
Attributes of Filipino Seafarers: Will They Enhance Global Competitiveness Among Filipino Officers?

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ABSTRACT: In the 17th century, Filipino seafarers were the primary choice of foreign shipowners. They were hired to complement the galleons. The global survey of Seafarers International Research Center (SIRC) 2002 showed 28.1% deployment with 9% as senior officers and 19% as junior officers while 72% were ratings. The SIRC 2002 survey showed that Filipino seafarers occupy the No. 1 spot in global deployment. However, the recent survey conducted by the Baltic International Maritime Council (BIMCO/ICS) 2021 results showed officers from the Indo-Pacific occupy the top spot among senior officers and China was the top spot for junior officers. Nineteen years after 2002 the deployment position has changed with officers from the Indo-Pacific and China in the top spot. A study of attributes among Filipino officers who are currently in the employ of foreign shipowners will serve as the basis for an intervention program to increase the deployment of Filipino officers. The study when implemented will remedy the gap in the deployment. Research instruments were distributed to Filipino officers in Luzon and Visayan regions. The respondents of this study chosen using the simple random method were Filipino Management and Operational level officers who were employed by international shipping companies. Hard copies of the questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the Philippines while soft copies were sent to officers on board. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Significant differences among variables were determined through, a *t*-test of Independent Samples and One-way ANOVA. Results revealed that of the five attributes, two were found significant. The attributes of analytical and critical thinking and lifelong learners were found significant. To enhance global competitiveness study should be done to validate the result of this study and the impact of the intervention program.

KEYWORDS: Attributes, Seafarers, Global Competitiveness

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines ranked no. 1 in the deployment of seafarers to international shipping companies with 28.1% from the survey of Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC) 2002. However, the recent survey conducted by the Baltic International Maritime Council (BIMCO) 2021 showed otherwise. Filipino management (senior officers) and operational level (junior officers) ranked second compared to officers from Indo-Pacific regions and China. The survey was conducted among international shipowners that employ officers of different nationalities. Thus, this study was conceptualized with the help of Filipino management and operational-level officers employed by foreign shipowners. The study determined the attributes that are important for deployment overseas. Instruments were distributed to the randomly selected Filipino officers employed by international shipping companies. The result of the study will serve as the basis for an intervention program to increase the deployment of Filipino senior and junior officers and reclaim the top spot in the deployment to foreign registered ships.

BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The Baltic International Maritime Consultative Organization (BIMCO) survey, in collaboration with the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) in 2021, predicted a shortfall of 26,240 Standard of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW)- certified officers to complement the increasing number of ships trading globally. Movements of goods around the world have increased due to the opening of borders, thereby easing the restrictions and worldwide trade has increased tremendously. Given the improving worldwide economic conditions, the demand for ships of all types has increased, causing a shortfall of ship officers and ratings. More ships were built, requiring more officers and crew. However, the survey showed that the officer requirements of international shipping companies were recruited from other countries. According to the report (BIMCO/ICS, 2021), the global requirement for STCW-certified officers will last until 2026. In the same report by BIMCO/ICS (2021), China was at the top spot in the supply of Operational level officers for the global shipping market, and

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the Philippines ranked second. In the category of Management-level officers, Srinivasan (2021) stated that the top spot was garnered by senior officers from the Indo-Pacific region, while the Philippines was second in the global employment ranking.

The decrease in deployment was reported by the Manila Times that in 2018 there were 337,502 seafarers deployed, which was 111,961 lower as compared to the figure of 449,463 in 2017 (Ayeng, 2019) as reported by Tang and Bhattacharya (2021). Even though a separate figure for officer deployment was not provided, it is reasonable to assume that tens and thousands of Filipino officers lost employment in 2018. If this continues, the Philippine maritime industry would be strained with an increasing number of unemployed MARINA-certified officers.

The Report of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) shows a 25% reduction in deployment from 2018 to 2019 during the pre-pandemic era. The decrease in the deployment of Filipino officers during the COVID-19 pandemic was 53% in 2020 and 48% in 2021 (POEA,2021). This study was conceptualized because of International shipping companies' decreasing deployment of Filipino officers. The task of managing the daily affairs falls in the hands of the two senior officers – Master Mariner and Chief Engineer. They should possess attributes of leadership, analytical and critical thinking skills, and life-long learning to guide the crew into safety in times of emergencies.

This study investigated the Filipino seafarers' attributes that served as bases for an intervention program to enhance global competitiveness.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the Filipino seafarers' attributes as an the entire group and when classified as to annual salary, rank, and course graduated?
2. Are there significant differences in the Filipino seafarers' attributes when classified according to annual salary, rank, and course graduated?
3. What intervention program can be developed to enhance seafarers' global competitiveness?

HYPOTHESIS

There are no significant differences in the Filipino seafarers' attributes when classified according to annual salary, rank, and course graduated.

