



Current Challenges in the Retention of Skilled Manpower Supply in the Shipping Industry: Bridging the Demand Supply Gap

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Abstract

Shipping industry is of utmost importance to continue uninhibited trade and business around the globe. Ships are large vehicles of great importance which carry goods to multiple destinations and so people working on them are crucial for world trade. Seafarers tend to have a different lifestyle from other professionals as their place and nature of work is totally different from others. Retention of skilled seafarers is the primary concern of shipping companies for the last few years. This study basically discusses the demand supply scenario of seafarers and emphasizes that the shipping industry is facing a crisis of shortage of seafarers so it should not be underestimated by researchers as well. The reasons of existing gap of demand and supply of merchant navy officers have also been figured out in this research paper. It was further found that companies need to understand the needs of their employees well to retain them otherwise attrition of skilled manpower would ultimately lead to irreparable losses. Data related to the demand and supply of seafarers was collected from secondary sources and compiled in the study to get a better understanding of the gap existing between the two. Several solutions have been advised to the shipping companies to overcome the problem of shortage of skilled manpower.

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Introduction

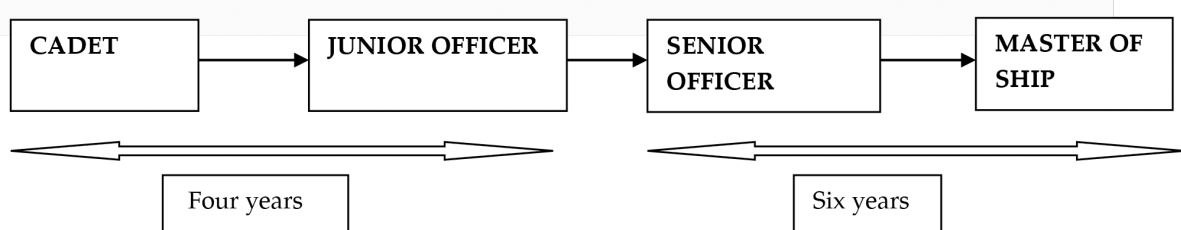
The society in which we live is global and is supported by a global economy which cannot function without ships and the shipping industry. Trade through sea accounts for about 90% of the total world trade and therefore quality manpower is the most important factor which drives sustainability in this industry. Ship management is one of the most important activities of this trade. Ship operations have turned very complex nowadays due to fast advancement in shipping technology, introduction of new policies and regulations, complicated management policies and low tolerance towards environmental disasters. Management of ships today, demand higher technical, managerial and operational skills. There are several government and private enterprises



which support maritime transport to a large extent, namely, maritime administration, port authorities and equipment manufacturers etc. It is necessary for the shipping industry to have well educated and trained manpower in order to be efficient in all the areas including safety or environmental protection. Shortfall of well qualified and competent seafarers is threatening the shipping industry. According to Inderveer (2007), complex and specialized ship operations require higher analytical skills, capabilities and competencies and needless to mention that seafarers are extremely critical to the efficiency of smooth ship operations. The shortage of seafarers, especially of officers is a matter of concern among stakeholders of shipping companies. Success of the maritime sector largely depends on the skilled workforce like any other sector (Thai et al, 2012). The seafarer labor market is highly unstable due to the imbalance between demand and supply. The demand is more than supply which has lead to volatility in the labor market and companies are luring experienced seafarers by offering high salaries. According to Cahoon, Caesar and Fei (2014), this volatility coupled with shortage of seafarers can lead to less rigorous human resource practices, such as less importance to career development and poaching, among seafarers. Such practices act as a barrier to the sustainable recruitment of seafarers in the global shipping industry. The crisis of dearth of well-educated and trained manpower in shipping industry has been elaborately highlighted in several shipping journals, magazines etc. Attracting youth and retention of competent seafarers is a major challenge in the present scenario. When workforce trends are critically analyzed, it shows that there is an imminent shortage of competent and trained employees who have the necessary knowledge and capability to perform at high standards (Rappaport, Bancroft, & Okum, 2003).

