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Employability of Female Graduates in a Quasi-Military Maritime Higher Education Institution: Towards Gender Equality in the Maritime Industry

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ABSTRACT

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) underscores the value of conducting graduate employability studies in higher education institutions.

On the other hand, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) battles for the empowerment of women, notably those who are seafarers assigned to work-aboard inter-ocean ships. The study traces the employment, career path, and relevance of the curriculum and competencies learned in the academy and gender issues experienced by the 26 alumnae of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) who graduated in 2013-2018. The quantitative-descriptive research design was utilized. A researcher-made questionnaire both via Google form and print-out was the main data gathering instrument. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean and Likert scale. Data shows that the female graduates are single, with an OIC license, able to land a job 1-6 months after graduation and mostly working in either an international ocean-going vessel or serving at the Philippine Coast Guard. They also perceive that they have acquired all competencies in PMMA to a great extent which become handy in their respective jobs. Further, they strongly agree that they have acquired work-related values from PMMA and that the curricula at the Academy are relevant. Unfortunately, most of them have experienced gender inequality. The findings imply that even if the alumnae were skilled and had the necessary competencies, gender inequality is still prevalent in the male-dominated industry. The incidence of inequality was mostly experienced in the assignment of tasks and finding a job. It is recommended that Gender and Development seminars/lectures should be given to the students, which includes anti-sexual harassment, safe space and violence against women and children acts and the Academy to institutionalize system-wide the conduct of employability studies every three-school year to include not only the graduates but also the employers as respondents.

Keywords — Institutional Research, employability study, female graduates, gender and development, maritime, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Employability has been presented as an aspect of the quality of higher education and as a benefit of university degree programs for career and work (Storen & Aamodt, 2010). Employability studies or tracer survey is a means of sustaining curriculum relevance and enhancing the marketability of educational programs. Adequate knowledge on employment outcomes of the graduates could assist in formulating academic policy towards combating unemployment (Balingbing, 2014). These are surveys mostly used by higher education institutions (HEI's) to follow up on their graduates; find out what they are doing

in the education and training they have received from their alma mater (Aquino et al., 2015). Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) are challenged in balancing the development of higher education and the professional relevance of academic teaching (Melik & Pavlin, 2009). Learning success' parameter is measured through the employability of graduates, type of employment and the length of time landing on their first job (Word press 2011). It was noted that graduates' employability had been an increasing concern of HEI's. Government agencies have encouraged educational institutions and employers to work together to address employability issues (Lowden et al., 2011).

Furthermore, according to Brown et al. (2001, as cited in Stiwne and Alves, 2010), when there is a growing supply of graduates, employers consider educational certificates less essential than individual characteristics and abilities. Thus, employers define 'employability' as aspects of 'behavioral competence' and the students' abilities to display personal, performative, and organizational skills rather than the possession of established academic, conceptual knowledge and skills.

Estimo (2012) revealed that the BSMT Alumni seem to find employment as soon as they reach the age of 21 and that they seem to gain stable employment as they reach the age of 26. Accordingly, based on the study made by Orence and Laguador (2014), maritime graduates (respondents) found communication skills as one of the competencies which are very advantageous in their first job. The graduates are presently employed during the time of data gathering wherein their first jobs are related to the Maritime Program with almost 1 to 6 months of job search employed in international shipping industries and cruise line and tourism vessels. The skill in basic safety is considered the number one very relevant and important competence in the marine transportation curriculum.

Having provided the skills such as knowledge and technical, communication, human relations, leadership, research, problem-solving very adequately, and other competencies were major factors on top of the area of specialization considered for immediate job acquisition (Gines, 2014).

The fight for gender equality in the maritime world and the seafaring industry has gained overwhelming support from the United States and other seafaring-connected and allied organizations (Pateña, 2019). It is said that "the place of women is well recognized by the job placement when they deployed inter-ocean-going vessels aboard, and in land-based officers of a shipping company." Further, the International Labour Organization (ILO) shows that at least 25,000 female seafarers are deployed aboard international ocean vessels, inter-ocean vessels, and competent in the job assigned to them by employers and superior officers. It

represents only 1-2 percent of the world's 1.25 million seafarers. However, in the cruise line sector, they represent 17-18 percent of the workplace. Ninety-four percent are employed on passenger ships (with 68% on ferries and 26% on cruise ships) and 6 percent are employed on cargo vessels (i.e. container ships, and oil tankers). As for jobs, there are women shipmasters and chief engineers, as well as officers. Because the nature of seafaring life has changed in recent years, having women on board is a great advantage; it creates a more normal social environment. As part of the crew, women can reduce the sense of isolation felt by many seafarers (ILO, 2011).

