



HOWARD COLLEGE

**“A SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN WORK AND FAMILY LIFE OF SEAFARERS WHO
PASS THROUGH THE PORT CITY OF DURBAN”**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Zoleka Pearl Molefe, declare that this report is my own work, has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university and that the sources that I have used have been fully acknowledged.

This report is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the degree of Masters of Social Science in the Faculty of Humanities, University of KwaZulu- Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban, South Africa

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“There are two words that, when spoken, have the most unfathomable power to completely change your life. Two words that, when they pass your lips, will be the cause of bringing absolute joy and happiness to you. Two words that will create miracles in your life, wipe out negativity, and bring you abundance in all things. Two words that, when uttered and sincerely felt, will summon all the forces in the Universe to move all things for you. There are just two words standing between you, happiness, and the life of your dreams...

THANK YOU”. (Daily Teachings-The Secret)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMSA -	Australian Maritime Safety Association
F.O.C-	Flags of Convenience
ILO-	International Labour Organisation
OECD-	Economic Co-Operation and Development
UK-	United Kingdom
Gt-	Gross Tonnage

DEFINITIONS

SEAFARERS “a mobile workforce in terms of their inevitable geographical moves, who are usually precariously employed” (1999, p. 10). Seafarers are a mobile workforce solely because their job entails moving from one port to the other and across one continent to the other. Their work space is mobile and while constant in the work expected of them, the location of their work space is fluid. There are essentially two types of seafarers – the first consisting of officers and the second of ratings. Occupational differentiation of seafarers contributes to new patterns of inequality in the global and local labour markets for seafarers with regard to their recruitment, wages and working conditions (Ruggunan, 2005, p. 66).

OFFICERS Officers and ratings are associated with specific countries, gender, race and nationality as a basis for exploitation and unequal workplace practices. Officers, both men and women, are from developed countries such as the United Kingdom (U.K), Germany and Sweden. They are usually individuals who are from developed countries and who have acquired tertiary qualifications and they can be found in high rankings or positions of the industry such as captains or masters of the ship (ILO, 1996).

RATINGS Ratings are from developing and or underdeveloped countries such as India, the Philippines and Malaysia. Scholarship indicates that ratings often lack the necessary opportunities to equip themselves with the required skills and qualifications, due to financial constraints in their countries. They are forced to enter into manual labour positions on board

ships, at reduced rates. For instance, the Philippines provide the cheapest labour in the maritime industry (ILO, p. 1996).

FAMILY In an attempt to understand the work and family life balance of the seafarer, a family will be understood as a “group of individuals related to one another by blood ties, marriage or adoption, who form an economic unit, the adult members of which are responsible for the upbringing of children” (Eshleman, 1994, p. 2).

WORK-LIFE BALANCE According to Kofodimos (1993) “work–family balance often implies cutting back on work to spend more time with the family. Moreover, it is thought to be in an individual’s best interest to live a balanced life (Kofodimos, 1993 in Greenhaus et al., 2003, p.511). Clark however, defines ‘balance’ as a satisfaction and good functioning at home and at work, with a minimum of role conflict (2000, p. 751).

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to explore how the seafarer's long and regular absence from home affects both their work and family lives. In so doing the strategies that seafarers adopt to cope with their long absence from home and their extended time on the ship is sociologically understood. Both men and women from developing and developed countries join the Maritime industry as seafarers on a daily basis. Statistics indicate that only 2% of all seafarers today are women who are largely concentrated in the cruise and ferries sector. They have been relegated to gendered positions on these ships. For instance, women occupy positions such as being part of the hotel staff or cabin stewards, which have been previously and historically considered to be work for women while the men occupy jobs that are considered to be masculine and more important. While these seafarers enter the profession as both ratings and officers, the latter is a skilled professional worker more likely from a developed country. Ratings are often from poorer developing countries their labour is cheaper. Seafarers at all levels engage in the industry for a variety of reasons; some are forced into a life at sea to eke out a living; while others spend years training to prepare for a career at sea. Seafarers while working spend six weeks to nine months on board ships and are separated from their family.

KEY WORDS

Seafarers, Family, Work Life, Balance, Maritime, Strategies

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1.BACKGROUND

This study focuses on the significance of the relationship between work and family life of seafarers. It focuses on seafarers who pass through the port city of Durban which is situated at Longitude 31° 02'E and Latitude 29° 52'S, the port is 680 nautical miles north-east of Cape Agulhas and occupies the natural expanse of Durban Bay - an area of 1850ha, with the water area being 892ha in extent at high tide and 679ha at low. According to Hutson (2008, p 1), “Due to its geographic location and being a natural deep water port, it is the most accessible port with sufficient capacity to cater for the needs of the county’s industrial heartland in Gauteng. Growth in international trade will be a cornerstone of South Africa’s future economic success and Durban Port will play a key role in facilitating this success. It is geographically placed to fulfil this role more cost-efficiently than any other Southern African port”. The distance from the Point to the opposite side of the entrance channel on the Bluff is 21km also considering the emerging Point waterfront development and central business district to the north and northeast, Maydon Wharf in the west, the Bayhead ship repair area in the south and the Bluff Peninsula forming the southeast (Mather and Reddy, 2008, p 1-2). The Port and Maritime Sector together unquestionably are the main economic drivers of the Durban economy (Hutson, 2008, p 1). Durban is the largest city in the KwaZulu-Natal region of South Africa and the biggest, busiest port in Africa. Zulu and English are the two predominantly spoken languages. Durban has also been home to the largest Indian community in South Africa since the 1860s, when the British brought over Indian labourers to work in the sugar cane industry (ITF seafarers, 2014). Millions of waterborne transport workers handle over 90% of trade and a significant segment of travellers in seas, rivers and lakes around the world (EU, 2006). Waterborne crews face occupational hazards (e.g., exposure to noxious agents, toxic or dangerous cargo, severe weather and climatic changes), health issues (e.g., injuries, depression, substance abuse, STIs), and psychosocial risks (e.g., separation and alienation from family and home, stress associated with shipboard living) on a regular basis (Wickramatillake, 1998; UNAIDS, 2005). The aim of this thesis is to understand

the relationship between the work and family domains of seafarers and how they maintain a balance and integrate the two. The world of work for seafarers is something of the past, in fact, it is ancient. It is an occupation or industry that is rich in history. Its history is characterised by racial oppression, slavery and colonisation (Balachandram, 2012, 31). For many years, the international shipping industry has been responsible for over 90% of the world trade and is a major contributor to the world's economy. As a result, a vast number of people of different races, gender and multiple identities, from all over the world, continuously flux into the industry (Polonia, 2012).

According to Borovnik (2004, p.36), seafarers are a unique occupational group who are recruited by international agencies and work under contract on board ships of different kinds: merchant cargo and container ships; deep sea fishing vessels and cruise ships. Seafarers travel either globally or regionally over varying distances. Seafarers are employed in accordance with their qualifications, skills, age and gender. They are either employed as officers or ratings with the latter being from poor disadvantaged backgrounds (Thomas et al, 2003). The officers come from developed countries and occupy the higher ranking positions in the maritime industry. The ratings are often subjected to poor working conditions. This differentiation between ratings and officers result in seafarers socially comparing themselves with each other, thus there is a prevalence of hierarchy within the workplace of the shipping industry (Hult, 2010, pp.5-6).

Seafarers are absent from home and their families for long periods. As suggested by the literature, this may have a negative effect on their work and family life. Their reasons for joining the industry differ and are sociologically significant (Mckay and Wright, 2007 and, Thomas, 2003). Men and women from various parts of the world join the industry to attain employment in order to earn an income that will provide them the opportunity to support themselves and their families. This then affords seafarers an opportunity to attain an economic and social standard of living. For many, a career at sea is never a part of their plans but instead, the maritime industry becomes a playground for employment opportunities as the lack of job opportunities in their countries are apparent.

According to Thomas, Sampson and Zaoh, (2003, p.59), given the dearth of research on seafarers in general, it is no surprise that little attention has been given to the impact of seafaring on family life or the effect of prolonged absences from their home and families on the seafarers themselves. However, the little research that does exist suggests that such separations from home and family may be problematic for seafarers and their families. In their research study conducted amongst harbour physicians in Rotterdam, Thomas et al, (2003) identified three main psychological problems among seafarers: loneliness, homesickness and 'burn-out' syndromes. The problems were primarily caused by long periods away from home, the decreased number of seafarers per ship, and by increased automation (Thomas, et al., 2003). According to Ziarati, Koivisto and Ziarati (2011, 390) "automation is major Engineering subject covering a whole range of areas in design and production of goods and services. In recent years ships are becoming increasingly automated and the development of maritime education and training standards". Lack of understanding and knowledge about automation can lead to lack of safety on board the ship for the seafarer as Ahvenjarvi (2011) argues that seafarers need to be trained and updated about the knowledge of safe use and maintenance of automation technology.

There is a lack of provision and policy frameworks set out by organizations to support the seafarer in maintaining and achieving balance between the two domains. Balance for seafarers and for any other profession is vitally important as it ensures the worker to perform and achieve organisational goals and as well as maintaining the social life of individuals (Maritime New Zealand Statement of Intent: 2011–2014, p. 31) "It can be established that work–family context measures explain variance in employee outcomes that cannot be attributed to more global indicants of organizational support. Conversely, if measures of work–family culture do not explain a meaningful amount of unique variance in relevant dependent variables, then their utility can be called into question" (Behson, 2002, p. 54). In other words, measures of work-family conflict, that arise both at home and at work, need to be addressed. Thus, this study aims to investigate if there are any forms of support systems that the maritime industry and various organizations in particular provides for their employees. Allen (2001, p. 415) states that "surprisingly little empirical research has been directed toward examining employee perceptions regarding the extent that a work environment is family-supportive. Most studies have examined

the direct relationship between the availability of family friendly benefits with outcomes of interest such as organizational commitment or job satisfaction”.

Support groups, which are mainly formed by seafarers in their own accord, become the coping mechanism adopted for addressing their challenges and for acquiring balance. As suggested by Borovnik (2004, p.42), “seafarers often cannot establish a kin-based community while living on board ships, they still remain strongly connected with their families at home by regular communication with them and by sending remittances. Seafarers are going beyond the social network building of typical migrant communities abroad, by establishing temporary and multi-national work-based communities on board ships”.

A definition of seafarers must take into account that they live in confined spaces, crisscrossing maritime space around the world, circulating in long-term contracts between home and work, and maintaining the transnational links mentioned earlier (Ceyhun, 2010, p. 100). Ceyhun further states that seafarers have to be seen as being bound in both a global economic system, where they are competing for jobs with other nationalities, and as social beings, working apart from their families (Ceyhun, 2010, p. 100). These occupational features are the basis for a common identity that has led to an almost ‘cosmopolitan’ attitude amongst all nationalities of seafarers. Hence, seafarers have begun to fill a niche in the transnational network concepts on migration (Borovnik, 2004, p.42). Seafarers cannot be defined as migrants.

According to Bauder, a migrant can be understood as any person who goes from one place to another especially to find work (2008:1). A seafarer can be understood as someone who works on a sea going ship (ILO, 1996, p. 1). Unlike migrant workers, who live and work away from home, seafarers only spend months away from their familial homes. However we can conclude that both seafaring and migrant work necessitates a form of separation. In her study of migrant workers in the hostels of Cape Town, Ramphela highlights the many challenges that the dwellers were facing. Their main concerns are the combined effect of a poor environment and the instability of their life (1993, p.39), which is not different from that of seafarers. However, one differentiating factor between the two is that in as much as they spend long periods away from

home, migrant workers can eventually have their entire family migrating with them since their working space allows them to do so unlike that of the seafarer.

A review of literature (see chapter two of this study) pertaining to the lives of seafarers suggests that not much research has been conducted in this area, and more particularly there is a paucity in the scholarship pertaining to the work and family domain of seafarers. This thesis explores and examines both male and female seafarers' experiences and views of the industry. It provides a glimpse into their various coping strategies with regard to negotiating the demands of their work and family lives. This thesis therefore attempts to gain insight into the challenges that seafarers face both at work and upon their return to their families. The overarching question which this thesis will address is: How do the seafarers in the Durban area negotiate their work lives and their family lives?

1.2. RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES

- a) To understand why these seafarers choose to work at sea.
- b) To understand the strategies that seafarers put in place to ensure the well-being of their family while they are at sea.
- c) To gain insight into the type of relationship the seafarer has with his or her family.

1.3. THE KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED

- Why do the seafarers in this study choose to work out at sea?
- What strategies do these seafarers put in place to ensure the well-being of their families?
- What type of relationship does the seafarer have with his or her family?
- How do Seafarers balance their work life?
- How do Seafarers balance their family life?
- What are the challenges that the seafarers face at work?
- What are the challenges that the seafarers face at home?
- What are the coping strategies adopted by seafarers at home?
- What are the coping strategies adopted by seafarers at sea?

1.4. RESEARCH STATEMENT

According to Kossek and Lambert (2005, p.194), the work-family life interface has focused on the negative outcomes associated with work and family roles. The focus is based on the engagement of one role that makes participation in the other role difficult. This is especially so for seafarers whose work isolates them from family for extended periods of time, thus making it increasingly difficult to participate regularly and consistently in family life

Australian Maritime Safety Association (AMSA) found that seafarers reported the 'home– work interface' to be their greatest source of stress. Such problems may not be without consequence: investigations into suicide at sea have identified marital and family problems as contributory factors to the event (Thomas et al., 2003, p.60). Seafarers have reported that because of the long periods of time spent away from home, fitting in and catching up with the family lifestyle when at home seems to be their biggest challenge. There is a growing recognition in the work–family literature that organizational context plays an important role in employee ability to balance work and family (Behson, 2002, p.53). With the research I have engaged with, research suggests that within the maritime industry, there are very minimal policies or frameworks to support the seafarers in balancing their work and family life. In support to this statement, the participants in this study did not report any form of support or policy framework that is provided by the maritime industry in supporting them to the challenges that they face both at work and at home.

For seafarers, the family domain, which can also be understood as the family structure or family sphere, is still of significance in their lives; in fact it is the source of their comfort parallel to the challenges that they face at work. The family domain is of significance because it is usually the leading reason why they join the industry in the first place. The importance of being a part of the economic sector is also central to the seafarer. From the literature that I have engaged with in chapter 2, one can deduce that seafarers join the industry for sustainability reasons as research clearly suggests that seafarers, more especially those from developing countries join the industry to eek out a living so that they are able to support their families and themselves and, to better their profession (Thomas et al., 2003, ILO, 1996) According to Bengtson (2001; 14), over the century, there have been significant changes in the family's structure and functions. "Prominent

among them has been the extension of family bonds, of affection and affirmation, of help and support, across several generations, whether these are biological ties or the creation of kin like relationships. But as families have changed, they have not necessarily declined in importance.

The increasing prevalence and importance of multigenerational bonds represents a valuable new resource for families in the 21st century” (Bengtson, 2001; 14). To conclude, I draw on Lamvik’s closing statement of her doctoral dissertation. She states that:

“The seaman’s place or position in a family based network, is what makes him able and willing to leave, and at the same time it is what enables him to (but not without struggle) cope with the deprived and secluded universe on board. Besides an element of adventure and avoidance of certain relationships back home, it is a strong focus on sacrifice – or to undergo hardship in someone’s name – that motivates the departure for this overseas labour market. In addition, the obvious and strong financial element among the inducement factors should be comprehended as being deeply rooted in the Filipino family orientation, since it is a widespread notion that the income is for the benefits of or meant for the whole family. Insights and efforts from relatives are also crucial when it comes to the practical accomplishment of the labour migration. In order to get to know how to approach the manning agents, those who locally handle the foreign labour market, the seaman – at least in the beginning of his career – often needs to rely upon the resources of his relatives. To regard the family organization as a coping strategy during the contract period on board is related to the seaman’s ability to drape his daily life on board” (Lamvik, 2002: 203).

- Reflecting on the above statements, the following should be considered.
- Why do seafarers join the industry?
- What are the challenges they face at home?
- What are the challenges faced upon return?
- How do they make sense of these challenges, in other words, what coping strategies they adopt or develop?

Scholars such as Thomas et al (2003), Ruggunan (2005) and Lamvik (2002) have begun to explore the life of seafarers. While a preview of existing scholarship has been important, the lack

of attention to the relationship between work and family life balance has been noted. This study therefore seeks to provide a sociological understanding of the relationship between work and family life balance of the seafarer. To unpack the questions and the answers to the question, I draw on Clark's work/family border theory.