Retention is undoubtedly a critical element of any organization's Talent Management approach which is defined as "the implementation of integrated strategies or systems designed to increase workplace productivity by evolving improved processes for attracting, developing, retaining, and utilizing employees with the required skills and aptitude to meet current and future business needs" (Lockwood, 2007). The latter part of the above definition is of high importance because it suggests that programs related to talent management should be designed in such a way that the focus is more on those employees who are more responsible for the success of an organization.

For seafarers, it takes about four years to reach to the level of junior officers and six years more to the senior ranks (Eler et al, 2009), the high number of seafarers quitting sailing within the duration of 10 years (Moreby, 1975; Ljung, 2010; Shiptalk, 2008) is quite depressing since they might not have become captains or chief engineers thereby increasing the problem of existing labor crisis at the higher hierarchy (Caesar et al., 2013). The figure below gives a brief idea of the various points in the life of a seafarer where attrition can be seen evidently:



Literature Review

The literature on the factors influencing people to opt a career at sea and later quit it due to various reasons is still not mature and it is evolving. According to Leggate (2004), previous researches have focused on the shortfall of seafarers and on the reasons behind it. As put

forward by Lindgren N and Nilsson J (2012), the factors that influence common people to choose seafaring as a profession are different and it also depends on the fact whether people belong to a traditional or nontraditional maritime nation. Goldfarb (1949) found two main reasons why people chose seafaring as a career: attractions like romance, adventure etc and financial motives. Financial motives include handsome salary and this is probably the major reason behind choosing seafaring as a profession (Dimitrova and Blanpain, 2010). Borovnik(2003) further emphasized that people are attracted to work as seafarers due to high remuneration offered in this profession. This is pretty arguable as all researchers do not agree that seafaring is a highly paid profession (McLaughlin, 2012).

Nowadays, the master of the ship is more like the managing director of a company and a ship today is regarded as another link in the logistic chain (Stene, 2007). Extremely skilled and competent officers are required due to technical advancement and specialization in the shipping industry. Thus, the concern is not only about numbers but also about the higher skills and abilities which can be attributed to two main factors, namely, inability to motivate students to choose seafaring as a lifelong career option and retention of seafarers.

UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport 2015 published a report in which they mentioned that the growth in the world fleet was about 3.5 per cent during the 12 months to 1st January 2015 but the current shortage of seafarers' shows that this industry still needs more manpower to flourish in future, according to Drewry's published Manning 2014 Annual Report.

It is also common knowledge that most of the marine casualties are an outcome of some form of human error. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a direct cause and effect relationship between the competence and quality of seafarers through quality MET and environmentally responsible Globalization. According to Krishnan (2014), the shipping industry is under a dilemma, demand for quality seafarers worldwide is increasing continuously across all vessel type and the cargo volumes are also shooting up and if noticed meticulously, all the indicators are pointing towards future expansion in global economy. Therefore, clearly more manpower will be needed for the smooth functioning of this industry. The cause of concern is that this surge in demand of highly skilled seafarers has not been matched by a good increase in number of seafarers. In short, it can be seen that not enough highly qualified and skilled seafarers are present to do their job safely and efficiently. Krishnan (2014) further clarifies that ships can be built easily as compared to a high quality crew which takes more time and effort in today's scenario. It normally takes three to five years for trainee officers and engineers to reach the junior ranks and nearly around eight years to reach to the senior managerial positions. This loss of skill is extremely costly in long run.

As stated in BIMCO/ISF Report (2010), since the year 2000, global trade and the world shipping fleet has expanded to a great extent leading to a considerable increase in demand of seafarers. Despite the global financial crisis of the last decade, the global fleet has increased with new ships released into the market (ISH, 2011).

As per the five-year BIMCO/ICS Manpower Report (2016), released recently, a severe shortage in the supply of seafarers has been identified in the future. The report further elaborated that an existing shortage of about 16,500 officers which is nearly 2.1% will eventually lead to an additional requirement of 147,500 officers by 2025 in the world merchant fleet. Although, the report also predicts that the supply of officers will increase gradually but it is expected to be outpaced by increasing demand of officers worldwide. Particularly, few categories have been mentioned in which shortage of officers has become a cause of concern for shipping companies,

namely, engineers at senior management level and ship officers required for specialized ships like LNG, chemical and LPG carriers. It was also stated in the report that China has overtaken the Philippines and the highest number of seafarers originate from China who are qualified for international trade though Philippines, still remains the largest source of ratings.