The role of women in traditionally man's seafaring dominion is also gaining attention in the country. The Women in Maritime Philippines (WMP) and the Associated Marine Officers and Seaman's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) led industry stakeholders in validating this development. WMP battled for the empowerment of women, notably those who are seafarers assigned to work-aboard inter-ocean ships, while AMOSUP underscored the role and importance of maritime education and training to which women seafarers must have equal access to squarely face challenges of the times with success. Although very much outnumbered by male students, female maritime students are equally attentive and patient with their male counterparts. He also added that women empowerment in the Philippines is very much in place. Proof of this development is women holding key post-elective and appointed government and private business (Pateña, 2019).

In the Philippines, the PMMA is the pioneer institution in maritime education. For 192 years, it has produced many master mariners, chief engineers, shipping executives, naval and coast guard officers, excellent educators and trainers now serving in maritime-related industries/institutions in our country and abroad. No maritime education institution can claim 100% employability of its graduates except the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA).

The entrance of midshipwomen on this prestigious academy was brought about by the implementation of a certain Board Resolution in 1993. The 1997 Batch of graduates gives way to the first batch of graduates with two cadettes on its line of marine merchant officers. This is largely connected to the perceived shortages of officers in the world fleet, and thus, since the late 1990s, there has been a growing interest in training and recruiting women seafarers (Magramo & Eler, 2012). The successful implementation welcomes the opportunity for midshipwomen to slowly penetrate the maritime education and training of the academy, and despite the quasi-military approach life in the academy, midshipwoman in their unique way shows significant performance and manifests

virtuous characteristic of a true merchant marine." (Paraggua et al., 2015).

Once onboard, some women seafarers encountered the problem of gender discrimination in terms of promotion in their seafaring careers compared to their male counterparts, even when qualified and due for promotion. For instance, some of these women had the experience of applying to companies who rejected their applications based on their gender or who applied an unofficial upper limit on the level to which women could be promoted (Thomas, 2004). Female seafarers on board commonly experience sexual harassment, and the residential and isolated nature of the ship increases opportunities and amplifies consequences for sexual harassment (Belcher et al., 2003).

Ultimately, this study aimed to trace the employment, career path, and relevance of the curriculum and competencies learned in the academy of the alumnae of the PMMA who graduated from 2013-2018. This is a typical tracer study to identify program effectiveness and determine the effectiveness and relevance of the curriculum and the students' learning experiences and how it affects employment after graduation. This also assessed the employment status of the graduates and how far they have come after earning the knowledge and skills in college.

This study is similar to the studies of Gines (2014), Refozar et al. (2017), Negro and Amparado (2019), and Biscante et al. (2019) but with different courses or bachelor degrees. It is very similar to Estimo (2012), Orence and Laguador (2014), Ampong (2016), who studies maritime graduates.

This study, however, focused on the female maritime graduates and aside from identifying the employability of graduates, competence acquired in the school and the relevance of the curriculum, it further explored gender issues experienced by the female graduates very similar to the study conducted by Belcher et al. (2003) and Thomas (2004).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to trace the employment, career path, and relevance of the curriculum and competencies learned in the academy and gender issues experienced by the alumnae of the PMMA who graduated from 2013-2018. Specifically, it sought to address the following objectives, (1) to identify the demographic and employment profile of the female graduates, (2) to describe the perception of the respondents on the relevance of the PMMA curriculum on their job placement and the extent of learning from PMMA, (3) to recognize gender inequality experienced by the female graduates, and (4) to interpret the

possible measures to promote gender equality in the employment of females in the maritime industry.

