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Indian seafarers quitting sea career: disenchantment with prevailing conditions and lasting effects of the COVID–19 pandemic

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Indian Seafarers Quitting Sea Career: Disenchantment with Prevailing Conditions and Lasting Effects of the COVID – 19 Pandemic

By

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Declaration

I certify that all the material in this dissertation that is not my own work has been identified, and that no material is included for which a degree has previously been conferred on me.

The contents of this dissertation reflect my own personal views, and are not necessarily endorsed by the University.

(Signature): ....

(Date): ....20th Sept 2022...............................

Supervised by: ......Prof. Raphael Baumler.......

Supervisor's affiliation... World Maritime University

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my father. Thank you for your boundless love, care, support and sacrifices for making me who I am. Your imprint on me will remain forever.

Acknowledgements

journey and the, immense support from my wife Ranjit and love from my sons Jasmeh and Angad only made this journey a more memorable one.

Abstract

Title of Dissertation: **Indian Seafarers quitting sea career: Disenchantment with prevailing conditions and lasting effects of the COVID – 19 pandemic**

Degree: **Master of Science**

The dissertation is an exploratory study on the underlying reasons for growing number of Indian seafarers looking for an alternative career due to the prevailing conditions and effect of the COVID -19 which may have accelerated mobility towards a landside job.

The research involved qualitative interview of 12 Indian seafarers who had sailed during the pandemic with an aim to study the perceptions of seafarers towards their chosen profession, how they feel the industry has evolved in last two decades and the impact it has had on seafarers.

The results indicate that there are increasing instances of seafarers looking for alternative careers due to convergence of termination factors ranging from family commitments, dissatisfaction with working conditions, recent effect of COVID – 19, inadequate support from international agencies for seafarers' welfare, and commercial considerations continuing to eclipse seafarer's rights, and wellbeing. In addition, the growing Indian economy provides multiple job options to the seafarers that hastens their decision.

Seafaring as a 'career for life' amongst Indian seafarers under the current scenario appears to be dwindling and will require considerable efforts from the stakeholders to reverse the trend.

Issues related to dearth of suitably qualified maritime labor is gaining greater traction in the shipping industry. Exploring evolution of developments within the Indian seafarer workforce and knowing their aspirations assumes greater significance especially after COVID-19 pandemic, considering their irreplaceable role in the entire gamut of international trade.

Maritime stakeholder should demonstrate their commitment towards improving Indian seafarers' well-being and Occupational Health and Safety. To achieve this, they should consider introducing provisions for improving mental health, shorter contracts, salary revision, and family carriage. Further, MLC 2006 provisions related to seafarers 'social benefits and working time are to be reviewed.

Keywords: *Seafarers, retention, family commitments, alternative careers, COVID - 19*

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List of Abbreviations

AMSA	Australian Maritime Safety Authority
BIMCO	Baltic and International Maritime Council
CAGR	Compounded Annual Growth Rate
Capt.	Captain / Master
CHENG	Chief Engineer
ICS	International Chamber of Shipping
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
MLC	Maritime Labour Convention, 2006
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress disorder
Rating 1	Able Seaman
REC	Research Ethics Committee Protocol
STCW	International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978 convention
Supdt.	Superintendent (Marine or Technical)
WMU	World Maritime University
2nd Off.	Second Officer

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Miles away from home,

Memories of loved ones and a bag pack, I walk alone.

On a journey, as I travel the world around,

Have seen new places so profound.

I have sailed a thousand miles,

Across the lonely oceans frontiers.

Days at sea, not even a bird to sight,

The thought of being alone can't get me through the night".

- *Ruben Fernandes (Second Officer)*[1]

1.1 Background

Increase in global trade has led to growth of the international merchant fleet and this is symbolic of the distinct relation between the industry and global economic growth. This growth consequently results in an increased demand for officers that cannot be met readily due to the time needed for an entrant who joins as a cadet, to acquire skills and qualifications as required by the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978 convention (STCW) to become an officer (Baltic and International Maritime Council [BIMCO] & International Chamber of Shipping [ICS], 2021).

The 2021 estimates of global seafarers indicate an estimated number of 1,892,720 seafarers, of whom 857,540 are officers and the remaining, 1,035,180 ratings (BIMCO & ICS, 2021). These numbers indicate a growth of 10.8% for officers and 18.5% for ratings since 2015. However, the numbers also indicate a shortage of 26,240 officers

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[1]https://m.facebook.com/sailorconfession/photos/a.177108025782848/615342115292768

and surplus of 37,640 ratings. The shortfall necessarily doesn't mean that there are not enough officers, it reflects a pattern of insufficiency that requires greater level of officer rotation on ships which is expected to put additional burden on employers to source additional seafarers and retain existing (BIMCO & ICS, 2021).

India is one of the top 5 seafaring supply countries[2] in the world and Indian contribution stands at 58,645 officers and 54,829 ratings (BIMCO & ICS, 2021).

1.2 Anticipated demand of seafarers

The overall world merchant fleet numbers are expected to grow at 6.4% by 2026 using compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 1.25% annual increase over the next five years. The figure indicates, that to fulfil this requirement of fleet growth, an additional 17,902 officers will be required every year starting 2022 (Table 1). The requirement roughly translates to increase in officer numbers by 2% annually which currently is about at 2.4%. As the rating numbers are already in surplus, no shortfall is anticipated in their numbers (BIMCO & ICS, 2021).

Table 1 Estimated future global demand for officers and ratings

	2015	2021	2026 (Basic case)
Officers	790,500	883,780	947,040
Ratings	754,500	997,540	1,069,500
Total	1,545,000	1,881,320	2,016,540

Note. Adapted from *Seafarer Workforce Report*. Witherby, BIMCO & ICS. (2021).

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[2] The other leading seafarer supplying countries include Philippines, Russian Federation, China and Indonesia in that order, followed by India.

The numbers stated in Table 1 are approximate, however the data from BIMCO/ICS 2021 regarding the global seafaring market remains the most reliable source of data (Caesar, 2016) but is not without criticism (Tang, 2022).

1.3 Retention of seafarers – Current trends

Considering that seafarers are a significant resource of the industry, there is a heightened interest in addressing the issues related to shortage of officers to maintain the long-term viability of maritime transport. As the younger generation of seafarers are spending fewer years at sea and the recent trend of wastage amongst senior officer's increases, the problem of retention is only expected to compound in coming years. In many developed countries the career span of the current generation of seafarers are considerably less than their predecessors (Caesar, 2016).

1.4 Retention – Why is it a problem?

Considering that on an average, it takes about 10-12 years for an entrant to attain the rank of Master or Chief Engineer, and the current trend of a shortened career at sea, retention assumes pre-eminence (Caesar, 2016). The current trends indicate that the era of being a seafarer for life will eventually phase out (BIMCO, 2021) and the attrition rates are only likely to increase. Though the recruitment rates have remained the same, the mobility of officers to landside jobs is one of the principal reasons for the recurring shortage witnessed by the sector. Early shift to landside jobs will create critical vacuum at the management level on ships which the industry will struggle to fill immediately. This scarcity will have a bearing on how safely the industry will operate their ships, on which the world relies so heavily. Case in point is Denmark, where the data suggests that many officers are making a transition to shore in early forties (Caesar, 2016).

However, no such data exists in respect of Indian seafarers, which the research intends to explore.

1.5 Effect of COVID – 19 on retention

As the world grapples with after effects of COVID -19, an increasing number of seafarers felt they were denied rightful appreciation with little steps taken by agencies to address the issues they faced. Taxing work regimes, indifferent treatment by authorities, increasing mental health issues due to prolonged stay onboard or at home are affecting seafarers' wellbeing (Hebbar & Mukesh et al., 2020).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic apart from worsening some of the pre-existing challenges, has also posed new challenges for the maritime industry (Pauksztat et al., 2022a).

As the world moves towards newer technologies in shipping in response to environmental and work safety, the maritime sector is staring at a problem in retaining skilled manpower who will be in the forefront of implementation of new regulations and operation of these newer technologies (Ljung & Widell, 2014).

1.6 Aims and/or objectives

As India is one of the principal seafarers supplying nation, it is desirable that a research study be conducted on selected Indian seafarers to understand the issues being faced and reasons for seafarers opting to quit seafaring as a long-term profession. Insight into the working environment of seafarers would enrich the data and knowledge regarding life of seafarers in the present regime of reduced manning, frequent inspections and limited shore leaves.

Studies on the overall working environment of the seafarers and its relationship with occupational health are still limited and the number of seafarers quitting seafaring as a profession in the Indian context has not been studied as yet. The research is expected to throw insight at what measures must be initiated by the stakeholders to improve the retention of seafarers.

1.7 Research Questions

The following questions may be further researched in order to meet the research objectives;

a. What are the factors which are prompting Indian seafarers to look for an alternative career options and not consider seafaring as a long-term career.

b. How the recent effect of COVID -19 and its influence have contributed to the mobility towards landside jobs.

1.8 Overview of the research

The research is organized into five chapters.

a. Chapter-1 describes the demography of seafarers' numbers, the geographical regions contributing towards the labor supply market, the trends of demand and supply and current issue regarding shortage and retention of officers. The chapter describes the aim and objectives of the study which then leads to the research questions.

b. Chapter -2 deals with literature review and briefly touches upon the contribution of seafarers in facilitating global trade, discussing challenges that affect seafarers' their overall well-being and in their retention. The chapter further discusses available literature on effects of COVID – 19 on seafarers.

c. Chapter – 3 discusses the research approach and suitability of data collection

method adopted. The chapter further discusses selection of participants, data collection process through semi structured interviews. The reliability, validity and limitations of the research are also discussed in the chapter followed by ethical considerations.

d. Chapter – 4 presents the results of the interviews with the participants. The results of the interviews are described in themes based on the semi structured interview questionnaire.

e. Chapter – 5 presents the discussion and analysis of the results obtained in Chapter 4 under various themes and compares the results with extant literature.

f. Chapter – 6 provides conclusions, recommendations and outlines scope for further research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The concept of a 'career for life' has been under analysis, as the world's labour market has seen a steady shift towards contractual and temporary work, often referred to as flexible employment in the last four decades (Sampson, 2013; Stone, 2005). The shift towards working on temporary contracts vis-à-vis jobs offering long term security remains the most noticeable feature of this change (Stone, 2005) as it has become a norm with majority of the global working population (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2022), though there are organizations offering their employees permanent long-term careers.

Seafaring too has experienced a similar trend which was considered a lifelong occupation in the past (Talmor, 2020). Seafaring, for most of the individuals, is no longer a 'job for life' even though it offers job security and salaries which are above the national average in developing countries (Talmor, 2020), the major seafarer supplying nations today.

2.2 Movers of Global Trade

The growing world economy is heavily dependent on shipping, as maritime transportation forms the backbone of global trade, moving approximately 90% of volume of trade through the seas in which seafarers play a vital role (UNCTAD, 2021). The long-term viability of the maritime trade and the industry remains intertwined with availability of suitably trained and skilled seafarers and scope to recruit quality newcomers in sufficient numbers (Rayos & Borbon, 2022).

However, in spite of being a virtually indispensable commodity, the human aspect of shipping secures little academic scrutiny even though the industry remains confounded

by it. The growing world economy and corresponding growth in world fleet has highlighted that retention and recruitment of quality seafarers has emerged as a global problem which is further compounded by adverse public opinion regarding seafaring and lure of shore-based opportunities (McLaughlin, 2015).

2.3 Seafaring as a profession

Seafaring continues to remain by far the most dangerous profession with relative risk of mortality considerably higher than the workers engaged ashore. For instance, mortality rates are twenty-six times and eleven times higher than the national average in British and Danish merchant fleets vis-à-vis shore-based industry. These figures assume significance considering that European fleets deliver best practices when it comes to protection of seafarers (Walters & Bailey, 2013).

An intrinsically perilous and unpredictable environment are not the only reasons, but also are the prevailing business practices in the industry in which endless pursuit for profit has relegated welfare of the seafarers to a largely secondary consideration which has resulted in this unenviable situation (Walters & Bailey, 2013).

Recent industry research indicates that there are nearly 1.89 million seafarers[3] employed on over 74,000 ships (BIMCO, 2021) who indeed are a unique occupational group who may be recruited by international agencies not based in their own countries and may end up with contractual employment on varying types of ships registered elsewhere (Borovnik, 2004).

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[3] person who is employed or engaged or works in any capacity on board a ship to which MLC, 2006 applies (ILO, 2006).

2.4 Atypical nature of seafaring career

One of the principal reasons attributed to difficulty in retention of seafarers is the atypical nature of working in the maritime industry (de Silva et al., 2011) with seafarers reporting essentially similar reasons for making a switch to shore-based opportunities (Barnett et al., 2006). Separation from family which affects the seafarer as well as the spouse (Oldenburg & Jensen, 2012), is often cited as one of the principal reasons to reduced years out at sea (Forsyth, 1990) as dissatisfaction of family with sea career due to prolonged separation coupled with prevailing stress and fatigue on board increases loneliness and its overall impact is multi-dimensional (Jeżewska & Iversen, 2012). Stress and fatigue induced by elevated workload, considerable paperwork and skeletal crew levels are another facet of industry's peculiarity which presents challenges in retaining young seafarers (Zaar and Hammarstedt, 2012).

2.5 Seafaring labour market and important seafarers supplying countries

Last few decades have witnessed reorganization of the international seafaring labour market which has seen a steady decline of seafarers from developed western countries due to inadequate recruitment and retention. The changes in structure of seafarer engagement and ever-increasing desire to decrease the operating costs has seen a corresponding increase in demand of seafarers from the developing countries. This has introduced a new concept of 'seafarer labour supply countries' (Leggate, 2004).

The shift in the seafaring labour supply market has seen that the majority share of the seafarers is contributed by the Philippines, Russian Federation, China, India and Indonesia (BIMCO and ICS, 2021).