Analysis

The Demand for Seafarers

The estimate of demand of seafarers is very important so that a potential shortage can be accurately determined. Predictions in demand have been provided by BIMCO/ISF which mainly depend upon the expected increase in the world fleet and also on the expected recruitment and wastage levels. The demand is estimated at 790,500 officers and 754,500 ratings and it has been observed that the estimated demand for officers at senior positions has increased by 24.1% since the year 2010 whereas the increase in the demand for ratings has only been around 1.0%. A comparison between the estimated demand for officers and ratings in the year 2015 as reported in previous reports is shown in Table I.

Table I: Comparison between the Estimated Demand for Officers and Ratings in the Years

RANK	2005	2010	2015
Officers	476000	637000	790500
Ratings	586000	747000	754500
Total	1062000	1384000	1545000

Source: BIMCO Manpower Report 2015

The Table I indicates that the estimated demand for officers has gone up between 2005 and 2010 by 33.8% whereas the estimated demand for ratings has increased by 27.5% in the same time duration, this implies that the trend of the demand for officers has continued whereas only a small increase in demand for ratings has occurred since 2010. There are still doubts regarding the minimum qualification ratings for international service. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Geneva Review of Maritime Transport, 2002 showed that the levels of seaborne trade are volatile since the year 1990 and there was discussion on an annualized growth rate of 3.5% in the conference. If the manning levels remain the same then the supply of seafarers would need to grow at about 2.8% to sustain the same level of business. The existing manning problems are exaggerated by the restriction on the intake of foreign seafarers by a large number of countries. The ILO study showed that the majority of countries have restrictive policies, especially for the master and senior officers.

The concern is not only for the number but it is more regarding the quality of the future seafarers. According to Leggate (2004), seafarers have been shifting towards the labor supplying nations in the past few years. The maximum percentage of senior officers (46.5%) originally belongs to OECD countries while junior officers come from the East and Central Europe. The Philippines is continuously experiencing a rapid growth in the number of entrants in this profession.

According to the data published in International Chamber of Shipping, May 2016, the annual average rate of growth in the number of world fleet was 0.7% between 2010 and 2020. The demand for seafarers in the year 2020 was calculated with the help of this additional figure as empirically assuming the necessary number of seafarers as per each ship type and size keeping a backup ratio of 50%. The predicted demand of Seafarers in 2020 is shown in Table II.

Table II -Predicted Demand of Seafarers in 2020

	2000-7999 GT	8,000GT and over	SUB TOTAL	Backup (50%)	Total
Officer	110,647	207,492	318,139	159,069	477,208
Rating	138,309	325,554	463,864	231,932	695,795
Total	248,956	533,046	782,002	391,001	1,173,004

Source: BIMCO Manpower Report 2015

GT: Gross Tonnes

The Supply of Seafarers

The BIMCO/ISF Manpower Update 2015 has estimated the worldwide supply of seafarers at 1, 647, 500, comprising 774, 000 officers and 873,500 ratings. The supply of seafarers around the globe has increased in the past five years. As reported by the BIMCO Manpower Report 2015, the number of officers has increased by 34% between 2005 and 2010 and now it is estimated to have increased by around 24% in the past five years. A summary of how the estimated global supply of seafarers has increased since 2005 is provided in Table III.

Table III: Increase in the Estimated Global Supply of Seafarers

RANK	2005	2010	2015
Officers	466000	624000	774000
Ratings	721000	747000	873500
Total	1187000	1371000	1647500

Source: BIMCO Manpower Report 2015

On the basis of estimates of national contributions to the current global supply of seafarers in 2015, five countries with the highest numbers of seafarers in 2015 have been listed in Table IV.

