

Anchored in Duty: Lived Experiences of Women in Maritime Policing

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the challenges faced by female maritime officers in a male-dominated profession, focusing on their daily experiences. Conducted in Misamis Occidental, Philippines, this phenomenological research explored the lived experiences of five female maritime law enforcement officers with at least three years of service. Using Moustakas' phenomenological reduction method, structured interviews revealed themes of resilience, gender-based challenges, and strategic adaptation. Participants displayed remarkable adaptability and empowerment while navigating gender biases, physical demands, and isolation. Their strategies included seeking mentorship, engaging in professional development, and fostering teamwork. Despite societal expectations and stereotypes, these women demonstrated dedication to community safety and national security, successfully breaking barriers and advocating for inclusivity. Key findings highlighted their professionalism, relationship-building, and continuous learning as critical approaches to overcoming challenges and creating a collaborative work environment. The study emphasizes the compounded difficulties faced by women due to gender stereotypes and societal norms while highlighting their proactive strategies in reshaping roles and achieving professional success. Recommendations include implementing formal mentorship programs, gender sensitivity training, work-life balance policies, and increasing female representation. Additionally, leadership training, skill development, and networking platforms are essential to empower women in maritime policing. These initiatives aim to promote gender equity, foster professional growth, and establish inclusive structures for future generations. This research contributes to understanding the complexities and significance of women's roles in maritime law enforcement, showcasing their resilience and strategic approaches to thriving in a challenging field.

Keywords: maritime, maritime law enforcement, maritime policing, maritime women, women

INTRODUCTION

Maritime policing refers to the law enforcement activities conducted on the water bodies such as oceans, seas, rivers, and lakes (Lagat & Handa, 2023). It involves ensuring the safety and security of maritime environments, enforcing laws and regulations, preventing illegal activities, and protecting marine resources (Jabar, 2021). Maritime policing is crucial for maintaining order, safety, and security in coastal areas and beyond. Often involves engaging with diverse stakeholders such as commercial shipping companies, fishing communities, and recreational boaters to promote safety and compliance with regulations (Moreno, 2023). PNP Maritime Group collaborates closely with other maritime law enforcement agencies, including the Philippine Coast Guard and the Bureau of Customs, to effectively address maritime security threats and enforce laws related to fisheries, customs, and immigration (Agastia, 2021). With its specialized training programs and modern equipment, the Maritime Group is equipped to conduct patrols, respond to emergencies, and engage with coastal communities to promote maritime safety awareness and enhance security along Philippine waterways (Abad et al., 2023). The Maritime Police Unit, headed by a director with the rank of chief superintendent, was established alongside the Philippine National Police (PNP) under Republic Act RA 6975, also recognized as the Department of the Interior and Local Government Act of 1990. According to RA 6975 (Section 35 b.1), the Maritime Police Unit is mandated to execute all police functions across Philippine territorial waters and rivers. The Maritime Police Unit collaborates closely with other maritime agencies and