2.6 Retention of seafarers

Fewer seafarers are preferring to stay at sea beyond ten years due to declining working

conditions onboard (Caesar et al., 2015). The availability of quality seafarers at management level may be exacerbated in the foreseeable future on analysing the trend of seafarers leaving the profession within 10 years of joining (Caesar et al., 2014; Ljung, 2010).

Reasons attributed to moving ashore earlier than in past are attributed to, inadequate career progression avenues onboard, family commitments of the younger officers, increased availability of shore-based opportunities for the mariners and prevailing working conditions on board (Barnett et al., 2006).

2.7 Challenges impacting seafarers

Seafarers are a unique occupational group who are in their work place during working and non-working periods. Seafarers remain isolated on board with exposure to shipboard factors like noise, vibrations, chemicals, weather, inadequate medical amenities which affects their physical and mental wellbeing (Rinne et al., 2020). Lack of shore leave, prolonged contract periods, inadequate communication with family and friends including reduced social environment onboard also have a detrimental impact on seafarer's well-being (Pauksztat et al., 2020; Slišković et al., 2020).

Fatigue is a combined result of work stress, job pressures encountered onboard, reduced manning levels, prolonged working hours, shift patterns and schedules resulting in disrupted circadian rhythms and sleep deprivation (Abaya et al., 2018).

Recording of rest and work hours are mandated as per Maritime Labour Convention (MLC, 2006). However, research demonstrates that seafarers adjust their rest hour violations for fear of these violations appearing as non-conformities during inspections, job insecurity, being subservient to the company's interest even if they are in contravention of the conventions which are in place to safeguard their welfare (Baumler et al., 2021).

A compromised physical and mental health, not only diminishes the working efficiency of the seafarers but also has a prolonged effects on their general well-being and in some instances may even lead to suicide (Sampson & Ellis, 2020).

Principal reason for seafarers becoming disenchanted with seafaring as a profession are factors that affect their mental well-being which adds to their anxiety, depression (Carrera-Arce et al., 2022).

2.8 Effect of the COVID – 19 pandemic on seafarers

Seafarers as an occupational group were regarded as potentially vulnerable to mental health issues even before the onset of COVID – 19. Considering the way industry is structured, coupled with seafarers' employment attributes and business priorities, has an influence on health, safety and well-being of its workforce (Walters & Bailey, 2013).

Concerns regarding mental health and wellbeing of seafarers have received a fresh impetus since the outbreak of the pandemic. Considerable delays in declaring them key workers by national authorities had put them in an unparalleled exacting situation (Carrera-Arce et al., 2022). The pandemic exacerbated some of the existing issues impacting seafarers welfare by infringing on their rights established under MLC, 2006 (Hebbar & Mukesh, 2020). The period saw an 40 % increase of complaints related to MLC non-compliance (AMSA, 2020).

The effect of pandemic was particularly severe on the seafarers as they faced difficulties during these times ranging from difficulty in repatriation due to travel restrictions and contract extensions, health concerns onboard, anxiety related to family's well-being and general feeling of culpability, impact of isolation and

loneliness on board, physical as well as emotional fatigue and financial implication for being at home for a prolonged time (Kaptan & Olgun Kaptan, 2021).

Researchers have observed high prevalence of anxiety and depressive symptoms including Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) amongst seafarers during the pandemic. However, even though there have been instances of seafarers committing suicide, not many studies have been undertaken to understand the mental health issues of seafarers due to COVID -19 (Baygi et al., 2022).

As per ILO (2020), during the pandemic, the governments failed in their duties required as per international law to provide basic minimum standards to the seafarers with respect to healthcare, repatriation, shore leave.

2.9 Trend of shortened career at sea and relation with country's economy

As career at sea means sacrifice of work and leisure time, it ceases to be an attractive career proposition with increase in a country's GDP, phenomenon experienced by seafarers of developed economies (Glen, 2008). The opportunity cost of a career at sea no longer remains attractive with younger generation preferring working in shore based jobs due to comparative salaries and the freedom, the shore job offers ((Yuen et al., 2018). Informatively, Indian economy has shown continuous growth in last two decades barring the COVID-19 pandemic period. Growth of India economy in last twenty-five years, annual percentage increase of its GDP is depicted in Figure 1 (World Bank, 2022).

Figure 1. Growth of Indian Economy (1995-2021)
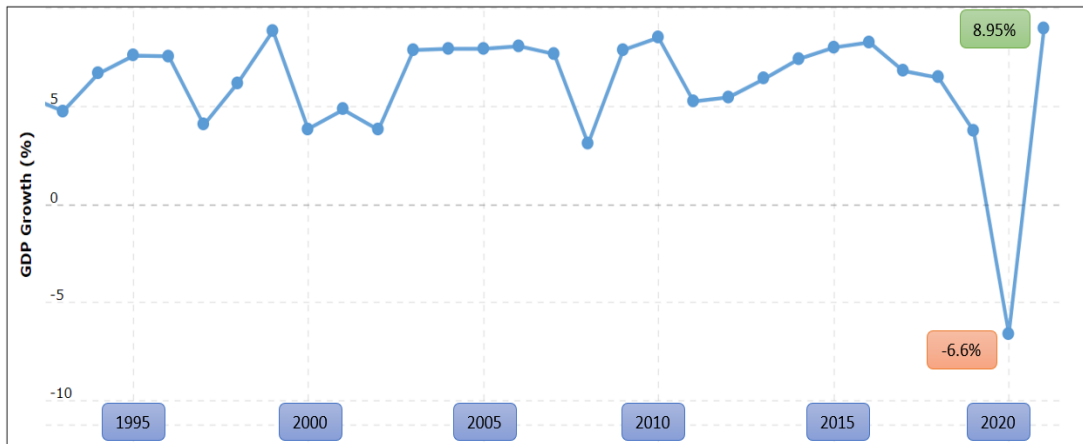
Note. Adapted from World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, statistical data presentation for annual GDP growth of India for year 1995-2021, (https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2021&locations=IN&start=1995).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

As per Kothari (2004), "A research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem". Choice of most appropriate research methodology remains critical, and is a key in attaining the aims and objectives of the research (Gray, 2013). This chapter starts with a discussion on the research approach, selection criteria of participants, negotiation process used for engaging participants to know the issues which the study largely aims to understand (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Research process employed for the study
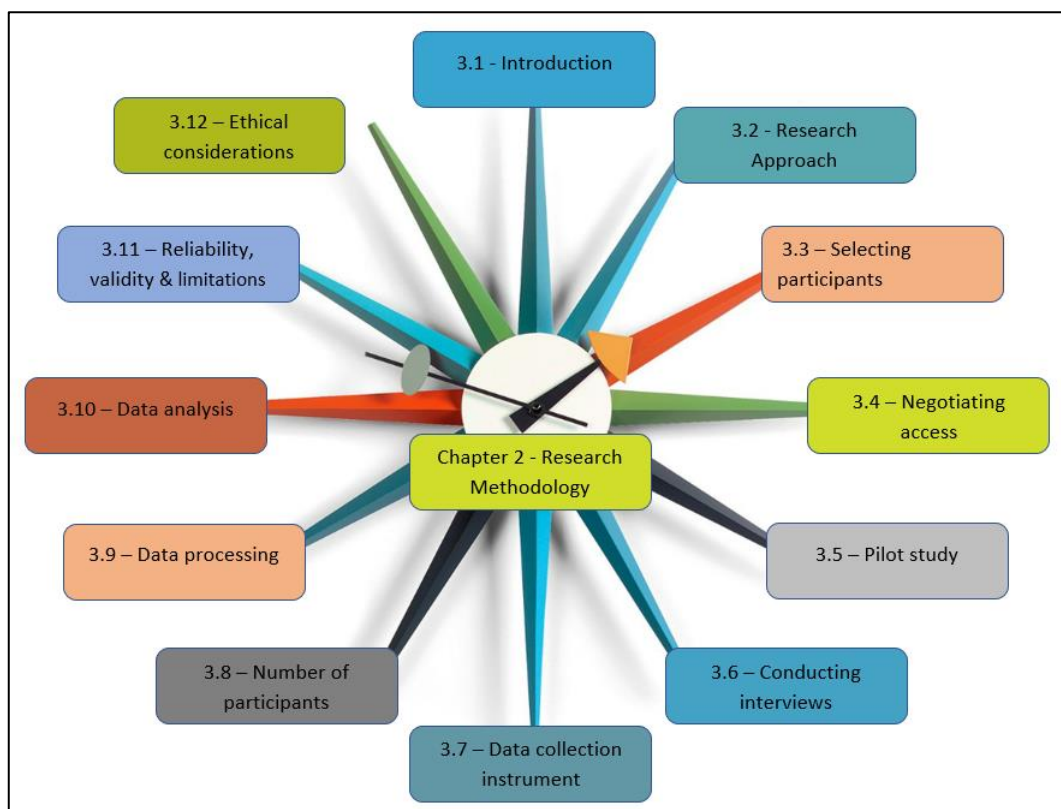
The chapter further explains the data processing and analysis followed by justification on the validity and reliability of the method adopted for undertaking this study and

potential limitations of the results. Finally, the chapter also provides and illustrates ethical considerations employed during the study.

3.2 Research approach

The research approach constitutes a research paradigm that defines the research methodology and subsequently determines the data collection method (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Research approach employed for the study
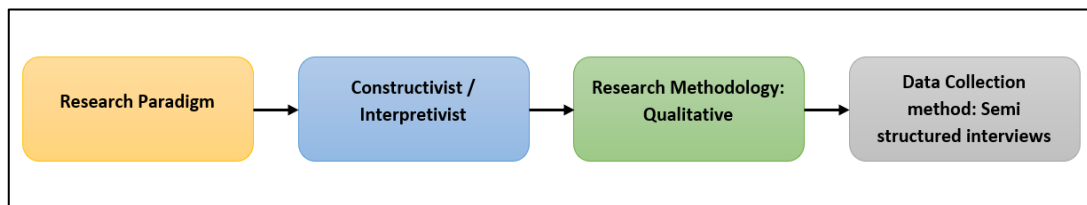
Note. Adapted from "Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and critical research paradigms", by James Scotland, 2012, English Language Teaching, 5(9), p.9–16, (https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n9p9).

As the phenomenon being researched is subjective and has not been studied earlier in Indian context and about which relatively little is known, qualitative research remains the most appropriate choice in such cases. It also remains a preferred method to gain newer perspectives on issues which have been studied in the past (Strauss & Cobin, 1990).

The results will vary with individuals, and the reasons expressed will be as many as the number of Individuals (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The subjective views and experiences of the seafarers will present multiple realities, which will form the groundwork of data from where the researcher will extract his inferences (Scotland, 2012). To achieve this, semi structured interviews with guiding questions were conducted as same is suitable for conceptualizing thoughts and experiences and it is also expected to furnish new knowledge and fresh perspectives (Mason, 2018).

Since each individual has his own perception of reality, subjective interaction with the seafarer will help gain access to his perceptions and unravel them (Guba-Egon-G, 1990). As the meaning of the same phenomenon is constructed differently by individuals, it will present different views and opinions which will necessitate considering numerous truths and presenting them co-constructively (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). An open-minded approach by the researcher remains the most suitable way to evaluate realities as presented by the interviewee.

3.2.1 Qualitative research methodology and its appropriateness

To understand the underlying reasons for some Indian seafarers not looking at seafaring as a long-term career about which little is researched, a qualitative approach over quantitative was chosen as the research method. This method accepts the views shared by the participants based on their experiences and first-hand knowledge, which permits seeking and understanding multiple realities (Hilal & Alabri, 2013).

There is a growing realization amongst maritime researchers that human elements of seafaring experiences have inherent difficulty in exploring and representing them statistically in tables (Sampson & Schroeder, 2006). As per career researchers, quantitative methods seldom permit participants to elaborate on their professional experiences, thereby necessitating use of methods which permit exchange of qualitative forms of expression (Arthur et al., 2005).

3.2.2 Data collection method: Semi-structured interview

Semi structured interviews with guiding questions (Appendix 1) were used in the study which facilitates the researcher to "enter into a dialogue with the interviewee", facilitating greater comprehension of their perspective (May, 2011). It also allows the researcher flexibility in probing the participants (Miles & Gilbert, 2005) and the

questions can be revised to address areas relevant to the participants, and better understand the phenomenon under study (Gray, 2013).

3.3 Selecting the participants

An excellent participant in qualitative research will be the one who has first-hand experience of the phenomenon under study and can provide data to further the research (Qureshi, 2018). Hence, a mix of seafarers who had adequate experience across different ranks and type ships[4], had sailed during COVID-19 pandemic or had quit sea in the last two years were approached randomly using researchers contacts. Social media networks were used for initial identification and final shortlisting of the candidates; this included, among other, professional WhatsApp groups of seafarers and superintendents. The participants included 6 Masters (one female), 3 Chief Engineers, 2 Junior officers (one female) and 1 rating. The sample size which could provide the best possibility to attain data saturation[5] was thoughtfully shortlisted by the researcher.

3.4 Negotiating access

The most important phase in conducting semi structured interviews is initial access to the participants which invariably is a slow process requiring perseverance and care over time (Benjumea & Carmen, 2014). The researchers own seafaring background, time spent as a marine superintendent and in the Indian Maritime Administration, did facilitate some ease in access to participants and conducting interviews once the shortlisting was completed. Twenty participants which will corroborate reliability in data collection were shortlisted.

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[4] Participants had sailed on Tankers (Crude & Product), Cargo, Bulk carriers and Container ships.

[5] Data saturation is said to be attained when sufficient information is available to replicate the research (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Walker, 2012), feasibility to obtain newer information is reached, and feasibility for further coding may not be possible (Guest et al., 2006).

As per the prevailing University norms, prior consent of the Research Ethics Committee (REC) was taken for conducting the interviews (Appendix 2). The participants were approached and were adequately briefed on the scope and purpose of study. The dates and time of the interviews were adjusted to the convenience of the interviewee. Consent of each participant was obtained through the consent form.

