the overall sea crew, with an excessively high presence in passenger and cruise ships and in hotel or auxiliary services (Barahona-Fuentes et al., 2020; Dragomir, 2019; Narayanan et al., 2023). The regional disparities are also high because there are comparatively more women officers in OECD and some East European nations, and few in South Asia, the Middle East, and some parts of Africa (Dragomir, 2019; Tang, 2023).

Regardless of these limitations, the literature defines mechanisms that are linked to relatively favourable results. The enabling structure of gender-equality laws, anti-discrimination policies, and enhanced clauses under MLC-based regimes regarding harassment and violence has credible enforcement. Institutions that run training ships or guarantee cadet berths attract, much more strongly than other measures, the sea-time bottleneck, and employers who actively place women cadets, have anti-harassment codes of conduct, and invest in mentoring are more likely to retain and have a higher level of satisfaction. The recent evidence on digitalisation implies that technological change can lessen a few physical barriers, yet warns that unless every one is equally available to both digital and technical upskilling, there is the risk that new skilled regimes and policies can reproduce existing gender inequalities (Dragomir & Popa, 2018; Kim et al., 2019; Lyu & Li, 2024; Narayanan et al., 2023; Pike et al., 2021; Rose A Arceño, 2024) .

One common theme in comparative studies is the low success of the direct policy transfer. When analysed in terms of stakeholders, it can be seen that priorities vary in systematically different ways between OECD and non-OECD settings, with labour-supply nations prioritising labour-restricted access and first-berth positioning, and high-income nations prioritising labour-collinearity and leadership-building (Tang, 2023). There is evidence to show that therefore, selective appropriation and not wholesale importation of global practises is needed to combine international standards with national enforcement instruments, employer incentives, and on-the-job country-specific priorities throughout the career cycle (Kitada, 2021; Lyu & Li, 2024; Tang, 2023).

### **3. Research Methodology**

The research design employed in the study is qualitative and interview based based on comparative learning, aimed at exploring the explanation of global practises associated with employing women seafarers, and evaluation of these practises by the experienced stakeholders, and the relevance that the practises have on the Indian context. The data were gathered using semi-structured interviews of 20 experts who were selected based on the research variables, which were academia, maritime policy and regulation, consultancy, port and maritime administration, and maritime training institutions. The purposive sampling method was used to sample experts to get a wide range of institutional opinions and extensive professional experience throughout the seafaring job cycle.

Semi-structured questionnaire is provided in Appendix A. Thematic analysis was used to analyse interview data, the codes were matched to the themes of the interviews and they were polished by comparing with the interviews of other respondents. The process of maintaining ethical standards was in the form of informed consent, anonymisation and triangulation with peer-reviewed literature.

### **4. Findings: Global Practices Identified by Experts**

#### **4.1 Global Performance and Benchmarking**

Throughout the interview corpus, the experts noted that the issue of women participation and retention in seafaring is much stronger in the jurisdictions where the regulatory clarity, accountability of the employer, and alignment between maritime training institutions and industry converge in a mutually reinforcing fashion. Most commonly cited contexts in which women seafaring outcomes seem to be more stable were Northern European states, chosen EU flag states and a part of East Asia. Notably, these outcomes according to respondents were largely due to systemic characteristics rather than cultural attitudes such as predictable cadet placement routes, more explicit employer commitments, and more noticeable enforcement by flag administrations.

Experts also warned that increasing the participation levels does not automatically lead to equality in the career ladder. Even in those jurisdictions that are performing better, women are still overrepresented as junior officers, and few of them are promoted to senior command. The observed trends are very similar to trends found in the literature, in which participation is better as institutional coordination is strong, but structural obstacles continue to be encountered further into the career cycle (Grimett, 2024; Kitada, 2021). The results directly provide answers to interview questions 113 directly pointing to the areas where the outcomes are comparatively stronger and explain how these differences happen to be so.

#### **4.2 Entry, Training, and Sea-Time Allocation**

Sea-time became the most controversial point of transition that determined women and their careers in seafaring. Scholars emphasised that systems with better performance are based on formal connexions between maritime learning and training centres and shipping firms, instead of informal or commercial placement brokering. The placement of cadets in a number of national systems is either contracted to employers or heavily regulated, and thus offers less ambiguity to the trainee and restricts discretionary rejection.

In contrast, the respondents stressed that voluntary placement systems have the propensity to discriminate women at times when berths are few, and employers favour those who are considered to be less risky. Analysts has pointed out time and again that quality of training or the number of trainees being taken on should not be improved without a guarantee to shipboard experience. The findings corroborate the interview questions 4 through 6 and support one of the dominant conclusions of the existing research: the absence of guaranteed access to sea-time makes investments in maritime education not translate into sustainable seafaring careers of women (Kitada, 2021; Tang, 2023).

#### **4.3 Onboard Employment and Retention**

Regarding the aspect of retention, professionals highlighted that the situation on vessels is a decisive factor on whether women continue in seafaring positions after their first contracts. These are good practises practised around the world that were identified in the interview process and comprise the clearly defined onboard conduct policies, the availability and trustworthiness of the grievance mechanisms, and the established hierarchy of accountability in corporations. Respondents emphasised that retention cannot just be enhanced by the presence of those mechanisms on paper but that women need to see them as believable, confidential and devoid of retaliation.