international counterparts to enhance maritime safety, combat transnational crimes, and uphold maritime sovereignty, contributing significantly to the country's maritime security framework (Chang, 2021). Recruitment for the Maritime Group follows a stringent process designed to ensure that candidates meet the necessary criteria and possess the required skills and attributes (Erlevent et al., 2023). Eligible individuals who aspire to join the Philippine National Police (PNP) must adhere to specific qualifications. These include being a citizen of the Philippines, possessing a commendable moral character, holding a formal baccalaureate degree from a recognized educational institution, and falling within the age range of 21 to 30 years upon oath-taking. Additionally, candidates must meet height requirements, with men needing to be at least 1.62 meters tall and women at least 1.57 meters tall. Candidates undergo a series of examinations and assessments to determine their suitability for the role. These include the PNP Entrance Exam administered by the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM), as well as compliance with RA No. 1080 (Bar and Board Examinations) and PD No. 907 (Civil Service eligibility for College Honor Students). Furthermore, applicants must not have a history of dishonorable discharge from military service or dismissal from any government civilian position for cause, nor can they have been convicted of an offense involving moral turpitude. They must also maintain a weight within five kilograms of the standard weight corresponding to their age, weight, and sex. The screening process involves a series of assessments, starting with a written examination, followed by a psychiatric/psychological examination (PPE), and a physical/medical and dental examination (PMDE). Candidates must also undergo a Physical Agility Test (PAT) to assess their physical fitness. Upon successful completion of these assessments, candidates proceed to a final interview. After passing the screening process, candidates participate in oath-taking and reception rites, marking their formal induction into the Maritime Group. Subsequently, recruits undergo basic and field training to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge required for their roles within the Maritime Group. This comprehensive recruitment and training process ensure that only qualified and capable individuals are entrusted with the responsibility of serving in the Maritime Group, contributing to its effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate of maritime law enforcement and security (Pastrana, 2021). The Maritime Group offers a range of specialized training courses tailored to equip personnel with the skills needed to fulfill their roles effectively in various maritime environments (Nalupa, 2022). One such course is the Maritime Trooper Course, serving as the foundational training program for Maritime Group personnel. This intensive course is designed to provide participants with proficiency in handling diverse situations, including counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations within Philippine Territorial Waters (De Castro, 2022). Additionally, it prepares individuals to serve as a maneuvering force of the Philippine National Police (PNP) during land-based security operations, ensuring readiness to respond to security threats (De Castro, 2020). The Maritime Trooper Course also emphasizes the development of individual skills required to respond promptly in the event of natural or man-made disasters, highlighting the importance of preparedness and resilience in addressing emergencies in maritime environments (Guyton, 2021). Another key training program offered by the Maritime Group is the Police Basic SCUBA Diver Course (PBSDC). This course is specifically designed to provide participants with comprehensive training in underwater operations, including underwater search and rescue operations. Participants undergo rigorous training to enhance their swimming skills and proficiency in navigating underwater environments, thereby preparing them for crisis and critical management operations involving maritime disaster incidents. Delivered by the Maritime Group Special Waterborne Operations School located in Brgy Solo, Mabini, Batangas, the Police Basic SCUBA Diver Course ensures that personnel are equipped with the necessary expertise to conduct underwater operations effectively and safely. These specialized training programs significantly enhance the Maritime Group's capabilities in responding to emergencies, protecting maritime assets, and ensuring maritime security. The overarching mission of the Maritime Group is to execute all police functions and uphold public safety and internal security across Philippine territorial waters and rivers, inclusive of ports of entry and exit, while also preserving the integrity of the maritime environment (Dizon et al., 2023). The Special Operations Units, these tasks include providing support to Police Regional Offices (PROs) through the execution of security, anti-terrorism, and anti-criminality operations. Furthermore, the Special Operations Units are responsible for enforcing environmental and maritime laws, conducting tactical boat operations, and facilitating maritime investigations (Letts et al., 2022). Additionally, collaboration with other operating units within the Philippine National Police (PNP) and external agencies such as the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine Coast Guard, and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources is essential in safeguarding maritime areas and ensuring comprehensive maritime security measures are implemented effectively. Through these specific tasks, the Maritime Group contributes significantly to the overall mission of

maintaining law and order in Philippine waters while protecting the maritime environment and securing vital maritime assets (*Philippine Agencies Work Together to Enhance National Inter-Agency Coordination and Information Sharing on Securing Safe Seas*, 2023) This study is essential for addressing gender dynamics within this specialized field and aims to address an Experimental gap by focusing on the stories and viewpoints of women officers in maritime law enforcement. Unlike previous studies that may have missed the specific challenges faced by women in this male-dominated field. Existing research on maritime policing may predominantly focus on quantitative data, policies, and structural issues, with limited exploration of the personal experiences and viewpoints of women officers. By highlighting the voices and experiences of women in maritime policing, this study aims to bring about real changes in law enforcement agencies, creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for women while improving the effectiveness of these agencies in keeping the public safe. To fully understand the challenges, motivations, and aspirations of women in maritime policing, it is essential to capture their voices through qualitative methods such as interviews. Insights gained from the personal narratives of women officers can inform more effective and inclusive policies and practices within maritime policing organizations. This will provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of women in maritime policing, enriching the existing literature with qualitative data that captures their voices and viewpoints. This approach not only contributes to academic knowledge but also has practical implications for creating a more inclusive and supportive environment in maritime policing. The study holds significant benefits, especially for stakeholders within the law enforcement community, particularly the Philippine National Police (PNP) Women Maritime Group. This research offers valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by women officers in a traditionally male-dominated field, enabling the PNP Women Maritime Group to tailor recruitment, retention, and support strategies to better meet the needs of its female members. Policymakers can utilize the findings to develop gender-inclusive policies and practices, fostering diversity and equity within the PNP and specifically within its maritime division. Furthermore, the research serves to validate the experiences of women officers, raising awareness of gender-related issues and advocating for a more inclusive and supportive work environment within the PNP Women Maritime Group. Ultimately, by enlightened the lived experiences of women in maritime policing, this study aims to drive positive change within the sector, enhancing the organizational effectiveness of the PNP Women Maritime Group and contributing to safer maritime communities in the Philippines.