RELATED LITERATURE

The Spanish Pacific empire was established in the sixteenth century, Filipinos primarily crewed the ships that connected Mexico to Manila (Zhao & Amante, 2005) While the maritime industry has relied on transnational labor for centuries and has been globalized for more than 600 years, it has long been known for its severe racial and ethnic labor divisions (Sharma, 2022). Ships on international voyages have become more prominent and carry more cargo with less operating cost. Compared to older ships built in the 90s, new ships require less complement to operate. Despite the mild shortage of officers ships must run with insufficient backup or fewer officers than the recommended level of manning (Petersen, 2000 as cited by Sugimoto, 2004). From the Seafarers Manpower report of BIMCO/ICS 2021, the demand for officers has increased by 24%. The report indicates that 26,240 STCW-certified officers are required globally for the next decade. Fan et al. (2017) stated that one of the most essential criteria for sailors to be hired aboard foreign ships is their ability to communicate in English.

SEAFARERS' ATTRIBUTES

Seafarers should possess the attribute of leadership. Leadership attributes are inherited from parents through genes, while others learn from their association with persons. "He is born to be a leader" cited by Marasan, et al. (2021). The shipping industry is undergoing a wave of increased automation (Kitada et al. 2018; Sharma and Kim, 2022). In the same study, Sharma and Kim (2022) reiterated the importance of skilled and qualified seafarers to operate fully autonomous ships. It was found from the study of Kaplan (2016) that basic communication skills in both native and foreign languages, and digital competencies were embraced in the lifelong learning approach.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The relationship between variables was presented in Figure 1. The illustration in Figure 1 shows the factors such as annual salary, rank on board ships, and course graduated will determine which among the five attributes of ethical and socially responsible, life-long learners, effective communicators, technically competent, and critical thinking that are required for deployment to international shipping companies. This study was anchored on the theory of the Great Man. "According to this theory, great leaders are born, not made" (Spector 2016). This theory posits that leadership attributes are inherent and cannot be learned. While Marasan, et al. (2021) defined Great Man Theory as the attributes regarding qualities possessed by great people.

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METHOD

This descriptive study was designed to closely investigate Filipino officers' attributes employed by international shipping companies and to formulate an intervention program to enhance their global competitiveness.

The simple random sampling method was used to gather the data. Hard copies of the questionnaire were given face-to-face to the respondents at the offices of shipping companies A and B, training centers A and B, and to those Filipino officers who were on board, copies of the questionnaire in Google form with the link were sent.

For inferential analysis, One-way ANOVA and *t*-test for Independent Samples were employed to determine the significance of the differences in terms of the independent variables.

RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

The respondents of this research as shown in Table 1 were the ninety-four (94) Filipino officers (Management and Operational levels) employed by international shipping companies. The respondents were currently employed by shipping companies A and B. Also, Filipino officers who were on upgrading training at training centers A and B were included as respondents.

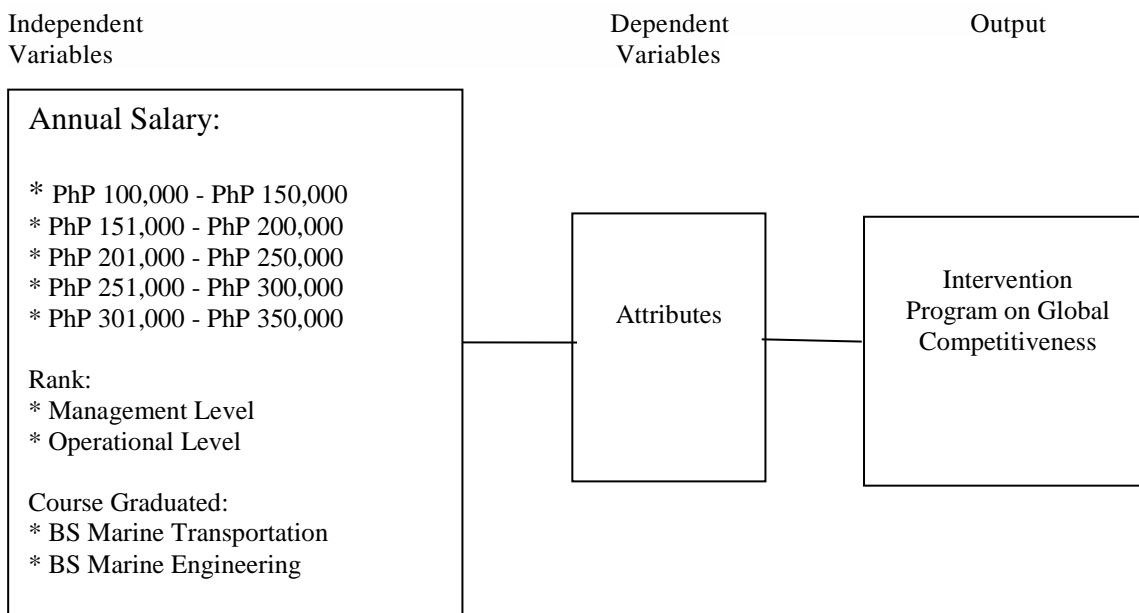


Figure 1. The diagram shows the attributes as influenced by annual salary, rank onboard ship, and course graduated.

