

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF GENDER DIVERSITY ON BOARD

GEMİLERDE CİNSİYET FARKLILAŞMASININ AVANTAJ VE DEZAVANTAJLARI

Associate Prof. Dr. Ergün DEMİREL

Piri Reis University, Istanbul/Turkey



Article Type : Review Article / İnceleme Makalesi

Doi Number : <http://dx.doi.org/10.26449/sss.1012>

Reference : Demirel, E. (2018). "Advantages And Disadvantages Of Gender Diversity On Board", International Social Sciences Studies Journal, 4(25): 5442-5447

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the advantages and disadvantages of gender diversification in the maritime world. Diversity is a significant tool to refrain discrimination. Gender characteristics of crew board members are used as the proxies for diversity. In this study finds that gender diversity may create advantages and disadvantages. Comparing this facts it is found that gender diversity may improve performance of crew. Appropriate usage of gender's specific characteristic as a tool to change boring and stereotype life on board, the life at sea may be more attractive and better provide to improve performance. It is not hard work if necessary action taken by maritime community in particular shipping companies.

Keywords: Gender Diversification, Gender Discrimination, Female Seafarers, Woman on Board

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, deniz dünyasında cinsiyet çeşitliliğinin avantaj ve dezavantajlarını araştırmaktır. Çeşitlilik, ayrımcılığı önlemek için önemli bir araçtır. Günümüzde şirketlerin yönetim kurulu üyelerinin cinsiyet özellikleri, çeşitliliğin bir göstergesi olarak kullanılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada cinsiyet çeşitliliğinin avantaj ve dezavantajlara yol açabileceği görülmektedir. Bu gerçekleri karşılaştırarak, cinsiyet çeşitliliğinin mürettebatın performansını artırdığı görülmüştür. Cinayetin iş hayatının can sıkıcı ve stereotip yapısını değiştirmek için bir araç olarak kullanılması düşünülmelidir. İnsanların cinsiyete özgü özelliğinin denizdeki yaşamı daha çekici hale getireceği ve daha iyi performans sağlamak için kullanımı konusu değerlendirilmelidir. Özellikle denizcilik şirketlerinin ve denizcilik sektörünün bu konuda gerekli önlemleri alması zor olmayacaktır..

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplumsal Cinsiyet Çeşitlemesi, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Ayrımcılığı, Kadın Denizciler, Gemideki Kadın

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender diversity is a term referring to how different genders are represented in a relevant setting. Primarily this term is often used to refer to females and males, though in some contexts and research the term may also refer to those who fall into non-binary categories of gender (Wikipedia).

Maritime sector, in particular ships preserve the male dominated culture with its male dominated environment although women are already in the sector not only in low-skilled tasks but also in managerial level. The entry of women to this sector is getting important in international organizations and among the industry stakeholders and shipping industry but the culture still values the male employment. The ship as a working environment is a living culture for both genders yet the ruling class is the masculine standards.

Since the ancient cultures, imagery of a woman has been in close relation with the sea. In many myths and traditions, there have been female creatures such as sirens, mermaids who were seen or depicted by sailors. It is even believed that the carved female figures protect the vessels at sea. The ships were named for a woman and that's why the ships are called as 'she'.

At the very early ages, they start working on ships and doing the same tasks as the men in particular in the Nordic countries. They even fight as female warriors with males. Generally speaking women have significant roles on ships such as, cleaning, serving, carrying gunpowder, helping the navigation, keeping the logbook or accounts even mending. Some of them were became a crew member like a man sailor.

Mainly after the mid-nineteenth century, women were in many areas of life as stewardess, cooks on board, riverboat pilots, nurses. In the twentieth century they have assumed sailors and officers' duties and even captains or chief engineers. The women even started to serve on board the navy ships after the World War II. The women became work force in factories and shipyards for shipbuilding. In the twentieth century, women started to take part in water sports such as yachting and all types of racing.

The women workers at sea are still too rare in the world. The percentage of woman seafarers is estimated only 2 % in the world by ITF. Female seafarers work generally in the cruise and ferries sector. The women are confronting prejudice and but becoming valuable members of ships' crew.