Table IV: Countries with the Highest Number of Seafarers

For All Seafarers	For Officers	For Ratings
China	China`	Philippines
Philippines	Philippines	China
Indonesia	India	Indonesia
Russian Federation	Indonesia	Russian Federation
Ukraine	Russian Federation	Ukraine

Source: BIMCO Manpower Report 2015

As indicated in the BIMCO Manpower Report 2015, the top five countries are China, the Philippines and the Russian Federation, followed by Ukraine and then India in regards to the supply of seafarers all over the world.

Over recent decades, there have been a lot of important changes in economic and commercial aspects of shipping which have played a major role in restructuring the international seafaring labor force. According to Leggate (2004), there have been amendments in the structure of

employment of the seafarers; there has been a sharp decline in the number of quality seafarers belonging to developed countries as developed countries are unable to retain seafarers. The decline in the number of competent seafarers from developed countries and also the desire to reduce labor unit costs have put an extra pressure on developing countries as far as the number of seafarers is concerned.

Indian Shipping Scenario

The Directorate General of Shipping reveals that total number of officers are 24,000, out of which 13,000 are deck officers and 11,000 are engineers. A consensus has been made amongst the government, unions, and shipping companies that around 70% of officers would be employed on foreign flagged vessels and 30% on Indian. Seafarers prefer to be employed on a foreign flagged vessel due to the favorable tax relief which leads to paucity of quality officers in the Indian flagged vessels. The condition for the number of ratings is different. The number of ratings has been estimated at around 40,000 by the government though the real total number is expected to be higher than this based on union membership. Considering the fact that ratings are trying to attain the estimated 32,000 jobs for themselves, there is a good amount of manpower surplus as far as this area is concerned. According to Leggate (2004), ratings prefer Indian flagged vessels compared to the foreign ones owing to the favorable terms and conditions of employment contracts. However, as there is no method of eliminating seafarers who are no longer active sailors, the database will represent a cumulative total of all those people who have received training certificate at some point of time in their lives in India.

High population, availability of cheap labor, strong education system and proficiency in English has made India an obvious choice as one of the major suppliers of competent seafarers to world shipping industry. Needless to say, the Indian seafarer is no less than a valuable asset to his employer. Over 5,000 Indian officers and 4,000 ratings have been reported to be employed with companies like Eurasia, OSM Barbers and V-Ships. There has been consistent growth in the amount of complex paper work required to be done by the seafarers in order to abide by the changing regulations of the maritime industry and this requires good education and an excellent knowledge of English language by the seafarers so this leads to a great demand for Indian seafarers due to their high levels of education and training. It is to be noted that the Indian Government has set the highest levels worldwide for entrance into the seafaring profession. But, is this enough? There is still a long way to go in order to bridge the gap between demand and supply of seafarers. But, certainly, India is getting there gradually. According to the Merchant Shipping Rules, 2005 regarding Recruitment and Placement of Seafarers, Indian seafarers have been called "assets" and they need to be protected, pampered and preserved for working in the international market. The assurance of our DG to boost Indian maritime education to meet the emerging global challenges have given an assurance to the industry related to the understanding, admiration and commitment of the government to raise the standards of Indian shipping and make the seafarers compete in the international market.

India is on its way to realizing its true potential as a major supplier of seafarers. The private sector has shown a high level of commitment to Indian seafarers by substantial investment in training and recruitment of cadets from India, as well as enhancement of professional and leadership skills of Indian seafarers. However, creation of entire seafaring entities and augmentation of the infrastructure and financial resources it requires are a tall order for the private sector alone. Only a much higher level of funding, integration of splintered efforts, centralized policy and coordination will make this dream a reality.

But is this enough? And if not, what needs to be done?

Out of the total population of 1.1 billion, Indian seafarers constitute merely 1,50,000, out of which barely 20% choose to work on a foreign flagged vessel. This needs to be rectified. We need to carefully select the areas in India whence we draw our seafarer cadets. They need to be drawn from areas of society where there is an incentive to choose shipping as a long-term career option. We have more chances of achieving this by looking to the countryside, villages or hinterlands for our seafarer number as they are less likely to be wooed by the alternative career options available in the cities and large towns.