1.5. THEORETICAL FOCUS

According to Kanter (1977, p, 57) researchers have long recognized that work and family are not "separate spheres", but are interdependent domains or roles with "permeable" boundaries. Some have gone beyond recognizing this linkage to advocate initiatives that allow working families to integrate these domains (see Bailyn, Drago, & Kochan, 2001). However, Sargent and Desrochers (2004) stipulate that others have expressed concerns over the blurring boundary between work and family that workers can experience if there is too much work-family integration in their lives. In the work-family border theory Clark (2000) addresses the integration and blurring of boundaries in work and family life. The theory subsidizes the study of work-family linkages by relating the conditions under which varying degrees of work-family integration are likely to improve or diminish individual well-being (Sargent and Desrochers, 2004). Grzywacz and Marks (2000) suggest that investigators need to address the positive side of work-family integration as well as study the impact of work on family life and vice-versa. Such an integrative perspective can allow the examination of how work and family may enhance each other (Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005). This study will make use of Clark's (2000) work-family border theory as lens to analyse the data generated through interviews with the participants and the secondary sources accumulated during the research process. The theory aims to explain "how individuals manage and negotiate the work and family spheres and the borders between them in order to attain balance" (p.750). The concept of 'work' and 'family' constituting different domains or spheres which influence each other is central to the model. Clark defines 'balance' as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict" (p.751), stating that "though many aspects of work and home are difficult to alter, individuals can shape to some degree the nature of the work and home domains, and the borders and bridges between them, in order to create a desired balance" (p.751). According to Gurney (2010) it is this proactive shaping of domains (work and family) by individuals which differentiates work-family border

theory from much of the literature on work and family conflict that assumes individuals to be purely reactive to their situations. According to Lambert, Kass, Piotrowski and Vodanovich (2006: 67) the central focus of this theory is that the relationship between work and family borders must be managed appropriately (according to the individual situation) to create and maintain balance. For Clark (2000), integration is believed to occur through two mechanisms: flexibility and permeability. Flexibility refers to the malleability of the boundary between two or more roles or domains—its ability to expand or contract—to accommodate the demands of one domain or another

1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on empirical research as well as desktop research which include researching academic journals, books and articles that have explored on understanding the lives of seafarers and the maritime industry for the literature review. In addition, this study draws from scholarship that focuses on the work and family life of seafarers and how they maintain balance. Data for this study has been collected gradually over a period of two years. A range of different sources of information have been perused. My first trip to the seafarer's mission took place between 2013 and 2014. The main objective of this trip was to gather a visual picture of the shipping industry as well as to conduct a pilot study. Secondly, it was for me to familiarise myself with the study location as it was new to me. Later in 2014, I conducted my first interviews with the participants, that is, the seafarers who pass through the port city of Durban. I went back into the field in the beginning of June. However, because the year 2014 was the year of the FIFA soccer world cup tournament which was held in Brazil. I was advised by the manager of the Seafarers mission to come back after the world cup tournament had ended because the seafarers would not avail themselves because they were watching the tournament which was broadcasted live and were captivated by the excitement of the tournament. So as a result, I discontinued the interview process and resumed from the end of July to the end of August 2014. Interviews were conducted with twenty seafarers who were located at the port city of Durban, at the seafarer's mission. This location was selected because of its relevance to the study and secondly, because the researcher has established a relationship with the Seafarers' Mission in Umbilo and Bayhead. These linkages were established through a project on seafarers at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. It

is a distinctively remote area specially designed to cater for seafarers` needs while they are in Durban. It must be noted that access to seafarers is not easily attainable. Below is an image of a portion of the Port city of Durban, the container terminals in particular. Situated alongside the terminals, is the Sailor`s Society where I conducted the interviews.



1.7. CONCLUSION

The structure of the dissertation will be as follows:

Chapter 1 introduced the focus and provided the background of the study. This chapter also presented the definitions of the key terms that will be used throughout this dissertation. Furthermore, it highlighted the importance and the benefits of the study as well as the objectives that this study hopes to achieve. In addition hereto it provides a glimpse into the research methods used in this study.

Chapter 2 provides the background and the literature that this study draws on. The chapter also discusses the key concepts of this research which are: family, seafarers and work life balance. Additionally, the chapter explores the reviewed challenges that seafarers face at home and at work as well as the coping strategies they adopt. The work-family border theory is introduced and briefly discussed.

Chapter 3 discusses and unpacks the methodological paradigm of the study. This study adopted the qualitative means of inquiry thus this chapter looks at the research design of the study; in other words, how the participants were gathered, the type of sampling technique adopted and the system used for the process of analysing the empirical data. It provides a brief background of the study population and location of where the participants were gathered. It also provides ethical considerations that were implemented to ensure the safety and protection of the participants for the study. Lastly, it outlines the limitations of the methodology process.

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the findings and the analysis of the data. It discusses the seven key themes of the analysis which are identified as: exploring factors such as seafaring as a profession, challenges experienced by seafarers at work, namely being homesick and lonely; hierarchy at the workplace, language as a barrier to communication and lack of communication with family. It discusses the concept of displacement as a challenge faced by seafarers at home. Lastly it discusses the support groups which seafarers use as a coping mechanism to balance their work and family life.

Chapter 5 concludes, summarises and presents the main findings of the study. In addition, the chapter concludes with an examination of the objectives of the study. This chapter will also include suggestions for further research in this area.

The dissertation concludes with an appendix of the interview schedule that was used to facilitate discussions with the participants as well as a consent form that the participants had to complete. Lastly it provides a list of references that were used for the study

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The scholarship review for this study will focus on the work-life balance of seafarers who pass through the port city of Durban. Journal articles, books, theses and online resources have been utilised to compile this scholarship review. This chapter will first provide the conceptual framework where the key terms used in this study will be looked at. This is followed by key areas of focus which have been identified as central to this investigation. This chapter will lay the foundation based on literature that has already been published on seafarers in relation to work life balance and coping strategies. The themes that emerge are:

- Understanding who the seafarer is
- Defining the family within the context of the seafarer
- What is work-life balance and how this is achieved
- The challenges that seafarers face,
- Coping strategies adopted by seafarers, with direct reference to work space on board the ship,
- Family space and place on land,
- Communication with family and other seafarers,
- Benefits of seafaring,
- Issues of gender at home and work,
- Issues of race and issues of nationality in relation to both work and family life.

2.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This part of the chapter will define and contextualise the critical sociological concepts and /definitions that are utilised in direct relation to this study and sociologically understanding seafarers within the specifically identified context of the study.

2.2.1. DEFINITIONS

a) SEAFARERS

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the term seafarer is any person defined as such by national laws, regulations, collective agreements and who is employed or engaged in any capacity on board a seagoing ship (1996, p.1). Mayhew defines seafarers as “a mobile workforce in terms of their inevitable geographical moves, who are usually precariously employed” (1999, p. 10). Seafarers are a mobile workforce solely because their job entails moving from one port to the other and across one continent to the other. Their work space is mobile and while constant in the work expected of them, the location of their work space is fluid.

There are essentially two types of seafarers – the first consisting of officers and the second of ratings. Occupational differentiation of seafarers contributes to new patterns of inequality in the global and local labour markets for seafarers with regard to their recruitment, wages and working conditions (Ruggunan, 2005, p. 66).

b) OFFICERS

Officers and ratings are associated with specific countries, gender, race and nationality as a basis for exploitation and unequal workplace practices.

Officers, both men and women, are from developed countries such as the United Kingdom (U.K), Germany and Sweden. They are usually individuals who are from developed countries and who have acquired tertiary qualifications and they can be found in high rankings or positions of the industry such as captains or masters of the ship (ILO, 1996).

c) RATINGS

Ratings are from developing and or underdeveloped countries such as India, the Philippines and Malaysia. Scholarship indicates that ratings often lack the necessary opportunities to equip themselves with the required skills and qualifications, due to financial constraints in their

countries. They are forced to enter into manual labour positions on board ships, at reduced rates. For instance, the Philippines provide the cheapest labour in the maritime industry (ILO, p. 1996).

d) FAMILY

In an attempt to understand the work and family life balance of the seafarer, a family will be understood as a “group of individuals related to one another by blood ties, marriage or adoption, who form an economic unit, the adult members of which are responsible for the upbringing of children” (Eshleman, 1994, p. 2).

e) WORK-LIFE BALANCE

According to Kofodimos (1993) “work–family balance often implies cutting back on work to spend more time with the family. Moreover, it is thought to be in an individual’s best interest to live a balanced life (Kofodimos, 1993 in Greenhaus et al., 2003, p.511). Clark however, defines ‘balance’ as a satisfaction and good functioning at home and at work, with a minimum of role conflict (2000, p. 751). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined the work-family interface as an inter-role conflict, whereby the competing demands of work and family roles are incompatible.

2.3. MOTIVATION OR NEED FOR THE STUDY

According to Chin (2008, p. 21) “The industry is traditionally male dominated and little has changed. There are currently 1, 25 million seafarers only 27 000 of whom are female (Guo and Liang 1998) this clearly indicates the pervasiveness of a male dominated industry. However, through globalisation, the recruitment of female seafarers is slowly increasing. The economic situation in their home countries, high inflation and poor job opportunities, along with the financial needs of their families, led these women to seek employment on cruise ships and ferries, where they could earn higher salaries in hard currency (Chin, 2008 & ILO 2003).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined the work-family interface as an interrole conflict, whereby the competing demands of work and family roles are incompatible.

Seafarers' work necessitates a prolonged separation from their home and families. They are not alone in their prolonged separation from the familial home; they are similar to other migratory work. Seafaring can be understood as a lifestyle that involves a constant series of partings and reunions with associated transitions from shore-based life to the unique work environment of the ship" (Thomas, et al, 2003, 59). Inevitably, seafaring is a lifestyle that will impact dramatically on both work and family life. Viljoen and Muller (2012) found that the career choice of seafarers creates challenges in their familial relationships, because they in a sense, become strangers and outsiders to their families.

High levels of unemployment in developing countries provide the impetus for both men and women to seek out a living in the maritime industry. Because of the challenges faced in securing employment sometimes it can be the only available option. They in turn seek employment at sea as means of escaping their dire economic position, while at the same time they hope to provide a means to support their families on shore. In an unpublished study by Seedat-Khan, and Dekker, (2013) *leaving my children on Land: Longing for My Children At Sea*, a participant explains that:

"If I could earn the same amount of money at home I would never work on a ship. I would be prepared to do anything in my country. The problem is that there are no jobs. I had no choice" (Women Seafarer 5 interviewed, 19 November 2012).

As participant 5 explains, there is no desire for her to work on a ship and to leave her home country. However due to lack of jobs on shore, it can be understood as one of the driving forces that propel men and women to join the industry. What can also be understood from her statement is that the maritime industry provides a better earning salary opportunity than compared to the on shore jobs.

Thomas et al (2003) indicates that once a person has made the choice to enter the seafaring profession; this may both negatively and positively affect both the seafarers and their families

that have been left behind on land (2003,59). Seafarers do not anticipate the effects that their choice of career may have on themselves and their families. As a result, “separation from partner and family has been found to be one of the most significant causes of stress for seafarers, with separation from the family one of the most important ‘ stress’ factors influencing a decision to reduce planned sea service” (Thomas, et al., 2003, 60).

This study therefore seeks to explore and understand the relationship between work and family life balance, more specifically it makes an effort to understand how seafarers, both male and female, balance their familial roles and responsibilities both on shore and at sea while at the same time meeting their professional responsibilities on board the ship.

2.4. LITERATURE PERTAINING TO THE STUDY

2.4.1. GETTING TO KNOW THE SEAFARER

The definition of a seafarer varies slightly between ILO conventions and recommendations, but generally is reflected in the definition under ILO Convention 185 on Seafarers’ Identity Documents, which states “the term seafarer means any person who is engaged or works in any capacity on board a vessel, other than a ship of war, ordinarily engaged in maritime navigation” (ITF, 2005). “Seafarers and ship-owners are often of different nationalities, and ships often operate under a flag different from their country of origin or ownership, (commonly known as the ‘flag of convenience’ ships) (ITF, 2005). Seafarers employed on FOC ships are frequently exposed to difficult working conditions and particular occupational risks. FOC employees are among the worst paid and least protected of jobs at sea (ITF Seafarers, 2012). Working far from home, they are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, non-payment of wages, non-compliance with contracts, exposure to poor diet and living and even abandonment in foreign ports around the world” (ILO, p. 2003). According to Smita, (2011), FOC vessels are always characterized by a dispute of nation of jurisdiction and rules that apply. These cargo vessels are categorized with poor pay and poor working conditions, especially for those from developing countries (Mayhew, 1999, p. 11).

In the section of 'Seafarers' employment and social rights', the maritime labour legislation (Maritime Labour Convention, 2006) states that "Every seafarer has the right to a safe and secure workplace that complies with safety standards, every seafarer has a right to fair terms of employment, every seafarer has a right to decent working and living conditions on board ship and, every seafarer has a right to health protection, medical care, welfare measures and other forms of social protection". Ruggunan (2005, p. 66) however believes that "the labour market for seafarers is not an occupationally homogeneous one". Occupational differentiation of seafarers contributes to new patterns of inequality in the global and local labour markets for seafarers with regard to their recruitment, wages and working conditions (Ruggunan, 2005, p. 66).

For instance, the Philippines provide the cheapest labour in the maritime industry. In the 1990s, after the salary of Taiwanese seafarers increased due to rapid growth of national economies, the shipping market shifted from seeking seafarers from Taiwanese and they were replaced by seafarers with a lower pay such as those from the Philippines (Guo, and Liang, 1998, p. 194). Ratings are trapped in jobs at sea with unfavourable conditions. Their labour is cheap and therefore there is a high demand. In addition to the separation of people into ratings and officers, developed countries and developing countries scholarship indicates that until recently, the seafaring industry has made little effort to actively include women in the profession. Chin (2008, p. 21) states that "The industry is traditionally, male dominated and little has changed". Currently, there is 1, 25 million seafarers only 27 000 of whom are women (Guo and Liang, 1998: 194), this clearly indicates the apparentness of a male dominated industry.

However, through globalisation, the recruitment of female seafarers is slowly increasing. Peng (1989b) highlights that the recruitment of women seafarers in China started in 1950 when Chaoshan Advanced Marine Academy opened its door exclusively to women. Most Chinese women seafarers were trained here as navigators and engineers. Thirty years later, Chinese women were sailing on rivers, seas and oceans in various ranks and positions as Abs ('Able Seaman'), radio officers, chief engineers and captains. The voyages made by the women-officers-only vessel of *Fengtao* between Shanghai and Osaka were so successful that Chinese women seafarers won great applause and admiration world-wide, in particular from the women's movement in Western countries. Proud and encouraged, shipping companies even began to

consider the establishment of a fleet crewed entirely with women seafarers, officers and ratings (Zhao, 2001, p. 8). There are women who have careers on board ships as shipmasters, chief engineers, as well as other officers these women are usually from developed countries and have acquired tertiary qualification. However, it has been noted that, women are working largely as hotel staff on passenger ships. Of this latter group, 51.2% of women at sea come from Organisational Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, 23.6% from Eastern Europe, 9.8% from Latin America and Africa, 13.7% from the Far East, and 1.7% from south Asia and the Middle East (ILO, 2003). Currently, the majority of women seafarers work mainly in the cruise and ferries sector, often for Flags of Convenience (FOC) vessels. In the cruise line sector, women represent 17-18% of the workforce. Ninety-four per cent of women are employed on passenger ships (with 68% on ferries and 26% on cruise ships) and 6% are employed on cargo vessels (i.e., container ships, oil tankers, etc.). (Zhao, 2001, p. 9).

2.4.2 THE SEAFARER AND HIS/HER FAMILY

The nature of the seafarers work space, only allows for the sometimes virtual presence in the familial home. This can become a problem for the seafarer and his family and as a result, present a series of challenges. Viljoen and Muller (2012, p. 2) remind us that seafarers are simply people who are husbands, wives, sons, daughters, friends, fathers and mothers; they are ordinary people. The long periods of time spent away from home, have a negative impact on the family left behind at home, as well as on the seafarer. Sociologically defined the family as a social institution and a social system meets broad societal goals that centre on intimate relationships and the reproduction and socialization of children. “As a social system, the family has many interdependent components with major differentiations in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, age, size and so forth” (Eshlemen, 1994, p. 2). The family plays an important role in primary socialisation; the significant other is responsible for transmitting the norms and values of the family. From the moment that we are born the process of socialisation begins. As we navigate through different stages in our lives we undergo different forms of socialisation, these include secondary socialisation and re-socialisation at different stages in our lives. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 177). According to Heiss (1968, in Burgess, 1926 p. 29), Professor Ernest Burgess (a pioneer to the sociology of the family):

“The sociological conception of the family as a unit existing in interaction has two chief aspects. It signifies first of all, that the family is an interplay of personalities rather than purely a common fixation of sexual, parental, and filial instincts. The sociological description of family interaction will then naturally be in terms of impulses socially defined, as wishes, attitudes and sentiments”.