FRAMEWORK

The study characterized the respondents by gathering their employment profiles. The study has the following independent variables: (1) employment status/ job placement profile of the respondents (i.e., present employment, employment status, nature of employment, means of job search, place of work, reasons for accepting the job, reasons for staying on the job, reasons for unemployment, if applicable, duration of job search, job level position, and gross monthly income; (2) skills/competencies learned in the Academy based on CHED Memorandum Order No. 20 series of 2015; (3) work-related values that the Academy have inculcated in them (i.e., discipline, honesty, integrity, sense of obligation/duty, obedience to regulations, directives, and order, courtesy, respect for all, fairness and justness, and preserving and saving life at sea at whatever cost); (4) relevance of the BSMT and BSMarE curricula in their employment; and (5) gender inequality experience while job searching and while employed. As an output/ dependent variable, the study determined the employability of the PMMA female graduates. Once determined, the study could propose enhancements of the current education and training program to improve employability and lobby for the promotion of gender equality in the employment of females in the maritime industry.

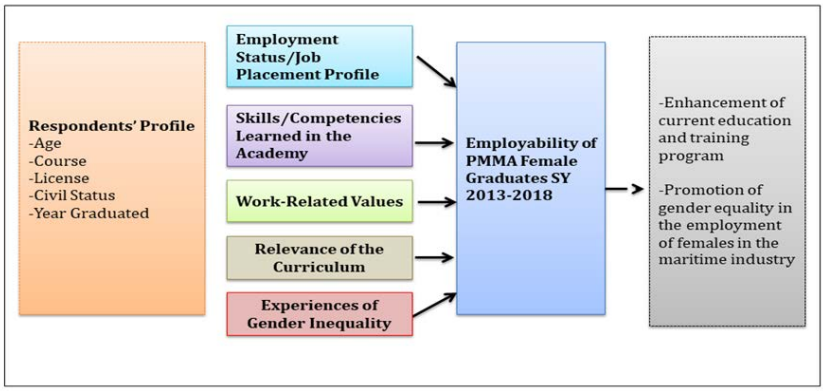

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Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative-descriptive research design was utilized. Descriptive research includes observation and description of the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way (Ragma, 2018). The respondents of the study are female graduates of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy school year 2013 up to 2018. A total of 78 graduates were identified; however, since there was limited contact with all of the graduates, only 26 alumnae could answer the survey questionnaire via Google form or print-out. Ethical considerations were made to assure the anonymity of the respondents and protection of the data gathered through the inclusion of confidentiality notice and informed consent form. This researcher-made questionnaire which was validated by subject experts, was the main data gathering instrument of this study. The respondents are equally distributed according to the year they graduated from 2013-2018. Frequency, percentage, and mean were used to present and analyze the gathered data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic and Employment profile of the Female Graduates

Table 1 shows the demographic and employment profile of the respondents. The respondents are in the middle-adult age group with an age average of 24 years old. They are fairly distributed according to their course. Among the respondents, 76.92% respondents are with OIC licenses, and others are currently undergoing licensure exams or with the Philippine Coast Guard. Only 1 of the 26 respondents is married.

On the employment status, data shows that 13 or 50% are regular/ permanent, 12 or 46.15% are contractual, and only 1 or 3.85% are temporary. On the location of the present job, data shows that 12 or 46.15% are work located at land-based and 14or 53.85% are work located at sea-based: ocean-going vessel. On job level position, the table shows that at land-based there are 5 or 19.23% are managerial/executive, 5 or 19.23% are professional/technical, and only 2 or 7.69% are rank or clerical. At sea-based (ocean-going vessel), there are 13 or 50% operational level (2nd/3rd mate/3rd/4th engineer) and only 1 or 3.85% who are in a support level.

On reasons for staying on the job, data shows that there are 24 or 28.57% who are staying on their job because of the salaries and benefits, 18 or 21.43% who are staying on their job because of the career challenge, 9 or 10.71% who

are staying on their job because of the proximity to residence, 8 or 9.52% who are staying on their job because of the family and/or peer influence, 5 or 5.95% who are staying on their job because of the security-related, 15 or 17.86% who are staying on their job because it is related to their course and only 1 or 1.19% who are staying because of the job stability.

On the duration of job hunting, data shows that there are 12 or 46.15% who looked for their job in less than one month, 7 or 26.92% who looked for their job in 1-6 months, 5 or 19.23% who looked for their job in 7-11 months and only 2 or 7.69% who looked for their job in 3 years and above. On nature of the first job, data shows that there are 8 or 30.77% who worked at military service (PCG/PN/PNP Maritime and the like), 14 or 53.85% who worked at international shipping, 1 or 3.85% who worked at privately-owned maritime-related offshore offices and 3 or 11.54% who worked at maritime education and training.

