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Research Article

Review and Analysis of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Policies and Procedures in Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK) For the Protection of Female Seafarers

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ABSTRACT

This study reviewed and analyzed the anti-sexual harassment policies and procedures of NYK-Fil Ship Management, focusing on the protection of female seafarers. Using a mixed-methods design, the research gathered quantitative data from a descriptive survey and qualitative insights from interviews with NYK-Fil office personnel and representatives from other manning agencies. Findings revealed that awareness of anti-sexual harassment policies among NYK-Fil seafarers is high, with no significant differences across age, rank, or experience. However, the interviews pointed out ongoing challenges, including fear of retaliation, cultural issues onboard, and gaps in leadership accountability. While NYK-Fil's policies align with the requirements of Republic Act 12021 (Magna Carta for Seafarers), the study highlighted areas for improvement, including clearer communication, inclusive policy enhancements, and stronger leadership accountability. The findings suggest that awareness alone is insufficient; lasting protection depends on consistent enforcement and cultural transformation within the industry to fully protect all seafarers.

Keywords: Anti-sexual harassment, NYK, Magna Carta, Female Seafarers, Policy and Protection

Background

Sexual harassment is a serious and pervasive problem within the maritime industry, particularly for female seafarers who operate in a predominantly male environment. Recent global studies and reports by organizations like the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) have highlighted the scale of this issue, with a significant percentage of women seafarers reporting experiences of harassment.

While international and national legal frameworks, such as the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC, 2006) and the Magna Carta for Filipino Seafarers, provide a legal framework for protection, gaps persist in their practical implementation and enforcement. The unique characteristics of the shipboard environment, including its inherent isolation, cultural diversity among crew members, and rigid hierarchical structures, often create barriers that hinder the

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effective application of anti-harassment policies. This study addresses this issue by analyzing the anti-sexual harassment policies of Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK). By gathering perspectives from a unique group—male seafarers who have served alongside female seafarers—the research provides a critical and grounded understanding of how these policies are experienced and applied at sea. The findings offer NYK-Fil a clearer picture of where policy breakdowns occur, whether in training, leadership, or reporting mechanisms, enabling the company to make more targeted and effective improvements to foster a safer and more inclusive onboard environment.

Methods

A quantitative survey was administered to 285 male seafarers currently employed by NYK-Fil. The purpose of this phase was to measure their level of awareness regarding anti-sexual harassment policies. The rationale for focusing exclusively on male seafarers was to understand their perspectives and role in shaping the onboard environment, which is critical for effective policy implementation. The

sample size was determined to ensure the statistical significance of the findings for the target population. The survey tool was subjected to validation through pilot testing, and its reliability was confirmed using a Cronbach's alpha test.

The qualitative phase involved interviews with 12 key informants from two distinct groups. Seven (7) office personnel from NYK-Fil participated, selected based on their direct roles in creating, implementing, or monitoring anti-harassment policies, as well as their experience with training or incident reports. Additionally, five (5) representatives from other Philippine-based manning agencies were interviewed. All research procedures were conducted in strict adherence to ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, who were fully briefed on the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. All responses were anonymized to ensure confidentiality, and the data was stored on secure, password-protected devices to guarantee data protection throughout the study.

Result and Discussion

Table 1.1. Age Profile of NYK-Fil Seafarer Respondents

| AGE BRACKET (in years) | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------|------------|--------------|
| 20 – 25 | 12 | 4.2 |
| 26 – 30 | 83 | 29.1 |
| 31– 35 | 61 | 21.4 |
| 36 - 40 | 34 | 11.9 |
| 41 – 45 | 27 | 9.5 |
| 46 – 50 | 36 | 12.6 |
| 51 – 55 | 28 | 9.8 |
| 56 and above | 4 | 1.4 |
| TOTAL | 285 | 100.0 |

Table 1.1 shows that NYK-Fil's seafarers were distributed across both younger and older groups. A large portion fell into the 26 to 30 years old bracket at 29.1% which indicated that a lot of younger seafarers were in the younger age group. Also, there is a significant number in the 31 to 35 years old bracket at 21.4% showing a considerable representation

from seafarers in their early thirties. However, the older groups were equally important to share, 11.9% were 36 – 40, 9.5% were 41 – 45, 12.6% were 46 – 50, 9.8% were 51 – 55, and 1.4% were 56 and above showed that almost half of the respondents were beyond their mid-thirties. The age profile demonstrated a balance between younger and older seafarers.