Seafarers join the maritime industry for various reasons. We cannot assume that they are all family men or women as one of the reasons for a number of seafarers for joining the industry is to purely sail and see the world. But even that may be the case; it does not mean that they do not belong to a family as they are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. The point that is brought across here is that, as Burgess (1926) indicates the entity of a family can be understood in terms of impulses socially defined as wishes, attitudes and sentiments thus for these kind of seafarers their choice of career is purely based on their wishes. For other seafarers, especially the Ratings, their choice of career is not because of choice but rather to fulfil their family needs. The attitude of being responsible and to provide for their families is one that they adopt. Due to the nature of the seafaring industry, the only role that seafarers adhere to is that of their occupation while the roles of being parents, husbands or wives and so forth, are roles that they are expected to fulfil on shore. Research suggests that this can become a problem for the seafarer. In a study by Viljoen and Muller (2012, p. 14), a respondent states that:

“I can tell you that it would take some time before I will be part of them again. I’m going to be a total stranger...so when I come back home now, I am going to begin to see how I can refit myself into, to their routine of life, you know, the way they see life and the way things are with them”.

It is evident that upon return home, seafarers experience displacement as the respondent explains that he experiences difficulties of adjusting to the family routine and how he can be a part of it once again. The constant series of commuting off shore and on shore also means a series of separation and unification. A traditional definition of a family “would be one comprised of one female legally married to one male who is employed full time, serving as the primary provider and ultimate authoritarian and a wife who is a full-time mother and homemaker (Eshleman,

1994, p. 2). Dating back to the hunter-gather society, a family comprised of the same characteristics as?

The only difference being that men would hunt and gather food for the family instead of seeking employment. Times are changing and our knowledge of what constitutes a family has also changed. According to Eshleman (1994, p. 2), the images of today's relationships is remarriages, dual careers, one-parent households, and gender inequalities, and maintaining traditional attitudes and opinions also goes hand in hand with a growing acceptance of different modes of cohabitation and various family patterns (Misztal, , 1996, p. 159). In other words, what constitutes a 'family' in one society may be different to another society.

2.4.3. FINDING A BALANCE: WORK AND FAMILY LIFE

According to Kossek and Lambert (2005, p. 194), the work-family life interface has focused on the negative outcomes associated with work and family roles. The focus is based on the engagement of one role that makes participation in the other role difficult. In a similar vein, Clark views work-family balance as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict" (Clark, 2000, p. 349). This is especially so for seafarers, their work isolates them from family for extended periods of time, thus making it increasingly difficult to participate regularly and consistently in family life. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined the work-family interface as an inter-role conflict, whereby the competing demands of work and family roles are incompatible. Australian Maritime Safety Association (AMSA) found that seafarers reported the 'home-work interface' to be their greatest source of stress. Such problems may not be without consequence: investigations into suicide at sea have identified marital and family problems as contributory factors to the event (Thomas, p. et al, 2003, p. 60). Seafarers have reported that because of the long periods of time spent away from home, fitting in and catching up to the family lifestyle when at home seems to be their biggest challenge. Lamanna and Riedmann state that "in single-parent families and for couples where both partners are employed and have dependents, the separation of work from family living creates role conflict and tension as the increasingly stressed and overloaded workers juggle what have become conflicting obligations: providing for and caring for family members"(2006, p. 339).

One of the consequences of the inability to balance work and family demands is the increasing level of work-family conflict experienced by employed parents. Work-family conflict occurs when an individual has to perform multiple roles that require time, energy, and commitment (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The cumulative demands of these multiple roles can result in two types of strain: overload and interference. Over-load exists when the total demands on time and energy are too great to perform the roles adequately or comfortably. Interference occurs because many work and family activities must be performed during the same time periods in different physical locations (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The rational view of work-family conflict postulates that the amount of conflict one perceives rises in proportion to the number of hours one expends in both work and family roles (Greenhaus, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1987; Gutek et al., 1991; Keith & Schafer, 1984; Staines, Pleck, Shepard, & O'Connor, 1978). According to this view, the more hours a person spends in work activities, the more he or she should experience interference from work to family. Similarly, the more time spent in family activities (i.e., home chores and child care), the more he or she should experience interference from family to work.

Gender may influence the ability to balance work and family in a number of different ways. Not only may it act as a direct predictor of the sources of conflict, but it may also act as a moderator that affects how the conflict is perceived, what coping skills are called upon, and how the conflict is manifested (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Gutek et al., 1991; Jick & Mitz, 1985; Pleck, 1985; Schnittger & Bird, 1990; Voydanoff, 1988). The research literature has consistently reported that women's work and family-role demands are higher than men's (Pleck, 1985; Rexroat & Shehan, 1987). The literature also indicates that men have more control over the distribution of their time, which, in turn, should make it easier for them to satisfy both work and family expectations. By way of explanation, men have traditionally perceived that they can fulfil their family-role expectations simply by being a good provider, without having to meet many additional demands within the home (Barnett & Baruch, 1987). According to Kumka et al., (1986, p. 37), "professional and managerial occupations are often structured as careers, sequences of positions involving increasing responsibility and rewards through which individuals expect to move. The careers pattern is important to the family because it establishes the upper limits of probable success and income attainment

2.4.4. THE CHALLENGES THAT SEAFARERS FACE

There are three main psychological problems that are found among seafarers: loneliness, homesickness and ‘burn-out’ syndrome. The impetus for these three psychological problems are the prolonged absence from home, the decreasing number of seafarers on ships, the increased work load, the long extended working hours and by increased automation on ships (Thomas, ., et al., 2003, p. 59). Seafaring is a working activity with particular characteristics and is performed in specific contexts from a physical and psychosocial point of view. Work-related stress affecting seafarers has particular characteristics often different from stress that can be appreciated in other working activities. These include many possible dangers in the form of accidents, injuries, and diseases. Seafaring risks depend on the type of activity or work on board. This activity must be regarded as strenuous due to the multitude of factors within and without the ship that come to bear on it. Iversen (2012, p. 79) laments that “seafarers spend months, maybe years, away from home; they get lonely: they work many hours straight through without enough sleep; they face stress and fatigue, lack of shore leave, they face short ship-turnaround times, criminalization, harassment and bullying, and dangers from piracy. These can lead to anxiety and depression and in some cases suicide”. These problems result in seafarers not working efficiently and this adversely affects their familial life and can result in a series of challenges for the seafarer.

2.4.5. LONELINESS

Seafarers are one of the most isolated groups in the world as they have little contact with others, being at sea for days or weeks before they can reach a port. Social isolation is a major cause of psychological problems and has caused a decrease in the number of seafarers in Western countries. Isolation can lead to despair and depression. In particular situations and in vulnerable individuals it has been reported to be a cause of suicide.

2.4.6. LACK OF COMMUNICATION

In the absence of physical contact, communication takes on an increased significance, however access is highly variable and communication is not without a financial cost. While aboard a ship,

communication with the outside world is very minimal. In most cases, the only opportunity to communicate with loved ones is only awarded when they reach a port city of not all have the necessities to communicate with their families (Thomas, 2003, p. 44). The financial implications of purchasing communication equipment (household telephones, cell net phones, fax-machines and personal computers for internet and email access) and the on-going costs of making contact are considerable and sometimes prohibitive, especially for the seafarers who come from developing countries (Thomas, 2003, p. 44).

2.4.7. SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

Women seafarers face sexual harassment on board ships as a number of senior officers use their position (power) in the work place as means of getting away with their own sexual gratification (ILO, 2003). As a result, women adopt different kinds of coping mechanisms to deal with sexual harassment. Some refrain from attending social events on-board while others de-feminize themselves just to avoid harassment. Female seafarers de-feminize themselves by adopting what is generally perceived as masculine behaviour, meaning, they dress and talk like men, they adopt habits such as heavy smoking and drinking (Marshall, 1984). On the other hand, female seafarers pursue romantic relationships as a form of protection from possible harassment.

2.4.8. GENDER AND POWER: WOMEN SEAFARERS AND VULNERABILITY

The general perception of women is that their duty is to take care of the family, nurture them, and to care and love their children and spouses. A great majority of women seafarers are employed in the cruise and hotel sectors due to the nature of work which is similar to that of gendered roles or roles that women are supposed to fulfil in traditional settings. Durkheim (1994, p. 444) speaks of social facts being external to the individual and to his actions. He indicates that they existed before he did therefore it follows that they exist outside him thus they are perceived or taken for granted as being 'natural' and innate. Natural categories come to be treated as pre-given and hence unalterable. These ideas of categories have been used to legitimize human actions that grant advantages to some categories over the other. These ideas guide human action which is why we take them for granted as being real. For instance, the idea of gender being a

categorization of the human species differentiating the males and females, Social constructionists on the other hand argue that this is a social process that is underpinned with an underlying beneficial motive; a motive whereby women are oppressed and exploited thus a patriarchal society is promoted. Women seafarers are faced with challenges that the male seafarers are not subjected to. Firstly, in some countries, women are excluded from acquiring maritime education. Not only are they denied the education but women are also denied enrolment in training institutions (ITF Seafarers, 2012f). When women have acquired these skills and qualifications, they are further subjected to prejudice and biases of employers who are unenthusiastic to employ them (Finke, 2012). Secondly, women often receive lower pay as compared to their male colleagues despite them being equally skilled or qualified (Finke, 2012; ITF Seafarers, 2012f). Women seafarers also face issues of sexual harassment aboard a ship. A number of senior officers use their position in the workplace as means of getting away with their own sexual gratification. In the case of a case being reported, it sometimes poses as a challenge for women because in some occasions, the perpetrator is the ‘head of security’ or someone in a higher position thus they fear losing their jobs.

2.4.9. ISSUES OF NATIONALITY AND RACE

The past two decades have witnessed tremendous changes taking place both in world shipping industry. Globally, a series of restructuring have transformed shipping into the world’s first fully globalised industry (Zhao, 2001, p. 2). Whereas mixed nationality crews are hardly a new phenomenon in world shipping, the labour market for seafarers has been globalised in the last 20 years. On board the world vessels today, it is common to find the crew composed of seafarers from several or several dozens of countries. The labour force, traditionally dominated by seafarers from Western maritime nations such as Britain, Germany, Norway and Denmark, has been dramatically multi-nationalised with seafarers from E. Europe and increasingly from the developing countries in Asia (Zhao, 2001, p. 2). The increased vulnerability to stress in the workplace is linked to various factors, such as social relationships, physical heaviness, and lack of monitoring and support (Jezewska, et al., 2006; 57: pp. 66–75). These factors could aggravate problems that may arise from the presence of people of different nationalities and speaking various languages on board. This can increase communication problems and lead to isolation

(Bridger,et al. 2007,pp. 92–97). In general, crews consist of people of different nationalities, religions, and cultural backgrounds. These factors could cause conflict (Wadsworth, Allen, Wellens, 2006,:pp. 836–844.).

2.4.10. THE SEAFARER AND HIS SPOUSE: INFIDELITY

Whilst seafarers' partners do not have to physically leave their homes and families in the same way that seafarers do, they are, nevertheless, also faced with a relationship characterized by separation and reunion and the constant adjustments these transitions require. Research suggests that such a pattern may affect health, resulting in higher rates of depression and anxiety amongst seafarers' partners than in the general population (Parker, et. al., 1998). As with seafarers, studies of partners, highlight the difficulties associated with the transition periods of the work cycle. In 1986, an Australian study of seafarers' wives found 83% reporting some degree of stress when their partners were due home or due to return to sea, with nearly one in 10 (8%) reporting taking medication to cope (Foster and Cacioppe: 1986). Nearly half (42%) of the women in this sample felt that their relationship with their partner was strongly at risk due to the seafaring lifestyle and 25% believed that their partner was having, or had had, an affair (Thomas et al., 2003, p. 65)

Thomas et al, further state that, when they are at sea, seafarers find it hard to be faithful to their spouses who are at home (2003, p. 66). The long periods of time spent away from home and the lack of communication may be the cause of infidelity (Viljoen and Muller, 2012, p. 13). Also, the loneliness that they experience can be another reason why seafarers choose to be unfaithful to their spouses, usually because they spend so much time away from home and the lack of communication. In a study by Viljoen and Muller (2012, p. 14) a respondent stated that “while at sea, unfaithfulness is ‘okay’ or normal behaviour, there is a pressure that expects him to participate in such behaviour. This shows that it is very difficult for seafarers to be faithful to their spouses because they have many opportunities to be unfaithful; they are in a social environment on the ships where this is not considered a big moral failure (Viljoen and Muller, 2012, p. 13). The problems that seafarers face are not different from those experienced by the individuals who leave their homes for other provinces or cities, countries or continents in search of employment.

2.5. COPING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY SEAFARERS

2.5.1. SUBSTANCE ABUSE

According to the ILO (2001), “the use of alcohol and or other drugs in general is increasing globally, and the impact of substance abuse can be seen in the workplace”. Alcoholism is identified as the key contributor to less productivity in the workplace as it causes 500 million lost workdays each year (ILO, 2001). It is estimated that 10-30% of the accidents at work are related to alcohol and that problem drinkers have a 2-4 times higher chance of an accident than non-drinkers (Bijl and Ziekemeyer, 1990). The progression of drug and alcohol use may go unnoticed until a health or safety crisis occurs. However, even the moderate use of drugs or alcohol may cause substantial harm and hazard irrespective of the workplace and regardless of the type of work being performed (ILO, 2001). According to Hansen and Jensen, “the mortality rate among seafarers is high, with alcohol and tobacco consumption” (1998) as both men and women drink and smoke heavily on board the ship as means of coping or rather escaping the loneliness experienced.

2.5.2. RELIGION

Defining religion has proved to be complex as a number of modern scholars of religion have commented on the difficulty of defining what religion is (Connelly, 1996). In some cases the definitions are too narrow, defining religion in terms of the speaker's religious beliefs or those of his or her culture and tending to exclude the religious beliefs of other cultures. According to Berger (1974, p.126) scientific approaches to religion have always alternated between functional and substantive definitions of the field, that is, between defining religion in terms of its social or psychological functions and in terms of its believed contents. In other cases the definitions are so vague and inclusive that they do not sufficiently delimit religion from other areas of human thought such as psychology, law, economics, physics and so forth. However, Connelly defines religion in this way: “Religion originates in an attempt to represent and order beliefs, feelings, imaginings and actions that arise in response to direct experience of the sacred and the spiritual. As this attempt expands in its formulation and elaboration, it becomes a process that creates

meaning for itself on a sustaining basis, in terms of both its originating experiences and its own continuing responses” (1996, p. 14). By their nature, religious beliefs tend to motivate other aspects of human behaviour beyond those which would strictly be considered to be of religious concern. Due to the long periods of time spent away from home, seafarers seek comfort through religious practices. Through faith, seafarers are empowered to handle the challenges of their career as the profession has awarded them opportunities that might have proved impossible (Viljoen & Muller, 2012, p. 2).

2.5.3. SUICIDE

According to Holmes and Holmes (2005, p. 2), suicide is defined as “self-murder”, and he stipulates that no one commits suicide for the same reasons and under the same circumstances. Durkheim (1994) on the other hand studied suicide as an individual act as well as a social phenomenon. Durkheim argues that different social contexts produce different conditions leading to suicide (Durkheim, 1994 in Ritzer, 1996, p. 87). Durkheim identified four types of suicide, namely egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic. Egoistic and anomic suicides are characteristic of a modern society, and altruistic suicide is found in the pre-modern era or tightly bonded circumstances in contemporary times. Egoistic and anomic suicide rates vary inversely with the degree of integration, that is, the lower the integration, the higher the suicide rates. Egoistic and anomic suicide reflects a breakdown in social integration. Stress and fatigue, lack of shore leave, homesickness, criminalization, bullying and harassment are some of the challenges that seafarers are faced with which can result to depression (Iversen, 2012, p. 79). According to Kempton and Forehand (1992), depression should be a high-level indicator of potential suicide. In a study by Roberts (2003, p. 7), the United Kingdom fleet from 1976-2005, reported 57 cases of suicide among 1515 total deaths (Iversen, 2012, p. 81). However, there are less incidences of suicide committed on land by immigrants as compared to seafarers. We find that when seafarer’s lives are imbalanced, suicide occurs as a coping mechanism.

2.5.4. WORK SPACE

The seafarers, both male and female are connected to all parts of the globe and as a result, the nature of their work makes them global citizens as they have the globe as their workplace at any given time. The ship acts as both workplace and home. The workspace of the maritime industry is characterised by geographical mobility, mixed cultures, customs and languages. There is limited social interaction, health facilities and irregular working hours (ILO, 2001).