It was observed that even though participants agreed to be part of the pilot study, they remained skeptical regarding any worthwhile outcome of the study, as the belief that welfare of seafarers remained very low on priority of stakeholders remained deeply ingrained in their thought process.

The viewpoint of women seafarers was also considered to provide greater and wider depth to the study. To have a balanced perspective, the women seafarers included a sailing seafarer in junior rank and a Master Mariner who had quit sea career in the last eight months.

Finally, 12 participants were interviewed as against 20 initially shortlisted through the means as enumerated above.

3.5 Pilot test

At initial stages of the interview process, two participants were interviewed as part of pilot study to determine the efficacy and accuracy of semi structured online interviews and effectiveness of the electronic means used for preserving the data. The means used were observed suitable for the interview process and the process was used for the remaining participants as well. The participants interviewed during the pilot tests were also included in the main study.

3.6 Data collection process - Semi-structured interview

The interview process commenced in May 2022 and culminated in August 2022 with

seafarers and professionals from diverse backgrounds interviewed during this period. The interviews on an average lasted for about 45 minutes to one hour.

There were all in total 12 online interviews done using online zoom platform as majority of the participants were in India, with the data additionally being recorded on electronic medium as a backup to the primary data stored.

The interview guide consisted of questions on the participants particulars followed by their choice of seafaring as a career and reasons for remaining at sea (Appendix 1). Further questions lead participants to discuss what kept them satisfied or unsatisfied while working on board and the reasons for looking for an alternate career. Finally, the questionnaire concludes with the impact of COVID-19 in influencing their decision to quit sea and search for an alternative career.

Before each interview, rapport and trust were developed with the participants by engaging in a candid conversation to make the environment congenial for exchange and free flow of thoughts which were critical for the study.

Figure 4 Stages of semi structured interview
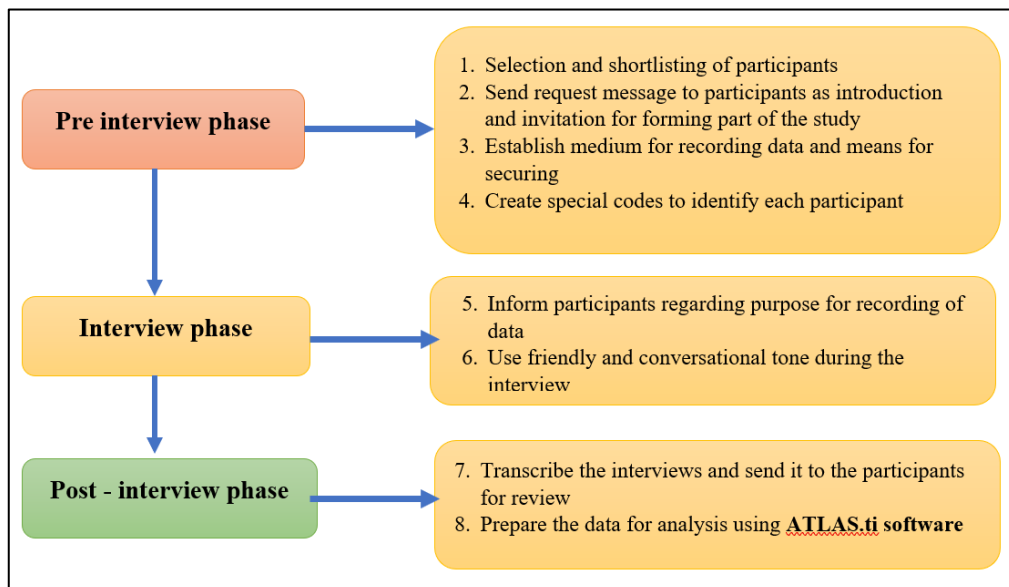
The terms under the consent form were briefed and participants were informed regarding the time when the recording was commenced and the time it was stopped.

The candidates were encouraged to indicate their responses unassisted but carefully; the views expressed were listened carefully by the researcher. This process helped in building trust allowing participants to know that their views are being valued (Seidman, 2006).

The interview questions were carefully prepared and validated by faculty with experience in maritime domain and a psychologist.

3.7 Data collection instrument

The researcher interacted with all the participants one on one for data collection. Following a formal approval from the participants, the interview was recorded to facilitate the transcription and coding (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). In addition, the researcher recorded written data during, before and after the formal interview time.

3.8 Number of participants

Considering that this work is exploratory and limited time was available, a total of 12 interviews were conducted. As per Marshall et al. (2013), in thematic code prevalence in qualitative studies, an acceptable measure is when Cronbach's alpha[6] 0.70 is reached, which generally happens within 12 interviews. The researcher ceased the interview process when a certain level of conceptually significant and practically worthwhile saturation (Saunders et al., 2018) was attained and there existed fewer opportunities in identifying further themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The difficulty, the

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[6] "*Expressed as a number between 0 to 1, it was developed by "Lee Cronbach" to provide a measure of internal consistency of a test or scale to ensure its validity in research or examination*" (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

novelty and the exploratory nature of the work allow to draw initial finding with this limited number. However, to enhance the validity of the research, additional interviews and focus group discussions should be undertaken.

3.9 Data processing

Transcription was facilitated using the online tool "otter". The software does provide a fairly reliable level of transcription, however since none of the participants were native English speakers, the entire recordings had to be verified and adjusted according to original data. Usually, this process took about 6-8 hours per interview. After the transcription was complete, the draft version was sent to the participants for approval.

3.10 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of collecting large amount of data and reducing it to make a sense of them (Bryman, 2016).

Figure 5 Coding of themes in Atlas.ti 22 software
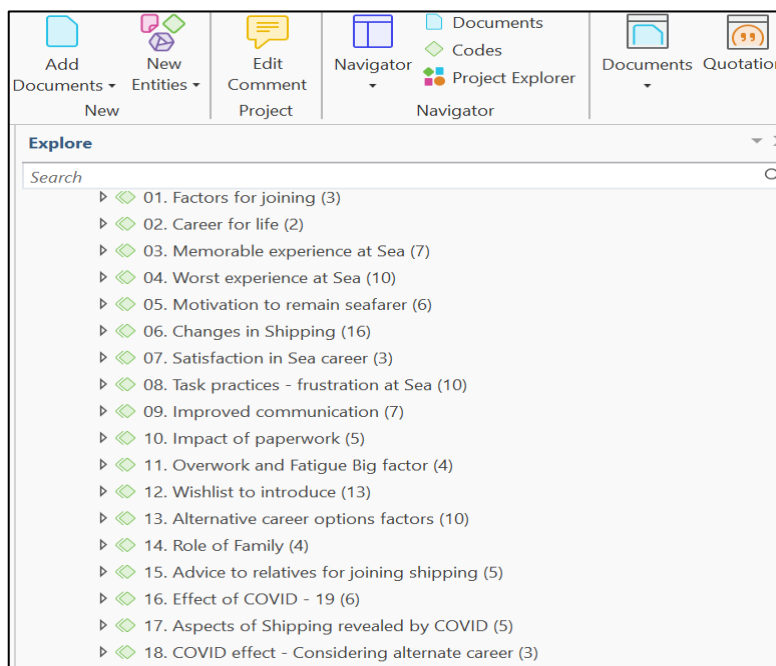
On receipt of final reviewed transcripts from the participants, the data analysis was done using "Atlas.ti 22" software (Figure 5). The software allows data to be coded as per themes for individual transcripts. As the data was exhaustive, each question was analyzed simultaneously for all participants to keep track of emerging themes. The coding process essentially involved, identifying themes, labelling data texts in sentences, as some of the sentences also had multiple themes, the sentences were marked accordingly which formed the cornerstone for analysis of data (Lune & Berg, 2016).

The researcher utilized numerical expressions to make a more precise count of factors being described by the participants, which was helpful especially when the participants cited more than one reason for a phenomenon (Maxwell, 2010). Coding as per themes also helped presenting vivid presentation of tables presented in Chapter 4 which highlights multiple responses of participants.

3.11 Reliability, Validity and Limitations

To attain a level of trustworthiness, the structuralist methods adopted by the researcher should be put through the criterion of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Guba, 1981).

The extent to which the collected data and its eventual analysis remain authentic and worthy of trust are a measure of credibility criterion and largely depends on the research paradigm of the researcher (Rose & Johnson, 2020). To achieve this, the findings were socially constructed based on the first-hand views expressed by the participants.

The dependability of the data is corroborated if the data analyzed results in drawing the same conclusions under similar conditions. To ensure that other researchers

engaged in a similar study obtain similar outcomes, text of the data were double or multi coded as described in Section 3.10 (Boréus & Bergström, 2017).

The researcher chose participants with diversity in rank, sailing experience, type of ships and companies to have a multiple perspective. As per Wertz (1986), the multiple perspectives of the participants are essential for reliability of data even if they are dissimilar in facts or context which formed the basis of confirmability criterion. Invariably all the participants agreed that life on board has undergone changes, more often not to their liking, even though the reasons varied.

As the study is largely contextual and focuses on a certain phenomenon, the transferability of this data to another context will remain challenging and may not be possible (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

The researcher being a seafarer himself and also having experienced the phenomenon under study first hand may display visible prejudice towards the area of research which has the potential to influence the inferences drawn from the study (Smith & Noble, 2014). This maybe either active or passive, and can occur at data collection stage and also has the potential to infiltrate the data analysis and interpretation stage which presents a threat to the legitimacy of the research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). Also, the data collection may also be affected by participant's bias as the views expressed are subjective and cannot be independently verified if the data provided is not in line with their actual experience (Smith, & Noble, 2014).

Limitations: Owing to availability of limited time during the research period, novelty of work, exploratory nature of the research at this stage and with available resources, the number of participants were kept limited to twelve. Additional number of participants would have given an even broader representation of the reasons which the research largely aimed to study.

3.12 Ethical considerations

As the study involved interaction with participants, the question of ethical concerns in data collection are omnipresent and could emerge anytime during the study (Lune & Berg, 2016). To this effect, WMU protocol form, semi structured interview questionnaire and protocol form were forwarded to the REC in April 2022 and approval obtained. Once the WMU REC approval was obtained, a data collection process was initiated.

The researcher ensured sanctity of the data collected from the participants against unauthorized access or sharing. The identity of the participants was kept confidential during the entire period of study. Any reference to any organization or place by the participant was obliterated to maintain anonymity. Further, names/affiliation data were always kept separated from the transcripts.

Chapter 4– Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the results of semi-structured interviews of the participants with an aim to providing answers to the primary and secondary research questions. The responses from the participants were transcribed verbatim and the transcriptions were coded. The process of transcription along with referring to notes made during the interviews was helpful in gaining familiarity with the data gathered and ensured accuracy (Schilling, 2006). Each of the 12 transcripts were uploaded in qualitative research tool 'ATLAS.ti' for identifying themes, which were then coded.

To reach any worthwhile conclusion, it is important that the phenomenon is systematically analysed by interacting with the seafarers to understand how shipping has evolved in their perspective, and how it fared vis-à-vis their initial expectations, since they began their career. Results presented in this Section are supported by direct quotes extracted from the interviews. Additional quotes from the participants under each subsection are in Appendix 3.

4.2 Sociodemographic data

The study benefitted from the sociodemographic patterns and diversity of the seafarers shortlisted for the research. Twelve participants from various parts of India and from different organizations were interviewed to have as heterogeneous sample as possible. The age profile of participants ranged from 27 years to 47 years, with two females also forming part of the participant list, allowing a wider and deeper perspective of the phenomenon being researched. The details of the participants are as per Table 2.

Table 2 Sociodemographic details of participants

Sr. No.	Codes	Rank	Sea time (yrs.)	Time since last sailed	Age	Sex	Present job	Marital status	Children
1	Capt. 1	Master	25	1.5 years	47	Male	Marine Surveyor	Married	Yes
2	Capt. 2	Master	25	Sailing	43	Male	Seafarer	Married	Yes
3	Capt. 3	Master	24	Sailing	44	Male	Seafarer	Separated	Yes
4	Capt. 4	Master	16	6 months	35	Female	Looking for job	Married	Yes
5	Capt. 5	Master	22	3 months	40	Male	Marine Supdt.	Married	Yes
6	Capt. 6	Master	18	2 months	37	Male	Training Supdt.	Married	Yes
7	CHENG 1	Chief Engineer	19	10 months	45	Male	Looking for job	Married	No
8	CHENG 2	Chief Engineer	16	1.9 years	36	Male	Technical Supdt.	Married	Yes
9	CHENG 3	Chief Engineer	17	1 month	39	Male	Technical Supdt.	Married	Yes
10	2nd Off. 1	Second Officer	7	Sailing	27	Female	Seafarer	Single	No
11	2nd Off. 2	Second Officer	12	1 year	34	Male	Looking for job	Single	No
12	Rating 1	Rating	18	10 months	41	Male	Trying business	Married	Yes

Of the 12 participants, 3 were active seafarers, 3 trying for shore opportunities and had not sailed for more than 10 months and the remaining 6 had left a career at sea within the last two years.

4.3 Seafaring as a career

As was the case with this study with Indian Seafarers, to better understand the reasons for attrition amongst the seafarers, the foremost consideration remained the identification of initial motivating factors for people to take up seafaring as a career and how they subsequently managed their expectations over time (Cahoon et al., 2014).

4.3.1 Motivation to join

The principal attraction/motivating factor for taking up seafaring as a career remained (a) financial stability at an early age, (b) travelling and adventure associated with the profession, (c) family or community influence and (d) growing up near a coastal city (Table 3).

Table 3 Motivation to join shipping career

Sr. No.	Factors for joining seafaring career	No. of Participants*
1	Financial stability at an early age	10
2	Adventure and travelling	06
3	Family or community influence	03
4	Growing up near coastal city	01

*One participant can cite multiple factors

In a developing country like India, a career offering better financial stability at an early age appeared to be a natural choice amongst the participants; also, considering different geographical locations the participants hailed from, some of those locations had limited career choices as compared to others (Appendix 3).