Employer commitment was identified as one of the key factors of retention result. The scholars made it a point time and again to differentiate between symbolic compliance, in which policies are officially accepted and substantive implementation, in which top officers and managers on shore enforced policies of conduct. These observations support the results of previous empirical studies which point to the organisational culture and leadership behaviour as key mediating factors in the experience of women at sea (Grimett, 2024; Pike et al., 2021). The themes are closely related to the interview questions 79 and put an emphasis on the fact that retention issues are not individual but institutional.

#### **4.4 Career Progression and Continuity**

It was observed that the long-term prospects of remaining in seafaring require the presence of an advancement route beyond the entry-level jobs. Structured mentoring schemes, continuity and recognition of fragmented sea service and formal re-entry facilities following career interruptions are part of the international practises that encourage continuity. In the absence of such mechanisms, women will tend to leave seafaring forever, despite any success at retention, initially.

Some of the respondents emphasised that the issues are especially pronounced in labour-supply nations, where the service of women in the sea is usually discontinuous and the promotion policy is still strict. Under these circumstances, the lack of progression and re-entry strategies is more likely to cancel previous achievements in recruitment and placement. These observations address the questions asked during the interview 10-11, and support the thesis that it is necessary to focus on career paths throughout the entire employment cycle, instead of being focused on recruitment.

### **5. Adaptation Analysis: Implications for India**

#### **5.1 Practices with High Feasibility**

Those who were widely in agreement were that a number of practises could be brought to India as part of the current institutional and regulatory provisions. These are the compulsory reporting of the gender-disaggregated sea-time

achievements by training establishments, the centralised monitoring of candidate placements and completion, and the better-defined regulation of the employer likely courses in the areas of training-to-employment transition. These measures were perceived by the respondents as administratively viable, and aligned with the existing regulatory capabilities especially when made in a gradual approach by amending the existing reporting and oversight processes. These perceptions directly echo question 12 of the interviews.

### **5.2 Practices Requiring Institutional or Regulatory Change**

The other practises were perceived to be possible only with more institutional or regulatory change. These are binding placement commitments on shipping businesses, enhanced flag-state supervision of onboard employment terms, and responsibility systems that attach adherence to incentives or clearances. Researchers noted that these measures must involve better coordination of regulators, training institutions, and the industry participants themselves along with more enforcement capacity. These results, in line with interview question 13, highlight that an effective adaptation is a precondition that is dependent on institutional authority and coherence.

### **5.3 Practices with Limited Suitability**

Other practises noted by the experts as limited to Indian context were unions to place the system or high-cost onboard welfare regimes reliant on robust collective bargaining. According to respondents, these limitations were due to the disparities in labour organisation, practises in crewing and the capacity to enforce regulations. These anxieties reflect comparative research that warns against moving institutional arrangements without providing the foundations of the labour-market (Tang, 2023). The results address the question of interview issue 14 directly and support the necessity of selective and context-driven adaptation.

## **6. Strategy Framework for India's Seafaring Workforce**

### **6.1 Short-Term Measures**

Short-term investments of experts were focused on enhancing transparency and coordination. Among the essential steps, one can mention the compulsory reporting of gender-disaggregated sea-time achievements, cadetship programmes provided by pilots, as well as the better explanation of grievance procedures on board. Respondents pointed out that such measures are to be viewed as enabling conditions, and not immediate results, which prepares the groundwork of more substantive reform. These priorities are indicative of interview question 15.

### **6.2 Medium-Term Measures**

Medium-term plans are concerned with institutional fit and incentive systems. It has been proposed to offer regulatory or reputational rewards to employers who are compliant, incorporate the results of placement and retention into the regulatory review procedures, and create systematic partnership forums between the regulators, maritime training institutions, and industry. Experts considered these actions to be vital in maintaining employer involvement in more than pilot programmes.

### **6.3 Monitoring and Benchmarking**

To maintain the momentum, the respondents pointed to the necessity of measurable and transparent indicators such as the rate of placements, retention of employment after the initial contracts, advancement to the officer status, and re-entry rates. Sex-disaggregated reporting and periodic benchmarking were perceived as the key instruments of evidence-based policy correction and institutional learning. These indicators, which were associated with interview question 16, were regarded as important to the translation of strategic intent into quantifiable results.

## **7. Discussion**

This paper aimed to go beyond the descriptive explanations of under-representation among seafarers in the Indian context by studying the meaning placed on the practises of seafarers globally by scholars and how the practises can be modified to fit the Indian setting. Results show that the expert views to a large extent corroborate tendencies observed in global literature, as well as extend their findings by shedding more light on the relative significance of governance capacity, institutional coordination, and employer behaviour to determine the results in the cycle of seafaring career.