We have to address this imbalance and make an effort to improve the existing image of shipping by bringing up the positive dimensions related to shipping so that seafarers can still consider this profession as a long-term career. Shipping industry's short sightedness with respect to tackling Human Resource issues has been a major problem. Now is the time to improve our vision and come out of this problem of short-termism and look at the broader picture. Once again, policing and coordination of an integrated approach can best be facilitated by initiatives from the Ministry. The new government should also take notice of the foreign employers who have employed Indian seafarers as they are responsible for a large number of deployments.

Training is the most effective solution to all these issues!

It is not only imperative to encourage the potential seafarers to choose the sea as a career option but they need to be adequately trained as well. Quality training centers and universities are too less in number to cater to the needs of manpower in shipping industry and this problem needs urgent rectification for this industry to prosper. In China there are eight to ten world class maritime universities yet India can only boast two. The tunnel vision of the University Grants Commission to subject the new applicants for Maritime Universities for NAAC, NBA Accreditations is another deterrent in the ever-changing education scenario in the maritime sector and the HRD Ministry should take an urgent call on this matter. "Partnering" or greater training cooperation is required amongst the important players in shipping industry.

In many companies the employers have undertaken the responsibility of refining their seafarers with a continuous program of development. They have created HR Initiatives to focus largely on instilling the values of loyalty, truthfulness, integrity and professionalism in them. Technical skills and business acumen have also been improved.

In this context, simulator based training plays a vital role and it has been taken care of that training should not just comprise simply learning theoretical concepts from a textbook. Training should focus on creating leaders and not just teaching operational and technical knowhow. The fact is that captains and chief engineers hold extremely important positions on the value chain but they do not understand this and consequently they are stuck to only navigation and maintaining the engines. It is important to enhance their level of involvement in the value chain of maritime transport in order to eliminate their feeling of isolation and this can be achieved by integrating them with shore-side operations. This would also lead to a sense of leadership in them of shore side management with continuity in their sailing careers. It is largely the onus of the employers to look forward to create opportunities for seafarers holding high positions to help them coordinate and integrate with the shore side operations during their vacation between sailing contracts.

The Gap between Demand and Supply

BIMCO 2015 manpower update provides a basic forecast for the future supply-demand balance



which is calculated based on the information and data obtained for the 2015 report. The report also shows nine other probable future scenarios (some demand-side and some supply-side) that may affect the future maritime manpower situation, specifically the supply and demand worldwide for merchant navy officers. The basic forecast is that the supply of officers across the globe will increase steadily, but be outpaced by increasing demand for officers.

Gardener and Pettit (1996) concluded that seafaring skills were indispensable in more than 70% of the jobs in maritime industry and since then similar reports have been made that clearly indicated the gap between demand and supply of seafarers.

The Drop-out rate of seafarers has gone high and passing percentage has gradually decreased (Aldanese, 2006). The shortfall of competent seafarers is tremendously affecting developing countries around the world leading to which permission has been granted to Indian ship owners to employ foreign seafarers to overcome this acute shortfall. Moreover, it has been observed that even a fast developing country like China is facing this problem and the supply of trained officers is lagging far behind the supply of new ships. The manpower crisis is actually deeper than it is shown as the shortages become more acute if companies look for competent and well trained seafarers. The estimated future demand supply balance for officers is clearly exhibited in Table V.

Table V-Estimated Future Demand Supply Balance for Officers

	2015	2020	2025
Supply	774000	789500	805000
Demand	790500	881500	952500
Shortage/Surplus	-16500	-92000	-147500
%	2.1%	18.7%	11.3%

Source: BIMCO Manpower 2015 estimates

The estimated overall shortage of officers, as shown above, is modest (around 2%) that shows that currently there is no serious problem as far as shortage of officers is concerned but the important point here is that it does not at all imply that shipping companies are not facing serious recruitment problems. As stated in the Trading Cum Training Vessels Committee Report, 2014, the fact of the matter is that currently, the overall supply and demand of seafarers is in decent balance. The reason could be that there has been a sharp decline in the demand of seafarers in 2009, but since 2011 and 2012 the situation has revived and the sea trade has been growing at a rate of 4.3 %. Various surveys have reported problems related to the shortage of supply of particular field of seafarers, such as senior rank officers and highly skilled engineers in labor markets. Some evidences strongly suggest prolonged problems related to recruitment and retention. The major concern is particularly the availability of officers at senior management level in future, especially engineers, in the Far East and the Indian Sub-Continent. However, there are hardly any difficulties in the supply of ratings as observed through the evidences.