> *"The reason for choosing the seafaring career was to earn good money [...]" (Capt-6)*

> *"I hail from a small town which didn't have much in terms of higher education unlike today, so we were left with two options, either Defence or Merchant navy." (Capt. 3)*

The perception amongst the participants that seafaring was an adventourous career and will entail novelty of travelling to different places was an important reason for taking up this career.

"I just chose this field because it is challenging and adventurous." (Capt. 4)

Another reason cited by the seafarers was influence of family members or someone known in family circles or nearby community who was already in shipping industry.

"I got influenced from one of my neighbours in shipping, he used to say I'm coming from US, UK and all that sounded good and it made an impact on my life and I decided to be like him, to see the world." (Rating 1)

Growing up in a coastal city and family member working in an industry where one had some knowledge about shipping was another reason for taking up this career.

"My father used to work in the dockyard and from him, I came to know about shipping." (CHENG 3)

4.3.2 Career for life – initial perception

As discussed in Chapter 2, career for life is a phenomenon which has seen a tactical shift in last two decades (Table 4).

Table 4 Career for life- initial perception

Sr. No.	Career for life	No. of Participants
1	Yes	09
2	No, as a stepping stone to do something ashore	03

The majority of the participants, when they started their sea career, were very clear that it was to be a career for life (Appendix 3).

"When I entered, I was supposed to stay until I retire." (2ⁿᵈ *Off. 2)*

"I considered sailing as a lifelong engagement." (CHENG 3)

On the other hand, three participants immediately considered seafaring as a stepping stone for settling ashore. However, the decision to stop may be delayed due to social and financial pressure as suggested by Capt. 6.

> *"I never saw this as a long-time career. That was my first impression when I completed my first vessel. However, that stigma and societal pressure of not being able to withstand pressure and leaving the sea career is the reason why I remained." (Capt. 6)*

4.4 Decision to remain at Sea

4.4.1 Experiences at Sea

The participants had mixed experiences while they were in their sea career, some of which were pleasant and memorable while others not so. Exercising professional judgement and displaying competence remained the most memorable experience followed by visiting new places, promotions (taking over command of the vessel), sailing with family, parties on board which were more frequent earlier. One of the participants was involved in rescue of seafarers at sea and recounted their rescue as a memorable experience (Table 5).

Primarily, seafarers' memorable experiences related to professionalism and collective experiences associated with ship conduct, management and operations.

Table 5 Memorable experiences at sea

Sr. No.	Memorable experiences	No. of Participants*
1	Exercising Professional judgement and competence	06
2	Visiting new places	04
3	Onboard social interaction	02
4	Sailing with family onboard	02
5	Promotions / taking over command of the vessel	02

One participant can cite multiple factors

Importance given to overcoming risks, solving complicated problems with available resources, having a career without major accident and participating in rescue operations demonstrate the importance, seafarers place on professionalism. It also demonstrates the self-satisfaction of being able to make good decisions in a dynamic and complex environment. The pride of assuming responsibilities for own decisions is also highlighted by certain participants (Appendix 3).

> *"I managed to avoid grounding of the vessel through my professional judgement, even with a pilot onboard in a river passage, is one of the proudest and memorable moments of my command and seafaring career." (Capt. 5)*

On a different spectrum but still within collective experiences, certain participants highlighted the importance of wellbeing onboard when having their family or/and with having friends onboard.

> *"The best experience at sea was when I was sailing as a chief mate along with my family." (Capt. 6)*

"Some of the parties onboard when there were no dry ship policies, [...], we had memorable parties and people used to really enjoy, there was lot of camaraderie during those days." (Capt. 1)

Furthermore, certain participants highlighted memorable moments that are purely individual experiences such as travel and promotion.

"Traveling to different countries around the world, interaction with locals and exposure to varying degree of experiences was all very memorable." (Capt. 2)

"One of the best experiences was, the time I was getting promoted from third to second officer." (2ⁿᵈ Off. 2)

The unpleasant experience for the seafarers included dealing with medical emergencies onboard, facing inclement weather, transit through piracy areas, excessive terminal inspections, and feeling of loneliness and helplessness. One participant also reported a case of suicide onboard and death of a family member as among the most unpleasant experiences (Table 6).

Table 6 Unpleasant experiences at sea

Sr. No.	Unpleasant experiences	No. of Participants*
1	Medical emergency on board	04
2	Inclement weather	03
3.	Transit through piracy areas	03
4	Excessive terminal inspections	03
5	Getting stuck onboard due to COVID	02
6	Loneliness and helplessness	02
7	Limited opportunity for women seafarer	01
8	Suicide on board / death of family member while onboard	01

One participant can cite multiple factors

Additionally, women seafarers mentioned their difficulties in the sector, specifically limited job options. Finally, the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic and its related restrictions have seriously affected certain seafarers.

Medical emergencies and death deeply affect seafarers.

> *"Worst experiences I had was suicide case on board. One of my junior engineers was facing some family issues and though I tried counselling him but I could not make out the extent of depression he was going through. One fine morning, he was found missing. [...] he could have survived if I and the ship staff had taken more precautions." (Capt. 3)*

> *"There have been times when there were injuries on board, there had been a medical emergency on board a ship requiring evacuation which I can recount are the worst experiences for a seafarer." (Capt. 2)*

Another detrimental impact of working at sea relates to the impact of external factors uncontrollable by ship's crew such as heavy weather and piracy. Such event affect both their bodies and their minds.

> *"It was a cyclone 400 miles away, but the condition was so worse that we were told to be ready for abandoning ship. We were ready by wearing life jackets, that was the worst experience." (Rating 1)*

> *"While transiting the red sea our vessel was followed by 10 to 12 small skiffs. Captain raised alarm, we went running on deck, started the fire pump, and then we managed to escape from that area. Those days vessel did not carry armed guards, it was a bad experience as far as the piracy attack is concerned." (CHENG 3)*

Continuous inspections also affect seafarers' wellbeing and add to individual and collective stress.

> *"[…] you have to first complete the inspections at the terminal and there are, internal/external audits, annuals, vetting inspection or Port state control (PSC) inspections. By the time inspection is completed, its either time to sail out or one is exhausted. Every port it is just more stress." (Capt. 6)*

Isolation at sea and distance from family and friends affect seafarers' wellbeing. Inability to support families when needed generates frustration and sense of culpability.

> *"When you are facing some challenges at home and you are not with your family, the feeling of helplessness sets in." (CHENG 2)*

Being a woman in male-dominated environment also signifies fighting against prejudice.

> *"When I was switching companies, I realized that the job opportunities for female seafarers are far less than what a male seafarer would have", the realization I feel was an unpleasant experience." (2nd Off. 1)*

Finally, specific events such as COVID-19 and its consequences on seafarers have been reported by those who experienced it and for one of them it was the worst experience in his sea career.

"Getting stuck on board during COVID-19 with absolutely no indication of sign off and whether my crew and I will ever sign off, is probably the worst experience I've had at sea." (Capt. 1)

4.4.2 Motivation to remain a seafarer

The average seafaring career length of the participants was 18.25 years (details in Table 2).

Principal motivations to remain at sea are the following for the sample (Table 7).

Table 7 Motivation to remain a seafarer

Sr. No.	Motivation to remain a seafarer	No. of Participants*
1	Monetary considerations	08
2	Career growth	05
3	Professional pride and accomplishments	04
4	Job flexibility and option to spend more time with family	03

One participant can cite multiple factors

Overall, the main motivations are professional income, career and professionalism. Monetary consideration by far remains the primary motive to remain at sea followed by possibility of career growth and professional accomplishments (Appendix 3).

"First one was to earn the money and second was to become a master which motivated me to remain seafarer." (Capt. 6)

"Pride of commanding a vessel where I am in absolute command, the decision maker, […] motivated me." (Capt. 1)

One seafarer highlighted the freedom during off-sea periods that he may organize his life.

> *"There was flexibility in when we choose to work and when we choose to remain at home, [...] It's much easier to plan holidays and that flexibility gave enough time to rest and recuperate for months at home." (CHENG 1)*

4.4.3 Perceived changes in shipping and its impact

The perceived changes in shipping felt by the seafarers since they joined shipping ranged from (a) increased workload and pressure, (b) increased paperwork, (c) increased inspections at ports and terminals, (d) reduced manpower, (e) restrictions on shore leave, (f) no socializing on board, (g) lack of respect for seafarers, harassment and bullying at ports and growing criminalization of seafarers, (h) dry-ship policies and (i) new regulations implemented in shipping during this period (Table 8).

Negative impacts of change on seafarers' life clearly outnumbered the positive changes. Few seafarers also reported improvement in equipment, safety culture and improvement in salaries.

The increase in work pressure and paperwork, compounded by ever reducing manpower onboard appears to be the most significant change perceived by the participants in the shipping industry affecting them (Appendix 3).

> *"The one thing that has impacted work or personal life onboard is increasing workload, which is increasing every day and the manpower is reducing." (2nd Off. 1)*

Table 8 Perceived changes in shipping since joining

Sr. No.	Perceived changes in shipping since joining	No. of Participants*
	Workload and Pressure	
1	Increased workload and pressure	12
2	Increased paperwork	12
3	Reduced manpower	12
	Psychosocial	
4	Increased inspections at ports and terminals	12
5	Implementation of new regulations	04
	Personal & Social	
6	Restrictions on shore leave or no shore leave	12
7	No socializing onboard	08
7	Dry ship policies	02
	Psychological	
8	Lack of respect for seafarers, harassment and bullying at ports and growing criminalization of seafarers	08
	Positive changes in Shipping	
9	Improvement in equipment's onboard	03
10	Improved safety culture	01
11	Improvement in salaries	01

*One participant can cite multiple factors

On a level with the increased workload and psychological pressure, having nearly similar effects is the enhanced inspection and monitoring regime which has resulted in increased frequency of inspections at ports and terminals.

> *"Every port someone or the other visits the ship for inspections, be it some auditor, inspector PSC, vetting inspections or some superintendent visit etc. Every visit entail preparation […] ship staff gets overloaded and it is never ending." (CHENG 3)*

"Every time something or the other […regulation/work] is coming, and it's never ending, new regulation of the Ballast water treatment, now ballast water treatment plant operation, it's a tedious job with no additional manpower." (CHENG 3)

Among other notable changes felt by the participants are the restrictions imposed on seafarer's shore leave, implementation of dry ship policies and reduced manpower. These have affected social interactions on board and have resulted in loneliness with fewer avenues for seafarers to de stress affecting their overall well-being.

"There is no longer life on board, ship has become more like a factory now. With no shore leave, the seafarers are stuck for months with no respite and no way of letting it go. ISPS code was really the one which broke the back of the seafarers, it was supposed to secure the seafarers but has ended up jailing them." (Capt.2)

"There is no socializing on board due to reduced manpower which only adds to loneliness." (Capt. 4)

Majority of the participants perceived that criminalization, lack of empathy towards seafarers, instances of harassment and bullying by authorities are rising and this triggers a feeling of helplessness amongst the seafarers leading to low self-esteem and poor quality of well-being.

"There are growing instances of criminalization of seafarers where maritime incidents are treated at par with true crimes, there have been instances of seafarers languishing in jails which makes seafarers feel very vulnerable and insecure." (CHENG 1)

"Seafarers face constant harassment from shore authorities during sign on and sign off and also during port calls." (Capt. 4)

Few participants perceive that equipment fitted onboard, safety standards and salaries have improved vis-à-vis the time they joined.

"Considering changes to equipment in shipping, it has really helped out especially with ECDIS, corrections have become quicker which has really helped the Mariners and for me it was a good change." (Capt. 6)

4.5 Job satisfaction while at Sea

4.5.1 Factors contributing to job satisfaction

The following factors were cited as contributing to job satisfaction by the participants (Table 9).

Table 9 Factors contributing towards job satisfaction

Sr. No.	Factors contributing towards job satisfaction	No. of Participants*
1	Discharging professional duties	12
2	Monetary remuneration	05
3	Travelling to different countries	04

One participant can cite multiple factors

Once more, professionalism and pride are highlighted followed by remuneration and travel. This is in line with previous statements.

"Whenever I am able to solve any problem on board related to machinery or welfare of my crew, that feeling is always very satisfying." (CHENG 2)

"A good salary reaching your bank account on time […] sense of satisfaction." *(Capt. 1)*

"Travelling was my hobby and here I am getting paid for travelling." *(Capt. 3)*

4.5.2 Tasks/ Practices which affected job satisfaction

The following factors were cited as detrimental to job satisfaction by the participants (Table 10).

Table 10 Factors contributing towards inadequate job satisfaction

Sr. No.	Factors contributing towards inadequate job satisfaction	No. of Participants*
	Workload & Pressure	
1	Excessive paperwork	10
2	Frequent audits and inspections	06
3	Inadequate support from office, control from office	04
4	Inadequate crew quality	01
	Psychosocial	
5	Lack of empathy for seafarers	05
	Personal and Social	
6	Restricted shore leave, travel restrictions and quarantine	03
7	Uncertainty regarding sign off	02

One participant can cite multiple factors

Excessive paperwork, frequent audits and inspections, and inadequate shore/office support leading to increased workload and psychological pressure are the most cited reasons leading to poor job satisfaction levels on board. Incidentally, the majority of these reasons are also the ones the participants cited for perceived changes in the

shipping industry since they joined; which is an indicator of gradual decline in factors contributing to job satisfaction at sea (Appendix 3).

> *"Because of the amount of workload [...], there were things I could not do. Sometimes I do things only on paper and not in reality. I know that I'm not doing the right thing, and that sometimes got quite frustrating." (2nd Off. 2)*

> *"Frequent inspections at ports are another very frustrating experience and every port call is like appearing for an exam." (Capt. 4)*

> *"Decision making is more of a shore-based phenomenon now. Ships are being controlled remotely by shore and master is just a rubber stamp on board." (Capt. 3)*

Lack of empathy and disregard for seafarers by the employers and authorities was also cited by nearly half of the participants. This perception has gained traction as indicated in Section 4.4.2 and has a detrimental impact on morale of the crew affecting job performance on board.

