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WOMAN ON BOARD — FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

The article presents a comparison of the results of exploration that have been made at the Faculty of Navigation (FON) at the Maritime University of Szczecin, Poland with results of Universities of European countries. This comparison was made by a student of Maritime University. The aim of the study is to show the maritime industry and society a difference in education, gaining sea practice, willingness and concerns faced by female students of the Maritime Universities. This study is based on a questionnaire, which is available in two languages — Polish and English — as well as on paper and electronic form. Survey includes 25 questions about inspiration, motivation but also the concerns related with physical and mental powerlessness. The answers are presented in the form of graphs and comments. Text of the article contains valuable information not only for future employers of young women but also for young ladies who face the choice of university.

Keywords:

female seafarer, young women, maritime university, motivation, concerns.

INTRODUCTION

Women stand out intelligence since ancient time. Unfortunately there were noticeable. As it turned out, women who have tried to contribute to the development and history of science, had to overcome all the barriers, take the strategies that their work would be appreciated and accepted by the scientific community. Such was the life of ambitious women until the twentieth century. Then in the universities began to appear the first female persons. Nevertheless, in maritime universities was

not possible to see the woman. One of the first who worked on the ships were nurses from the United States Navy Nurse Corps. The United States Navy Nurse Corps was officially established in 1908. It was all-female until 1965. After the establishment of the Nurse Corps in 1908 by an Act of Congress, twenty women were selected as the first members and assigned to the Naval Medical School Hospital in Washington. However, the navy did not provide room or board for them, and so the nurses rented their own house and provided their own meals. In time, the nurses would come to be known as ‘The Sacred Twenty’ because they were the first women to serve formally as members of the Navy. The Nurse Corps gradually expanded to 160 on the eve of World War I. For a few months in 1913, Navy nurses saw their first shipboard service, aboard *Mayflower* and *Dolphin*.

Nowadays, according to International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) only 2% of the world’s maritime workforce are women, mainly in the cruise and ferries sector (ITF 2012). *Shipping has historically been a male-dominated industry and that tradition runs long and deep. However, through its global programme on the Integration of Women in the Maritime Sector (IWMS), International Maritime Organization (IMO) is making a concentrated effort to help the industry move on from that tradition and to help women achieve a representation within it that is more in keeping with twenty-first century expectations (IMO, 2013).*

At the moment not much is said about young women trying to exist in the world as a confident and strong women. In order to fill this gap a research has been done by female student of the Faculty of Marine Engineering. It is based on comparison of polish prospective seafarers with group of female sailors from Malta, Sweden, Turkey, and United Kingdom. A questionnaire is directed to fellow female seafarers. Survey contains 25 questions concerning the motivation for commencing the study in the field of maritime navigation, aspirations, fears and obstacles faced by female seafarers, seagoing practice and future work onboard ships. 162 answers have been received. Respondents are in age from 19. Few of them have a family, children. But mostly they are young women who have just a little knowledge about vessels.

‘TO BE OR NOT TO BE’ — MOTIVATIONS AND CONCERNS

Her eyebrows are shaped and arched, her lips lightly rouged, her blonde hair up in feminine curls. That’s Miss Molly Kool ashore [...] but in her barge [...]

she knows no fear [...] and she'll give orders if she marries, and hubby holds only a mate's ticket. One news account from the period said about Myrtle 'Molly' Kool (1916) — North America's first registered female sea captain (Nytimes, 2009).

Respondents, the same like 'Molly' were asked about motivation, concerns and expectations. Comparison of answers about motivation to choose Maritime University are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