Table 2. The Demographic Profile of NYK-Fil Office Personnel Interview Participants

| Profile | Indicator | Frequency |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Position / Job Title | General Manager | 1 |
| | Head of Training | 1 |
| | Senior Technical Officer | 1 |
| | Superintendent | 2 |
| | Vice President | 1 |
| | President | 1 |
| Department / Unit | Recruitment and Assessment Group | 1 |
| | Cruise and Crew Allied Services | 1 |
| | NYK-Fil Maritime E-Training Inc. | 2 |
| | Maritime Crewing Team | 1 |
| | HSEQ Maritime Operation Team | 1 |
| | Technical Operations – Manning Center | 1 |
| Years of Service in NYK-Fil | 10 years | 1 |
| | 12 years | 1 |
| | 15 years | 2 |
| | 22 years | 1 |
| | 28 years | 2 |
| The Implementation Or Monitoring Of Company Policies Onboard Vessels. | Yes | 7 |
| | No | 0 |
| Participated In Training Or Briefings Related to Anti-Sexual Harassment Policies. | Yes | 7 |
| | No | 0 |

Table 3. The Demographic Profile of Manning Agency Representative Interview Participants

| Profile | Indicator | Frequency |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Agency Name | A | 1 |
| | B | 1 |
| | C | 1 |
| | D | 1 |
| Position / Role in the Agency | Marine Manager | 1 |
| | Operations Manager | 1 |
| | Marine Superintendent | 1 |
| | Group Head – Marine Operations | 1 |
| | Assistant General Manager | 1 |
| Years of experience in the manning industry | 5 years | 1 |
| | 4 years | 1 |
| | 10 years | 1 |
| | 15 years | 1 |
| | 7 years | 1 |
| Handle Seafarers Assigned to International Vessels. | Yes | 5 |
| | No | 0 |
| Worked with Female Seafarers Deployed Onboard. | Yes | 5 |
| | No | 0 |

| Profile | Indicator | Frequency |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Involved in Formulating or Implementing Anti-Sexual Harassment Policies With Your Agency. | Yes | 5 |
| | No | 0 |

Seafarer Demographics and Awareness

The study's demographic analysis revealed a balanced workforce with a near-equal distribution of younger (26-30 years old) and older (36+) seafarers, providing a wide range of perspectives on policies. The data also indicated a highly seasoned crew; over half of the respondents had more than a decade of experience, offering valuable insights into the evolution of onboard culture. A key finding, however, was that only 48.4% of male seafarers had direct experience working with female seafarers. This means a significant portion of the data on policy effectiveness was theoretical, underscoring the critical value of insights from those with firsthand experience in mixed-gender crews.

Policy Framework and Implementation

The qualitative interviews with NYK-Fil personnel and other manning agency representatives confirmed that a robust policy framework is in place, developed in alignment with international standards like the ILO/IMO Maritime Labour Convention and informed by direct input from seafarers. Despite this strong foundation, a significant gap exists between policy awareness and consistent, on-the-ground enforcement. Survey results showed a high level of awareness among seafarers, with an overall mean score of 3.76 out of 4 and standard deviation is 0.63. The qualitative findings, however, revealed that implementation is heavily influenced by the leadership style and personal judgment of senior officers, leading to a perceived lack of consistent enforcement across different vessels. This finding is consistent with Lipsky's theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy, which highlights how frontline implementers—in this case, senior officers—have significant discretion that shapes policy outcomes. This dynamic is particularly relevant when considering cultural and generational

differences, which can subtly influence behavior and policy application on board.

Challenges to Implementation and Reporting

The study identified several critical challenges that undermine policy effectiveness. Interviews with personnel from NYK-Fil and other agencies revealed a pervasive fear of retaliation among seafarers, as well as shame and mistrust of the reporting system. These barriers make it difficult to get **Recommendations and Future Outlook**

Based on the triangulated findings, a series of recommendations were proposed to address the identified gaps. These are categorized into short-term, actionable steps and long-term, strategic goals.

Short-Term Recommendations

- To seafarers, it suggested that training should be more interactive and scenario-based to help them identify and prevent harassment more effectively. NYK-Fil office personnel recommended strengthening the organizational and logistical aspects of policies, such as using independent third parties for investigations to ensure impartiality.
- To manning agency representatives advocated for industry-wide best practices, including the use of third-party case handlers and gender focal points to provide confidential support and build trust among seafarers.

Long-Term Recommendations

- The foundational policy framework is in place; successful implementation depends on consistent leadership and a cultural shift that encourages safe reporting. This requires a sustained, strategic effort to overcome barriers like fear of retaliation and onboard mistrust.

- To future updates to the STCW framework, which will mandate anti-harassment training in the PSSR course, are expected to help close this gap. However, continued industry-wide effort and collaboration are essential to establish unified standards and ensure the lasting protection of all seafarers.

Conclusion

The study found a significant gap between the existence of anti-sexual harassment policies in the maritime industry and their effective implementation on vessels. While policies are in place, their enforcement is often inconsistent and heavily dependent on the discretion and personal values of senior officers. This leads to a disconnect between the formal policy framework and the actual experience of seafarers. To build on these findings, future research should explore more dynamic and proactive approaches to policy enforcement. We recommend investigating the role of technology in reporting harassment, such as the use of anonymous digital platforms or real-time monitoring systems that could bypass the traditional chain of command. Additionally, conducting cross-cultural comparative studies would provide a deeper understanding of how different national and generational norms influence onboard behavior and the perception of harassment. Lastly, a long-term study could track the effectiveness of newly implemented international regulations, like the updated STCW framework, to measure their impact on cultural change within the industry.

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