2.6. BENEFITS OF SEAFARING

2.6.1. SOCIALLY

Socially, the seafaring industry provides a platform whereby seafarers have the opportunity of exploring or travel around the world. Seafarers get to experience different cultures, languages and so forth. The maritime industry has been significantly occupied by men and women had for years the false impression that the maritime business is forbidden for them (Dragomir and Surugiu, 2013, p. 15) Dragomir and Surugiu (2013, p. 16) further state that “An advantage of women seafarer’s presence on board ship is that it creates a more normal social environment. This is particularly important because the nature of seafaring life has changed in recent years and there is less time to go ashore and there are less people on board. Having women as part of the crew can reduce the sense of isolation felt by many seafarers”.

2.6.2. CULTURALLY

In the Philippine culture, there is a strong sense of migratory sacrificial efforts. Working abroad and choosing a career that necessitates separation from the familial home is acknowledged as a sacrificial effort in this society (Lamvik, 2002: 24). For the Philippines, choosing a career at sea, which is characterised by long separations from family and friends, is one of many career paths that are recognised as a sacrificial act (Lamvik, 2002: 24). Other cultural aspects of the maritime industry are that culturally, it is dominated and run by men. This belief has had a negative influence on the employment of women seafarers. According to Dragomir and Surugiu (2013, p.

16) “there may also be some cultural resistance to women working outside the home, but the principal objections to employing women at sea appear to centre on lack of adequate separate facilities for women on board and stringent physical requirements.

2.6.3. ECONOMICALLY

Various scholars such as Thomas, et al., (2003), Lamvik (2002) and Hansen & Jensen (1998) have identified the various reasons why both men and women, from all over the world choose a career or job at sea and one of these reasons is to provide their families and themselves with financial security. High levels of unemployment globally forces people to join the maritime industry if it is the only available option. They turn to a life at sea as means of escaping their economic strife and provide a means to support their families. In a study by Seedat-Khan, and Dekker, (2013) a participant explains that: *“If I could earn the same amount of money at home I would never work as a seafarer”*. The participant explains that the only reason for joining the industry and becoming a seafarer is because of the difference in salaries. This is an indication that for the participant, a job at sea means a better and more attractive salary income.

2.7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.7.1. INTRODUCTION

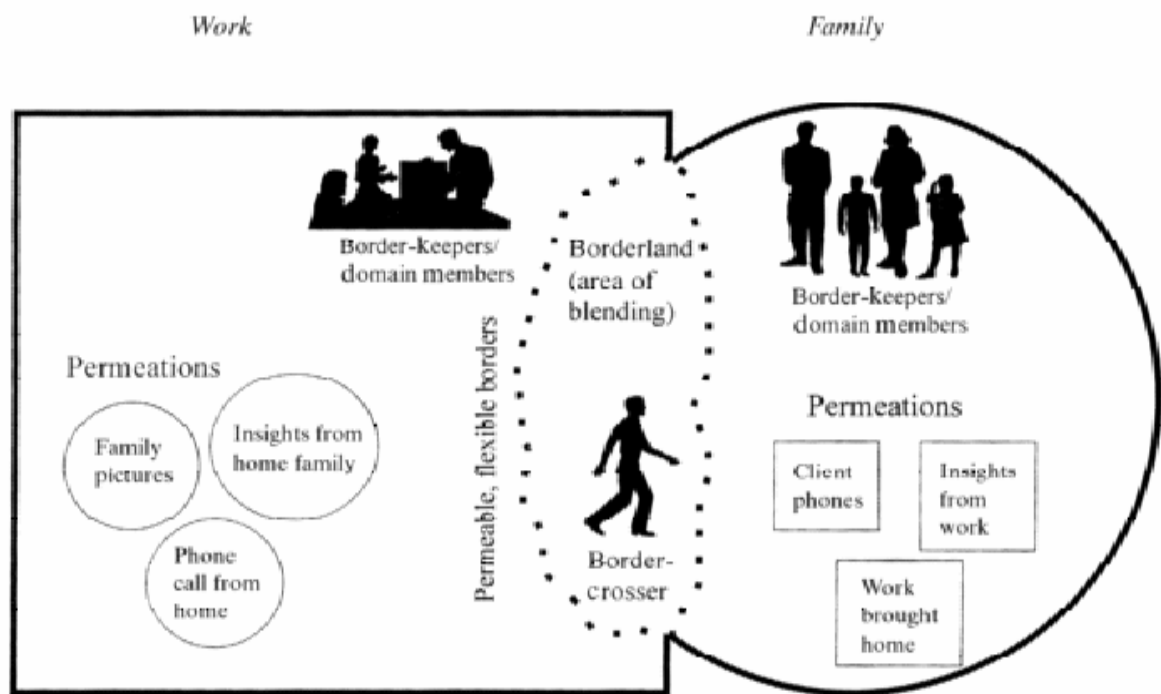
One of the aims of this study is to understand the relationship between the work-family life balance of seafarers. This thesis will be guided by Clark’s (2000) work-family border theory. According to Clark (2000, p.750), the work-family border theory helps us to explain “how individuals manage and negotiate their work and family spheres and the borders between them in order to attain balance”. What is central to this theory is that it examines the two domains, work and family, as two distinct spheres that influence, and are influenced by each other (Gurney, 2010; Bellavia & Frone, 2005). This chapter will unpack the concepts work of family and balance. It will look at how Clark (2000) defines these concepts as well as looking at how she uses her ‘work-family border’ theory to explain them. Thereafter, I present how the theory can be utilised to understand the social phenomenon of work life balance amongst seafarers.

2.8. DEFINING THE WORK-FAMILY BORDER THEORY

Clark (2000) asserts that the primary connection between work and family systems is not emotional but, human, “people are border-crossers who make daily transitions between two worlds- the world of work and the world of family” (2000, p 748). Even though seafarers are not ‘daily’ transistors, they do however make the transition between work and family. The theory attempts to explain the complex interaction between border-crossers and their work and family lives, predict when conflict will occur, and give a framework on how to attain balance between work and family life (2000, p. 78). Understanding and explaining conflict has proved to be challenging as Schmidt and Kochan (1972, p. 359) assert that definitions of conflict have been either ignored or stated in exceedingly vague terms and such vagueness makes comparison of different research difficult. Pondy however, suggests that:

The term "conflict" has been used at one time or another in the literature to describe: (1) antecedent conditions (for example, scarcity of resources, policy differences) of conflicting behaviour, (2) affective states (e.g., stress, tension, hostility, anxiety, etc.) of the individual involved, (3) cognitive states of individuals, (i.e., their perception or awareness of conflictful situations, and (4) conflictful behavior, ranging from passive resistance to overt aggression (p. 298).

Figure 1: A pictorial representation of work/family border theory (Clark, 2000p.754)



The above diagram (figure 1) is a graphic depiction that Clark uses to exhibit the central concepts of work/family border theory. As suggested by Clark (2000), the work domain and family domain are two different spheres that do however, influence each other. The central concepts of border theory are: domains, borders, border-crossers and; the border keepers and other important domain members. These central concepts will therefore be discussed with close reference to the work and family life of seafarers in attempts of understanding how they achieve balance.

2.9. DOMAINS

According to Gurney (2009, p. 32) work and home can be distinguished as two different domains; worlds that people have associated with different rules, thought patterns and behaviour. To better understand the concept of domains, one draws understanding from Bourdieu's theory of structures. Social structure can be understood as the patterned relationships, roles, rules governing individuals and behaviour, and informal or formal agreements affecting individuals in groups (Webster and Sell, in Ritzer, 2012, p. 139). For Webster and Sell (in Ritzer, 2012, p.

139) “institutions such as work and family are the more or less enduring structures in which we spend our lives, including families, schools, corporations ,clubs, political parties and many others. In Bourdieu’s theory of structures, he indicates that social structures are “structures that have been structured to facilitate or rather to influence and shape human behavior” (Bourdieu, in Calhoun, 2007, p. 277). So therefore institutions can be understood as what constitutes the social structure of societies as Haugaard (1997, p. 131) asserts that “Structures and institutions do not exist in isolation from each other, just as Clark has stated that the work domain and family domain are separate spheres that influence each other.

Social structures represent a larger body of knowledge and, for this reason; the survival of institutions depends upon a surrounding environment of compatible structural practices (Haugaard, 1997, p. 131). Seafarers spend months away from home and the time away can present a series of challenges for them, both at work and at home. Bourdieu further states that these structures ‘impose their presence, with urgencies, things to be done and said, things made to be said, which directly govern words and deeds without ever unfolding as a spectacle. Since these social facts exist before the individual they become ‘natural’ or ‘real as social constructionists state that “there is no ‘essences’ inside things or people that determine who we are since the social world including people is the product of social processes” (Bourdieu in Ritzer, 2008, p. 5). Webster and Sell also state that institutions “like all social structures, permit, organize, and constrain action; in addition, they often define the meanings of various acts thus they create social realities for individuals (in Ritzer, 2012: 193). This paper is however interested in understanding how the family institution and work institution of seafarers affect or influence each other. So therefore, we will unpack the work domain and family domain of seafarers.

2.10. THE WORK AND FAMILY DOMAIN OF SEAFARERS

According to Murdock (1949 in Haralambos and Holborn, 2004, p. 466), “the family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults”.

Burgees, Locke, and Thomes on the other hand state that “the family may be defined as a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood, or adoption; constituting a single household; interacting and communicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister; and creating and maintaining a common culture” (1963: 2). One may argue that Murdock and Burgees et al., (1963) provides definitions that are more reflective of a traditional family.

A more contemporary definition of a family is that of Chambers. According to Chambers (2001, p. 1), “ increases in divorce, remarriage, post-divorce families, blended families, single parenthood, joint custody, abortion, cohabitation, two-career families, single parenthood, gay and lesbian partnerships and parenthood all contribute to a rising ‘postmodern family’ ”. In this study however, family is understood as a “group of individuals related to one another by blood ties, marriage or adoption, who form an economic unit, the adult members of which are responsible for the upbringing of children” (Eshleman, 1994, p. 2). Within the family, there are societal expectations that one must fulfil. As suggested by Bourdieu, these expectations impose themselves on individuals with things to be said and done (Bourdieu, in Calhoun, 2007, p. 277). In support of Bourdieu, Clark states that “cultures in organizations like work places and families are a collection of means and rules about which means take priority. In other words, it examines the roles that individuals have to fulfil within the family and work spectrum.

According to Eshleman (1994, p. 75) the family system is one example of interrelated statuses that fulfil certain basic function. Within the family system are subsystems that are highly patterned, recurrent, and organized in order to fulfil selected tasks (1994, p. 75).

Eshleman identifies the subsystems as; 1) *Marital systems* (whereby individuals have to fulfil the tasks of being husband, wife, divorcee, spouse, single, widower etc.); 2) *sexual systems* (individuals assume the tasks of fulfilling the roles of being men and women) and lastly; 3) *childrearing systems* (individuals assume the roles of being parents or guardians to their children). Seafarers are separated from their families while they are at sea. Many of the seafarers join the industry as means of securing employment in order to earn an income that will support themselves and their loved ones. In today’s society, the assumption of a man being the sole-breadwinner is no longer apparent. With the rise of globalisation and the so ever changing

society, there has been a shift in role-relationships. For instance, women can now occupy what was usually considered to be a man's role. There are women who have abandoned the traditional role of a homemaker and have assumed positions as head of states, engineers, doctors and so forth. In the maritime industry, there has been an increase in the number of women joining the industry and like their male colleagues; reasons for joining the industry are more or less the same. What is apparent here is that, within the seafaring community, both the men and women are away from home. We therefore assume that, while the roles of women and men within the sexual system are met as seafarers financially provide and support their family, the other roles of marital systems and childrearing systems are ignored. Even within the sexual systems, other role functions are ignored while they are away. This thesis therefore question what happens to the roles they have to fulfil within the family domain while they are at sea?

Economics is defined as the social science that studies the choices that individuals, businesses, governments, and entire societies make as they cope with the scarcity and the incentives that influence and reconcile those choices (Parkin et al., 2010, p. 2). Wells defines 'economics' as "the study of how men and society choose, with or without the use of money, to employ scarce productive resources to produce various commodities over time and distribute them for consumption, now and in the future, among people and groups in society" (1970, p. 43). We provide our labour in exchange for something in return, as the choices we make respond to incentives. Seafarers join the maritime industry for different reasons but one reason they have in common is for financial security be it for themselves or for their families.

According to Eshlemen (1994, p. 110), the economy is the component of society concerned with the creation, distribution, and the consumption of goods and services and hence, the family contributes labour and skills and in turn receives wages or other forms of compensation (prestige, insurance, services). Alternatively, Parkin (2010, p. 11) emphasises that institutions play an influencing role in the incentives that people face as they pursue their self-interest. Seeking employment in the maritime industry is not only for economic reasons only. As the research in this chapter of this thesis indicates, seafarers also join the industry for professional achievement as well as social achievement. Some seafarers join the industry to travel and see the world while others join the industry to grow in their professions.

According to Wells (1970, p. 49) “the comparative sociological study of economic institutions is that it studies how the economic aspect of activities is related to the other aspects in the social matrix. Similarly, it studies the way in which men’s decisions as to the methods of producing, distributing and consuming are related to the character of family relationships, class relationships, culture and the like”. This thesis is therefore interested in understanding how seafarers balance the two institutions, that of work and family. Therefore, the work/life border theory is adopted to help understand this phenomenon. This theory acknowledges that both these institutions are separate spheres however they emphasise on the fact that they influence each other as well. According to Cabrillo (1999, p. 19), “if the traditional family disappears and we move to a situation in which both the husband and the wife obtain income from the market, have small numbers of children and there are a large number of unmarried people and divorcees living alone, then unemployment will be less serious and may cause less social conflict. But, on the other hand, that buffer of security offered by the family will also disappear”.

In conclusion, Wells (1970, p. 169) states that the family is “the most important of all human groups because it is essential to the survival of the human species, it is essential for the survival of human culture and to social existence”. Burgees et al., state that the “urban family has been profoundly changed by alterations in economic and other functions of industrialization, the growth of cities, and the influx of immigrants and rural people into cities” (1963, p. 7). Seafarers are not migrant workers because their work does not necessitate them to move and live in another country. It does however demand them to be separated from their families while fulfilling the roles of economically supporting and providing for their families. According to Gurney (2009, p. 32) “Work and family are seen as separate domains and separate worlds which are associated with different rules, thought patterns and behaviours. Basically, how we conduct ourselves at work will differ to the way we behave at home due the influences of the two domains”.

2.11. BORDERS

Work life balance can be understood as the amount of time you spend engaging in your job compared with the amount of time you spend with your family and engaging in leisure activities.

According to Heathfield (2000) work life balance “is a concept that supports the efforts of employees to split their time and energy between work and the other important aspects of their lives. Work-life balance is a daily effort to make time for family, friends, community participation, spirituality, personal growth, self-care, and other personal activities, in addition to the demands of the workplace”.

However, Gurney (2009, p. 31) states that Clark defines ‘balance’ as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict” (2000, p. 751), stating that “though many aspects of work and home are difficult to alter, individuals can shape to some degree the nature of the work and home domains, and the borders and bridges between them, in order to create a desired balance” (2000, p. 751). Borders are the delineation between domains, indicating the point at which domain-specific behaviour can begin and end”. For seafarers, the delineation of the two domains can be presented as the challenges that seafarers experience while at work and at home. Challenges that the seafarer experiences while at work are namely homesickness and loneliness; discrimination against gender, race and nationality; as well as sexual harassment that is usually faced by the female seafarer. On the other hand, displacement and marital problems (infidelity) are the challenges that the seafarer faces at home. The border is characterised by three main forms namely, physical, temporal and psychological.

2.11.1. THE PHYSICAL BORDER

The physical border defines where domain-relevant behaviour can take place, such as the location of paid employment (Clark, 2000, p. 755).

2.11.2. TEMPORAL BORDERS

Temporal borders are borders which divide when tasks can be done, for example set working hours (Clark, 2000, p. 755).

2.11.3. PSYCHOLOGICAL BORDERS

Psychological borders define which thinking patterns, behaviour and emotion are suitable to which domain (Clark, 2000, p. 755). Lewin distinguishes that psychological borders are largely created by individuals on their own capacity (Rychlak, 1981). Physical and temporal borders may be used by the individual to determine the rules that make up psychological border. According to Clark (2000, p. 756) borders are characterized by their *permeability*, which is understood as the degree to which elements from other domains may enter. For instance, seafarers are challenged by homesickness and loneliness while they are on board the ship. This can result to seafarers experiencing stress and depression which may negatively impact on the seafarers work capabilities in fulfilling their roles. Clark states that this permeability can be understood as a 'psychological permeation'. According to Clark (2000, p. 757) psychological permeations are characterised by the spill over of negative emotions and attitudes from a work to a home life.