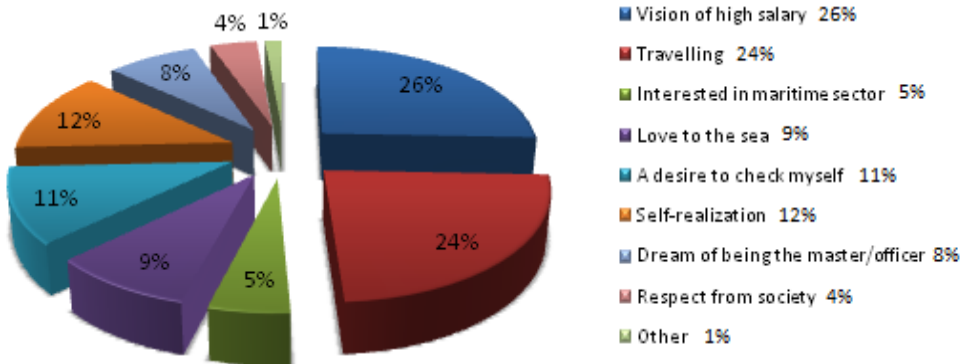


Fig. 1. Answers of polish female seafarers to question *What was your motivation to choose Maritime University?*

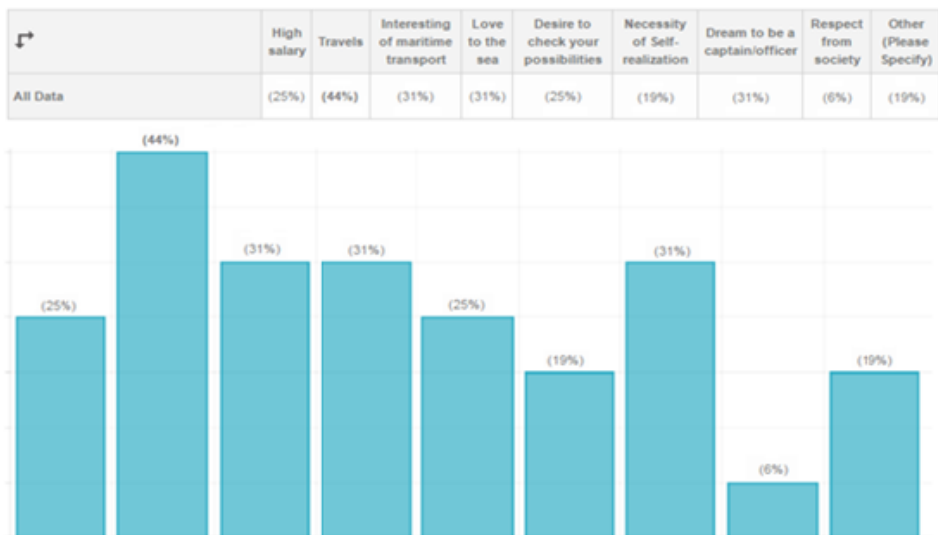


Fig. 2. Answers of foreign female seafarers (Malta, Sweden, Turkey and United Kingdom) to question *What was your motivation to choose Maritime University?*

According to the graphs above 26% (majority) of polish female seafarers have chosen Maritime University because of high salary. Almost the same percent of foreign women said that salary is important, but 44% of them decided to study this field because of travels. From the other hand, only 9% of polish women want to work on vessels because of the love to travels. One of foreign females said *Love mechanics and long holidays*. Polish student said *It is a family tradition; I will be third generation in maritime sector*.

Next question was *What kind of concerns you had before you started education at Maritime University?* Figures 3 and 4 show answers of polish and foreign women.

Majority, 31% of polish seafarers said, they are afraid to not find a job. Among answers labeled as 'other' there was such as *"I am not engineer oriented and I am afraid about science and math's"*. 5% of them were unsure about their choice, because family had not accept it. Responses from foreign women are different. More than half of responders said they had no concerns. Only 19% were afraid to not find a job and 6% had no acceptance from family.



Fig. 3. Answers of polish female seafarers to question *What kind of concerns you had before you started education at Maritime University?*