The 2015 report indicates that an overall shortfall in the supply of senior management officers is likely to continue as high demand for seafarers is predicted over the next decade due to the forecasted growth in the world merchant fleet. Worryingly, over the last five years, several efforts have been made to improve the recruitment and training levels and also to reduce the wastage of officers but the situation still remains tense.

The current situation of maritime manpower and future predictions indicates that the shipping industry is bound to face challenges with respect to the supply of highly qualified and competent seafarers in the near future unless concerted efforts are made in this direction and measures are taken to resolve key manpower issues. However, it is imperative to promote seafaring as a profession and enhance marine education and training around the world, address the issue of retention of seafarers and to continue monitoring the supply and demand of seafarers globally on a regular basis.

The shipping industry is basically suffering from a shortage of experienced and well trained manpower that need to operate the complex and sophisticated shipping operations efficiently (Grey, 2006).

Attrition and Reasons

As rightly observed by Zade (2003), seafarers consider sea career as temporary as most officers are inclined to quit sailing after few years to work ashore. Actually, increasing shortage of skilled and competent seafarers can be attributed to three main factors, namely, inability to attract good students, inadequate training and education and retention of seafarers. According to Zade & Horck (1997), a seafaring career is invisible to society so common people are totally unaware that they are able to access majority of goods because of sea trade. It is hard to believe that there are a number of towns and small cities where seafaring is not even heard of. Seafarers can be regarded as the best ambassadors of a career in sea and the common man's view about seafaring as a career would largely depend on how the career is propagated to them.

According to Demitrova and Blanpain(2010), the environment that a seafarer lives in is considered to be isolated and secluded from society. Ship is not only place of work for seafarers but is their home as well. The words which are generally associated with a sailor's life are isolation, hazards, mobility and vulnerability which also give a negative image of the seafaring career (Lindgren and Nilsson, 2012). Seafarers are easily becoming susceptible to stress due to the confined nature of their work environment and ever building work pressure on them (Caeser, Cahoon and Fei, 2014). Studies have shown that people who have to work in isolated environments tend to be exposed to mental stress easily.

According to Grey (1980), retention of seafarers has been a cause of concern to the shipping industry since the middle of the last century, when the first manpower crisis took place. Glen et al. (2007) have predicted a wastage rate of around 6% per annum of UK certificated officers till 2022. The average wastage age hovers around from 30 to 50. The research by the author further proves that average wastage age is 35.7 years. The issue in present times is that not only the wastage numbers have increased but the age of officers leaving sea career has also come down. The reasons of poor retention are nicely put forth by Barnett et al. (2006) which include the following:

Poor Human Resource Practices of Companies

A very prominent reason of why the retention of quality officers has become a serious concern is the prevalence of poor human resource practices. For instance, HR executives form the groups of their employees depending on their geographic origin or cultural background and this also influences promotional prospects of employees' onboard vessels (Lane 2002; Wu 2004). Therefore, it has been observed that for certain nationalities there is less chance to rise up the growth ladder onboard. According to the Employee Motivation Model, proposed by Herzberg in 1993, advancement is one of the most important tools for retaining employees and seafarers are no exception to it (Lindgren and Nilsson, 2012). Hence, seafarers seek shore jobs due to lack of



opportunities for growth onboard. Other poor practices include: ill treatment of seafarers due to prevalence of unfair terms and conditions of contracts, salary issues (Couper, 2000), lack of shore leave, distance from friends and family and highly stressed working conditions. Presence of these poor human resource practices eventually demotivate seafarers and eventually lead to job dissatisfaction (Forsyth, 1990; Kronberg, 2011).