Flexibility is defined by Clark as "the extent to which a border may contract or expand depending on the demands of one domain or the other" (2000, p. 757). For example, the psychological border of seafarers is flexible in the notion that, the emotions and attitudes of individuals can influence the seafarer when at home and when at work.

Blending, according to Clark (2000, p. 757), is the intertwinement of permeability and flexibility that occurs around the border. It is merely the blending of both, the work domain and family domain. Within the work and family domains of seafarers however, blending is highly unlikely to occur due to fact that both these domains are geographically separate or apart.

2.11.4. BORDER-CROSSERS

According to Clark (2000, p. 759) border-crossers are the individuals who are making the frequent transitions between work and family domains. Seafarers are men and women of different nationalities, race and ethnic groups. Thus their cultural beliefs, values and norms differ. They are men and women, who are single, married, divorced separated widowed; they are

family men and women. They are daughters and sons; mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers; husbands and wives; and so forth.

2.11.5. BORDER-KEEPERS AND OTHER DOMAINS

Clark states that border-crossers, border-keepers and other domain members negotiate what constitutes the domains and where the borders between them lie (2000, p. 761). She identifies supervisors as border-keepers at work and generally, spouses as border-keepers at home. Border-keepers play an important role in the border-crossers ability to manage the domains and borders (2000, p. 761).

It is this recognition of tangible (physical and temporal) as well as psychological borders which work/family border theory distinct from that of boundary theory (Desrochers and Sargent, 2003). Whilst the understanding of the differing natures of boundaries as permeable, malleable, dynamic, and changing (McKie, Cunningham-Burley and McKenrick, 2005; Speakman and Marchington, 2004) provides greater insight into behaviours in different domains (Gurney, 2009, p. 32).

According to Clark (2000, p. 78) early researchers treated work and family systems as if they operated independently because work and family was associated with the physical and temporal separation as well as, men assumed the role of breadwinner and women the role of homemaker. The spill over theory, conflict theory, role theory as well as compensation theory is some of the theories that researchers utilise when using the open-systems approach, when studying work/life balance. Thompson (2001) states that “role theory attempts to explain the interactions between individuals in organizations by focusing on the roles they play. Role behaviour is influenced by role expectations for appropriate behaviour in that position, and changes in role behaviour occur through an iterative process of role sending and role receiving”. According to Beutall and Greenhaus (in Lambert & Kossek, 2005, p.19), One element of the work-non-work interface is the conflict a person may experience between the work role and other life roles. They believe that engaging in one role makes participation in the other role more difficult because the demands from one role are incompatible with the other. With seafarers however, the issue is not

that they experience difficulty with functioning in their respective roles. It is only when they return home that they embody the roles of being fathers, sons, brothers, husbands and so forth. According to Hill et al., (2003, p. 222) “Spill over theory postulates the conditions under which the spill over between the work microsystem and the family microsystem is positive or negative. Research documents that if work-family interactions are rigidly structured in time and space, then spill over in terms of time, energy and behaviour is generally negative. Research also supports the notion that work flexibility, which enables individuals to integrate and overlap work and family responsibilities in time and space, leads to positive spill over and is instrumental in achieving healthy work and family balance”. In the case of seafaring, a positive balance cannot be achieved because of the working conditions. The spill over theory does not however, consider workers such as seafarers who work and live miles away from their families.

2.12. SUMMARY

The roles of being husbands or wives, parents, women and men, are however, the reality for most of the seafarers and research has indicated that this can negatively affect these individuals` work performance and ‘believed’ work capabilities. Also with the nature of the industry and the long periods spent away from home or rather their reality, seafarers find themselves in isolation and in a state of displacement when they are at home. Therefore, what is argued here is that the seafaring profession can negatively affect the seafarers’ family lives. However, to be a part of any profession, one has to acquire the required qualification or have the necessary skills to enable full functioning in the work place. Being part of the working force is not something that we are merely born into rather we ascribe ourselves in the career paths we choose and usually for different reasons. For the majority of seafarers, entry into the maritime industry is mainly to support their families and themselves and as the breadwinners of their families, keeping their professions can be assumed as their main concern. This theory will therefore be utilized to understand how seafarers maintain and achieve balance between the work domain and family domain.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the dissertation will focus on the methodological approach that was utilised in this study. The researcher will discuss the research design and the research methodology adopted, which includes the sampling selection, the data collection method and the system used for analysing the raw data that was collected during the 20 interviews. This chapter will also discuss the research experience in its totality, particularly looking into the challenges of field research of this nature. This chapter will also include the ethical considerations borne in mind for the participants' involvement in the study.

3.2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research is aimed at studying human action from the perspective of the people being studied. It is rich in nature and allows for the collection of valuable information in narrative form. The goal of the qualitative approach aims to describe human behaviour in great detail and not to predict and make assumptions about the participants in the study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) "Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings and attempt to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them". The participants in this study are interviewed in their social work space - a familiar space, such as the Sailors' Society.

According to Creswell, "a qualitative research design essentially collects and interprets non-numerical data, focusing on the meaning of sample participants' beliefs, experiences and perceptions of a particular phenomenon" (2003, p. 20). Qualitative research methods enable the researcher to gain access and to become part of the research participants' world temporarily. This allows the researcher to emphasise the meanings and experiences of the participants with great detail. In an attempt to explore and understand how seafarers balance both their work and family

life, information gathered from participants focused on their own meanings and understandings, their lived experiences and perception of their experiences to date. The researcher was able to get to know the participants' backgrounds and personal experiences of the participants in great detail using the interviews.

According to Babbie (1995, p. 83) "research design addresses the planning of scientific inquiry- designing a strategy for finding out something". A research design entails the outlining or plan that explains the procedure to be used in seeking an answer to the proposed research question. According to Babbie (1995, pp. 84-85) exploratory research is conducted to explore a topic; it is also used for examining a new interest. The persistent phenomenon of work-life balance among seafarers is recurrent in international studies. However, seafaring is an under researched area within the South African context and work-life balance has rarely been explored.

Mouton (2001, p. 109) advances the idea that "an exploratory research has a basic research goal, and researchers frequently use qualitative data". This study will use an exploratory research design which will include the use of in-depth interviews.

This design selected is best suited for this study because this investigation seeks to understand the coping strategies that seafarers employ in an attempt to find a balance between work on board the ship, away from home and family life on land.

A problem posed in the research was the unfamiliarity of the study location and the research participants and the effect this could have on data collection. One of the challenges that I faced was getting consent from the participants. The issue at hand was that of trust. The researcher was a stranger to the participants and I was not sure if they would be comfortable talking to me. However, being total strangers could have served as an advantage as some people are more comfortable and open to talking to strangers.

As a researcher, I tried to develop a somewhat of a relationship with the participants. I achieved this by disclosing my identity at the outset, telling them the reason for the research and how the

data would be used. This enabled me to gain their trust and as a result they were open with me without the fear of being judged which can hinder them from sharing their life experiences.

3.3. POPULATION AND SAMPLING METHOD

3.3.1. STUDY POPULATION

The study was conducted at the Seafarers` mission in Bayhead which is located at the port city of Durban. This location was selected because of its relevance to the study. It is a distinctively remote area specially designed to cater for seafarers needs while they are in Durban. It is a safe and relaxed environment away from the ship. It provides the seafarers with an opportunity to contact their loved ones whether telephonically or through social networks such as Facebook and Myspace. The mission has a Christian ministry that caters for all seafarers irrespective of their gender, age, nationality or culture and faith. On site, there is a sports and recreational centre, a bar as well as a shop where seafarers can purchase toiletries and other necessities. Upon arrival, one is welcomed by staff members who are all South African citizens. As there are different ships entering the Durban Harbour, there are also seafarers from all parts of the world visiting the Seafarers` mission. The mission therefore is basically the only place where one can find a group of seafarers in one place. They also vary in terms of their years of experience in the industry and the positions they occupy.

3.3.2. SAMPLING METHOD

The researcher made use of the non-probability sampling method; namely the convenient sampling method and snowball sampling. While convenient sampling is not always an ideal choice, the nature of this study and its participants required the use of this method since access to seafarers is limited and unpredictable. According to Davies (2007, pp. 55-56) “in convenience sampling you (the researcher) simply take what you can get where you can get it and interview the first eighty people you meet who agree to cooperate with you; you cold-call telephone numbers”. The willingness of people to engage with a stranger and the language barriers all provide a series of challenges for both the researcher and the seafarer. The researcher has an

established relationship with the Seafarers' Mission in Umbilo and Bayhead. These linkages were established through a project on seafarers at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The participants in this study were seafarers who pass through the Port city of Durban. I met with the seafarers at the sailor's society (in Bayhead), the participants were selected using the convenient sampling method. Additional participants were gathered using the snowball technique. Babbie (1995, p. 287), states that a "snowball sample is a technique that begins with a few relevant subjects that you have identified and expands the sample through referrals". The seafarers were keen to talk to me and were happy to tell other seafarers about my research.

Davies (2007, p. 56) found that the researcher has no control over who falls into the sample in terms of age, race and gender or nationality and consequently the researcher has no means of knowing the extent of the information you get or the opinions that are expressed do or do not reflect the total 'population'- or even what that 'population' might consist of. It is therefore important to indicate that the findings are based on this particular small sample of seafarers and therefore the findings cannot be generalized to the broader seafaring population.

3.4. SEMI STRUCTURED ONE-TO-ONE IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS

According to Greef (2002, p. 298) "the unstructured one-on-one interview also sometimes referred to as the in-depth interview, merely extends and formalizes conversation". In this study, the researcher used unstructured one-on-one interviews as a tool to gather data. Individual interviews are useful to determine individual seafarers' perceptions, opinions, and information about their lived experiences in their navigating a work-life balance under difficult and strenuous situations. This research tool enabled the participants to be more relaxed since it was more of a conversation between two people rather than a formal interview. However, the researcher was guided by a list of broad questions and themes that related to the key area of investigation around 'work-life balance'. The unstructured one-on-one interviews afforded the researcher the opportunity to obtain greater understanding of what life at sea entails and the impact it might have on the ways in which these participants balance their work and family lives. The interviews carried out in the Port City of Durban were all tape recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

In general, the interviews lasted not more than twenty minutes and not less than 10 minutes. It depended on the willingness of the participant to open up and share information. The interview process was very interesting. It awarded me the opportunity to better understand the world of seafarers and how life is like at sea for them and other seafarers. It awarded me the opportunity to have a better insight on the research that I had engaged with for the purpose of this study and as a result, I was able to relate theory and experience. Because of the differences in language I often had to use lay-man terms. For instance, instead of using the word salary I had to use income instead as well as using the words wife, husband, boyfriend and girlfriend instead of spouse.

Some participants felt more comfortable with me interviewing them in the presence of their colleagues. So for those who felt this way, I sat with them while I interviewed them one by one, while others had no problem with being interviewed separately. I found that the group interviews were more relaxed and allowed a comfortable setting for easy conversation.

3.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Blaikie (2000, p. 19) “most social research involves intervention in some aspects of social life. There is always a risk that even asking someone quite innocent questions could be disturbing or traumatic to that person. It has therefore become normal practice for the ethical implications of a social research project to be made explicit, together with the procedures to be used to deal with them”. This procedure helps to prevent conflict that may arise between the researcher and the participants. Some of the ethical considerations are outlined below. All the participants were notified that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so.

3.5.1. INFORMED CONSENT

It is important for the participants to be fully informed about the goal of the study, how the goal will be achieved and also the pros and cons of taking part in the study. This approach ensures that the participants are aware of everything that is going on, and enables them to make an

informed decision about being part of the study. However, it is important for the researcher not to give away too much information as this might pose a challenge for the researcher. One of the challenges would be that the participants may hold back information which in turn may affect the outcome of the study in the sense that I would not get a full view and understanding of the real experience of the seafarers life experiences. The information would be an altered view of how the life and experiences of seafaring is actually like. The researcher informed the participants about the aim of the research study and the nature of the research study. Participants were informed on how data was to be collected. The researcher gave the participants an opportunity to ask questions before they took part in the study and after completion of the interviews. A sample of the consent form is attached as Appendix B.

3.5.2. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

The confidentiality of the participants was ensured and guaranteed. The participants were assured that no one else besides the researcher and the supervisor would have access to the recordings and that, after transcription, the recordings would be deleted and the transcribed material would be kept in a safe at the university after use. Participants were informed that they had the right to not answer questions that they did not feel comfortable answering. Anonymity was emphasised and promised to the participants. Pseudonyms were used instead of participants' real names.

3.6. DATA COLLECTION

3.6.1. THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

The data for this study was collected through one-on-one interviews using the interview schedule (Appendix A). The interviews were conducted at the Port of Durban Sailors Society. Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher outlined the goals of the study and went through the consent form (Appendix B) with the participants. Participants had to sign the consent form then only were the interviews conducted. All interviews were digitally recorded with the consent of the participants. In-depth interviews were conducted for this study. The interviews were

conducted in English. In the discussion during interviews, one of the topics was to understand why people choose a career at sea and the strategies that seafarers put in place to ensure the well-being of their families while they are at sea; and to determine how the seafaring industry and family life may impact on each other.

3.6.2. DATA ANALYSIS

According to Terre Blanche and Kelly (in Terre Blanche and Durrheim 2002, p. 123), the interpretive approach presumes that people's subjective experiences are real, that we can understand others' experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us, and that qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task. After data was transcribed, it was divided into broad themes through the use of thematic analysis. According to Rugg and Petre (2007, p. 154), thematic analysis is based on what is said in a text, how it is said, and how often it is said. During the analysis, major themes were identified and then recorded into different sub-headings or categories to make it easier to compare similarities and differences. Some of the themes that will be looked at are family, stress and challenges, as well as coping strategies. In each of these key themes, meanings and understandings that seafarers associate with them are explored in the next chapter of this study.

3.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

When researchers choose procedures for their study, they have to keep in mind some of the challenges that may surface in specific research settings, among certain research groups and in unique research circumstances (Berg, 1998). Thus it is important to take into account some of the limitations of this study when analysing the results of this study. When conducting the in-depth interviews, language and time proved quite challenging. One of the requirements to work on an international ship is the proficiency in English more specifically, to communicate in English. The interviews were conducted in English but because of the different nations that seafarers come from, a number of them were not fluent in the language. This served as a barrier of communication between the seafarer and the researcher. To eradicate this problem, as suggested earlier, I had to use lay-man terms and often had to explain the research questions in

detail to the participants. In the case where I did not understand the participant, they in turn had to do the same. Time and access to seafarers posed as another challenge in this study. Seafarers were only available at the mission from six o'clock till ten o'clock in the evening. For the researcher, this proved challenging as it was after working hours and for safety reasons. For safety purposes, at times, I was accompanied by my brother. Also, the study location is very remote; means of transportation are very minimal and only open to private motors. So a result, I had to catch a metered taxi, which proved to be costly. I normally arrived at the Sailors Society between 17h30 and 18h00 and left around 22h30.

3.8. SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research methodology that was adopted to conduct the empirical component of the study is described in detail. Careful consideration is given to all aspects of the research and is narrated as clearly as possible. The research design, sampling method, participants, ethical considerations, data collection, analysis procedures and limitations of the study are explained in detail. Each of these components provides important insight and detail for the study that is important for the creation and generation of new knowledge.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings and analysis of the data. The factors that are reviewed in the analysis include exploring themes such as seafaring as a profession, challenges experienced by seafarers both at the work place and at home and finally, the coping strategies they adopt. This chapter reflects on the findings from the 20 in-depth interviews that were conducted with seafarers from different parts of the world. The interviews were conducted at the Sailors` Society in Durban. Because of their working hours, seafarers who were interviewed were only available after 18h00 in the evening thus the interviews were carried out mostly from 18h30 till 22h00. Data was collected from the end of June to early August 2014. This chapter outlines the characteristics of the sample studied followed by key issues affecting seafarers. These themes have been identified through the process of transcribing and analysing the verbatim data gathered from the interviews. To extend the research findings, direct quotes are used from the transcriptions. The analysis provides an understanding of the different lifestyles and challenges that are faced by seafarers both at work and at home.