On resigning from the first job, data shows that there are 5 or 19.23% who resigned from their first job. 2 or 40.00% resigned because of career challenge, 1 or 20.00% resigned because of security-related, 1 or 20.00% resigned because of continuation of contract and 1 or 20.00% resigned because of review for licensure exam while there are 21 or 80.77% who stayed on their first job. Lastly, on gross monthly income, data shows that there are 6 or 23.08% who have a gross monthly income of less than PHP 50,000, 11 or 42.31% who have a gross monthly income of PHP 50,000 – PHP 100,000, 8 or 30.77% who have a gross monthly income of PHP 101,000 – PHP 200,000 and only 1 or 3.85% who have a gross monthly income of PHP 201,000 – PHP 300,000.

The data which reveals 1-6 months of job hunting, onboard employment, and status of graduates as contractual employees agree with the result of the studies of Estimo (2012), Orence and Laguador (2014), Paraggua et al. (2015) for maritime graduates and Amparo (2016) and Refozar et al. (2017) for other degrees. The Philippines has been the world's biggest supplier of seamen, with Filipinos accounting for approximately 30 percent of the world's 1.6 million seafarers, which reflects a high level of employability for maritime graduates.

However, the findings on position level and monthly salary of graduates from the result of the studies of Estimo (2012), Orence and Laguador (2014) argued with the present study. Such disagreement is because PMMA graduates hold managerial positions or deck/engine officers upon graduation and the graduates from other schools work as quartermasters or ordinary seamen.

Table 1. Demographic and Employment Profile of Respondents

Demographic Profile		f	Percentage (%)
Age: 27-30		6	23.08%
24-26		12	46.15%
21-23		8	30.77%
Course: BSMT		12	46.15%
BSMarE		14	53.85%
License Passed OIC Licensure Exam		20	76.92%
Undergoing Licensure Exam		6	23.08%
Civil Status Single		25	96.15$
Married		1	3.85%
Employment status			
Regular/Permanent		13	50%
Contractual		12	46.15%
Temporary		1	3.85%
	TOTAL	26	100%
Location		F	%
Land-based		12	46.15%
Sea-based: Ocean-going Vessel		14	53.85%
	TOTAL	26	100%
Job Level/Position			
Land-based:			
a. Managerial/Executive		5	19.23%
b. Professional/Technical		5	19.23%
c. Rank or Clerical		2	7.69%
Sea-based (Ocean-going vessel):			
a. Operational Level (2^{nd} / 3^{rd} Mate/ 3^{rd} / 4^{th} Engr.)		13	50.00%
b. Support Level		1	3.85%
	TOTAL	26	100%
Reasons for Staying on the Job			
Salaries and benefits		24	28.57%
Career Challenge		18	21.43%
Related to special skill		9	10.71%
Proximity to Residence		4	4.76%
Family and/or peer influence		8	9.52%
Security-related		5	5.95%
Related to Course		15	17.86%
Others: Job Stability		1	1.19%
	TOTAL	84	100.00%

Duration of job hunting		
less than 1 month	12	46.15%
1-6 months	7	26.92%
7-11 months	5	19.23%
1 year to less than 3 years	0	0.00%
3 years and above	2	7.69%
TOTAL	26	100.00%
Nature/Industry of First Job		
Military Service (PCG/PN/PNP Maritime	8	30.77%
International shipping	14	53.85%
Domestic shipping	0	0.00%
Privately manning agency and offshore offices	1	3.85%
Government-owned maritime offshore offices	0	0.00%
Maritime Education and Training	3	11.54%
TOTAL	26	100.00%
Respondents who resigned from First Job		
Yes	6	19.23%
Reasons for Resigning Career Challenge	2 40.00%	
Security-related	1 20.00%	
Continuation of Contract	1 20.00%	
Review for Licensure Exam	1 20.00%	
No	21	80.77%
TOTAL	26	100.00%
Gross Monthly Income		
Less than Php 50,000	6	23.08%
Php 50,000 – Php 100,000	11	42.31%
Php 101,000 – Php 200,000	8	30.77%
Php 201,000 – Php 300,000	1	3.85%
TOTAL	26	100.00%

Perception on the relevance of PMMA Curriculum

Table 2 shows the relevance of the PMMA curriculum to female nautical graduates. Data shows that with the BSMT curriculum, English, Mathematics, Physical Education, Computer, Seamanship, Naval Science, Aptitude for the Service, Meteorology and Oceanography, Deck Watchkeeping, Maritime Communication, Statistics, Marine Environment, Maritime Law, Mar Power, and Persman are very relevant to the graduates' job placement while Filipino, Social Science, Natural Science, Humanities and Navigation are relevant.