> *"Sign off being treated like dirt by office even in case of emergency situations was something which has always been disappointing." (Capt. 1)*

Other factors that affect job satisfaction and performance on board include increasing restrictions on crew shore leave, uncertainty regarding sign-on and sign-off resulting in a stay onboard beyond contractual periods, difficult quarantine requirements in different countries that restricts travel and hinders timely relief.

"The shore leave is really restricted in many ports [...] restrictions are one of major factor which led to my resignation from the sailing." (Capt. 6)

4.5.3 Impact of improvement in telecommunication on job satisfaction

The response from the participants regarding improvement in telecommunication and introduction of newer communication equipment over the last two decades was mixed. Positive views were expressed with the new equipment facilitating communication with shore, providing medical advice and support to solve machinery problems. On the contrary, participants complained about interference from office in ship conduct, imposition of decisions taken ashore, excessive communication and excessive time spent by crew on internet (Table 11).

Table 11 Effect of improvement in communication on job satisfaction

Sr. No.	Effect of new communication equipment on Job satisfaction	No. of Participants*
	Workload and Pressure	
1	Interference from office	11
2	Excessive communication and flooding of queries	07
3	Shipboard decisions taken from shore	03
	Positive changes with new communication equipment	
4	Ease of communication with office	06
5	Solving machinery problems on board	03
6	Helpful in case of medical emergencies	02
	Social	
7	Excessive time on internet by crew	01

One participant can cite multiple factors

Changes attributed to improvement in telecommunication which haven't been very productive are captured on quotes below (Appendix 3).

"There is constant monitoring of the vessel, you need to take permission from office which has resulted in ships being virtually run from the shore. With advent of technology the power has shifted ashore and I think this is where we have failed." (Capt. 6)

"Continuous flooding of mails makes it difficult to concentrate on other shipboard routine jobs [...] the non-essential communication has increased and has made ship staff's life more complicated." (Capt. 3)

"Calls from the office at odd hours when there is time zone difference are at times not respectful of the rest hours of the ship's crew." (Capt. 5)

Positive changes attributed to improvement in telecommunication are reflected in the quotes below.

"There is an advantage of having technology, we can refer to a lot of things online for fixing problems which was not the case earlier." (CHENG 1)

"Communication will always remain the key to getting any speedy resolution to any situation." (Capt. 2)

"Taking medical advice has become easier now, one can do video calls, and you can get the doctors to see you and actually find out what is going on, and I can say communication has helped." (Capt. 5)

However, surfing internet for prolonged duration is also affecting the crew performance with additional pitfall of reduced interaction amongst already depleted ship staff.

"The crew is connected to the family, to an extent it helps. The problem arises when they are sacrificing their rest hours to surf the net and they are not coming to work very fresh. This has also reduced social interactions on board." (CHENG 1)

4.5.4 Effect of paperwork on job satisfaction

Overwhelming number of participants stated that paperwork volume increased with detrimental effects on workload, priorities and disturbance in 'real' work. The paperwork does not always meet reality. Seafarers are forced to adjust paperwork which stresses and frustrates certain seafarers. Only, two participants supported that enhanced paperwork contributes to safety by increasing awareness through checklist compliance culture (Table 12) (Appendix 3).

Table 12 Effect of increased paperwork on job satisfaction

Sr. No.	Effect of increased paperwork on Job satisfaction	No. of Participants*
1	Increased workload	12
2	Deviation from 'real' work	12
3	Increased stress and frustration	06
4	Increased safety	02

One participant can cite multiple factors

"Yes, paperwork has increased and it has increased the workload and associated pressure on the ship staff tremendously. So much so that the officers are increasingly only doing the paper work and not the actual job. As a result, most of the compliance happens on paper." (Capt. 3)

"Excessive paper work increases stress levels on board and repetitive work is really frustrating at times." (Capt. 4)

"It's a part of ISM, and we have to follow it [...] it has grown through years of experience and enhances safety." (CHENG 3)

4.5.5 Effect of fatigue and overwork on job satisfaction

All participants agreed that fatigue and overwork is a major issue in shipping. They consider that it affects their work and lives. Not only does it have an adverse impact on the seafarers it also happens to be one of the principal reasons for considering an alternative career (Table 13).

Table 13 Effect of Fatigue and overwork on job satisfaction

Sr. No.	Effect of fatigue and overwork on Job satisfaction	No. of Participants*
	Direct factors	
1	Overwork and fatigue are a big factor to affect job satisfaction	12
2	Fatigue is having an adverse effect	11
	Contributory factors	
3	Reduced manpower has contributed to fatigue	06

One participant can cite multiple factors

Even though regulatory framework exists to address and mitigate the effects of fatigue, allocation of inadequate resources to ensure compliance renders these regulations ineffective and piecemeal with seafarers even adjusting the records to demonstrate compliance (Appendix 3).

"Fatigue and overwork have always been an issue in this industry. With continuously decreasing manpower on board the vessel, this issue of overwork and fatigue is getting complicated day by day. But this is the last complaint which [...] company would like to listen to." (Capt.3)

"I have seen that there is some kind of mass migration happening now. More and more people are considering career ashore, and one of the main reasons is that people are not getting enough rest and they feel like they are always under that stress where they are not able to relax at all." (CHENG 1)

4.5.6 Changes suggested by seafarers to improve job satisfaction

The seafarers were conscious of the fact that a slew of factors was affecting their job satisfaction and general happiness on board. They suggested means to improve the general well-being (Table 14).

Table 14 Changes suggested by seafarers to improve job satisfaction

Sr. No.	Changes suggested by seafarers to improve Job satisfaction	No. of Participants*
1	Shore leave at all ports	11
2	Shorter contracts and timely sign off	07
3	Increase manpower onboard	04
4	Family onboard	03
5	Review alcohol policies	02
6	Eliminate VISA restrictions	02
7	Respect for ship staff by authorities	02
8	Easy medical facility and mental health support	01
9	Harmonization of inspections	01
10	Berthing / unberthing during daylight hours	01

One participant can cite multiple factors

Unhindered access to shore leave which improves seafarers physical and psychological health and well-being by giving them access to shore-based welfare and recreational facilities by far remained the single most important factor to improve job satisfaction onboard (Appendix 3).

> *"Shore leaves to be allowed at every port and crew should not to be subjected to unnecessary checks." (Capt. 5)*

Reducing tours of employment through shorter and flexible contract system with assurance of timely sign off which facilitates the seafarers to organize their lives better was another change suggested for improving job satisfaction.

> *"The contract periods should be shorter and flexible." (2ⁿᵈ Off. 2)*

Technological developments coupled with desire to reduce operating costs by the shipowner has resulted in reduced manpower onboard which has affected seafarers in more ways than one. Increasing manpower onboard, also remains one of the significant factors to improve welfare and job satisfaction.

> *"Increasing manpower would be the best thing as things were happening on paper and not in real, that was one of the reasons why it brought job un-satisfaction to me." (2ⁿᵈ Off. 2)*

The participants also reported that authorities treat seafarers with increasing disrespect and have scant regard for their well-being.

> *"The inspectors and auditors to be educated to remain more respectful to the ship staff and their rest hours." (CHENG 1)*

4.6 Decision to quit Sea

4.6.1 Factors justifying exploration of alternative careers

All participants justified their exploration of alternative career by the following factors contained in the Table below (Table 15).

Table 15 Factors for exploring alternative career options

Sr. No.	Factors for exploring alternative career options	No. of Participants*
	Personal factors	
1	Spend more time with family	08
2	Having attained financial stability	01
	Professional factors	
3	Excessive stress and workload on board	05
4	Stagnant salaries and no career growth	06
5	Difficulty to continue as a female officer	01
6	Control by shore office	01
7	Exploitation by company	01
8	Harmonization of inspections	01
	Social	
9	Social isolation on board	01
	Effects of COVID-19	
10	Impact of COVID restrictions	02

*One participant can cite multiple factors

The factors responsible for seafarers looking for an alternative career ranged from (a) personal, (b) professional, (c) social and (d) effects of COVID-19 pandemic.

Desire to spend more quality time with family was the principal reason (personal factor) cited by majority of the participants while exploring alternatives for seafaring, with one participant mentioning, attaining a certain level of financial stability as the reason for this move (Appendix 3).

> *"First thing is the family life and with sailing it is not very easy to strike a balance between the two." (Capt. 4)*

> *"Time has come for me to spend more time with my family as my children are growing up."* (Rating 1)

> *"Since I earned a fair amount of money which is still there in the savings, I decided to come ashore."* (CHENG 3)

Another significant reasons for a switch to landside jobs were range of professional issues/stressors including excessive stress and workload on board, stagnant salaries and no career growth, exploitation by the company and difficulty to continue in the profession owing to gender.

> *"The mental pressure which we are getting as a master combined with busy and hectic schedules has made me look for alternative career options."* (Capt. 4)

> *"If we didn't have EGCS and BWT right now, I will still be a happy sailor sailing onboard."* (CHENG 1)

> *"Being a female, it is a bit more difficult to continue in this profession due to family requirements, especially when you have a small child at home."* (Capt. 4)

> *"In the span of 10 years there is no increase in the wages of the second mate [...], there is exploitation of seafarers by the companies, by the governments."* (2nd Off. 1)

Social isolation and loneliness on board which compromises seafarers' welfare often caused by reduced manpower, increased workload, restrictions and confined environment is another reason cited for looking for an alternative career.

"Social isolation was one of the biggest reasons why I left shipping and I think if there is an option to stay ashore and work and stay connected with people, I would choose that rather than being isolated onboard." (2ⁿᵈ Off. 2)

The uncertainties, hardships and restrictions which the seafarers had to go through during COVID -19 pandemic while onboard or at home has had an overall adverse impact and has also contributed in many of them considering alternative career options.

"Because of COVID restrictions, I decided I will find work ashore and never go back to sea again." (CHENG 1)

4.6.2 Influence of family in exploring alternative career options

Majority of seafarers attributed spending time with family as one of the factors for exploring alternative careers. The response indicated that half of the participants had support of their families in either pursuing a sea career or making a shift to landside, and for the other half, the families did play a significant role with participants citing their families preferring them to quit sea and take landside jobs (Table 16) (Appendix 3).

Table 16 Influence of family in exploring alternative career options

Sr. No.	Influence of family in exploring alternative career options	No. of Participants
1	Supportive and ok with sailing or a switch	06
2	Supportive and wanted shift to landside jobs	06

"My family is more than happy in I sailing and we have a good work life balance. They understand that when I come back from sea, I'm able to provide them quality time. I have the liberty to take as many leaves as possible which is not possible ashore." (Capt. 2)

"My wife had been telling me for the last two years to quit sea and switch to a shore job if there is suitable opportunity. Though my wife also used to love sailing but when this opportunity came, she is happier now." (CHENG 3)

4.6.3 Advice to family members or friends for taking seafaring as a career

The participants had mixed views on advice that they would give to any of their family members or friends regarding taking up seafaring as a profession (Table 17).

Table 17 Advise to family members or friends for taking seafaring as a career

Sr. No.	Advise to family members or friends for taking seafaring as a career	No. of Participants*
1	Yes, will explain pros and cons and decision rests with the person	08
2	No, will discourage	03
3	No, will discourage unless from under-privileged family	01
4	Will not recommend to females	01

One participant can cite more than one reasons

The existing seafarers are ambassadors of the profession with their outlook and opinions having the potential to recruit youngsters into the profession. Most of them suggested that they will recommend it but will explain pros and cons of the profession.

Certain seafarers will clearly discourage their relatives from working at sea which is also an indicator of their own low job satisfaction levels and motivation. Their

response indicates that seafaring no longer enjoys the promotion from the seafarers as in the past when seafaring ran down generations in a family (Appendix 3).

> *"I would recommend, but I would like to mention to them that one has to be mentally tough to be out at sea. I will explain them the pros and cons of shipping, the eventual decision should lie with him. I can say, as a stepping stone it is a good career, but remaining a seafarer for life, I have my own reservations now." (CHENG 2)*

> *"I would explain to them the pros and cons in detail and will see if the boy is physically and mentally tough to handle life at sea and would rather encourage him. But if it's a girl, my answer will be strict No." (Capt. 1)*

> *"If a person comes from an affluent family [...], I will probably not advise. But if he comes from a poor family who needs to make his own life, then I will advise and tell him to keep an eye on what's happening outside so that he can step out any time he wants." (CHENG 1)*

4.7 Impact of COVID – 19 pandemic on seafarers

4.7.1 Impact on personal and professional life

The sample of seafarers reported having been significantly affected by COVID – 19 pandemic. All participants agreed that it impacted them a lot both onboard and ashore. It affected them psychologically and triggered some reaction.

The impact of pandemic is not only limited to physical wellbeing of the seafarers but has also caused psychological impact with increased cases of anxiety and depression. COVID –19 restrained the seafarers both onboard or at home by curtailing shore leaves, delaying crew change and, varying quarantine requirements in different

countries. These prolonged periods of isolation and loneliness had an adverse effect on the mental wellbeing of seafarers, such as interviewees describe (Table 18) (Appendix 3).

Table 18 COVID – 19, Impact on personal and professional life

Sr. No.	COVID – 19, Impact on personal and professional life	No. of Participants*
	Psychosocial	
1	Affected a lot	10
	Personal Experiences	
2	Delayed sign offs and no shore leave	10
3	Feeling of helplessness	08
4	Traumatic experience	04
	Social	
5	Rethink at seafaring career	09
6	Realization that seafarers are not important	04

*One participant can cite multiple factors

"It affected me a lot while I was onboard, it was the biggest trauma of my sea career. I had crew members onboard on the verge of breakdown, cases where one or two guys were getting suicidal, trying to cause self-harm. I was myself going through a feeling of helplessness not knowing what to do. COVID - 19, from the work point of view, gave me a lot of trauma and probably was responsible for me not thinking of going back to sea." (Capt. 1)

"It really affected me a lot, maybe if it was not for COVID - 19 maybe I would have been sailing till now." (CHENG 2)

The treatment meted out to seafarers during the pandemic and after it has resulted in a growing sense of abandonment and a feeling that their lives matter less. Certain seafarers reported that the event has forced them to rethink about their seafaring career.