METHODS

The study has utilized phenomenological study. Phenomenological research is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon. Using phenomenological research design, it was assumed that people used a universal structure or essence to make sense of their experiences. The study conducted in one of the cities of Misamis Occidental, Philippines. located in the province of Misamis Occidental, Philippines, is a charming and progressive city and celebrated for its captivating scenery, hospitable community, and dynamic cultural scene. The city is a coastal component city of the province, has a land area of 169.95 square kilometers (65.62 square miles), comprising 8.47% of the province's total area. With a population of 140,334 in 2020, it represents a significant portion of the province's population (22.73%) and a notable share of the Northern Mindanao region (2.79%). This translates to a population density of 826 people per square kilometer or 2,139 people per square mile. The participants of this study consisted of 5 female officers from maritime law enforcement agencies who are assigned in the province of Misamis Occidental, Philippines. Purposive sampling was used to identify the potential participants. The selection of the participants was based on following criteria: 1) female officers involved in Maritime Policing. 2) having at least 3 years' length of service in maritime functions, and 3) voluntarily participated the study. The research instrument consisted of structured interview guide designed to obtain detailed responses from participants regarding their lived experiences as women in maritime policing. The interview guide included open-ended questions covering various aspects such as personal background, gender dynamics, professional challenges, support systems, career development, and coping mechanisms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study focused on female police officers actively engaged in maritime policing, ensuring strict adherence to anonymity and data privacy protocols. A total of five participants, aged between 25 and 30, voluntarily took

part in the interviews. With at least three years of service each, their diverse backgrounds and professional experiences provided a rich foundation for an in-depth exploration of their roles, challenges, and strategies within maritime policing.

Resilience and Empowerment in Managing Multifaceted Responsibilities

This discussion is based on the identified key theme related to the resilience and empowerment in maritime policing among women police officers. The concept of resilience and empowerment in managing multifaceted responsibilities paint a vivid picture of the dynamic nature of maritime policing that captures the essence of the lived experiences shared by women police officers in this demanding field. The participants' narratives highlight a balance between overcoming challenges and embracing the empowering aspects of their roles. Their roles encompass routine tasks, emergency responses, and strategic collaboration, all of which are critical to maintaining maritime safety and security. The challenges they face, from environmental unpredictability to personal sacrifices, are met with resilience, adaptability, and a strong sense of purpose. The rewarding aspects, such as community impact, teamwork, and ecological preservation, underscore the intrinsic value of their contributions to maritime law enforcement. Collectively, these insights highlight the indispensable role of maritime police officers in ensuring the safety, sustainability, and security of maritime domains.

The daily responsibilities of female maritime police officers are diverse, combining routine duties with dynamic field operations. Participant 1 and Participant 4 underscores that their days often begin with team briefings to set goals and prepare for patrols, which involve monitoring vessel activities, conducting inspections, and ensuring maritime compliance (Chibana, 2021). On the other hand, Participant 2 and Participant 5 states that beyond patrolling, officers balance administrative tasks like report processing and data analysis while collaborating with agencies such as customs and fisheries to address complex maritime challenges (Maulana, 2021). This dual focus on fieldwork and coordination underscores the multifaceted nature of their roles according to Participant 3.

Thus, the statements of some of the participants said that:

"Every day starts with a team briefing where we review the goals for the day, check our equipment, and set out on patrol." (P1)

"While on patrol, they engage in monitoring vessel activities, conducting inspections, and staying vigilant for any suspicious behavior." (P4)

"On patrol, I help enforce laws, check permits, and ensure compliance with maritime regulations." (P2)

"Additionally, collaboration with agencies like customs and fisheries is a crucial part of their operations, allowing them to tackle complex maritime issues more effectively." (P5)

No two days are the same. Some days I'm out patrolling remote areas of the coastline, while on others, I might be responding to emergencies or assisting with search and rescue operations." (P3)

On the other hand, Participants 1 and Participants 3, highlighted their critical role in deterring illegal activities, such as smuggling, while promoting community safety and safeguarding marine resources against illegal fishing. Routine patrols and inspections foster maritime order, ensuring vessels comply with regulations and creating a safer environment for legitimate operations (Participant 2 and Participant 5) (Terry, 2024). The success of their operations, whether through intervention or ecological protection, reflects their contribution to national security, maritime trade, and environmental sustainability (Participant 4).