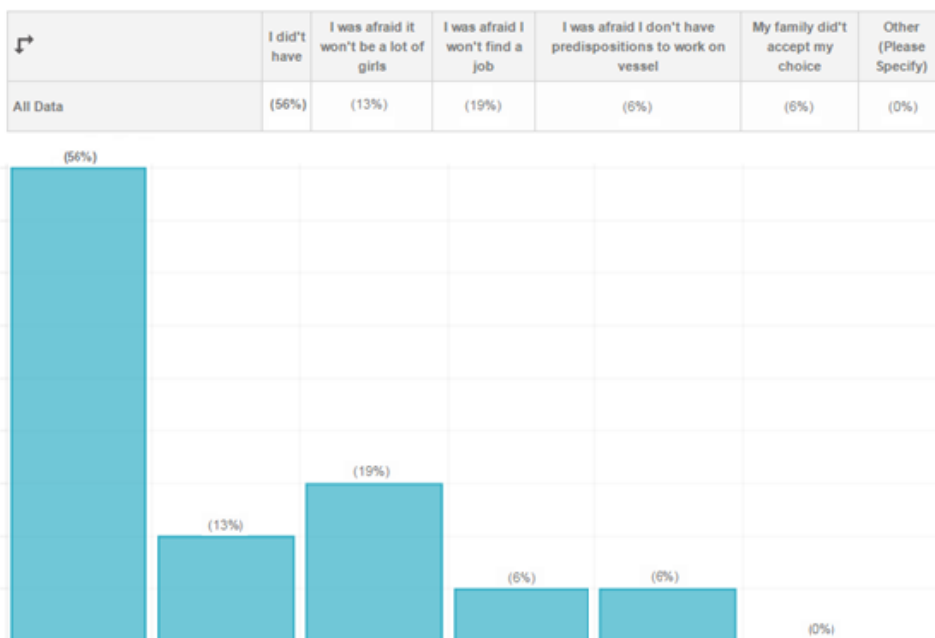


Fig. 4. Answers of foreign female seafarers (Malta, Sweden, Turkey and United Kingdom) to question *What kind of concerns you had before you started education at Maritime University?*

FAMILY — PROBLEM OR MOTIVATION?

I am Chief Engineer I married with Captain and I have 4 years old girl with us and working at the vessel... 😊. For Turkish woman having a kid is motivation to work, but not for everyone. Most women find it hard to reconcile private life, having a family to work at sea. Women were asked *Do you think that sailing can make difficult to have a family?* From 50 to 61% of answers provided by respondents this statement is true. 30–44% of female seafarers said they do not see any problem, 6–9% of women have no idea. Results are shown in Figures 5 and 6.

What is more interesting. Next women were asked if they are planning to have a family. According to the graph from Figure 7, majority (63%) of respondents have or want to have a family. More spectacular is that nobody oblige that certainly will not have a family.

In sum, female seafarers are afraid to have a family but are not going to give up their dreams connected with life at the sea. The young women are more enthusiastic to compromise in order to cope with this obstacle which cannot be said about their mothers, grandmothers and prior generations.

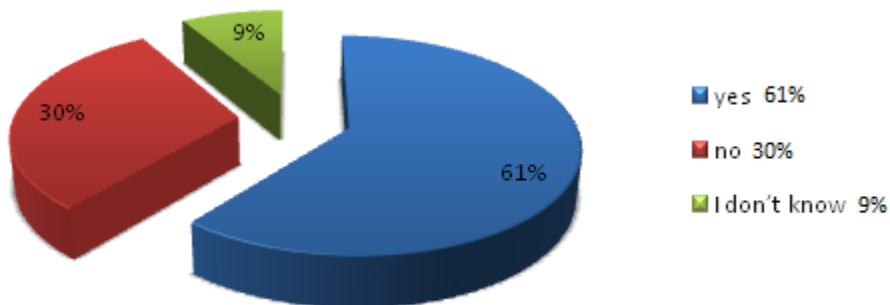


Fig. 5. Answers of Polish female seafarers to question *Do you think that sailing can make difficult to have a family?*

	Yes, I do	No, I don't	I don't know	Standard Deviation
All Data	(50%)	(44%)	(6%)	3.09