On the other hand, table 2 shows that under the BSMarE curriculum, English, Mathematics, Physical Education, Social Science, Computer, Humanities, Automation, Auxiliary Machinery, Electro, Engineering Materials, Maritime Drawing and Diagram, Machine Shop, Maintenance and Repair, Marine Environment, Maritime Law, Naval Architecture, Persman, Mar Power, Thermodynamics, Engineering Watchkeeping, Power Plant Steam, Naval Science, Aptitude for Service are very relevant job placement of the graduates while Filipino and Natural Science are relevant.

Table 2. Relevance of PMMA curriculum

BSMT Curriculum	Mean	QI	Rank	BSMarE Curriculum	Mean	QI	Rank
English	3.83	Very Relevant	1.5	English	3.79	Very Relevant	8
Filipino	2.75	Relevant	19	Filipino	2.57	Relevant	26
Mathematics	3.25	Very Relevant	15	Mathematics	3.50	Very Relevant	20.5
Physical Education	3.50	Very Relevant	10	Physical Education	3.71	Very Relevant	12
Social Science	2.92	Relevant	17	Social Science	3.36	Very Relevant	23.5
Computer	3.83	Very Relevant	1.5	Computer	3.93	Very Relevant	4
Natural Science	2.58	Relevant	20	Natural Science	2.86	Relevant	25
Humanities	2.92	Relevant	17	Humanities	3.43	Very Relevant	22
Navigation	2.92	Relevant	17	Automation	3.71	Very Relevant	12
Seamanship	3.58	Very Relevant	7.5	Auxiliary Machinery	4.00	Very Relevant	1.5
Naval Science	3.67	Very Relevant	4.5	Electro	3.86	Very Relevant	6
Aptitude for the Service	3.67	Very Relevant	4.5	Engineering Materials	3.71	Very Relevant	12
Meteorology and Oceanography	3.50	Very Relevant	10	Maritime Drawing and Diagram	3.64	Very Relevant	16
Deck Watchkeeping	3.67	Very Relevant	4.5	Machine Shop	3.71	Very Relevant	12
Maritime Communication	3.42	Very Relevant	12.5	Maintenance and Repair	3.93	Very Relevant	4
Statistics	3.50	Very Relevant	10	Marine Environment	3.93	Very Relevant	4

Marine Environment	3.58	Very Relevant	7.5	Maritime Law	3.79	Very Relevant	8
Maritime Law	3.67	Very Relevant	4.5	Naval Architecture	3.57	Very Relevant	19
Mar Power	3.33	Very Relevant	14	Persman	4.00	Very Relevant	1.5
Persman	3.42	Very Relevant	12.5	Power	3.79	Very Relevant	8
OVER-ALL MEAN	3.38	Very Relevant		Thermodynamics	3.50	Very Relevant	20.5
				Engineering Watchkeeping	3.71	Very Relevant	12
				Power Plant Steam	3.64	Very Relevant	16
				Naval Science	3.36	Very Relevant	23.5
				Aptitude for Service	3.64	Very Relevant	16
				OVER-ALL MEAN	3.63	Very Relevant	

The data above agree with the findings of Estimo (2012), Paraggua et al. (2015), and Orence and Laguador (2014) that both BSMT and BSMarE curricula are very relevant to their present employment. The cause of such agreement among researchers is the adherence of Maritime schools to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Policies, standards and Guidelines for the Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation and the Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering programs.