4.2. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

4.2.1: FIGURE1: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Participant	Gender	Age	Nationality/ Continent	Relationship status	No. of Children	Seafaring work experience
1	Female	38	Europe	Married	1	9 years
2	Female	29	Asia	Married	0	2 years
3	Male	28	Africa	Single	0	2 months
4	Male	37	Europe	Cohabitation	0	6 years
5	Male	34	Asia	Married	0	8 years
6	Male	26	Asia	In a relationship	0	4 years
7	Male	30	Africa	In a relationship	0	2 years
8	Male	23	Asia	In a relationship	0	1 year
9	Male	50	Europe	Married	3	21 years
10	Male	27	Africa	In a relationship	0	2 months
11	Male	33	Asia	Single	1	3 years
12	Male	45	Europe	In a relationship	0	8 years
13	Male	38	Europe	In a relationship	1	5 years
14	Male	39	Europe	Married	2	7 years
15	Male	31	Asia	Married	0	1 year
16	Male	34	Africa	In a relationship	1	3 years
17	Male	40	Europe	Married	2	12 years
18	Male	20	Europe	In a relationship	0	1 year
19	Male	32	Africa	Married	2	5 years
20	Male	38	Asia	Married	2	10 years

4.2.2. GETTING TO KNOW THE PARTICIPANTS

a) PARTICIPANT ONE

My first participant is a 38 year old white woman from Europe. She has been married for 15 years and has a 17 year old daughter. Her parents are guardians to her daughter when she and her husband are away at sea. Both she and her husband are seafarers and she has been working in the maritime industry for 9 years as the hospitality manager. She is a very polite lady who loves her family and her job. She states that being a seafarer is something she has always wanted to do. She speaks passionately about her job but fears that it may have a negative influence on her relationship with her daughter.

b) PARTICIPANT TWO

She is a very delightful young lady from China who recently got married to her high school sweetheart, who is also a seafarer. Due to the difficulties of securing employment off shore, both the participant and her husband decided to seek `greener pastures` in the world of seafaring. She is employed as a steward assistant. She hopes to have children one day but fears that her job might not favour her wishes. She and her husband combine their monthly salaries and support not only themselves but their families as well. She states that with her savings, she hopefully one day will fulfil her dream; of owning her own small shop. Conducting this interview seemed to be a challenge due to the language barrier. My participant was not very fluent in English since her home language is Chinese.

c) PARTICIPANT THREE

A twenty eight years old and is from Ethiopia in Africa. This participant had recently joined the maritime industry. This was his first contractual job and he has only been working for two months. He worked as a professional/qualified electrical engineer off shore. However, he is employed as an assistant to the electrical engineer on board a ship. He joined the industry purely for career reasons. He believes that having experience of working in an international capacity

will advance and have a positive influence on his career. He has not experienced any challenges at work besides missing home from time to time. Otherwise, So far, he is enjoying his job and is enjoying travelling around the world.

d) PARTICIPANT FOUR

He is a hardworking, very friendly and outspoken individual. At 37 years old, this participant proved to be ambitious. He has been working on board a ship as an assistant to the chief engineer for six years. When at home, he runs a small workshop where he works as a carpenter. Still yet to marry, his girlfriend of fifteen years only agreed to marry him once he retires from the maritime industry. He stated that he would retire at 40. In his years of working as a seafarer, his biggest challenge has been that of missing home and loneliness.

e) PARTICIPANT FIVE

My interview with this participant proved to be emotionally challenging. This participant revealed that he comes from a very disadvantaged background. He lost his parents when he was a young boy and since he was the eldest of his siblings, he had to leave school and seek employment in order to support himself and his siblings. Before becoming a seafarer, he worked at many different jobs. He worked on a farm, thereafter he worked as a cleaner in a factory. He then worked as a caretaker in a school near his community. He had heard about the seafaring job from the school headmaster. He is now employed as a cabin steward. He has been a seafarer for the past 8 years and says, besides missing his wife and siblings, his job is the best.

f) PARTICIPANT SIX

This participant revealed that he has been working as a seafarer for only 4 years. In his words, “I have always wanted to travel, see the world and just live my life, I enjoy being a gym instructor... now imagine doing what you love while living your dream”. He is a young 26 year old from Asia. He is full of life, energetic and easy going. He says that maybe after a year or two he will consider something new besides seafaring.

g) PARTICIPANT SEVEN

A 30 year old young African from Egypt who has been working in the maritime industry for two years and is employed as a busboy. A busboy usually works on a cruise ship and assists waiters and waitresses. This participant has only been a seafarer for two years. However, he indicates that he will retire soon. He states that in as much as the job provides financial security for him, it has taken its toll on his relationships more especially with his girlfriend. He misses home and says he could never get used to travelling around the world.

h) PARTICIPANT EIGHT

At 23 years of age, this participant has shown great enthusiasm and positivity towards life. He completed high school at the age of 18 with good grades but unfortunately could not further his studies due to lack of funds. He is currently employed as a bartender on a cruise ship. He states that he took this job because the earnings are good and says this will enable him to further his studies. He aspires to be a doctor one day.

i) PARTICIPANT NINE

This participant is 50 years old. With 21 years of experience as a seafarer, he states that he would not change a thing about his life and choice of career. He has been married for 22 years and has 3 children, a son and two daughters. He works as the chief radio officer. His 19 year old son intends to join the maritime industry as well and hopes to work with him on board a ship. He absolutely loves his job. He speaks passionately about his experiences over the years.

j) PARTICIPANT TEN

This participant joined the maritime industry for career purposes. He says that he wants to be internationally employable and claims that the maritime industry will grant him that opportunity. He is 27 years old and from Ethiopia. Prior to being a seafarer, he worked as an engineer and now is currently employed as an assistant to the chief electrical engineer. He says that even

though the levels of entry differ on shore and off shore, he will work his way up till he becomes recognised as a professional engineer. He has only been a seafarer for two months and states that he is enjoying the job thus far. However, he feels that a lot of work is done on board a ship.

k) PARTICIPANT ELEVEN

A 33 year old single father to a young baby girl, participant 11 is a very humble, polite and well-mannered individual. He has been a seafarer for the past three years and works as an utilityman. I could tell from the interview that he loves and adores his daughter. He states that he wants to provide her with everything that he never had when growing up. When he is away at sea, his parents take care of his daughter. He and the mother of his child separated because of the time spent apart. He claims that because he is away for so long, his work may have played a role in them separating. He also fears that this will also have an effect on his relationship with his daughter.

l) PARTICIPANT TWELVE

Welcomed me with a pleasant smile. He is 45 years old, from the U.K and has been working as a seafarer for the past 8 years. He is a professional mechanical engineer and works as a motorman on board a ship. He joined the industry not only for the job opportunity but also as a duty and honour to his family and family pride since his family has a history of members who have worked in the industry. He states that “as far as I can remember, all the men in my family have worked as seamen”. He has never been married but has been with his spouse for the past 20 years. He states he will marry her in the next three years, once he retires. He believes that marriage is a lifetime commitment and feels that his choice of career is not ideal for marriage.

m) PARTICIPANT THIRTEEN

It was a cold winter night when I interviewed the participant. We conversed over a cup of tea and had a somewhat comfortable and easy interview. At first he was a bit shy but he soon opened up to me. Since he was not fluent in English, he was concerned that it would have a bad effect on

our interview. However, that was not the case. Participant 13 is a 38 year old male from Europe (Germany). He has a 15 year old daughter, is engaged to be married. He has been working as a seafarer for 5 years. He works as an engineer on board the ship. Prior to joining the industry, he also worked as an engineer. Joining the industry was simply a challenge for growth and opportunities that the participant had set out for himself.

n) PARTICIPANT FOURTEEN

A 39 year old male, also from Europe (Belgium). He has been married for 9 years and has two children. One is headed to college while the other is still completing his schooling. He is employed as a third engineer and has worked as a seafarer for over 7 years. He highlighted that he has been in the industry for a long time but feels that one thing he could never get use to is missing home.

o) PARTICIPANT FIFTEEN

He is employed as an assistant to the security officer on board a ship. He has been a seafarer for a year. Before joining the industry, he had worked as a security for 4 years. He is 31 years old and has only been married for a year. His wife works as a child minder at a kindergarten. The participant told me that they hope to own their own business one day, build a beautiful home and hopefully have kids of their own.

p) PARTICIPANT SIXTEEN

Is a 34 year old man from Africa, Ethiopia but now resides in Mozambique He is currently engaged to be married to the mother of his 4 year old son in the year 2015. He has worked on board a ship as a cabin steward for over 3 years. His fiancé works as a general assistant in a hospital.

q) PARTICIPANT SEVENTEEN

Is a 40 year old father of two. His children are both in college. One is studying to be a doctor and the other a lawyer. He has been married for 15 years. He is a devoted father and husband. He states that “I joined the industry so that I could provide a comfortable life for my wife and children”. He is employed as a chief mate and has been working as a seafarer for over 12 years.

r) PARTICIPANT EIGHTEEN

Is 20 years old. He finished school then decided to travel. He has travelled to some parts of Africa and Asia, Australia and the United States of America. After travelling, he decided to join the maritime industry. He has been working as a bartender for a cruise ship for the past year. He is also in a relationship with a young girl back home. He hopes that he will grow in the industry and hopefully own a ship one day. According to the participant, his love for ships is what drew him towards seeking employment in the industry.

s) PARTICIPANT NINETEEN

Is a 32 year old man from Africa. He works as an engine cadet on a vessel ship. He has been working in the industry for 5 years. He is married for over a year and he has two daughters. He explains that he wishes he could have his family live with him. He states that there comes a time where he cannot stand the loneliness and emptiness that he feels when he is away from them.

t) PARTICIPANT TWENTY

At 38 years old, participant 20 states to have had his fair share of the industry. He is employed as an engine pumpman and has worked as a seafarer for 10 years and is now making plans of seeking employment back at home. He has been married for 25 years and has two teenage children.

4.2.3. SUMMARY

All the participants were aged ranging from twenty to fifty years; the participants were from both developing and developed countries. They come from countries such as Ethiopia, Russia, Germany, UK, China, Singapore and the Philippines. Of the twenty participants, only two were female seafarers. Their work experience in the maritime industry varies. Three of the participants have been seafarers for over 10 years, seven for over 5 years while the other 10 participants have worked lesser years. What seems to be the general idea is that seafarers join the maritime industry from a young age, between the ages twenty and twenty-five. However, there were two participants who joined the industry while still in their teens. Some of the seafarers reported to have worked off shore before. Others state to have worked in the same field as they are working now while others reported to have not worked before or have worked in an entirely different field. The relationship status of the participants differed. Nine of the participants are married. Seven participants reported to be in a relationship, with four reported are soon to be married while two of the participants are single. There was one participant who attested to a cohabitation relationship. Cohabitation generally refers to people who, regardless of gender, live together without being legally married to each other. Nine of the twenty participants claimed to have no children. Amongst the eleven participants who do have children, it was noted that they do not have more than three children.

4.3. SEAFARING AS A PROFESSION

This theme provides an analysis of how the participants view their choice of career, what it means to be a seafarer and the challenges that they face within the work place.

In all the interviews that were conducted, when participants were asked to give their own definition or rather their perspective of what it means to be a seafarer, the response was quite different from the definition provided in chapter two of this study and also differed from many other studies that have been conducted by researchers. Even the word ‘seafarer’ was hardly acknowledged as the term used to describe this vocation. . Instead, the word ‘seaman’ was more frequently used by the participants. The following extracts from the participants’ statements reflect the definitions of what a seafarer is and who used the term ‘seaman’:

“A seaman is a professional who works on a ship in the field of his specialisation and forms part of a crew” (participant 16)

“A seafarer... a seaman is someone who lives a certain lifestyle. I mean, yes it’s a profession, it’s our work (participant 7).

Researcher: what do you mean it’s a lifestyle?

“What I mean is that, which other profession do you know where people live and work in the same space? Not everyone can adjust to that....you really have to love this job” (participant 7).

“Being a seaman is like having so many different kinds of people doing different things on the ship.... working in one space to form one unit. You work together as a team” (Participant 12).

“It means working away from home for months...away from your friends and family. But being a seaman also means being dedicated and loving your job. You are part of a big team. We are all employed in different sectors but we work together all the time. We all come from different countries; we speak different languages and so on” (participant 14).

“A seaman is someone who is employed and lives on a ship and for me; it means exploring and seeing the world while you at work.... It’s what I love most about my job” (participant 8).

“What it means to be a seaman is that; you are working on a ship with different kinds of jobs and with different kinds of people from all over the world. It means being away from home for a very long time but it also means having that bit of freedom (giggles)” (Participant 3).

“Being a seafarer means being employed internationally in any profession that you are working in. As a seaman, you work and live at your workplace; there is no going home after work. There is not much to do but your job” (participant 18).

The above are statements that have been extracted from the interviews conducted with the participants. How they defined what it means to be a seafarer has similar attributes such as that of using the term ‘seaman’ instead of seafarer. The participants reflect on what it means to be a seafarer. In their reflections, they highlight that, firstly, it is a profession and should be recognised as such. Secondly, they highlight that being a seafarer means working on a sea going ship thus nature of the maritime industry means working and living on the ship. Participants also indicate that being a seafarer entails living your family behind while they are at sea. On the other hand, they express how working at sea also provides them the opportunity to travel and explore

the world. In summary, the participants shared experiences of what it means to be a seafarer both, career and family wise as well as the personal reasons. This however does not have any effect on the definitions provided by the participants of what a seafarer is. The following are more definitions provided by the other participants:

“What I have learned over the years is that one can really not define what it is means to be a seafarer but there is one thing I have learnt. No matter what the reason may be for being a part of the industry... I think that it’s the profession that chooses you” (participant 9).

“Well, a seafarer is any man or woman who is employed on a ship. You work and live on a ship...miles away from home and your family” (participant 11)

“A seafarer is someone who works on a ship. He can work at any job on the ship...we come from different countries to work here” (participant 6)

“uhh...(clears throat)..I don’t know really but I think a seafarer is a professional (pause), who works on a ship mostly...who is patient because he works with different people, different cultures” (participant 19)

“A seafarer is someone who works on a ship. Of course there are different kinds of ships, and jobs one can do on board the ship” (participant 4).

“A seafarer... (Pause). Being a seafarer is like doing any other job only difference is that it’s on a ship and spending months being separated from your family” (Participant 13).

“A seafarer is any person, who is employed and works on a ship” (participant 17)

“A seafarer can be any person who is employed on a ship” (participant 5)

From the above statements we also gather that the participants are aware of their differences. They express that they come from different countries, with different cultural backgrounds and speak different languages. They also share insight on the fact that they are employed in different departments and sectors of the maritime industry. As indicated earlier (see chapter two) the maritime industry is highly dominated by male seafarers. With this knowledge, the researcher was aware that the probability of coming across female seafarers would be very slim. In this study, the researcher was fortunate to have been able to interview two female seafarers. When asked what it means to be a seafarer, this is how they responded:

“A seafarer is someone who works at sea, on a ship. There are different kinds of jobs that one can find.... It’s like having all the jobs you find out there (off-shore) but now on a ship and at sea. It means working away from home. It’s a good job...good salary” (participant 2).

“It means working on a ship whether as someone who cleans the cabins, captain or chef. There are so many things (meaning jobs). Also...so many men on this job...is not a lot of women. You’re everywhere...you see the world and see many different people” (participant 1).

The definitions provided by the female participants are not different to those of the male participants. They both shared insight on the economic opportunity that the industry provides, the variation of jobs within the industry, meaning that there are many opportunities and different kinds of jobs that one can find. They also expressed that being a seafarer means working with different people and travelling the world. This first theme basically reflects on how seafarers view themselves. It adds knowledge to what has already been researched. However, for the researcher, it was important to acknowledge that seafarers view themselves different and how they view themselves is important. What is mostly common amongst the definitions is that both the men and women participants define a seafarer as:

- Someone who works on a ship.
- They identify their work as a profession and also,
- Of international standard or recognition.
- Being a seafarer means earning a good salary or as a good earning opportunity
- It means being away from home for months.
- Travelling and seeing the world.
- It provides a sense of freedom.

The participants consider their work to be in line with any other profession in the world be it off shore or on shore. For many, joining the industry is largely for economic reasons. For some, it provides a sense of freedom, liberation and personal growth. When asked to explain the best thing about being a seafarer, this is how the participants responded:

“I would say, it’s having a sense of independence. You grow from in the industry as well as personally. You get to meet new challenges, new faces and getting the chance to see the world”
(participant 1)

“Working on a cruise ship is the best. You meet people from all over the world. You have fun while doing your work” (participant 2)

“I have only been working for two months so I don’t know much. I do enjoy travelling the world. I have never been outside my country before and already I have been to three different countries and I hope to see many more” (participant 3)

In as much as participant 3 states that he has only been working for two months as a seafarer, he has already travelled to three different countries. Thus, travelling the world has been positively viewed and acknowledged. As participants 4, 5 and 6 explain below.

“Ohm...you never get tired of the ever so changing scenery....I have been in the industry for some time but I still enjoy going to all the different countries, I have travelled the world”
(participant 4)

“Besides the money and travelling all over the world, I would say the best thing is that little freedom you have. You are on your own, away from home and you get to do what you want”
(participant 5)

“Everything about being a seafarer is the best. You meet people, you travel...you enjoy doing your work...you make your own decisions about your own life” (participant 6)

Researcher: please explain about making your own decisions....what do you mean?