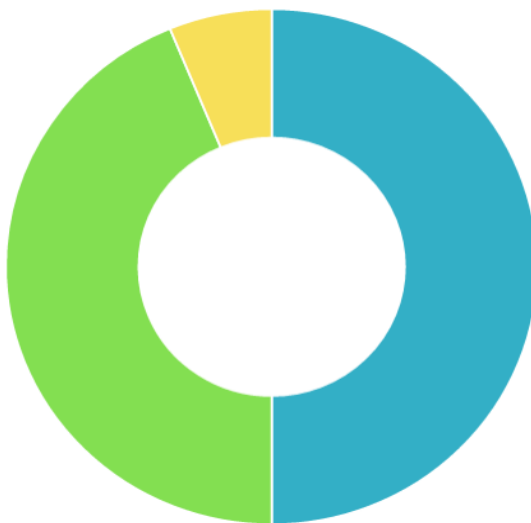


Fig. 6. Answers of foreign female seafarers (Malta, Sweden, Turkey, and United Kingdom) to question *Do you think that sailing can make difficult to have a family?*

	● Yes, I want to have a husband and children	● Yes, I want to have a husband	● I'm not going to have a family	● I didn't think about that	Standard Deviation
All Data	(63%)	(6%)	(0%)	(31%)	3.94

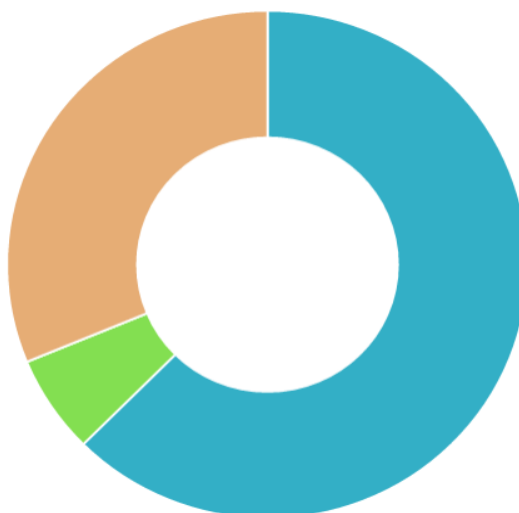


Fig. 7. Answers of foreign female seafarers (Malta, Sweden, Turkey, and United Kingdom) to question *Are you going to have a family?*

WOMEN VERSUS MEN

With the growth of number of girls at maritime universities the young society is familiarized with the declining stereotype regarding women at sea. It is nicely illustrated through the answers provided by the respondents who shared themselves into three groups.

The first group of answers presents that women are more determined in pursuing the set goal and more ambitious which is supported by following answer: *[...] the prevailing stereotype considerably facilitates the work for men. However, I strongly believe that due to this women are more determined and ambitious in pursuing the set aim and they are aware that their task is much more difficult for they are women. Or: [...] As it was proven in many cases, women occurred to be psychologically stronger, more resourceful and they easily cope with the situations difficult to resolve* — according to Polish woman.

The next group of female seafarers claims quite on the contrary. They assume that women still hang way behind men concerning the work on the sea. *Despite I am a woman, or maybe due to this, men are the one who are more sober and self-controlled. Moreover, they rather have the possibility and faculty to deal with challenging physical tasks. Men are characterized as courageous and confident whereas women in many cases change their mind on a given decision.*

The last group of respondents advocates equality. These female sailors feel that it does not matter whether one is a man or a woman but it is dependent on the individual characteristics, personality and psyche. The students illustrate it as follows: [...] *I think that you cannot say that male or female make you a better person, I think that the skill set for the job is base on the person you are not the sex you are.* And answer of another woman: *That depends on the physique of the person. You do need some muscles sometimes! But women can build muscles too.*

THE FUTURE

Despite the demographic decline and fewer students at universities, finding job in maritime sector is not easy. Especially for women. According to [Belcher et al., 2003] women seafarers representation in Poland amounted in 2001 from 0,7% to 0,9% of total number of seafarers. Women were employed mainly on passenger ships in hotel department. During last decades the number of female students studying maritime navigation in Poland increased significantly. Despite the fact that 80% of polish women and 81% of women from other countries have chosen the work on the vessel, they are well prepared to undertake the job provided on the land. Since Poland is one of the greatest supplier of the seafarers, positioned on top ten in the world [Sulpice, 2011], increasing number of women enrolled in maritime education and training institutions in Poland is a good sign of contribution to IMO, ILO and some governmental policies aiming at attraction and promotion of women in maritime sector.