The distribution of the 94 respondents in Table 1 revealed that 23% (22) received an annual salary of PhP 100,000–PhP 150,000, 16% (15) received an annual salary of PhP 150,000–PhP 200,000, 14% (13) received an annual salary of PhP 200,000–PhP 250,000, 11% (10) received an annual salary of PhP 250,000–PhP 300,000, and 36% (34) received an annual salary of PhP 300,000–Ph 350,000. There were 50% (47) of management and operational level officers; 48% (45) were graduates of BS Marine Transportation while 53% (49) were graduates of BS Marine Engineering.

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Entire Group	94	100
(A) Annual Salary		
PhP 100,000 to PhP 150,000	22	23
PhP 150,001 to PhP 200,000	15	16
PhP 200,001 to PhP 250,000	13	14
PhP 250,001 to PhP 300,000	10	11
PhP 300,001 to PhP 350,000	34	36
Total	94	100

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(B) Rank		
Management	47	50
Operational	47	50
Total	94	100
(C) Course		
BS Marine Transportation	45	48
BS Marine Engineering	49	52
Total	94	100

RESULTS

This portion of the data presentation indicates the descriptive data on the Filipino seafarers' attributes when grouped according to annual salary, rank, and course graduated. The result showed that ethical and socially responsible attributes got the highest mean of 4.30 while the attribute of analytical and critical thinking got the lowest mean of 4.24.

Table 2 Filipino Seafarers' Attributes as an Entire Group

	Mean	Description	SD	Rank
ATTRIBUTES				
Ethical and Socially Responsible	4.30	Very often true of me	0.43	1
Life-long Learners	4.29	Very often true of me	0.60	2
Effective Communicator	4.26	Very often true of me	0.58	3
Technically Competent	4.26	Very often true of me	0.59	4
Analytical and Critical Thinking	4.24	Very often true of me	0.55	5
Overall	4.27	Very often true of me	0.55	

The Filipino seafarers' attributes when analyzed and grouped according to annual salary. The attribute of technically competent got the highest mean Of 4.54 among the seafarers with an annual salary of PhP 250,000-PhP 300,000, while the attribute of life-long learners got the lowest mean of 4.04 among the seafarers with an annual salary of PhP 200,000-PhP 250,000. The Filipino seafarers' attributes when analyzed and grouped according to rank. The Filipino seafarers' attribute of life-long learners have the highest mean of 4.39 among operational level officers while the attribute of effective communicator has the lowest mean of 4.21 among the management Level officers. The Filipino seafarers' attributes when analyzed and grouped according to course graduates. The attributes of life-long learners for BSMT graduates got the highest mean of 4.32 while attributes of analytical and critical thinking for BSMT graduates got the lowest mean of 4.22.

Inferential data on the Filipino officers' annual salary, rank onboard, and course graduation. Statistics employed were one-way ANOVA and *t*-test for Independent Samples to determine the significance of the attributes in terms of annual salary, rank on board, and course graduated.

One-way ANOVA test on the attributes of the 94 respondents, when classified according to annual salary, was not significant. Therefore, regardless of salary, the attributes of Filipino officers are similar.

The Filipino seafarer's attributes in terms of the two ranks were analyzed with a *t*-test and was found not significant. Regardless of the rank onboard, the attributes are similar. The result of the *t*-test was not significant regardless of the course graduated, therefore the attributes of Filipino seafarers are similar.

Intervention Program To Enhance Seafarers' Global Competitiveness

The results of this study have revealed the required attributes of Filipino seafarers, to secure employment from international shipping companies. The attributes are ethical and socially responsible, lifelong learners, and effective communicators. These three variables of attributes should be emphasized in the baccalaureate programs. If the seafarers were found inadequate in these three attributes, then a refresher program like in-house seminars may be conducted by the respective shipping companies.

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Program Component

Component	Objective	Strategies	Person Responsible	Expected Output
Ethical and socially responsible	Strengthen cultural values integration	Conduct seminars on emotional resilience and mental health.	MHEIs - Dean / Guidance counselor Shipping companies - HR Manager	Must pass the assessment to complete the seminar requirement.
Critical and analytical thinking	Improve the critical and analytical knowledge to make appropriate decisions during emergencies.	Conduct workshops	MHEIs - Dean / HR Manager Shipping companies - HR Manager	Must present an output to complete the workshop
Effective communicator	Enhance communication skills in English and other languages	Conduct a short course in English / other languages for 15 days	MHEIs - Dean - Subject area head Shipping companies - /President / HR Manager	Must present an output of the language taken to complete the course.

Note: All seminars and workshops will be conducted face-to-face.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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