### **7.1 Expert insights**

The interviews with experts support one of the main ideas of the existing literature: employability of women in seafaring does not happen as the result of single barriers but remains under the influence of a series of interrelated processes (Grimett, 2024; Kitada, 2021). Sea-time access, conditions onboard, and progression pathways were always emphasised by experts as critical junctions at which women are sifted, just as in the case of the leaky pipeline in earlier empirical observations. Nevertheless, the interviews provide some complexity by highlighting how these bottlenecks are actively created or alleviated by institutional design options, and not determined solely by labour-market competitions or cultural orientations.

Specifically, scholars strengthened the critique of the literature of the policy methods which are limited to the entry into maritime education. Although statistics in the world report the increase in the enrolment of women in certain places, analysts emphasised that these benefits are tenuous unless it is accompanied by guaranteed placement plans and reputable employer commitments. This is in accordance with studies that reveal that without employment opportunities, education represents a waste of human resources as well as frustration of women cadets (Tang, 2023; Zhao et al., 2017). Meanwhile, expert views broaden the literature by making the priority of feasibility and sequencing, pointing out the interventions that may lead to near-term improvements and those that should be reformed at an institutional level in the long run.

### **7.2 Governance capacity and employer behaviour**

One of the major contributions of the research is that it helps to demystify the relationship between the governance capacity and employer behaviour. Although the literature tends to define regulatory frameworks and international conventions as the facilitating factor to gender inclusion, the expert contributions are emphasising that the achievement of results largely relies on the ability of institutions to control, regulate and align among the actors. Analysts kept on identifying the differences between jurisdictions whereby regulations are helped by steady supervision and jurisdictions where the enforcement is largely theatric.

An employer behaviour turned out to be a very important mediating factor at every career cycle stage. Professionals emphasised that formal policy statements and pronouncements have minimal influence on recruitment, placement, retention and progression outcomes and highlighted the effects of organisation practises and leadership cues on day-to-day basis. This result is complementary to the existing literature that emphasises the weakness of voluntary commitments to diversity and the need of believable accountability measures (Grimett, 2024; Pike et al., 2021). The study foregrounds employer agency and thus makes the focus of its attention to be on operational realities of the seafaring labour markets rather than on the abstract design of policies.

### **7.3 Contribution to seafaring employability scholarship**

The research has three contributions to the seafaring employability research. First, it empirically confirms the multi-phase employability framework by expert testimony enhancing its transferability to policy-oriented research. Second, it contributes to the literature on policy transfer by proving why adaptation but not replication is necessary in countries like India that are suppliers of labour. Third, it incorporates both governance and employer views, explaining more institutionally how gender inclusion may be operationalised in seafaring situations.

## **8. Policy Implications**

### **8.1 Implications for maritime regulators**

To maritime regulators, the results are to change the aspirational promises of commitments to the non-aspirational mechanisms of governance. The key area that should be given priority by regulators is the gathering and reporting of gender-differentiated training, placement of sea time, maintenance and advancement information. This transparency allows benchmarking, evidence-driven policy amendment, and sends the message that including all is not an act of desire but a governance priority. Regulators are also important in outlining the responsibilities of the employer, especially in transitions involving training to employment, and establishing a compliance-meets-incentive-or-approval relationship.

### **8.2 Implications for maritime training institutions**

Maritime training institutes are placed at a central role towards determining outcomes of employability. This evidence indicates that institutions need no longer restrict themselves on enrolment goals but they need to be proactive in seeking

employment opportunities among employers to provide women cadets with placement opportunities. This where feasible incorporates formal pacts with shipping organisations, improved monitoring of graduate results and systematic career advice. Institutions of training have their part to play in the same aspect by ensuring that learning places are inclusive and helping the cadets to be oriented in the onboard cultures and that institutional responsibility is not limited by certification.

### **8.3 Implications for shipping companies and flag-state oversight**

To shipping companies, the research highlights the fact that inclusive employment is critical as part of the workforce sustainability and not the fringe social programmes. Equity measures in proactive placement of women cadets, credible grievance mechanisms, right onboard structures, mentoring structures are in fact investment in retention, as well as skill development. The practises can be strengthened by the flag-state authorities in order to align commercial operations with regulatory expectations through incorporating the employment conditions into the inspection and audit.

### **9. Conclusion**

The current paper explores how the global practises of employing women in maritime careers are interpreted by the experts and whether they can be adapted to suit the context of India. The results show that positive results are associated with the existence of coordinated governance systems, ensured access to sea-time, provision of reliable onboard protection systems, and organisation of career-progression paths. In addition, the paper clarifies the limitations of simply applying the policies in one country to another without adapting to the differences in labour markets, institutional capabilities, and employer motivations.

The study will add to the policy learning in the maritime labour market and labour-supply countries that want to harmonise equity goals with labour sustainability. The paper shows that connecting the development of women in seafaring requires a holistic attention of the whole cycle of careers and the institutional processes under which careers change in stages.

There are some shortcomings that are worth mentioning. First and foremost, the research is founded on the interviews of the experts and not survey of seafarers themselves, which may not reflect the realities in the seas. Further studies ought to incorporate longitudinal information on how women career histories, comparative case-studies of particular regulatory change, or mixed-method methodologies, which merge expert and worker attitudes. This would also help to better understand how gender-inclusive seafaring labour markets can be operationalized.

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