Polish respondents who declared that they connect their future plans with work on the sea, more than 30% still does not specifically know how long are they willing to work as seafarers. Nearly 30% of female students stated that they are going to sail as long as they obtain the degree of senior officer or master. It shows how determined and courageous women are. 63% of female seafarers from Malta, Sweden, Turkey and United Kingdom work 1 month on a vessel and one month at home and 38% have chosen 3 or 4 months at sea and 3 or 4 at home.

There is no woman who has no specified herself. The very last question was *To be experienced at the moment, would you choose this field of study one more time?* 45% of Polish seafarers are definitely satisfied with University, job and would choose the same. Only 3% of them regret their decision (Female students' perspective for maritime career, 2014).

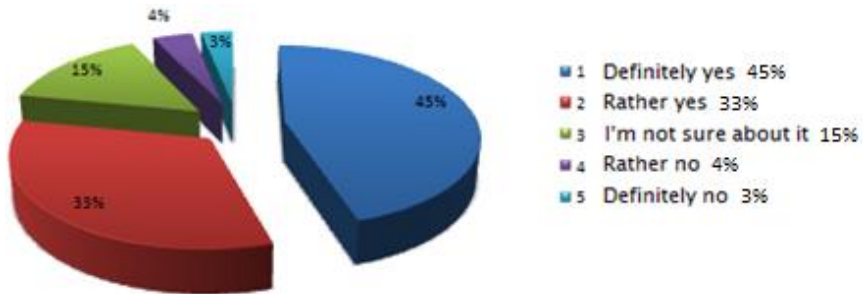


Fig. 8. Answers of polish female seafarers to question *To be experienced at the moment, would you choose this field of study one more time?*

	Definitely, yes	I think, yes	I'm not sure	I don't think so	Definitely, no	Standard Deviation
All Data	(50%)	(13%)	(19%)	(19%)	(0%)	2.64



Fig. 9. Answers of foreign female seafarers (Malta, Sweden, Turkey, and United Kingdom) to question *To be experienced at the moment, would you choose this field of study one more time?*

According to foreign respondents there is no woman who regrets her choice. Exactly half of them said they would choose the same field of study one more time. 19% of them are not sure and the same quantity said *I don't think so*.

CONCLUSIONS

It is observed that female seafarers are motivated with travels and vision of high salary. Women from Malta, Sweden, Turkey and United Kingdom mostly had no concerns before they started education in maritime sector. In Poland majority was afraid about the future, that they will not find a job.

61% of polish women think that sailing can make difficult to have a family. It is 11% more than think women from another countries.

About comparing working of women and men on board, all ladies shared into three groups. The first group of answers presents that women are more determined in pursuing the set goal and more ambitious. The next group of female seafarers claims quite on the contrary. They assume that women still hang way behind men concerning the work on the sea. Third group of respondents advocates equality.

According to question *To be experienced at the moment, would you choose this field of study one more time?* less than 50% of polish seafarers would not change their mind and exactly 50% of foreign women said *Definitely, yes*. Unfortunately unpleasant fact is that 3% of polish respondents regret their choice and would definitely not choose the same field of study which is caused by the difficulties in finding a job. According to foreign respondents there is no woman who regrets her choice.

Certainly, all women have one thing in common — determination. They are strong physically and mentally. They never give up and reach their goal despite the obstacles encountered on the road.

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STRESZCZENIE

W artykule porównano wyniki badań wykonanych na Wydziale Nawigacyjnym Akademii Morskiej w Szczecinie z wynikami uczelni innych krajów europejskich. Celem było ukazanie różnicy w edukacji, zdobywaniu praktyk morskich i gotowości do pracy przez studentki uczelni morskich w krajach Unii Europejskiej. Badanie oparto na kwestionariuszu dostępnym w dwóch wersjach językowych — polskiej i angielskiej. Ankieta zawiera 25 pytań na temat inspiracji oraz motywacji, a także obaw związanych z niemocą fizyczną i psychiczną. Odpowiedzi są przedstawione w postaci wykresów i komentarzy. Artykuł zawiera cenne informacje nie tylko dla przyszłych pracodawców zatrudniających młode kobiety, ale również dla dziewcząt stających przed wyborem uczelni.