Thus, the statements of some of the participants said that:

"I feel a strong sense of pride knowing that our work directly deters illegal activities like smuggling, which keeps our maritime borders secure and communities safe". (P1)

“By preventing illegal fishing and safeguarding marine resources, I know that my work contributes not just to security but also to the sustainability of our ocean ecosystems.” (P3)

“Our patrols and inspections help maintain order at sea, ensuring vessels comply with regulations and creating a safer environment for seafarers and coastal communities.” (P2)

Our presence at sea acts as a deterrent to illegal activities, which helps create a safer space for legitimate maritime commerce and navigation.” (P5)

“Every successful operation, whether it’s stopping a smuggling attempt or assisting a distressed vessel, reminds me of the crucial role we play in protecting lives and maritime trade.” (P4)

The duality of the role is evident in the rewarding and challenging aspects shared by participants. According to Participant 1 and Participant 2, they take pride in safeguarding ecosystems, supporting coastal communities, and contributing to maritime security. However, the unpredictable environment, prolonged isolation, and physical demands of the job present significant challenges, requiring resilience and adaptability (Peñalba, 2021). Despite these hardships, the participants remain dedicated, emphasizing teamwork, preparedness, and personal sacrifice as key to their success as emphasized by Participant 4 and Participant 5.

Gender-Based Biases and Physical Demands

The experiences shared by female maritime police officers underscore the multifaceted challenges they face, ranging from gender biases and isolation to physically demanding tasks. Despite these obstacles, they exhibit resilience and determination, continuously striving to prove their worth in a male-dominated field. Their ability to navigate stereotypes, build credibility, and adapt to rigorous operational demands speaks to their strength and adaptability. These insights not only highlight the challenges of maritime policing but also emphasize the importance of fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all officers.

The participants' reflections highlight the pervasive challenges of navigating a traditionally male-dominated field as women. Participant 1 described the difficulty of proving her capabilities in an environment where her skills and competence were often questioned. This sentiment underscores the additional effort women must exert to gain respect and recognition, which can sometimes result in feelings of frustration or isolation. The need to continuously prove oneself can create an ongoing pressure that male counterparts may not experience to the same extent (Turgo, 2021). Participant 2 elaborated on the stereotypes regarding women's physical strength and resilience, which persist despite their proven competence. These assumptions often manifest in tasks that require physical endurance or strength, where women feel compelled to overperform to dispel doubts about their abilities (Sampson, 2024). For many, this becomes an ongoing challenge not only to meet the demands of the job but also to challenge preconceived notions about gender roles in the workplace.

The persistent undervaluation of women's contributions in this field reveals the broader cultural and institutional biases that influence perceptions of competence. These biases can affect decision-making processes, such as the allocation of leadership roles or the weight given to women's input during operations (Mengo, 2023). Over time, these challenges necessitate the development of adaptive strategies, such as heightened resilience, assertiveness, and proactive demonstrations of capability. At the same time, the participants' determination to overcome these barriers reflects a significant shift in redefining norms within maritime policing (Pangan, 2021). Consistently demonstrating their competence, women in the field not only challenge stereotypes but also pave the way for greater inclusivity. Their experiences highlight the importance of fostering equitable work environments where merit, rather than gender, determines recognition and opportunities for advancement (Moreno, 2024).