"It has affected us a lot, there were no sign offs and we realized that we are not important for anyone." (Rating 1)

"In certain ports, we were told to go inside accommodation and lock ourselves up, we were under surveillance and no one was allowed to come out and in case we had to attend to moorings or machinery, we had to inform them and then they would disembark from the ship. I faced this in few other ports as well and it is very discouraging." (Capt. 5)

4.7.2 Aspects of Shipping revealed by COVID – 19 pandemic

The COVID – 19 crisis revealed to seafarers bleak aspects of shipping which existed but remained barely visible. In short, seafarers felt abandoned and exploited. The pandemic has further eroded their faith in the institutional framework which they perceived was designed to always protect their interests (Table 19).

Table 19 Aspects of shipping revealed by COVID

Sr. No.	Aspects of shipping revealed by COVID-19	No. of Participants*
	Personal	
1	Seafarers are inconsequential	12
	Psychosocial	
2	Exploitation by authorities/companies	12
	Institutional shortcomings	
3	IMO and International organizations lack commitment / power	04
	Organizational Support	
4	Companies tried to help in sign off	03

One participant can cite multiple factors

All the participants realized that the pandemic has made seafarers by and large inconsequential in the collective conscience of the stakeholders and the seafarers' welfare is not a priority for the industry (Appendix 3).

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> *"There was a feeling of being abandoned by the world during the pandemic. It was not taken very well by the seafarers. I feel Port authorities, Oil majors, charterers and maritime organizations could have done better in supporting seafarer in those tough times and were found wanting." (Capt. 2)*

> *Shore leave for the crew is not allowed, whereas every other activity in port is allowed […], it appears that lives of seafarers matter less." (CHENG 2)*

All the participants also believed that there was rampant exploitation of the seafarers during peak of COVID – 19 pandemic, with enough cases where the seafarers were stuck onboard for prolonged periods with instances of 'no crew change clause' inserted in the charter party. Also, many companies in the pretext of avoiding crew change expenses, cited 'force majeure' and were complicit in systematic breach of labour contracts tantamount to forced labour.

> *"Some management companies started thinking on saving money in the garb of delaying crew change." (CHENG 2)*

> *"This was an eye opener for me, pandemic gave rise to long contracts as a long-term trend. In the pretext of pandemic, even till today, contracts are being stretched." (Capt. 1)*

The participants further added that the pandemic eroded the faith of seafarers in institutional frameworks that existed for protecting their rights and welfare. They felt that, this framework collapsed in the face of commercial considerations.

"Realized that these (IMO) are organizations which are basically powerless when difficult things come and commercial implications are involved. Cargo was moving and nothing stopped, the people who made it possible were given absolutely no priority at all. People wanted the cargo but not the seafarers." *(Capt. 1)*

"Realized that most of the authorities were either unaware of the hardship's seafarers have to go through or were indifferent." (CHENG 2)

However, the participants also felt that prudent companies and authorities (though bit late) did their best to facilitate crew change and look after their welfare to the extent possible.

"Shipping companies paid through the nose to get their seafarer's home; Manning worked hard during the pandemic phase and also had to take the brunt from the seafarers stuck onboard ships." (Capt. 2)

4.7.3 COVID – 19 crisis – quest for an alternative career

All interviewees, except one, widely acknowledged the major contribution of COVID-19 to looking for an alternative career to seafaring. However, that person was already working ashore during the crisis (Table 20) (Appendix 3).

Table 20 COVID -19, influence on looking for an alternative career

Sr. No.	COVID -19, influence on looking for an alternative career	No. of Participants
1	Yes, the pandemic did influence	11
2	Pandemic had no influence in alternative career choice	01

"Yes, it was a big factor to look for alternative career options, if there was no COVID-19, I would have still been sailing now, and wouldn't have quit." (Capt. 1)

"It has made me look for alternatives, had it not been for COVID-19, maybe I would have been a Chief Mate by now." (2ⁿᵈ Off. 1)

"The pandemic had no role to quit shipping. My decision was of financial stability and for my family's happiness." (CHENG 3)

Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The study attempts to understand the perception seafarers have of their occupation and the factors which erode or stabilize their job satisfaction eventually determining the length of their career at sea. Understanding the reasons for seafarers' disillusionment with the prevailing conditions and exploring an alternative career remains central to finding a viable long-term solution to the problem.

5.2 Choice of seafaring as a career

The question of choosing seafaring as a career amongst entrants remains relevant, as the answer may help to understand the initial drivers which attracted the individual to the industry and how they changed over time, especially considering the current trend of diminishing appeal of this career (Wróbel et al., 2022). For participants in this study, the initial perception towards shipping remained positive and the principal attraction towards this career included in order (a) financial stability at an early age, (b) travelling and adventure associated with the profession, (c) influence of family member(s) and also (d) growing up near a coastal community.

The most common factor for opting for a sea-career amongst seafarers from Taiwan, Philippines and, the UK remains the desire to earn a good salary which is perceived as an adequate compensation for associated hardships in this profession (Gekara & Sampson, 2021). In developing countries, people are also impelled towards seafaring due to limited options ashore as the remuneration offered in shore jobs cannot compete with wages in the shipping industry (Sampson & Schroeder, 2006).

It was observed in the study that the response of the participants regarding choice of sea career corroborates the data from literature review and is in line with reasons for

seafarers from non-traditional seafaring countries taking up the maritime profession (Barnett et al., 2006).

Study has corroborated that the notion of opportunities for travel and adventure by joining a sea career is another popular draw for the potential seafarers (Dearsley, 2013). However, current pace of shipping has been reported as hindering the very possibility of 'travel and adventure'[7].

Finally, participants reported having been introduced to career at sea based on guidance provided by their immediate community which is corroborated by Mack (2007).

5.3 Life at Sea

Life at sea is a holistic experience which includes professional, personal and social life. Therefore, it has a strong impact on individuals but paradoxically remains difficult to express and detail.

Memorable professional experiences such as exercising professional judgement and taking fast and decisive decisions, possibility of career growth, participating in rescue operations or saving lives relate to work and feed the pride of being a professional seafarer.

Other memorable individual and social experiences at sea cited were (a) visiting new places, (b) onboard social interactions and (c) sailing with family onboard. However,

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[7] additional workload, introduction of new technology, faster turnaround at ports, restrictions on shore leave and remote location of ports which are served by poor transportation system (Sampson and Wu 2003; Walters & Bailey, 2013; Sampson et al., 2022; Caesar et al., 2015)

these non-professional experiences are becoming rare because of travel and shore leave restrictions as well as reduced manning.

Notably, the memorable experiences underlined by the sample suggested a distant past now overwhelmed by unpleasant experiences in relation with current pace of shipping.

Additionally, some seafarers simply enjoy the alternative lifestyle allowing long leave periods and high remuneration. The seafarers will make career decisions regarding continuity in the profession depending on many factors including their experiences on board (Barnett et al., 2006). In line with literature, the primary motivations of the sample to remain at sea are, (a) salary, (b) professional and (c) personal accomplishments.

Limited research has been carried out on the effect of ship/shore communication and shore management attempt to control ship operation by imposing its agenda (Sampson et al., 2016). Analysis and statements from the participants reveal that the most experienced seaman onboard, the captain, is increasingly burdened with flurry of queries and emails from multiple agencies leaving him disengaged and disillusioned. The other reasons cited in job satisfaction viz; career growth will 'plateau' once the entrant achieves the rank of Master or Chief Engineer on board and may cease to remain a motive to remain in sea-career beyond a certain point of time.

In short, current changes in shipping appears to have deeply affected the ship work system and life at sea.

5.4 Factors affecting motivation and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction can simply be described as 'the extent to which people like their jobs' (Spector, 2008). Job satisfaction on board increases seafarers' motivation (Nielsen et al., 2013) towards compliance with regulations and enhances their performance (Yuen

et al., 2018) thereby augmenting maritime safety (Lu & Yang, 2010). However, in spite of high salaries and opportunities to travel the world, career at sea can be unsatisfying (Fei and Lu, 2015), especially with the existing restrictions on travel taking sheen off the latter. Various factors affecting job satisfaction are discussed and analysed here;

5.4.1 Professional

Discharging professional duties on board remains the main driver of all participants for job satisfaction onboard which is in line with literature cited in Section 5.3. However, the participants cited higher workload, excessive paperwork, frequent audits and inspections, inadequate shore/office support leading to increased workload and psychological pressure as the reasons detrimental to job satisfaction as previously reported in literature (Haka et al., 2011; Nielsen et al., 2013).

While regulations initially aimed at enhancing maritime safety and protecting life at sea (Couper, 2012), participants reported that the recent regulatory development without additional crew members is increasing onboard administrative burden and affecting seafarers' well-being which is in line with literature (Caesar et al., 2014; Knudsen, 2009). Additionally, participants reported the lack of access to shore as a consequence of regulations such as the ISPS code which deeply restrained the movement of seafarers and isolating them from shore (Graham, 2009).

Participants also expressed their frustration at shore authorities and company staff's lack of empathy in imposing non-equalitarian relations and demanding any time immediate response from ships without considering ship constraints. Lack of trust and understanding from the shore office are other factors which can be frustrating for the seafarers (Sampson et al., 2016).

In short, participants highlighted (a) excessive regulations, (b) frequent inspections, (c) additional equipment fitted onboard, (d) paperwork not supported with adequate human resources results in 'only paper compliance' which is deviating seafarers from the real job, in line with literature (Bhattacharya, 2009). All these factors affect job satisfaction, increase stress and frustration amongst the seafarers.

5.4.2 Social Factors

Analysis of responses from the participants indicate that the social factors which affects their job satisfaction include, (a) restrictions on shore leave, (b) no social life on board, (c) lack of respect for seafarers, harassment and bullying at ports, growing criminalization of seafarers, and (d) dry ship policies. Participants reported that these factors are becoming more and more prevalent, contributing to overall decline in job satisfaction and disenchantment with the career over a period of time. These factors have been reported in literature (Caesar et al., 2014; Caesar et al., 2015; Sampson et al., 2022; Sampson & Wu 2003; Walters & Bailey, 2013).

As per Exarchopoulos et al. (2018), seafarers are becoming one of the most isolated work groups in the world with limited support. For instance, there are 'only' 398 welfare centres across the globe of which 150 are in Europe alone and 49 in North America serving 1.9 million seafarers (Sampson et al., 2022).

Despite claims from seafarers in the study, data related to harassment and bullying by shore authorities, inspectors and auditors are unfortunately scarce.

5.4.3 Personal Factors

Analysis of responses from the participants indicate that the personal factors which affects their job satisfaction include (a) uncertainty regarding sign off, (b) prolonged contracts and (c) separation from family.

The response from the participants corroborates findings of Oldenburg et al. (2009) and Papachristou et al. (2015) which indicates that prolonged separation from the family is one of the biggest stressors for seafarers and a major cause of dissatisfaction.

5.5 Reasons to quit sea career

The main reasons to quit the profession are related to well-being. Notably, the seafarers from the sample gave higher priority to professional factors for continuing on board and the reasons affecting job satisfaction, however the personal reasons overtook the professional reasons when it comes to deciding regarding continuity in the career.

5.5.1 Personal and Social Factors

Analysis of response from participants indicate that the single biggest factors contributing to quitting sea career remained their desire to spend more quality time with the family after attaining some degree of financial stability.

Another important factor observed during the study is the social isolation, loneliness and feeling of helplessness onboard among seafarers. These indicate inadequate socialization onboard due to lack of time following demanding working conditions exacerbated by crew composition.

These findings corroborate the literature on the impact of family and social settings which can prompt seafarer to explore alternate careers (Papachristou et al., 2015).

In the Asian context it is observed that the seafarers prioritize family bonding over individual needs which further magnifies the separation issue (Abdullah, 2017). Family conflicts may also arise in families of seafarers due to inadequate support as a result of long-term absence of a parent or a spouse affecting both the seafarer and their kin psychologically.

Prolonged separation from home and increasing social isolation on board due to various reasons are amongst the most cited psychosocial stressors in the shipping industry today (Slišković & Penezić, 2016). Family sailing onboard facilitates deeper insight into the spouse's occupational world and avoids lengthy separations which can otherwise be detrimental to the relationship (Thomas et al., 2003). The literature provide explanation on why seafarers' family remain the main factor to stop sailing.

However, no research appears to have been carried out (on impact) on families of Indian seafarers to my knowledge regarding psychosocial stress caused by prolonged absence of their partners which can throw more light on seafarers willing to make a shift to shore careers, considering half the participants cited pressure from family as the reason to quit sea.

5.5.2 Work-related factors

Analysis of response from participants indicate that harsh working conditions justify attrition from sea jobs. They rank these factors as follows (a) excessive workload and job pressure (b) fatigue, (c) stagnant salaries (d) limited career growth, (e) exploitation by company, (f) control of shipboard operations from ashore, and (g) difficulty to continue for women seafarers after becoming mothers.

The participants felt strongly about the increase in workload and job pressure due to inadequate manpower which makes them indulge in paper compliance activities onboard. The power shift to office made Capt. 5 remark that,

> *"Since power lies in shore office, it will be more prudent to be at place of power than be at sea."*

Considering that these reasons were also the ones that cause job dissatisfaction, they also happen to be the triggers for making a transition to shore job. Certain participants (senior officers) expressed their frustration about stagnant opportunities after becoming Captains or Chief engineers. Furthermore, certain participant highlighted that in Indian context, the salaries for ratings and junior officers have been stagnant for nearly a decade which reduce the gap between shore and sea salaries.