“When you’re at work, you are on your own...you decide what to wear, what to eat, when to sleep...that sort of thing...you’re just free to do whatever you want.

“Being a seaman has its ups and downs. I have been working on a ship for two years and so far, I’m enjoying learning new things and the machinery we use. You see, there are different types of machines that we work with here” (participant 7)

“Best thing...? I don’t know hey. I guess it’s the people I work with...travelling the world maybe” (participant 8)

“You know, in life, people come and go and some people are just there for ever. So for me, the best thing that I love about being a seafarer is the companionship that I have found here, the

brotherhood that I have with my fellow colleagues. I have learnt so much from them. They are absolutely amazing and a pleasure to work with....also the reason why I come back.”
(participant 9)

“I’m yet to find out (laughs), I’ve only been here for two months” (participant 10)

“I’m still getting used to being away from home but I think the best thing that I have gained is the sense of duty and responsibility that comes with the job. Also I have been able to fulfil my duties as a man, a husband and a father. I can now look after my family” (participant 11)

“Being on sea...on a sailing ship is enough on its own. It’s a completely different working environment. Not everyone can experience that. I love the ocean and its wonders...it brings a sense of calmness...it’s clean...it’s pure” (participant 12)

“I love that my job is stress free. I do not have to worry about taking my frustrations and troubles home. When I’m at work, I’m at work... everything ends there. Whatever problems I face at work do not have to affect my family. ...and when I’m home...I’m home” (participant 13)

“In as much as you are exploring the world and forever surrounded by people, being a seaman teaches you independence and self-reliance. You in a world full of strangers after all”
(participant 14)

What do you mean? (Researcher)

“For instance, we all have our own personal problems... whether back at home...or here at work and most of the time, you alone, have to deal with these problems. You have to take care of your own needs and take care of yourself. You deal with so many problems and eventually you find ways that can help you to deal with such.” (participant 14)

Participants from the above extracts also express how their job entails a sense of freedom for them. The freedom they talk about is that of being independent and being able to make their own life decisions. Participants also share that in as much as they come from different backgrounds; they form social bonds none the less. They also acknowledge that the maritime industry is different and that the working and functioning of a ship, demands them to work as a unified team.

“I think everything about this job still excites me. I’ve only been a seafarer for over a year”
(participant 15)

“The best thing....for me it would be the sense of freedom. You get to do whatever you want... you are away from everything and everyone...you are on your own” (participant 16)

“The more years you put in this line of work, the more you appreciate and value the little things in life. You appreciate your family, your work and yourself. There is a sense of pride that one feels. You accomplish all your goals...your goals as a seaman, a family man and as an individual.” (participant 17)

“It’s an absolute bliss working on a cruise ship. I absolutely love and enjoy it. I work as a bartender, so for me....life is like a party. It doesn’t feel like I’m working because I have so much fun and also...since I was a young boy I have had a strong passion for ships. I have always had an interest on what goes on in a ship...what happens while it is out there at sea...so what better way to find out? This is what I have always wanted to do” (participant 18)

“As a young boy, I spent most of my time traveling with my parents... so travelling the world for me, is like second nature. I know if I had a job back home I wouldn’t be doing this much travelling...and its free. I have learnt how to combine my love for travelling and the need to work” (participant 19)

“For me, I would say it’s the money. The pay here is better than many other jobs I have worked in. Before joining the industry, many years ago...I was unable to support my family but now I am able to do that and more” (participant 20)

This section outlines the definition of what a seafarer is. These conceptions or definitions have been provided by the twenty seafarers who were interviewed. The way in which these participants have conceptualised a seafarer is reflective of their own personal understandings and meanings they bring to it. The definitions are reflective of how seafarers feel about their choice of career and the positive and negative attributes of the profession. The positive attributes that have been identified are: exploring and seeing the world, independence and self-reliance, the social bonds that they form with one another as well as, job fulfilment. The negative attributes that have been identified is that being a seafarer means spending lengthy periods away from home and their families.

4.4. THEMES AND ANALYSIS

This section of the chapter discusses the various themes that have been identified and provides an analysis that draws on comparisons in the data and the themes using the work-family border theory. Themes were carefully categorised from the interviews that were conducted with twenty seafarers who pass through the port city of Durban. These themes were selected and identified in line with the objectives and aims of the research project. The themes are:

- Home sickness and loneliness
- hierarchy in the workplace
- gender inequality
- language as a barrier to communication
- lack of communication with family
- displacement
- marital problems and
- support groups

To sociologically understand the relationship between work and family life of seafarers, each theme will be discussed with close reference to Clark's (2000) work/family border theory.

4.5. CHALLENGES FACED BY SEAFARERS: BORDERS BETWEEN THE WORK AND FAMILY DOMAIN

According to Clark (2000, p.750), the work domain and family domain are two separate spheres that influence each other. With regards to seafarers, these domains are also separate in geographical terms. Clark explains that work and home differ in purpose, culture; there are differences in what constitutes acceptable behaviour and differences in how to accomplish tasks (2000, p. 751). Seafarers come from different backgrounds and cultures. They speak different languages and the notion of their belief and value systems differ. When on board the ship, they have to succumb to the differences they come across. They have to adjust to the maritime industry and the challenges they face as working men and women.

The series of challenges that are faced by seafarers, both at work and at home, can present a negative influence on the functioning of the two spheres. These challenges can also be understood as borders that hinder the balancing of the work and family domains. The transition between the two spheres differs. For some, the transition between the work domain and family domain is slight while others find it to be much greater (Clark, 2000, p. 751). Furthermore, Clark states that “people are border-crossers who make transition between two domains and often have to tailor their focus, goals and their interpersonal style to fit the demands of each” (2000, p. 751). Seafarers however, do not make a daily transition between the two domains, hence why this study aims to investigate how they make sense of this transition, after months on ends without returning home. Later on this chapter, we will look at the copying mechanisms that seafarers adopt to find balance between the two domains. However, for now, our focus is to unpack the borders that have been identified by the participants of this study. In this section, the borders (challenges) are outlined as themes. I have identified borders that hinder integration at home and at work.

4.5.1. CHALLENGES AT THE WORK DOMAIN

As indicated above, this section of the chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the challenges that seafarers struggle with while on board the ship. Within this domain, challenges that have been identified are: Home sickness and loneliness, hierarchy in the workplace, gender inequality, language as a barrier to communication and lack of communication with family.

4.5.1.1. THEME ONE: HOME SICKNESS AND LONELINESS

Homesickness and loneliness have been cited by some scholars, as one of the main challenges faced by seafarers across the globe. For instance, Ulven et al., (2007, p. 116) state that “international shipping is characterized by the seafarers’ absence from home for many months to years at the time. Such a life style can be a problem both for the seafarer and his family”. To no surprise, this study also found homesickness and loneliness to be one of the challenges that is faced by seafarers amongst the participants interviewed. As indicated, the study did find being homesick and loneliness to be a problem amongst seafarers. However, it is important to note that

not all the participants reported homesickness and loneliness to be a challenge. Of the twenty seafarers, only thirteen participants attested to this. The following are extracts from the thirteen seafarers who view homesickness and loneliness as a challenge. Participants were asked to share some of the challenges that they face while on board the ship, and this is what they reported. One of the female seafarers had this to say:

“For me I think that the greatest challenge I experience is missing home. Half your time in this kind of job is spent alone. It gets too quiet sometimes and you are all alone... and I think for many of us, we all miss our families back home. I am a wife and a mother...and I can't help but always worrying about my family. I miss my husband... almost every day. I miss my daughter the most. We fight a lot and I can't help but blame myself... I'm the one who is away after all but I know God watches over them” (participant 1)

The social ties that seafarers leave behind prove to be the reason why they experience homesickness while on board the ship. Drawing from participants 1 above statement, she expresses how she misses her husband her daughter. Participant 2 (below) also shares insight to this. In as much as she works with her husband, she states that both she and her husband find themselves missing home and their siblings.

The other female participant said:

“uuhm... life at sea is very lonely. There is nothing to do once the day at work is over ...there is nothing to do really and you barely have any friends but I think I am really really lucky because I work with my husband. I know a lot of women wish they could be with their husbands or boyfriends. On the other hand, I often miss my family from time to time...I miss my sisters...my mother. What I mean is, I just miss having my family together[pause] ...maybe if I spoke to them every day would make things better... but personally, I'm just fortunate because I work with my husband. So for us... it's not so bad...cause I also know that he misses his siblings as well.” (Participant 2)

“I think that it is too early for me to respond to this question as I have only been a seaman for two months. But so far, I think I can say that the problem I have faced is missing home...I miss my family” (participant 3)

“challenges... it very surprising how things don’t always work out the way you want them or as planned you know. Sometimes you think you will only be on sea for four months, sometimes it becomes a year because of the demands of the job and there is nothing you can do about it. Sometimes you just want to be at home and distress and if that does not happen, you end up being sad all the time and unhappy” (participant 5)

With reference to participant 5’s statement, the number of months spent on board the ship can be unpredictable and this is due to and depends on the demands of the work. Thus, it causes the participant to experience stress and feeling of unhappiness since he does not return home as planned.

I myself and I know...many other people (seafarers) experience missing their families a lot. This world can be lonely. You spend a lot of time alone and you can’t help but think about home and your family. There is nothing that I miss more than a home cooked meal. Its funny how you miss the little things... hey, I even miss my wife yelling at me [laughs]” (participant 7)

“to be honest with you, one of the greatest challenges that you face, especially right after joining the industry, is that you tend to miss home. Some even leave after two or three months of working. But as time goes by....eventually you get used to it and it becomes less of a problem. I mean, I have been working as a seafarer for over twenty years!! and I think that at some point in your working career, you are bound not to miss home at all” (Participant 9)

Researcher: so, do you not miss home at all?

“No...no...no... I do miss home but what I mean is that....there are times where you just miss home and there are times where I don’t miss it...especially when you to spend an extra month or two than expected”

Participant 5 and 9 express the same issue of unplanned time spent on board the ship. Participant 9 however, has been working as a seafarer for the past 21 years and states that the feeling of missing home lessens over the years unlike participant 5 who has been in the industry for eight years.

“My greatest challenge is being away from my daughter and just being away from home. I’m a single father... and that alone is hard. I hate that I can’t be with my daughter all the time. She once fell ill while I was on shore.....I felt helpless. I had to take time off work. (participant 11)

“one of the challenges, and I think for many, is that you get home sick. But being a seaman means being away from home...for a very long time so... you tend to miss home a lot and when you are eventually back at home...you miss being on sea” (participant 14)

“uhhm..I remember when I joined the industry; it was not easy at the beginning. I fell sea sick...I had the flu so I had to take time off at work for over two weeks. And when I was sick, I remember, all I wanted was to be at home. It wasn’t easy to make sense of it...at that time, we were in the middle of nowhere and there was no way I could get home. Missing your loved ones is something that we all share and almost everyone misses home in our job” (participant 15)

“there are a lot of challenges that we face hey...just like any other job you find out there but amongst those challenges, I think being away from home has been my utmost challenge. You can never get used to it. Because you don’t have many friends to talk to and making a phone call back home is not so simple...you can’t pick up a phone at any time...you have to wait to get to a port city...which can take up to two weeks. You feel so lonely and empty, with no one to console you, you end up having tension and problems at work. Sometimes this also affects you so much that when you do get home, you are not so happy anymore” (participant 16)

“Loneliness...uuhh, the world of seafaring can be very lonely. All I ever think about is my family. I miss the comfort of being around people who know me and understand me. I worry about my wife and daughters half the time...I worry if they are okay or not. All we go back to at the end of the day is our little cabins. Things would be different if they could visit now and again maybe” (participant 19)

Both participant 16 and 19 state that the challenge that they face at work is loneliness. They feel this way because they are separated from their loved ones. Also, they explain that at the end of a working day, all they return to is their cabins and a life full of loneliness. Both the participants state that because of this, it results them to experiencing problems when they are at work. They state that they become frustrated and as a result it causes tension for them with other seafarers.

“I miss home. I miss my family. And ... I don’t know if it is the change of scenery as we move from one port city to the other that makes me miss home even more...just realising how far you are from them” (Participant 17)

“Challenge... [Pause]I guess it’s being away from home. No actually, I think it’s only normal to miss your family and friends but I think what makes matters worse for us seafarers is that we have no means of contacting them on a daily basis...I’m sure a call a day would make a big difference in my life (participant 2)

Participant 2 and 19 state that, perhaps a way of curbing their challenges would be constant contact with their families whether telephonically or any other form of telecommunication. Also, they wish that their families could be allowed to visit them would make a difference.

Drawing from the data can deduce that while at sea, seafarers experience homesickness and loneliness. And many, express that they miss home because firstly, they are absent from home for so long and secondly, life at sea is characterised with a lot of time spent alone. To help us further understand how homesickness and loneliness affects the seafarer, we draw on Clark’s Work/family border theory.

Clark developed the work/family border theory drawing from Kurt Lewin’s idea of ‘life space’. Lewin suggests that as individuals, we have a ‘life space’ where everything that may influence our behaviour is encompassed in this life space (Rychlak, 1981). This ‘life space’ is a platform whereby each individual enacts his or her experiences. Similar to Lewin’s theory, is Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of the habitus. For Bourdieu, the habitus is “a set of dispositions which generate practises and perceptions” (Bourdieu, in Calhoun, 2007, p. 277) as the habitus is “inside the heads” of actors which only exist in, through and because of the practises of actors and their interaction with each other and with the rest of the environment which will have an impact on their behaviour. So therefore, both Lewin’s ‘life space’ and Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’ are mental spaces where individuals embody things, experiences and practices that influence their behaviour and the environment.

Being away from home and missing home can be stressful and challenging for seafarers. This then causes some to be depressed and sometimes fall ill which then has a negative influence on work performance. Participants 5 and 16 explain:

“I think being away from home has been my challenge. You can never get used to it. Because you feel so lonely and empty, with no one to console you, you end up having tension at work. Sometimes this also affects you so much that when you do get home, you are not so happy anymore” (participant 5)

“Things don’t always work out as planned you know. Sometimes you think you will only be on sea for four months, sometimes it becomes a year because of the demands of the job. Sometimes you just want to be at home and distress and if that does not happen, you end up being sad all the time and you end up not doing your job well” (participant 5)

These challenges therefore inhibit or may even hinder the full functioning of the individual at his workplace. What Clark (2000) also asserts, is that there are borders in each domain that may affect an individual’s capability of functioning in that specific domain. As indicated in the theoretical framework in chapter two, we understand and treat borders as the challenges that seafarers face within the work and family domain. For seafarers, homesickness and loneliness are experienced while they in the ‘work domain.’ How individuals are affected differ. Some experience loneliness and despair, homesickness and, some experience problems while at work. Of the twenty participants, 15 indicated homesickness and loneliness to be a problem but what is common amongst these seafarers is that they are all away from their families. Meaning that, they have social ties back home such as that of being parents and spouses. Unlike participant 6, participants 8 and 18, who are between the ages 20-26 are unmarried and have no children of their own to support and have no financial responsibilities back home. For these participants, the challenge of homesickness and loneliness is not apparent as compared to the rest of the participants. Unlike the 15 participants, these young men did not join the industry to support their families financially. The main reasons given was to explore the world of the maritime industry, to earn an income that will enable them to fulfil what they intend to do with their lives outside the industry. It can be concluded that homesickness and loneliness is mainly experienced by seafarers who are married and have children and whose reasons for joining the industry is to

support their families. Secondly, we understand that homesickness and loneliness forms as a ‘psychological border’ that affects the psychological, emotional and mental well-being of seafarers while they are at work, which in turn has a negative influence on the seafarer to fulfil their work duties to the best of their abilities.

4.5.1.2. THEME TWO: HIERARCHY IN THE WORK PLACE

According to Ingram (2006), “within almost every organization there is a hierarchy among the employees based on position, title, role and function. According to the participants, the issue of hierarchy among the employees in the work place posed a challenge. Fuller (2003) in *Somebodies and Nobodies* suggests that rank divides us into "somebodies" and "nobodies." More than most care to admit, we treat others and are treated by others based on our relative rank as Lambert and Waxman (in Kossek and Lambert’, 2005, p. 104). “What is central to the study of stratification is the way in which inequalities of both opportunity and outcome become institutionalized by groups, organizations, or states. Within employing organizations, inequalities may be based on employment status, job classification, level in organizational hierarchy, and geographical locations, among other factors” (Kossek and Lambert, 2005, p. 105).