Applicability of Competencies Learned To Their Present Employment

Table 3 shows the usefulness/ applicability of skills/competencies of the respondents that they acquired from PMMA. Data shows that on the extent of Learning, the items ranged from 2.96 to a moderate extent to 3.73 to a great extent. The competencies: communicate effectively in oral and written English (ranked #1), work in a multi-cultural and/ or multi-disciplinary team demonstration of the ability to perform the competence (ranked #2.5) and understand professional and ethical responsibilities (ranked #2.5), use appropriate techniques, skills and modern tools to remain globally competitive (ranked #4), understand the impact and implications of various contemporary issues, demonstrate ability at the operational level under section a-ii/1 (BSMT) or section a-iii/1 (BSMarE) of the STCW code (ranked #5), understand the

impact and implications of various contemporary issues in the global and social context of the profession; and engage in lifelong learning and keep abreast with developments in the field of specialization and/or profession (ranked #6) are to a great extent learning is acquired in PMMA, while the competence on applying knowledge in mathematics, science and technology in solving problems related to the profession and the workplace and conduct research using appropriate research methodologies are moderate extent of learning in PMMA are of moderate extent learning was acquired.

Table 3. Usefulness/Applicability of Skills/Competencies

Skills	Extent of Learning			Usefulness/Applicability to Job		
	Mean	QI	Rank	Mean	QI	Rank
Demonstrate the ability to perform the competence at the operational level under Section A-II/1 (BSMT) or Section A-III/1 (BSMarE) of the STCW Code	3.42	To a great extent	6	3.46	Very useful/ applicable	6.5
Apply knowledge in mathematics, science and technology in solving problems related to the profession and the workplace	3.23	To a moderate extent	8	3.27	Very useful/ applicable	8
Work in a multi-cultural and/ or multi-disciplinary team	3.69	To a great extent	2.5	3.73	Very useful/ applicable	2
Understand professional and ethical responsibilities	3.69	To a great extent	2.5	3.54	Very useful/ applicable	3.5
Communicate effectively in oral and written English	3.73	To a great extent	1	3.77	Very useful/ applicable	1
Understand the impact and implications of various contemporary issues in the global and social context of the profession	3.42	To a great extent	6	3.54	Very useful/ applicable	3.5
Engage in lifelong learning and keep abreast with developments in the field of specialization and/or profession	3.42	To a great extent	6	3.50	Very useful/ applicable	5
Use appropriate techniques, skills, and modern tools in the practice of the profession in order to remain globally competitive; and	3.50	To a great extent	4	3.46	Very useful/ applicable	6.5
Conduct research using appropriate research methodologies	2.96	To a moderate extent	9	3.08	Useful/ Applicable	9
OVER-ALL MEAN	3.45	To a great extent		3.48	Very useful/ applicable	

The findings above are similar with Gines (2014), Ampong (2016) and Biscante et al. (2019) that graduates find their learned communication skills to be very useful at work. English language proficiency is a major qualification in getting a job in the international seafaring profession. Thus, Maritime school graduates consider that developing high standards of competence and professionalism with good English communication skills is very important in their careers.

Work-related values acquired in PMMA

Table 4 shows the work-related values acquired in PMMA of the respondents. Data shows that the respondents strongly agree that work-related values: a sense of obligation/duty integrity, honor, courtesy, honesty, fairness and justice, obedience to regulations, directives, and order and humility are acquired in PMMA with a sense of obligation/duty ranked #1; ranked #4 are integrity, honor, righteousness, courtesy; ranked #8.5 are discipline, fairness and justice, and obedience to regulations, directives, and order; and humility ranked #11.

Table 4. Work-Related Values Acquired in PMMA

Work-Related Values	Mean	QI	Rank
Discipline	3.85	Strongly Agree	8.5
Integrity	3.88	Strongly Agree	4
Honor	3.88	Strongly Agree	4
Sense of Obligation/Duty	3.92	Strongly Agree	1
Righteousness	3.88	Strongly Agree	4
Courtesy	3.88	Strongly Agree	4
Honesty	3.88	Strongly Agree	4
Fairness and Justice	3.85	Strongly Agree	8.5
Courage	3.85	Strongly Agree	8.5
Humility	3.77	Strongly Agree	11
Obedience to regulations, directives, and order	3.85	Strongly Agree	8.5
OVER-ALL MEAN	3.86	Strongly Agree	

This implies that the academy has a weak policy implementation on developing the values of humility, discipline, fairness, justice, courage, and obedience to regulations, directive and order among the students. The findings agree with the study of Refozar et al. (2017). The root cause of these weaknesses is

the value priorities, commitment to a value and the disposition to act as imposed by the quasi-military training.