ITF (2017) reports that women are deployed among the worst paid and least protected of jobs at sea. Women also tend to be younger, and fewer are officers than their male crew mates. Their low number means that women can be subject to discrimination and harassment. The maritime unions are alert to these dangers and strive to protect the interests of women members – who now number about 23,000 worldwide.

The highest employment rate for woman seafarers is in the United Kingdom; 7 percent of the officers and 21 per cent of the ratings are female. Deck and engine UK ratings in 2013 had a similar split to deck and engine UK officers. Men accounted for 99 per cent of deck ratings and nearly 100 per cent of engine ratings. The catering/other category of UK ratings had the highest proportion of women at 36 per cent (Department for Transport, 2014).

The anticipated future growth of the world merchant fleet is over the next ten years and its possible impacts on the global manpower situation. The estimated officer shortage for 2020 is 92,000 (2.1%) and 147,500 (18.3%) in 2025. (BIMCO/ISF, 2016) It is clear that there will be a strong effort to increase the number of the cadets and seafaring officer in the next decade. It is likely expected that the number of the female seafaring officer will increase, but we are not sure about the increase of percentage of the females in the merchant fleet.

It's still rare to find women workers at sea. Although they are confronting prejudice, the women are becoming valuable members of ships' crew.

2. GENDER DISCRIMINATION

The discrimination defines “unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex” (Oxford Dictionary). Most people could have not been affected from discrimination because of his/her race, ethnicity or colour. But there is no one who has not been involved in woman discrimination having a wife, a mother, a sister or daughter. The discrimination of women in the world is still a very huge problem; even many strong efforts are spent to secure the woman rights throughout the world.

The United Nations Women's Treaty was implemented a few decades ago was supposed to give women an right to take part in their nations political and public life but that hasn't changed much (Rainbo org, 2017). Beyond the equality of woman, in many countries women are still unable to vote or even wear what they want. In the most parts of Asia, ex- Soviet Union territories, Latin America, Africa and Central and Eastern Europe woman trafficking is still a heart-breaking problem.

Although these are issues for many workers, they can be a particular problem if you are employed at sea, where you are isolated from family and friends and other sources of support.

Women can face discrimination even getting into seafaring work. In some countries, for example, maritime education and training institutions are not allowed to recruit women to nautical courses. Women tend to enrol on navigation rather than engineering courses. Even once trained, they may have to face prejudice from ship owners who won't employ women.

Once employed, women seafarers may also face lower pay even though they are doing work equivalent to that of male colleagues. Women may also be denied the facilities or equipment available to male workers, which are a form of discrimination (ITF, Woman Discrimination, 2018).

Bullying and harassment are common problems for both male and female seafarers. This unacceptable behaviour may come from colleagues or managers, and may cause serious mental and health problems.

3. MAIN PROBLEM AREAS ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF WOMAN AT SEA

In according to a study made by ITF, the followings are the major problems encountered due to employment at sea are;

- a. Isolation from family and friends and other sources of support. Although this is a common problem for men and woman, women are more suffered from this problem because having a few or no same gender seafarers on board.
- b. The sexual harassment or even abuse while at sea. Many maritime unions now have policies covering sexual harassment.
- c. Absence or lack of maternity rights. If they become pregnant and wish to take maternity leave, woman seafarers may have problems to use their rights depending upon company policy (Some companies may force them to take pregnancy testing before their employment).
- d. Lack of sanitary items for ladies on board ships.
- e. Some companies still no intention for double gender employment on board.

4. GENDER DIVERSITY

Darmadi (2011) made a study on "Board diversity and firm performance in Indonesia". Taking into account previous studies on this subject, he made an analytic The results of this research may help us to understand importance of gender diversity.

"There are different arguments on the relationship between gender diversity and the firm's competitive advantages. Some arguments support the proposition that greater diversity is likely to bring advantages to the firm due to various reasons. Women are considered to have "feeling" cognitive style that focuses on harmony (Hurst et al, 1989) and ability to facilitate dissemination of information (Earley and Mosakowski, 2000). They are also considered "tough" since they have to face various challenges prior to holding seats on the board, which reward them great prestige in the environment (Krishnan and Park, 2005). Furthermore, it is also argued that gender diversity would lead to increasing creativity and innovation (Campbell and Minguez-Vera, 2008). On the other hand, other arguments suggest that greater gender diversity may bring disadvantages to the firm. Greater gender diversity may increase the likelihood of conflicts (Joshi et al., 2006; Richard et al., 2004), slow decision-making process (Hambrick et al., 1996), and differences in responding to risks (Jianakoplos and Bernasek, 1998)".