The female officer (Capt. 4) reported quitting sea career due to conflict between managing home and staying away from a 2-year-old child which was too overbearing for her.

Unilateral decisions without appeal by the company when delaying sign off or promotions were reasons cited by lower ranks.

5.6 Impact of COVID – 19

To comply with MLC, 2006 requirements that safeguards safety, health and welfare of seafarers approximately 150,000 crew changes are required per month which was severely restricted at the peak of COVID -19 pandemic which left seafarers facing unprecedented challenges (Doumbia-Henry, 2020; Pauksztat et al., 2022b).

The participants were inquired about the impact of COVID – 19 pandemic on their personal and professional lives, aspects of shipping revealed by the pandemic which they were otherwise not aware of and whether the pandemic had any influence in their quest for an alternative career. The responses from the participants indicate that the pandemic hastened their decision to look for an alternative career option. COVID-19 also exposed to them the low level of societal consideration for seafarers.

5.6.1 Impact on personal and professional life

Majority of participants agreed that the COVID–19 pandemic has affected them adversely regardless whether they were onboard or at home. It was more severe for those onboard, and for some, the experience was traumatic and life changing with Capt. 1 stating that;

> *"It was the biggest trauma of my sea career."*

COVID-19 impacted personal and professional lives. Effects of pandemic on personal life ranged from delays and uncertainty in sign offs and incarceration onboard for prolonged periods leading to anxiety, depression, feeling of helplessness, culpability and for some, it was the most unforgettable and traumatic experience at sea. During the crisis, participants realized that family was all that mattered to them. Unable to be with their loved one in such critical period, imposed deep feelings of helplessness and culpability in them. As Capt. 4 (female seafarer) remarked,

> *"Because of the COVID situation, everyone whether it was a seafarer who was on board or at home realized that family is everything. Even with comparative lower salary I will be willing to work ashore as spending time with family is more important for me now."*

The impact of pandemic is not only limited to physical wellbeing of the seafarers but has also caused psychological impact with increased cases of anxiety and depression. The COVID −19 restrained the seafarers either onboard or at home by curtailing shore leaves, delaying crew change and, varying quarantine requirements in different countries.

5.6.2 Aspects of Shipping revealed by COVID -19

All the participants stated that the pandemic has made them realize that seafarers were largely exploited and abandoned. Their well-being was definitely not considered as

important for maritime stakeholders and decision-makers.

Participants reported that constant harassment, disrespect, bullying of seafarers coupled with a lackadaisical response from authorities has eroded the faith of seafarers in institutional framework supposed to protect their life and wellbeing. Certain participants reported that international bodies are powerless and insufficiently committed to intervene.

That the participants increasingly felt that the governments were slow in introducing measures to ensure their timely sign off from the vessel with many ports not even allowing medical assistance to the seafarers is not without substance.

Participants provided contrasted replies about the companies' responses. Some companies took advantage of the situation to increase the contract periods onboard, while other strived to repatriate seafarers.

5.6.3 Quest for an alternative career after the COVID-19 shock

The feeling amongst all the participants was unanimous. Their decision to look for an alternative career became unequivocal and irrevocable since COVID – 19.

The problems faced by the participants and lack of support were eye openers. It became a watershed moment. All participants suggested that the situation had a major influence in their decision to look for an alternative career. The one participant who commented that pandemic did not have much of a bearing had moved ashore in last 6 months.

The findings regarding uncertainty in sign off's, being with family, anxiety and depression are corroborated with recent studies on impact of COVID–19 on seafarers (Carrera-Arce et al., 2022; Slišković, 2020).

However, no study has been dedicated to Indian seafarers' decision to consider an alternative career after the COVID – 19 pandemic. The current study indicates that the impact of the pandemic is significant for all participants.

The analysis further indicates that the era of Indian seafarers considering seafaring as a lifelong engagement seems coming to an end. However, additional research is expected to validate this view.

Despite the limited sample, there was unanimity among participant about finding shore-based positions as soon as a suitable opportunity emerges. Furthermore, participants indicate that their Indian peers share similar feelings regarding their longevity in the seafaring profession.

5.7 Contribution of Growing Economy - Multiple job avenues

While the participants cited that the main reason to choose seafaring was financial, in retrospect when they draw comparisons with their peers working ashore, the difference is not as substantial anymore. Considering growth of Indian economy in last twenty five years, India offers many options for the seafarers. The literature also corroborates this analysis (Glen, 2008).

5.8 In-effectiveness of international conventions for seafarers' welfare

Despite regulations, welfare of seafarers remains largely compromised with stress, fatigue and social isolation due to reduced manning levels. Though the MLC, 2006 preamble states "given the global nature of the shipping industry, seafarers need special protection" (ILO,2006), the cases of seafarers receiving unfair treatment and facing criminalization is on the rise. The convention does not adequately address the main issues confounding maritime industry today viz; (a) Increase in stress and fatigue amongst seafarers due to reduced manning levels onboard (b) Impact of social

isolation on the mental health of seafarers (c) Unfair treatment and criminalization of seafarers in the event of an incident (Exarchopoulos et al., 2018).

Participants corroborated that the above cited reasons have a significant effect on their well-being and also affects job satisfaction levels. For instance, all the participants agreed that fatigue and workload are big issues in shipping and they have been routinely falsifying data regarding rest hours to demonstrate compliance.

Figure 6 Summary of factors responsible for exploring alternative career options
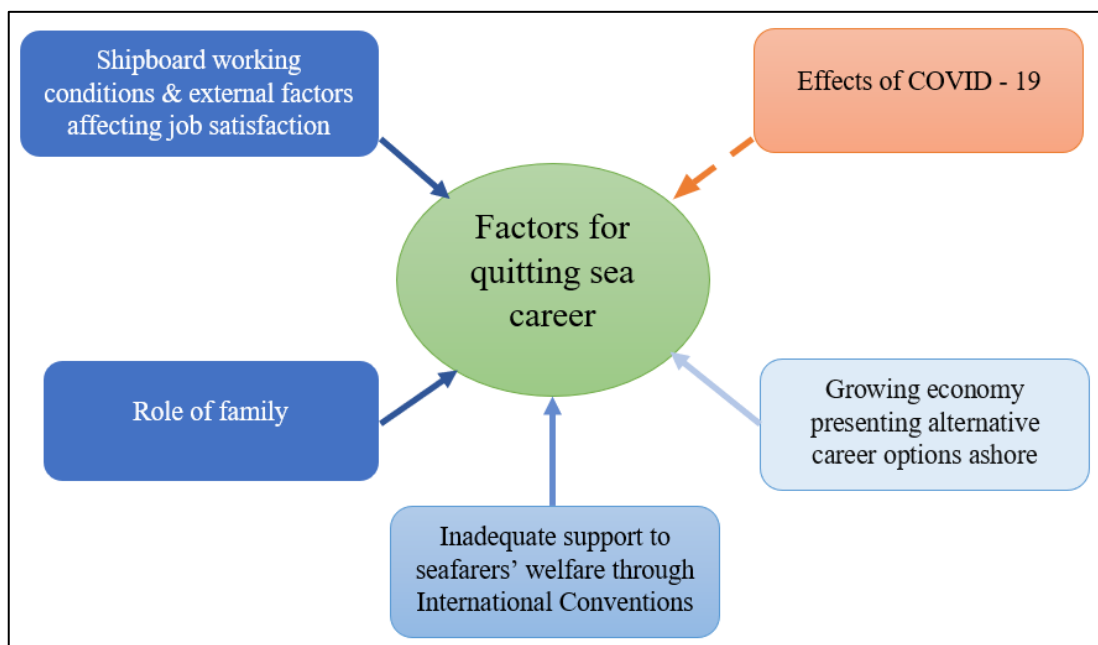
Decision to quit sea will generally be a convergence of the termination factors as indicated in Figure 6 which have been discussed and analysed in this chapter.

While four factors are structural, one is occasional (COVID-19).

Chapter 6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The results of the research indicates that seafaring as a 'career for life' might come to an end for Indian seafarers. None of the participants are looking at seafaring as a career beyond one or two contracts as a Master or Chief Engineer at best, with junior officers willing to leave in case a suitable opportunity emerges. Although initially seen as an inspiring and adventurous proposition, family concerns, unmanageable stress and workload onboard, stagnant salaries and limited career growth are identified as the main underlaying contributors to looking for alternative career options.

Historically, seafaring always has been a very challenging profession. However, the present model of the shipping industry induces and magnifies additional stressors, viz. limited job satisfaction due to working conditions, inadequate work life balance due to stressful schedules, incarceration onboard due to restricted shore leaves and untimely sign offs. Moreover, reduced manning leading to fatigue, loneliness, social isolation onboard, family commitments and concerns and the changing socioeconomic landscape is forcing Indian seafarers to look for alternatives to their careers at sea.

The research shows that seafarers prioritise professional factors as a reason for continuing their sea-career and these factors are among those that provide them positive job satisfaction. However, personal reasons overtake professional reasons when it comes to deciding regarding their continuity in the career. The study makes evident that at some juncture, family requirements take precedence over career goals in case they conflict.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread disruptions in human activities. Seafaring is no exception, and COVID-19 has exposed the frailty of the institutional framework that exists to support the welfare of the seafarers. Regardless of the claimed support, the seafarers largely feel abandoned and defeated by the system. Whereas for some, the COVID-19 period is exposed as the most traumatic period of their lives. Far from over, they still haven't recovered; for others it definitely has left an indelible memory for which they hold the existing framework responsible. The seafarers who have participated in this research lamented that they were left to their deplorable fate during the pandemic, while all other commercial activities went unabated.

As the shipping industry is showing signs of recovery, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic was that trigger which has pushed the seafarers to their extremity, leaving them disillusioned with the way industry conducts its business and treats its workforce.

It is also evident from the research conducted that the principal maritime conventions designed to address the welfare of seafarers fell short of their desired objectives. In consequence, many aspects of seafarer's wellbeing like 'mental health', effect of reduced manning, fatigue, and social isolation remain unaddressed. Even when the control mechanisms to address seafarers' welfare exists, the compliance largely happens on paper for demonstration to the third parties at the expense of their own welfare.

In short, the results of the study show a range of issues affecting seafarers' well-being and their desire to quit their careers at sea. These issues include overbearing work load and pressure, family commitments, ill treatment and criminalisation of seafarers, social isolation, culpability, helplessness and stagnant salaries. It is widely acknowledged that working conditions onboard have led to dwindling interest from population of developed economies and this work demonstrates that a developing

country like India, which is showing a steady economic growth, might follow a similar trend.

6.2 Recommendations

At the heart of sustainable development of shipping lies its 1.9 million strong workforce; and considering the sizeable number, it is evident that to address their overall well-being requires synergetic efforts at both governmental and industry level.

The main stress factors onboard remain the issues causing physical and psychological challenges to seafarers. Those are difficult to manage at individual level considering their magnitude. Due to the large-scale ramifications of those factors', it calls for greater participation from all stakeholders.

In short, for the shipping industry to remain an industry of choice for talented Indian seafarers, considerable efforts and measures have to be initiated to attract and retain them. Ships of 21st century are the largest and most complex structures at the forefront of innovative technologies, but its workforce should be analysed not by numbers but by quality.

Short term

a. It is unlikely that the current trend of reduced manning will be reversed or welfare measures through shore leaves will be accessible to seafarers anytime soon. However, shorter contracts and timely sign off for the officers and crew would remain the most viable alternative as same will help seafarers maintain family and social relationships.

b. The salary revision for ratings and junior officers need introspection from the industry considering the windfall profits most of the shipping companies made

during the pandemic. There were instances of companies giving bonuses to the shore staff, while the seafarers largely remained forgotten.

c. Family carrying permission should be granted to all officers as against the current trend of permission being granted to only the management level officers[8]. This measure would enable the partners of seafarers to have deeper insight into the occupational world of the seafarer, apart from spending more time together. The additional cost incurred would be offset by improved retention rates of seafarers.

d. Social benefits like family insurance and medical benefits when ashore could be introduced or made mandatory for all seafarers, and their families.

e. Systematic programmes to be run to sensitize all shore authorities and shore staff of the companies to treat seafarers with respect and dignity should be put in place.

Long term

f. MLC convention, 2006 to be amended to address contemporary realities of modern-day shipping by including provisions of seafarer's wellbeing and mental health.

g. Seafarers working hours to have parity with standards set for shore-based industries or other transport industries like aviation.

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[8] Management level officers - Captain, Chief Engineer, Chief officer and second engineer

6.3 Scope for further research

Considering availability of time and resources, sample size was limited to only 12 participants. To enhance the external validity of the results any future research on the topic would need to increase the sample size and scope of interview questions encompassing more even participation from all ranks of seafarers serving on various kinds of ships and also including seafarers of different nationalities. Further, research is also recommended to better understand the long-term psychological effects on Indian seafarers of;

a) Impact of COVID-19 on retention rate

b) Working conditions and employment terms.

c) Challenging relationships between seafarers and shore-based company and authorities.

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Appendices

Appendix – 1 Interview Questions

Identification of the Candidate

1. Name/nationality/gender/age/educational level/CoC held/Last Sailed /type of ship/ flag/ total experience in shipping / current rank and experience?
2. What is your current family situation?

Choice of seafaring as a career

3. What were the factors which influenced your decision to choose a seafaring career?
4. When you entered the seafaring career, did you consider this career as a life-long engagement or as a step in your professional life?
   (Identify how seafarers considered the length of presence in the industry from the start and if that changed at some point)

   Remain at sea

5. How would you describe your experience at sea? Can you eventually point out some of your best and worst experiences at sea?
6. What motivate(d) you to remain seafarer before finally deciding to quit or considering leaving seafaring career?
7. Do you think shipping has been changing since you first joined a ship? Can you describe such changes and how they potentially impacted your work? Also impact on life?