Generational Issues

Retention of seafarers has become a huge challenge also due to the differences in the level of aspirations and expectations among the younger and older generations (Cahoon and Haugstetter, 2008). Many seafarers belonging to older generations confess that they were attracted into seafaring career by the desire for adventure (Mack, 2007). However, the presence of minimal crew onboard and increased workload means that seafaring is no longer a career of adventure (Dimitrova and Blanpain, 2010). Thus the time where seafaring was seen as a lifetime profession has passed. The expectations and aspirations of the younger generation is different from their seniors, hence, there is a need for employers to critically examine these discrepancies and address them to reduce the early exit of sailors from this profession.

Increased Demand from Landside

Retention of officers at sea becomes even more challenging when there is a good demand of officers in shore jobs where they can use their operational skills. There are a huge number of positions on shore that ship officers are offered as they switch from sailing to shore jobs (Barnett et al. 2006). High remuneration is offered for shore based positions which further lures officers towards shore. For example, Wild (2012) discovered that oil companies usually offer higher salaries to lure seafarers with good experience for onshore jobs.

Peculiar Environment of Seafaring

The nature and environment of shipping industry is quite peculiar and this is also one of the major reasons as to why it becomes challenging to retain seafarers in this profession (Thomas et al., 2003; De Silva et al., 2011). If the reasons for quitting sailing are analyzed then it is found that maximum number of seafarers cite separation from family as the main reason (Rochdale 1970; Barnett et al. 2006). Therefore, seafarers who have families easily become dissatisfied with their jobs and it is this dissatisfaction that eventually leads to their decision to quit sailing (Forsyth 1990). As per Iversen (2011), loneliness occurs due to separation among seafarers and mental depression is caused when this loneliness is coupled with fatigue and stress (Parker et al. 1997), this eventually is the major cause of suicide among seafarers. Few researchers, namely, Hill (1972), Moreby (1975), Forsyth and Gramling (1990) have stated that separation from family creates disruption in marital life and this is also an important reason of high attrition rate among merchant navy officers. Thus, it becomes difficult to retain seafarers onboard due to the uniqueness of this occupation (Moreby, 1975; Oldenburg et al. 2009; Haka et al.2011). Zaar and Hammarstedt (2012) revealed that dimensions like stress and fatigue are also responsible for causing a great amount of difficulty in retaining young seafarers onboard.

Conclusion and Future Research Guidelines

In this paper, the researcher has tried to put forward the updated demand and supply figures of seafarers around the globe for an easy analysis of the shortage/surplus situation. Attrition, as a major issue for shipping companies has been addressed in the paper wherein efforts have been

made to find the possible reasons for attrition. Consequently, employers in the shipping sector should have a better perspective and deeper insight of career aspirations of the officers that they recruit and train so they can manage their expectations well in the long run. It is extremely vital to have a good understanding of the factors that influence people to choose seafaring as a career. At the recruitment and training end, the hiring practices should be revised and they mainly focus on the aspect of meeting the career aspirations and expectations of the recruits (Caesar, Cahoon and Fei , 2014). As it has been found that seafarers are susceptible to stress due to the kind of their work environment so it becomes important for shipping companies to conduct various psychological tests which aim to assess the ability to withstand stress of new recruits. As very rightly stated by Kline and Rogers (1949), “one of the most essential elements in recruiting as well as retaining a vigorous and vital merchant marine is understanding the merchant seaman himself-knowing where he is recruited, what his future plans are, what type of individual he actually is”.

Thus it is concluded that hiring process of seafarers needs to be improved to effectively manage the different expectations of different people entering the seafaring career. Constant efforts must be made both at the industry and company levels to address issues which lead to shortage of well qualified and competent officers at sea.

As far as the future research is concerned, the methodology that is adopted should use qualitative techniques for an in-depth study of the responsible factors which impact the decision of seafarers to join this profession and later to quit. The ideal sample for a detailed study should include the employers as well. The focus should be on how shortcomings are identified and worked upon to help shipping industry to flourish in future.

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