If we make a resume of this result;

The gender diversity creates a positive impact on the productivity the organization, in particular leads to increasing creativity and innovation. But greater gender diversity may increase the likelihood of conflicts, slow decision-making process and differences in responding to risks.

4.1. Disadvantages of Gender Diversity

Old fashioned shipping company managers and traditionally educated ship masters still insist on not deployment of women on board. They assess many disadvantages if the women are employed on board, such as;

- a. The females on board may create a negative effect on discipline on board.
- b. Women are not able to handle many hard duties because of their physical capacity.
- c. They may meet some additional problems such as sexual harassment and sexual abuse which may create legal problems and payment of high compensations.
- d. The women in managerial roles cannot establish control on the rating
- e. Due to females' natural characteristic such as maternity, late period of pregnancy, women seafarers may leave their duties for long period; even ship-owners may pay salary when they are not on duty.
- f. It is not easy deployment of women on board a ship which is traditionally a men-oriented profession.

4.2. Advantages of Gender Diversity

It was a necessity in the past to establish a man-oriented society due to hardness of the some professions such as military service, seamanship etc. But improvement of technology provided us to overcome this kind of hardness.

As a nature of human being men and women should establish a common life. A single gender oriented society is against the character of human being and creates many social problems. Creation of a diversified work environment would be more suitable for the nature of human.

- a. Man and woman have diversified skills. If we put them together we may obtain creativity and efficiency for work getting benefits one from other.
- b. Having to gender together a more suitable and natural life style could be created. This should make people more blissful.
- c. An environment where women are present, men will be able to act more naturally and eliminate isolation problems.
- d. Women are considered to have “feeling” cognitive style that focuses on harmony (Hurst et al, 1989).
- e. Women have an ability to facilitate dissemination of information (Earley and Mosakowski, 2000).
- e. Furthermore, it is also argued that gender diversity would lead to increasing creativity and innovation (Campbell and Minguez-Vera, 2008)

4.3. Recommendations to Improve the Quality of Life on Board

Hong Kong-based Anglo Eastern Ship Management has joined hands with International Seafarers’ Welfare and Assistance Network and WISTA International to publish a new booklet on building and maintaining gender diversity on board merchant ships Anglo Eastern, 2017). The booklet addresses critical social, cultural and interpersonal issues that can obstruct the productivity of a shipboard team.

More than a manual, the booklet aims to sensitize junior and senior officers to the challenges women seafarers may face. From sexual harassment and bullying to negative attitudes faced by male colleagues, the booklet addresses a wide range of challenges reported by women seafarers. These are the specific explanations by the senior officials of the organizations;

“Shipping is a global industry that strengthens each year thanks to increasing gender diversity. This booklet represents an important collaboration between the corporate, welfare, and non-profit sides of shipping to create a global industry that is inclusive, diverse, and strong,” said Despina Panayiotou Theodosiou, president of WISTA International.

“There is a need to bridge this gender gap, and this can only happen if we bring more awareness of this profession to the general public and at the same time sensitize the male seafarers towards acceptance of women on board the ship as equals, giving due respect to their viewpoints and working well together as colleagues,” said Capt. K N Deboo, Anglo Eastern Maritime Training Centre director and principal.

These are the significant recommendations in this booklet to obtain and secure gender diversity on board:

- ✓ The attitude and behaviour of the male seafarers can have a significant impact on the moral of female seafarers.
- ✓ Social interaction is inevitable need for human being and female seafarers should not be isolated.
- ✓ A secure cabin is a good heaven for male seafarers and privacy of women seafarers should be secured.
- ✓ Provision of security of sanitary napkins should be provided.
- ✓ Suitable size and types of shoes, clothes, boiler suits, rain coats and harness for women should be available.
- ✓ Managers should focus on women’s physical capacity when they assign them for hard manual works and training.
- ✓ Bullying of females should be strictly banned.
- ✓ Significant measures should be taken by management to avoid sexual harassment and abuse.