Thus, the statements of some of the participants said that:

“One of the biggest challenges has been proving my capabilities in a field where women are often underestimated. I’ve had to work extra hard to earn the respect of some colleagues and superiors.”(P1)

“There’s a perception that women aren’t as physically strong or resilient as men, so I’ve had to consistently demonstrate my competence to challenge those stereotypes.” (P2)

“Balancing work with personal life has been particularly difficult, especially when long deployments at sea take me away from family for extended periods.” (P3)

“Sometimes, I’ve felt isolated as the only woman on a team. It’s challenging to navigate situations where there’s a lack of understanding or support from male colleagues.” (P4)

“I have faced instances where my decisions or suggestions weren’t taken as seriously as those of my male counterparts, which can be frustrating and demoralizing.” (P5)

“Working in a male-dominated environment can sometimes feel isolating, especially when I’m the only woman on a team. However, it also motivates me to prove that I’m just as capable as my male colleagues.” (P1)

“At times, I have had to work harder to be taken seriously. There’s often an initial skepticism about my abilities, but I see it as a challenge to continuously demonstrate my competence and professionalism.” (P2)

“The male-dominated environment pushes me to excel in ways I might not have otherwise. I have learned to assert myself more confidently and take on leadership roles when the situation demands it.” (P4).

“While it’s rewarding to break down barriers and show that women can handle this kind of work, there are moments when I feel the weight of being an exception in an industry where men are the norm.” (P5)

Balancing work and personal life is a significant challenge for maritime police officers, particularly given the unique demands of the profession. Participant 3 emphasized the toll that long deployments at sea can take on personal relationships and family life. Extended periods away from home often mean missing important family events, milestones, or even daily interactions, which can lead to feelings of disconnection or guilt (Gonzaga, 2023). For many women in this field, the challenge is compounded by societal expectations regarding their roles as caregivers, which can create additional emotional pressure. This separation from family not only affects personal well-being but can also have an impact on mental health, as prolonged isolation and limited communication opportunities heighten the sense of being removed from loved ones. The demands of maintaining both a professional and personal identity can feel like a juggling act, as officers strive to meet the expectations of their roles at work while trying to stay connected to their families (Stoliarov, 2024).

Strategic Adaptation

The responses from the participants highlight several effective strategies for overcoming gender-based challenges, establishing credibility, and securing the support needed to succeed in maritime policing. These strategies ranging from consistently delivering results and building relationships, to engaging in continual training and seeking mentorship are essential for proving one’s competence and navigating the complex landscape of maritime law enforcement. The combination of hard work, professionalism, and support networks not only allows participants to break down gender stereotypes but also empowers them to become strong and influential members of their teams. Through these efforts, the participants demonstrate resilience and determination in a challenging and male-dominated profession.

The participants identified several strategies they have employed to overcome the gender-based challenges they face in maritime policing. One of the most commonly cited approaches, as highlighted by Participant 1, is focusing on the quality of their work. By consistently demonstrating competence and skill, they reduce the chances of their abilities being questioned on the basis of gender. As noted, the more proficient they are in their roles, the less opportunity there is for colleagues to doubt their capabilities, thus directly challenging gender stereotypes.

Another strategy, emphasized by Participant 2, involves building strong relationships with colleagues. By fostering positive relationships with both male and female team members, participants were able to earn

respect and support from their peers. This collaborative approach not only strengthens team dynamics but also helps to break down gender-based biases and fosters an inclusive work environment.

Leading by example is a powerful and effective strategy that demonstrates competence and challenges existing stereotypes as stated by Participant 3. This proactive approach allows women to showcase their capabilities in a tangible way, effectively addressing doubts or biases about their suitability for demanding roles in maritime policing. By stepping up to handle challenging assignments, they not only prove their technical skills and resilience but also model a standard of excellence that inspires confidence among their peers. Taking initiative in difficult situations also reflects leadership potential, which is crucial for breaking barriers related to gender. It signals to colleagues and superiors that women are just as capable of excelling in high-stakes or physically demanding scenarios, fostering greater trust and inclusivity within teams. Over time, this consistency in performance helps to shift attitudes, creating a more supportive and equitable work environment (Moreno 2024).

Additionally, continual learning and training, as highlighted by Participant 4, play a crucial role in maintaining credibility and readiness. Staying updated on maritime regulations, physical fitness, and operational procedures ensures that participants are well-prepared for any challenge. This emphasis on professional development not only boosts confidence but also reinforces their authority in the field.

Lastly, as noted by Participant 5, developing a strong support network, including mentors who understand the unique challenges women face in this field, has been instrumental. These mentors provide guidance, encouragement, and practical advice, which help participants navigate the gender-related barriers and challenges they face. The support network not only offers emotional reassurance but also contributes to their overall growth and success.