Table 4 shows the experience of female graduates on gender inequality. Data shows that there are 16 or 61.54% of female graduates experienced gender inequality while there are 10 or 38.46% of female graduates who did not experience gender inequality.

Among those who experienced inequality, the incidence of inequality was experienced in the assignment of task 11 or 39.29%, 9 or 32.14% inequality in finding a job, 5 or 17.86% in job promotion, and 3 or 10.71% in training and development.

The finding agrees with the study of Thomas (2004) that once onboard, some women seafarers encountered the problem of gender discrimination in terms of promotion in their seafaring careers as compared to their male counterparts, even when qualified and due for promotion. However, it argues with the study of Belcher et al. (2003) where it empathized that sexual harassment is commonly experienced by women working onboard cargo vessels because of the residential and isolated nature of the ship.

Table 5. Experience of Female Graduates on Gender Inequality

Gender Inequality Experience	f	Percentage
Yes	16	61.54%
No	10	38.46%
TOTAL	26	100%
Situation		
Finding the job	9	32.14%
Assignment of task	11	39.29%
Job promotion	5	17.86%
Training and Development	3	10.71%
TOTAL	28	100%
Strategies in Promoting Gender Equality in the Workplace		
Does your office/company have strategies to promote gender equality in the workplace?		
Yes	23	88.46%
No	3	11.54%
TOTAL	26	100%

Strategies		
Conduct of Gender Sensitivity Training	16	25.81%
Equal representation to Planning/Executive Bodies	20	32.26%
Provision of special leave for women	11	17.74%
Equal access to scholarship/training	15	24.19%
TOTAL	62	100%

The reason for gender discrimination in terms of promotion is that women still only comprise two percent of the 1.2 million seafarers worldwide and the lasting stigma that the maritime industry is for men only. On the other hand, the reason why female maritime graduates from a quasi-military institution do not experience sexual harassment is the nature of the authoritarian command structure of the academy where male and female roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.

On the strategies for promoting gender equality in the workplace of the respondents. Data shows that there are 23 or 88.46% of offices/companies have strategies to promote gender equality in the workplace. On the other hand, there are 3 or 11.54% of offices/companies do not have strategies to promote gender equality in the workplace.

CONCLUSIONS

This study assessed the employability of the PMMA female graduates and traced their whereabouts and current employment status. Further, it looked into the possible gender issues that arise when female graduates are seeking employment and during their employment, including possible measures to address these gender issues and improve the female graduates' employability. This was limited to the alumnae of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy, who graduated from 2013 up to 2018. The study utilized a very limited sample size of female maritime graduates with a very limited time frame. Furthermore, the inputs for this study were limited to CHED and PMMA policies and documents, results of the survey, and inputs from key informant interviews, to include other studies and literature that are related to tracer study and gender equality in the maritime industry.

The female graduates of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy 2013-2018 are able to gain employment and are successful in their chosen occupations,

which benefit themselves, the maritime workforce, the community, and the economy. Moreover, the PMMA curriculum has contributed significantly to developing the set of skills and attributes that will enable a graduate to succeed throughout their working life. Most of the companies where female graduates have worked have strategies to promote gender equality in the workplace. However, the incidence of gender inequality in the assignment of tasks and finding a job was experienced by the female graduates. The findings provide interesting insights on the design and development of policies to improve female graduates' employability and promote gender equality in the employment of females in the maritime industry.

The study implies that maritime institutions that admit female students in their program must enhance employment opportunities for females in the maritime industry to help attract more applicants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of this study, the following are recommended: (1) PMMA should provide more focus on the study provisions and conditions such as the hiring of competent instructors, acquisition of state-of-the-art facilities. that they are providing to their students, especially that this is significantly related to the graduates' employability and professional success; (2) strengthen the involvement of students in research projects as part of their study provisions and condition; (3) enhance the values of discipline, courage, fairness, and justice, especially humility among students as these are core values of the academy that should be exhibited in their profession; and (4) gender and development seminars/ lectures should be given to the students which include anti-sexual harassment, safe space, and violence against women and children acts.

Further, in-depth research should be done on gender-sensitive issues among females in the maritime industry and that other researchers need to base the same study on a larger sample size to generate a more relevant result.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of the study may best be translated into a policy to institutionalize system-wide conduct of employability studies every other school year to include not only the graduates but also the employers as respondents. A tracer sustainability plan should be established, which will include qualitative research methods.

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