   Job satisfaction/unsatisfaction (it is not about general experience at sea BUT about work satisfaction)

8. What satisfied you the most when working at sea?
9. Are there any tasks/duties/practices which detrimentally affected your job satisfaction or potentially annoyed or frustrated you?
10. Recent technology (via satellites, emails, phones, etc.) allowed the establishment of a permanent link between the company and the ships, how do you think this link impacted your work and job satisfaction?
11. The amount of paperwork has been said to expand on ships, how do you think this has impacted your workload and job satisfaction?

12. According to your experience, do you think fatigue and overwork are big issues in shipping? How do you think these have impacted your job satisfaction?

13. Use "magic wand question" to ask: if you had a magic wand and you could solve one thing in order to increase job satisfaction/decrease job unsatisfaction when working at sea, what would it be?

Decide to Quit

14. Which factors influenced your decision to explore options of an alternative career to seafaring?

15. How important is the influence of your family in your decision to stay or quit seafaring? (Identify the importance of family influence, who and reasons for that)

16. In current shipping world, if relatives and friends are asking for advice about joining seafaring career, what would be your recommendations and why?

Finally, the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

17. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your work and personal lives while you were at home or onboard?

18. What aspects about shipping were revealed by COVID-19 pandemic which you feel you were otherwise not aware of?

19. How does the covid-19 crisis influence your decision to consider an alternative career?

Appendix – 2 WMU Research Ethics Committee Protocol Approval

WMU Research Ethics Committee Protocol

Name of principal researcher:	Harinder Singh
Name(s) of any co-researcher(s):	Nil
If applicable, for which degree is each researcher registered?	MSC - Maritime Safety and Environmental Administration
Name of supervisor, if any:	Capt. / Dr. Raphael Baumler
Title of project:	Understanding underlying reasons for Seafarers quitting sea career after becoming disenchanted with prevailing conditions and recent effect of COVID – 19
Is the research funded externally?	No
If so, by which agency?	Not Applicable
Where will the research be carried out?	At WMU
How will the participants be recruited?	To be confirmed
How many participants will take part?	To be confirmed
Will they be paid?	No
If so, please supply details:	Not Applicable
How will the research data be collected (by interview, by questionnaires, etc.)?	Through interviews / and surveys
How will the research data be stored?	In my personal laptop with strong password
How and when will the research data be disposed of?	Data will be deleted permanently on completion of MSc in Nov 2022
Is a risk assessment necessary? If so, please attach	NA

Signature(s) of Researcher(s): .... Date: 25/03/2022

Signature of Supervisor: .... Date: 25/03/2022

Please attach:
- A copy of the research proposal
- A copy of any risk assessment
- A copy of the consent form to be given to participants
- A copy of the information sheet to be given to participants
- A copy of any item used to recruit participants

Appendix – 3 Quotes from participants

4.3.1 Motivation to join

"The profession helps you in travelling and that helps you develop professionally and personally." (2ⁿᵈ Off. 1)

4.3.2 Career for life – initial perception

"I can say, initially I have taken it as a lifelong engagement in my career." (Capt.4)

4.4.1 Experiences at Sea

"Every time we solved some major problems, we get that huge rush of solving a problem, overcoming obstacles is a memorable experience." (CHENG 1)

"My most memorable experience was when we rescued sailors who were stranded out at sea, the feeling that you managed to save some lives was one of the most fulfilling experiences for me as a seafarer." (Capt. 6)

"We are given a lot of responsibility at an early age. We handle so many stressful situations, such big responsibilities, whether it comes to other people's lives, our lives or towards environment, which is a very good experience." (2ⁿᵈ Off. 1)

"Traveling to different countries around the world, interaction with locals and exposure to varying degree of experiences was all very memorable." (Capt. 2)

"Transiting beautiful places like Magellan strait, Mississippi River, some scenic river passages and being on shore leave to places like the Maracana stadium in Rio, Brazil

or the Melbourne Cricket Ground which I always dreamt off as a child, were all very memorable.” (Capt. 1)

“One of the best experiences was, the time I was getting promoted from third to second officer.” (2nd Off. 2)

4.4.2 Motivation to remain a seafarer

“The main motivation was the money, because we were not getting such a handsome package ashore before coming to sea life.” (CHENG 2)

4.4.3 Perceived changes in shipping and its impact

“Earlier the manpower on board was more, it was a little bit higher than in comparison to the current time, the workload is day by day increasing and manpower is decreasing.” (Rating 1)

“The paperwork has increased, as lot of regulations are required to be followed. When you're going to different countries, the amount of paperwork involved, because of their local regulations keeps you on your toes and it is a pain.” (Capt. 6)

“Now it's not about completing work and reporting the work anymore, now, there is additional effort put in, trying to understand what the auditors/inspectors will come and check during their audit at every port the vessel calls. That added pressure adds a huge dimension of complications and pressure for us.” (CHENG 1)

“Ship staff is being pushed to the extreme limits of endurance; everybody is tense onboard with no social gatherings onboard now; we don't get time to interact personally with other crew members.” (Capt. 3)

"Movement in the ports have become so restricted for the seafarers that they can't go out and even if they get the chance, they choose not to because of constant restrictions, checks, harassment and bullying in ports and terminals." (Capt. 2)

"The safety culture has improved, earlier also there was safety but now I feel that safety is something that once you put it on paper no one can bypass it." (Capt. 1)

4.5.2 Tasks/ Practices which affected job satisfaction

"Most experienced seaman on board is supposed to be Captain of the ship, however due to extensive paper work, messages, master is most of the time tied to the computer completing one report or the other and works like a clerk." (Capt. 3)

"In one instance there was a medical emergency and office was indecisive whether to send the crew member ashore for medical assistance. Finally I had to tell them that I will seek Coast Guard assistance incase they can't decide, they relented and sent a boat." (Capt. 1)

"The job satisfaction was more when we were able to go out at ports although it was badly affected due to COVID. "The shore leave is really restricted in many ports because terminals are not even allowing people to go ashore. This part of going ashore really satisfied me which now is being reduced to almost none from last few years and is one of major factor which led to my resignation from the sailing." (Capt. 6)

"Especially after covid, the thing I hated the most is the travel restrictions and the problems because of the visa and the quarantine requirements. All those things have really affected my charm for this career." (Capt. 5)

4.5.3 Impact of improvement in telecommunication on job satisfaction

"Frequent calls from the office affects our working schedules. For e.g.; we have a toolbox meeting around eight o'clock and we get a call from the office, maybe around 10- 11 o'clock, and they say, this work is more important. They try to dictate us from the office like you need to do this thing and the you have to change the plan and this office interference affects the job planning on board." (CHENG 2)

"It is mostly negative, because you're available 24X7. Sometimes the company demands you to do things immediately, they want response because of which you have to sometimes work while you are supposed to be resting, and that is the negative impact. The positive impact is, I think if you are into a situation where you need an immediate assistance, which is available quite easily nowadays. That's a positive thing, but mostly, it has been negative." (2ⁿᵈ Off. 2)

4.5.4 Effect of paperwork on job satisfaction

"Actual amount of paperwork has actually expanded, and sometimes things are happening on paper because we don't have the amount of time to do everything by the books." (2ⁿᵈ Off 2)

"During navigation, duty officers focus more on writing down the buoys you are passing and all that VHF communication to comply with vetting inspection requirements, everything is being written at the expense of actual navigation. The officers are more focused on doing paperwork and preparing for inspections and less towards navigation and other practical aspects." (Capt. 6)

"Paperwork load is increasing; it is also giving benefits to us also because when we are entering enclosed space there is a positive compliance and checklists are being filled. It permits greater following of rules on ground. If not 100%, at least 60-70%

compliance does take place. However, a lot of paperwork filling exercise is also taking place, for example the enclosed space entry does not take place, but records are maintained." (Rating)

4.5.5 Effect of fatigue and overwork on job satisfaction

"Rest hour was the most beautiful regulation which came in to help the seafarers in how to handle it. It just crumbles when the commercial pressure comes in. And this has again become a tool to castigate seafarers as part of the accident investigation or to harass seafarers by auditors / inspectors / PSC to find some small mistake or violation in the rest our regulation, rather than helping seafarer, it has put extra workload on the seafarers to keep the rest hour logs updated at all times." (Capt. 2)

"MLC and Work and Rest hours were a constructive step in this direction. However, this has become extra paper work on board the vessel." (Capt. 3)

"Work and rest hours' regulation are something which I never followed by the book. I don't think it's possible. If you're following by the book, you cannot work at sea. It's always about managing and manipulating the entries. It has been always like that; it is still the same. But fatigue is something that you can feel as a master or an officer." (Capt.1)

"Yes, I think fatigue is one of the major issues on shipping. Sometimes it has happened that I work continuously for 24 hours because that's how the job demands were at that particular point of time. So, it was one of the reasons why I wanted to leave shipping." (2ⁿᵈ Off. 2)

4.5.6 Changes suggested by seafarers to improve job satisfaction

*"Shore leave option should be available at every port as we are 24*7 at work station*

with no holidays. If a person can get the shore leave at ports, it works like stress and pressure releasing thing. All the fatigue and overwork, everything will be the secondary. Also, measures to be initiated to increase man power onboard as per the actual workload onboard." (Capt. 4)

"Short contracts for officers and especially crew and timely sign off. Crew members are generally on contract of 7 to 9 months. This effects their mental health and work performance on board. I have personally dealt with 3 different depression patients on board." (Capt. 3)

"Seamless shore leaves, increase man power and more parties on the onboard the ship with some more drinks on board the ship just to basically take off that edge from the stressful environment where everyone is stretched like a rubber band ready to break because of the constant pressure which has been put on them." (Capt. 2)

"The terminal authorities should be more respectful to the seafarers." (Capt. 5)

4.6.1 Factors justifying exploration of alternative careers

"I have actually not quit, but now I prefer working ashore because staying away from family for even 3 to 4 months at a stretch is sort of getting quite difficult. Being out of touch with a growing family and ageing parents and that fear which has crept inside me after the pandemic, that fear of getting stuck on board that has probably left a scar which I am not able to get rid of so far. So that is what has influenced my decision to continue ashore." (Capt. 1)

"For last 15 years that I am working as an AB and my salary has not increased, whereas cost of living and inflation are increasing every year. I have not witnessed any growth in life in this profession whereas a cadet who joined has become a Captain now." (Rating 1)

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4.6.2 Influence of family in exploring alternative career options

"My family is always very supportive and always backed me in my career choices. I had all my family member positive with COVID which caused a lot of ambiguity and insecurity. Being ashore, I can take better care of my family members if something goes wrong, in fact my family also preferred my joining office." (Capt. 5)

"My family thinks, it was a good decision at the right time and they are very happy that at least in case of any emergency I will be with the family and I can look after my elderly parents and kids." (CHENG 2)

"She's very supportive and okay with whatever decision I take, this is my own private thing." (CHENG 1)

"My family is very supportive and adjusting in nature, they are with me in every decision that I take, be it whether I want to sail or I want to change it to shore job or anything. That is my personal decision and I want to surely spend some quality and quantity time with the family." (Capt. 4)

"They feel that it's okay whenever you are sailing, they understand that for six months you are away but when six months you were on land that should be your vacation time. So that is that something that they feel." (2ⁿᵈ Off. 1)

4.7.1 Impact on personal and professional life

Negatively for everyone, when I was at home, I stayed home for very long. When I was on board, I stayed on board for quite some time and there was so much uncertainty when I was joining or when I was signing off. It brought tremendous stress in your life because when I was at home I had to see where money's going to come from because

you have plans with family, for future, savings, career. All this affects personal and professional life." (2nd Off. 2)

"People onboard didn't know when they were getting down, and the ones who were at home, didn't know they will be joining. The pandemic did affect the professional as well as personal lives adversely." (Capt. 4)

"During COVID time I realized that I have to switch to a shore job and I am fortunate to have landed with one." (CHENG 2)

4.7.2 Aspects of Shipping revealed by COVID – 19 pandemic

"PSC inspection stopped but vetting's inspections didn't, people who own the cargo and the business, wanted shipping to run. But they stopped all other support system for the crew, sometimes even provision we couldn't receive. Everything basically stopped because of this COVID except cargo operations and other aspects related to shipping except for the crew welfare." (CHENG 1)

"Seafarers are frontline workers was realized by the government at a very late stage which really no one really bothered to understand. The SOPs were adopted to facilitate sign ON and OFF but the seafarers faced a lot of hardships during the period." (Capt. 4)

"I saw was the how fragile industry was, how sensitive to covid 19 the industry has become especially seafaring business. The big problem, the seafarers didn't have much of the support, either from the industry or from the authority and even now they are facing these problems." (2nd Off. 2)

"Many shipping companies joined hands to get the crew change collectively on their ships through use of chartered flights. Few countries recognized the contribution of

seafarers in balancing the world economy and declared seafarer as frontline workers. Countries like Singapore, Norway, UK and many more made crew change possible when the things started easing up." (Capt. 3)

"Covid 19 has changed the entire world and sea farers were one of the worst affected people. There were people on board who could not sign off for months together even when they had emergency at home." (Capt. 3)

"I felt that the effect of the pandemic was making the manning companies to push for long contracts and the seafarers are also happily or rather with no choice are accepting it and it will probably become vogue." (Capt. 1)

4.7.3 COVID – 19 crisis – quest for an alternative career

"It was actually one of the biggest reasons for me to look for an alternative, because I saw that the situation, was so unstable. You never know when you will probably lose the job because of this or something. When I was joining first time during COVID it was so challenging to join. I was like, ready to join with my bags packed for almost 1.5 months as the joining dates just kept changing." (2nd Off. 2)

Because of the COVID situation everyone whether it was a seafarer who was on board or at home realized that family is everything. Even with comparative lower salary I will be willing to work ashore as spending time with family is more important for me now. With more job options ashore now, seafarers are generally not looking at this as a long-term career option and most of the younger generation wants to move ashore as soon as they get command." (Capt. 4)