The participants shared various strategies for establishing credibility and demonstrating their capabilities within their teams. Participant 1 emphasized the importance of consistently delivering results, whether in routine patrols or high-stakes operations. This approach underscores the value of reliability and dependability, both of which are essential for earning the trust of colleagues in a collaborative and often high-pressure environment. Delivering results consistently not only reinforces the participant's technical competence but also demonstrates their commitment to the shared goals of the team (Tibayan, 2023). In the context of maritime policing, where operations can range from routine inspections to critical interventions, the ability to perform effectively across a spectrum of scenarios is particularly significant. It assures team members and superiors that they can rely on the participant's skills and judgment, fostering a sense of security and mutual confidence within the team (Das, 2023).

Thus, the statements of the participant said that:

"I demonstrate my credibility by consistently delivering results, whether it's during routine patrols or high-stakes operations. By being reliable and contributing to the team's success, I gain trust and respect." (P1)

"I have learned to focus on the quality of my work and consistently demonstrate my skills. I know that the more competent I am, the less room there is for anyone to question my abilities based on gender." (P1)

"One strategy I've adopted is to build strong relationships with my colleagues, both male and female. By showing that I can work well as part of a team, I've gained their respect and support." (P2)

"I try to lead by example—taking on difficult tasks and handling them with professionalism and efficiency. Over time, this has helped to challenge the biases people might have about women in this field." (P3)

"I focus on continual learning and training. Whether it's physical fitness, tactical skills, or maritime law, staying sharp ensures that I can face challenges head-on and prove my worth." (P4)

"I have developed a strong support network, including mentors who have been through similar experiences. They provide guidance and encouragement, helping me navigate challenging situations."

Participant 2 discussed the importance of staying well-prepared and knowledgeable about the latest maritime regulations and operational procedures. This approach reflects the value of continuous learning and adaptability in a field characterized by evolving challenges. Maritime policing demands a comprehensive understanding of laws, safety protocols, and tactical procedures to effectively handle diverse situations such as inspections, smuggling interdictions, and emergency responses (Andreas, 2023). Keeping abreast of the latest regulations and operational standards, participants ensure their skills remain relevant and impactful. Moreover, being informed allows participants to contribute meaningfully to team discussions. This active participation not only reinforces their role as a knowledgeable professional but also enhances team decision-making by introducing well-informed perspectives. In a male-dominated field where women may face scepticism about their abilities, demonstrating a mastery of subject matter helps to dismantle stereotypes and fosters respect from colleagues. This commitment to expertise also empowers participants to act confidently and decisively in high-pressure scenarios. In maritime policing, where split-second decisions can have significant consequences, informed officers become invaluable assets (Manzanilla, 2024). Their preparedness ensures they can adapt to unforeseen challenges, maintain operational efficiency, and uphold safety standards.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the resilience and empowerment of women in maritime policing as they navigate a male-dominated field, overcoming gender-based discrimination, physical demands, and isolation. Despite these challenges, they demonstrate exceptional adaptability, professionalism, and a commitment to community safety, environmental sustainability, and national security, which reinforces their sense of purpose. The study emphasizes the importance of mentorship, support networks, and professional development in helping these women excel, while also underscoring the need for institutional support, structural change, and an inclusive environment to foster gender equality. By employing strategies such as strong collaboration, delivering high-quality results, and maintaining professionalism, these officers not only break down stereotypes but also contribute to a more equitable and inclusive work environment, paving the way for future generations of women in maritime policing.

RECOMMENDATION

The study recommends several strategies to support women in maritime policing, including the establishment of formal mentorship programs to guide and support female officers in overcoming gender-based challenges. Regular gender sensitivity and unconscious bias training for all personnel should be implemented to foster a more inclusive and supportive team culture. Policies that support work-life balance, such as flexible hours, family leave, and on-site childcare, should also be introduced to alleviate the strain on female officers balancing personal and professional responsibilities. Efforts to increase female representation, ensure equal leadership opportunities, and provide access to ongoing training in areas like physical fitness and maritime law are essential for empowering women and enhancing their confidence. Additionally, creating platforms for women to build supportive peer networks, offering leadership training programs, and encouraging team-building activities will help challenge stereotypes, foster collaboration, and promote an inclusive work environment.

Declarations

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare no competing financial, professional, or personal interests.

Consent for publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

All the authors took part in literature review, analysis, and manuscript writing.

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