- ✓ Direct/indirect gender discrimination should be avoided.
- ✓ Women could reach special medicine needed by females without consulting a male colleague as well as all types of special medicine for females should be available on board.

5. TRANSFORMATION ERA

The status of the women changes in different countries depending upon economic, social and cultural development level. An OECD Institute study namely SIGI (Social Institute Gender Index (SIGI) is the best source to make a resume of the woman's right status covers situation of 160 countries covering developed, developing and under developed countries. The findings are;

- ✓ Social institutions can be a source of positive social transformation and empowerment.
- ✓ Discriminatory social institutions have a domino effect on a woman's whole life cycle.
- ✓ Constitutional and other legal protections do not suffice to protect women's rights and empowerment opportunities due to discrimination in social institutions.
- ✓ Data on gender equality has improved, but greater investments are needed to bridge the gap
- ✓ Gender equality needs the united voices and actions of a cross-section of actors. Public infrastructure, institutional mechanisms (including justice systems) and support structures often fail women and girls due to low prioritisation on political agendas and in public budgets.

6. CONCLUSION

Discrimination has a negative domino effect on the empowerment pathways of women and girls which seriously effects social improvement of society. Diversity is a significant tool to refrain discrimination.

Although there are some disadvantages of gender diversity, earnings of advantages are more beneficial. Taking some measures to embarrass these disadvantages, we can create a colourful and blissful life at sea.

We may avoid gender discrimination by positive practices and attitudes which are rather important than legislation. One of our aims should be to change the negative opinions old managers and shipmasters who could not adopt themselves into new posture of the world.

Social institutions can be a source of positive social transformation and empowerment for anti-discrimination. They should realize that encouragement of gender diversity is a crucial tool to achieve that.

Constitutional and other legal protections do not suffice to protect women's rights and empowerment opportunities. It is rather important to change the minds of decision making, leading and managing people to understand and believe importance of gender equality.

REFERENCES

- Anglo-Eastern, (2017). Gender Diversity, Towards Building and Maintaining a Diverse on Board Team (http://www.maritimetraining.in/pdf/Gender_Diversity.pdf)
- BIMCO/ISF, (2016). Manpower Report, The global supply and demand for seafarers in 2015
- Department for Transportation -UK, (2014). Seafarer Statistics, 2013 Statistical Release (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/275606/seafarer-statistics-2013.pdf)
- Campbell, K. and Minguez-Vera, A., (2008). "Gender diversity in the boardroom and firm financial performance", Journal of Business Ethics, Vol. 83 No. 3, pp. 435-451.
- Earley, P.C. and Mosakowski, E., (2000). "Creating hybrid team cultures: an empirical test of transnational team functioning", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 43 No. 1, pp. 26-49
- Hambrick, D.C. and Mason, P.A., (1984). "Upper echelons: The organizations as a reflection of its top managers", Academy of Management Review, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 193-206. Hurst, D.K.,
- ITF, (2017). Woman Seafarers, <http://www.itfseafarers.org/ITI-women-seafarers.cfm>
- Jianakoplos, N.A. and Bernasek, A., (1998). "Are women more risk averse?" Economic Inquiry, Vol. 36 No. 4, pp. 620-630.

- Joshi, A., Liao, H., and Jackson, S.E., (2006). "Cross-level effects of workplace diversity on sales performance and pay", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 49 No. 3, pp. 459-481.
- Krishnan, H.A. and Park, D., (2005). "A few good women—on top management teams", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 58 No. 12, pp. 1712-1720.
- OECD Development Centre (2015). *Social Institute Gender Index (SIGI)* (<https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/docs/BrochureSIGI2015.pdf>)
- Rainbo org, (2016). *Discrimination of Women Throughout the World* (<http://www.rainbo.org/discrimination-of-women-throughout-the-world/>)
- Rust, J.C., and White, R.E. (1989). "Top management teams and organizational renewal", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 10 No. S1, pp. 87-105.
- Salim Darmadi S., (2011). *Board diversity and firm performance: the Indonesian evidence*, *Indonesia Corporate Ownership and Control* Volume 8, 2011.