

## **FACTORS AFFECTING CAREER PROGRESSION OF FILIPINO MERCHANT MARINE OFFICERS TO STCW '95 MANAGEMENT LEVEL POSITIONS**

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### **I. BACKGROUND**

1. The worldwide supply and demand scenario is experiencing a critical shortage of merchant marine officers and a surplus of ratings. The Philippines is the leading supplier of maritime manpower with Filipino seafarers comprising almost 30% of the world's seafarers. However, out of this figure, our country's share of senior officers in the global fleet is only 14.8%. A closer look on the number of Filipino seafarers by rank shows that only about 10% are senior officers, 24 % are junior officers and 65% are ratings.
2. Completed in December 2005, the survey looks at the profile of Filipino merchant marine officers occupying management level positions, including personal and occupational factors that affected career advancement.
3. The methodology employed included:
  - Review of existing literatures and studies relevant to career progression
  - Interviews with manning agency representatives
  - Administration of questionnaire to management level officers
4. Results of the survey were generated from a sample of 705 senior merchant marine officers and interviews with managers of 85 manning/shipping companies. These results serve as baseline data to be used in formulating appropriate employment policies and programs.

### **II. SURVEY FINDINGS**

1. The desire for achievement ranks as the strongest motivator in a Filipino merchant marine officer's decision of pursuing the highest position onboard ship. Challenge for higher responsibility is another strong motivator that fuels seafarers' success.
2. Management level officers have consciously planned out their career progression with the end goal of attaining the highest license.
3. Strategies used to carry out their career plans included maintaining good performance and continuous updating of knowledge and skills through trainings.
4. Willingness to undergo training in the past as well as in the future has surfaced to be a predictor of success in the attainment of the highest license and the occupation of management level positions onboard vessels. Other significant predictors of officers' success include age, father's educational attainment, number of children, and examination as a screening method for entrance in a company.
5. Managers of manning/shipping companies shared that:
  - Seafarers with high need for achievement are more self confident. They possess high degree of commitment towards desired goals and do not fear but are challenged by the prospect of higher responsibility.
  - In contrast to those who simply view seafaring as a means of livelihood, who opt to stay in lower positions after they have sent their kids to school, after they have

secured a house and lot and saved for a business, those who make it to the highest positions remain focused on achieving what is considered as one of the peaks of the seafaring career – to take command as Captain or Chief Engineer of a ship.

6. The research also sheds light on occupational factors that facilitate seafarers' professional growth and advancement. These include recruitment and hiring policies, communication processes, mentoring relationships, promotion and training opportunities.
7. Scarcity of these opportunities contributed to the propensity of management level officers for frequent company hopping. This situation is even compounded by the contractual nature of seafarer's employment and "poaching" of management level officers among manning/shipping companies. The survey shows that almost half of the deck and engine officer respondents accounting for 49% have only served for 5 years or less in their present companies. Only 24% have been with their companies for 6 to 10 years.
8. Career progression of Filipino merchant marine officers to STCW '95 management level positions remains largely dependent on the interplay of personal and occupational factors.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations cut across the various stakeholders involved in the career development of Filipino seafarers in their desire to be successful in their chosen career.

1. Ship Owner's Strengthened Investment in Human Resources
  - Investment in continuous training of crew
  - Assistance in licensure examination
2. Manning Companies Organizational Support to Seafarers' Career
  - Review of existing recruitment and hiring practices
  - Utilization of appropriate selection methods
  - Training and development activities to help crew plan their careers
  - Formulation of mentoring programs
3. Maritime Education and Training's (MET's) Emphasis on Achievement Motive
  - Inclusion in the maritime education curriculum of subjects geared towards developing achievement motivation among potential seafarers
  - Offering of short developmental courses in training centers that will augment and supplement the KSAs gained on achievement motivation.
4. Government's Policies and Programs in Support to Seafarers' Career Development
  - Formulation of policies aimed at regulating "poaching" or "pirating" of management level officers among different companies
  - Review of government policies and programs on seafarers' career development (licensing requirements of manning agencies, Seafarers' Upgrading Program, possibility of providing financial assistance to seafarers taking the licensure examination, etc.)
  - Improvement in the accessibility of licensure examination conducted by the PRC (increased frequency of scheduled examinations and provision of facilities for walk-in examination)
5. The Seafarer's Individual Role in Career Progression
  - Individual career planning

6. Future Researches

- Study factors intrinsic to management level officers (KSAs) to determine which among these have been influential to their career success;
- Make comparative study of the factors affecting career progression of the competitors of Filipino seafarers to the management level positions, taking into consideration the interplay of cultural characteristics, sources of occupational/organizational support, policy environment, among others; and
- Benchmark the best employment practices/policies within shipping/manning companies deemed most facilitative to career success of crew.