Seafarers are grouped into two categories. On the one hand, there are seafarers from developed countries and are commonly employed in high rank positions such as Captains, masters of the ship, chief engineers. They come from countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany and Russia (Thomas et al., 2003, p 59). They are commonly referred to as ‘officers’ and as required, they have attained qualifications and the experience in their designated profession. On the other hand, we have seafarers that are known as ratings. Ratings are usually from developing or underdeveloped countries (Thomas et al., 2003, p, 60). Ratings are not qualified as officers are. They are usually employed even without a certificate of competence. Participants from this study come from countries such as Ethiopia, the Philippines, China, Egypt, and Singapore. Unlike the officers, ratings are employed in the lower ranking jobs such as cadet assistants, hotel staff and they assist with all other tasks that can arise during a voyage. This includes for example, mooring and cleaning of the ship. These are physically challenging jobs and have to be done regardless of

any conditions that may arise. The table below offers a general idea of how seafarers from both developed and developing countries are distributed within the rankings of ratings and officers.

Country	Number of officers supplied	Country	Number of ratings supplied
Philippines	57 688	China	90 296
China	51 511	Indonesia	61 821
India	46 497	Turkey	51 009
Turkey	36 734	Russian Federation	40 000
Ukraine	27 172	Malaysia	28 687
Russian Federation	25 000	Philippines	23 492
United States	21 810	Bulgaria	22 379
Japan	21 297	Myanmar	20 145
Romania	18 575	Sri Lanka	19 511
Poland	17 923	United States	16 644

SUPPLY OF SEAFARERS

Source of data: UNCTAD 2011, p. 159

The issue of hierarchy in the work place appears to be another challenge experienced by the participants in this study. According to Lewis and Haas (in Kossek and Lambert, 2005, p. 105), “perceptions of justice and fairness are socially constructed, usually by process of social comparison, within specific contexts and therefore differ across time and place, in families, workplaces, and societies”. In other words, as individuals, we have different reasons as to why we compare ourselves with one another.

With reference to the participants, the issue of hierarchy in the work place can affect and result to seafarers experiencing feelings of inequality and creates a sense of division amongst them both at work and socially. This feeling stems from seafarers socially comparing themselves to one another in terms of the level of professionalism in their careers. The end result of course is that seafarers comparing themselves negatively affects their ability to be fully functioning and to be

able to fulfil their duties in the work place. The participants are aware of the privileges that accompany higher ranking positions. The following participants in this study socially compared themselves in this manner:

“ a high rank position means fewer working hours, better pay and better life on board the ship”
(Participant 10)

“Our positions here are many. The more you up on top, means better life on the ship. Better life at home” (participant 4)

“Sometimes I wish I could spend more months at home...but for us that doesn't happen. Only the captain or senior engineer do that. Not us” (participant 6)

“When you are in a better position, you live happy on the ship. Better cabin...bigger cabin, sometimes you have access and means of communicating with your family because you can afford” (participant 5)

Gathering from the above statements, participants explain that being in a high rank positions means a better life on board the ship. Meaning that, they view that those who are employed in high rank positions enables one to attain a comfortable and much more pleasing life while on board the ship. Not only do they view that it means a better life at sea but also back home. A better life at sea means fewer working hours and less stressful jobs. A better life at home means more months spent at home as compared to the seafarers who are employed in the lower ranks as participant 14 explains below.

“what is difficult is that you spend a very long time away from home and unlike the master and other senior workers, who spend many months at home, you only home for less months than them” (participant 14)

Our job requires us to work as a team and at work we do, but after we have worked we don't see each other...people keep to their other work colleagues” (participant 20)

Participant 20 reflects on the fact that in as much as they work together, the differences in ranking positions create social division amongst seafarers. He indicates that they associate themselves with colleagues who are in the same ranks as them.

According to Ritzer (1996, p. 235) “the primary concern of societal functionalism is the large-scale social structures and institutions of society, their interrelationship, and their constraining effects on actors”. The participants compare their positions in ranking with the social environment at work. It is clear that the ratings have a better life on board the ship as compared to seafarers employed in the lower ranks. A better life means better living conditions and access to communicate with loved ones back home. Seafarers do not only compare the social aspect of their ranking but also the effects it has on their profession. Ritzer draws the understanding of stratification from the work of Davies and Moore (1945).

For Davies and Moore, certain positions in the stratification system come to carry with them different degrees of prestige (Ritzer, 1996, p.235). Ritzer (1996) further states that Davies and Moore (1945, p 242) were more concerned with “the functionally more important positions in society and that the positions that rank high within the stratification system are presumed to be those that are less pleasant to occupy but more important to the survival of society and that require the greatest ability and talent and as a result, society or organizations must employ sufficient rewards, prestige, high salary and sufficient leisure”. Participants interviewed reflected on the prestige that seafarers in high rankings attain, which then results in other seafarers of lower rankings comparing their social status to that of seafarers in higher rankings. The following participants in this study compared themselves in this manner:

“It’s hard in this job. There are not many opportunities for growth. I have worked for over 21 years but yet I have never been promoted to senior rank and what I earn has not changed much”
(participant 9)

“We also face problems at work with what we do and our job positions on the ship. I have worked here for two years but I can say that it is hard when you work in a lower position. The pay is better than what I used to earn back home but there are jobs here that pay better”
(participant 7)

“It is very surprising how one can be treated here because of their position in ranking. I have worked as an Electrical Engineer back at home and I worked at a senior position. But now...I work under and assist the senior electrician. This means long hours spent at work but I guess you just have to put up with it...but it’s very hard because the reason why I joined the industry is to get professional recognition and so far, I don’t know if I will achieve my goal.” (Participant 3)

Participant 3 and 9 have highlighted that opportunities for growth in the industry are scarce. Participant 9 laments that with his 21 years of service as a seafarer, he has never been promoted and there has been no significance change in his income. Participant 3 has only been a part of the maritime industry for two months. He is a qualified electrical engineer but he states that after joining the industry, he was employed in a junior position.

“It’s hard to be employed in a low rank position because you are treated differently. Sometimes you do work that you are not assigned to do when told by your the master and sometimes, even by other seafarers who are in better rankings than you” (participant 11)

“The issue of hierarchy is very prominent in the work place. People in higher positions are treated differently. They live a better life and are very respected” (participant 15).

Both participant 11 and 15 indicate that being employed in a lower rank position can have a negative impact on their career more especially with their job specification as participant 11 explains that they often have to do jobs that they are not assigned to when instructed by a colleague who is in a higher ranking than them. Just like the other participants above, participant 11 and 15 also state that being employed in a higher ranked position implies a better life and achievement of social prestige.

It is important to note that not all the participants felt that hierarchy within the workplace was a challenge. For instance, participant 13 is a senior engineer who has been in the industry for over five years.

Similarly, participants 16 17 and 19 did not identify hierarchy within the work domain as a challenge. Also, participants 6, 8 and 18, who are under the age of 25 and are employed in low ranked positions also did not identify hierarchy within the work sphere as a challenge. These participants have a lot in common. They work in a cruise ship as part of the hotel staff and have indicated that for them, seafaring is not a lifetime commitment.

Participants 1 and 2 are the only female seafarers in this study. They too did not identify hierarchy as a challenge that they face at work but instead, their concerns are issues of gender inequality. This will be discussed later in this chapter. In addressing the issue of organizational stratification, Lewis and Haas (in Kosekk and Lambert, 2005, p 105) state that:

“Perceptions of justice and fairness are socially constructed, usually by processes of social comparison, within specific contexts, and therefore differ across time and place, in families, workplaces, and societies”

With reference to Clark’s work/family border theory, Clark speaks about borders and their permeability. To better understand why seafarers in this study, feel that hierarchy presents itself as a challenge; we will pay close attention to the notion of psychological borders and their permeability as suggested by Clark. According to Clark, the psychological borders define our thinking patterns, behaviour and emotions as to how they are suitable in which domain. As indicated above, Lewin and Haas clearly state that as individuals, we socially construct the perceptions of justice and fairness. In other words, we evaluate justice and fairness in relation to our own perceptions and needs. Psychological borders are created by individuals on their own capacity and they define which thinking patterns, behaviour and emotion are suitable to which domain (Rychlak: 1981). Hierarchy amongst seafarers in the work place leads to seafarers comparing themselves to one another. This can lead to levels of unhappiness and can pose as conflict between the individual and his colleagues as evidenced by the following statements:

It is very surprising how one can be treated here because of their position in ranking. I have worked as an Electrical Engineer back at home and I worked at a senior position. But now...I work under and assist the senior electrician” (Participant 3)

“ a high rank position means fewer working hours, better pay and better life on board the ship”
(Participant 1)

In conclusion, the participants in this study identified hierarchy to be prevalent in the maritime industry. Participants have attested that being employed in different rank positions can have a negative influence on the seafarers' social life while on board the ship. They claim that it creates a sense of social division. Secondly, they attest that being ranked in a high position also means acquiring social prestige as participant 15 states that “you are respected”. Participants not only compared themselves in social aspects but also in terms of career aspects. They state that a high rank position means more suitable working conditions and lessened working hours.

4.5.1.3. THEME THREE: GENDER INEQUALITY

According to Yaish and Stier (2009, p. 344), “while women's inferior position in the labour market is largely attributed to their familial responsibilities, much scholarly interest has been devoted in recent years to understand if and how policies and work arrangements may alleviate women's work–family imbalance. Studies in this area stress the importance of family-friendly environments as a major facilitator of women's employment, especially when family demands are high”. Yaish and Stier indicate that because women's inferior position in the labour market, organizations need to make accommodations for the female employee in the work place more especially those who have families.

The seafaring industry is highly represented and dominated by men. Women seafarers only make 2% of the 1.2 million population of seafarers (Guo and Liang, 1998). When women seafarers join the industry, they usually assume the roles or positions that are socially expected. The majority of women work on cruise ships mainly in the hospitality sector. According to Yaish and Stier (2009, p.345) an undesirable effect of such an environment is manifested in high levels of gender segregation in the workplace, which is generally perceived to have negative employment consequences for women and that gender segregation in the workplace goes hand in hand with women's inferior position in the labour market. There is a great increase in the number of women joining the industry (Chin 2008 & ILO 2003). Women seafarers, just like their male

colleagues are faced with challenges of the hard working conditions and the rough seas but also they are subjected to discrimination, sexual harassment and are often relegated to low-paying jobs and within these jobs, opportunities for growth are very limited. In this study, the female seafarers did not report sexual harassment as a challenge. However levels of discrimination were reported.

Participant 1 has worked as a seafarer for over 9 years. She studied mechanical engineering and works as a second assistant to the senior engineer. Participant 2 works on a cruise ship and is employed as a cabin steward. Because of this social factor that precedes women, there are certain challenges that women face in what is traditionally known conceived to be a 'man's world.' Participant 1 expresses that one of her challenges at work is the way in which women are treated by their male colleagues. She states that:

"It's not easy working in a job where there are a lot of men. Some of them treat us badly. They think we don't do a good job...we could never do a better job than them"

This extract demonstrates the ways in which gender roles are firmly entrenched in the men she has worked with on board the ship. The men expect women in these types of employment to be incompetent. For the participant, this proved to be a concern for her. She is qualified in her profession yet she is treated otherwise.

She goes on further to explain that this has a negative impact on her personally and her fulfilling her occupational duties.

"Sometimes, when new machinery arrives, we have to wait for months before we can be taught how to use them. Just like all men, they think they do better job than us"

Therefore, we can deduce that for the participant, she is denied access in acquiring full and equal participation in the work place because of her gender.

On the other hand, participant 2 feels that men are given better jobs and that the opportunities for women to be promoted and advance their careers are minimal. She explains that:

“Sometime I don’t like my job. I feel I could do better. But there are no other jobs for us women here. All the nice jobs are taken by men”

The women seafarers of this study indicate that gender inequality is one of the challenges that they, and many other women seafarers face. It is a boundary that limits women seafarers and prevents them from functioning optimally and fulfilling their roles to the best of their abilities. This results in job dissatisfaction in their work environment which may in turn have a negative impact on the seafaring industry as a whole. Women seafarers have a lot to contribute in the maritime industry but because of the gender stereotypes that are apparent, it makes it undesirable for many women to join and stay in the maritime industry.

Drawing from Clark’s concept of borders, the issue of gender inequality and discrimination that is experienced by the female participants in this study, can be understood as a challenge that falls under temporal borders. For Clark, temporal borders are borders that divide when tasks can be done. For the female participants, how and when they can perform at work is largely influenced by the stereotypical attitudes that their male colleagues have towards them rather than the skills and talents that they have.

Sexual harassment is a reality for many women at sea. This can range from persistent verbal harassment and inappropriate comments, to physical assault (ILO, 2003, p.15).

In the case of the female participants in this study, they find themselves in positions whereby they cannot fulfil their duties due to the levels of discrimination they experience. They are, as indicated above, discriminated against on the basis of their gender. According to the ILO (2003, p.15), while “female seafarers are easily enrolled into training institutions as more and more institutions are encouraging women to enrol, once on board vessels, women often experience problems in being initially accepted, sometimes having to ‘prove themselves’. However, over time they are usually able to integrate themselves into crews, and become accepted and appreciated by their colleagues”.

In conclusion, the female participants experience discrimination in the work domain due to the gendered stereotypes that their male colleagues place upon them. This in turn, results to the

unfair treatment that they experience. Women seafarers are deprived the opportunity to excel in their work duties because of their gender.

4.5.1.4. THEME FOUR: LANGUAGE: A BARRIER TO COMMUNICATION

Communication is the most important part of human interaction. The general concept of communicating is that it is a social phenomenon that enables the sharing of knowledge in all aspects of our personal and professional lives. According to Winbon (2002, p. 2), “ineffective or misunderstood communications in our personal lives may give rise to problems or embarrassment but in our professional lives the results of misunderstandings may have much more serious results. In the world of international shipping, with seafarers from many countries sailing on ships trading to all parts of the world, effective communication between those on board and between ship and shore is vitally important”. The most common form of communication amongst people is speaking. However, because of our ethnicity and different cultural backgrounds, we speak in different languages. For instance, the most commonly used language in the United Kingdom is English; Russian in Russia, German in Germany and Spanish in Spain. However, a country can have more than one language that can be used to communicate. South Africa for example, has eleven official languages. In South Africa and in many other countries across the globe, English is the most widely used language for communication and it is regarded as a universal language.

According to Winbon (2002, p. 2) “for effective communications, when the sender of a message communicates with the intended recipient, there has to be a correlation between what the sender is thinking about and what the receiver is thinking about. Text or words must therefore be used in a consistent way, and the first requirement for communication is a set of messages that are used consistently”. Sometimes, we fail to send or receive the intended communications in the form of language. In most cases, the failure to communications results from using different languages. A message can be easily conveyed between two Spanish speaking individuals when communicating using the same language however, communication between two people that speak in different languages can be somewhat challenging.

Seafarers and ship-owners are often of different nationalities and ships do not always fly the flag of its country of origin or ownership. These are commonly known as F.O.C (flags of convenience) ships. The language usually used on board ship is the national language of the crew. In other words, if a ship is flying the German flag, the language that one would expect to be used is German. However, Winbon explains that:

“In these days of multinational crews, a variety of languages may be used or alternatively one working language adopted. Whichever is used, ships trading internationally must conduct ship to shore communications in a language that can be understood as navigational and safety communications must be precise and unambiguous to avoid confusion and error” (2002, p. 3).

The English language, in the world of international transport and shipping, is the chosen language that is adopted for the attainment of adequate and precise communication on board the ship (Winbon, 2002, p. 4). A satisfactory standard of English is therefore not only an international requirement for certification of seafarers but also a key element in ensuring safe, efficient and profitable ship operations. But even English speakers are likely to misunderstand each other at times and Winbon (2002, p.3) states that this is because “when different national or regional variations of the English language are added, the possibilities for mis-communication are increased”. For instance, there are certain elements such as words and pronunciation that makes the English used in America differ from that of the U.K. Winbon (2002, p. 4), identifies a few examples to indicate some of differences between the two:

ENGLISH**Bonnet (car)****Boot (Car)****Petrol****Trousers****Waistcoat****Full stop****Football****AMERICAN (ENGLISH)****Hood (something on a coat)****Trunk (a suitcase)****Gas (a fuel to cook on)****Pants (worn under trousers)****Vest (worn under a shirt)****Period (a length of time)****Soccer**

Winbon (2002) further states that within the shipping industry, seafarers have their own language or terminologies that are firstly universal to all seafarers and secondly they use them to communicate or convey certain messages. He states that “the maritime world has, like many specialised areas of activity, a language of its own. And some of the words and phrases are unlikely to mean anything outside of the maritime world or, if the words are understood literally, the reader will gain a wrong and possibly odd understanding. : Forward spring – a rope; a gypsy – part of the windlass; Monkey Island – on top of the wheelhouse are some examples. . So any vocabulary chosen has to be aimed closely to the real work of the seafarer if it is to be used and be useful” (Winbon, 2002, p. 4).

For many of the participants the issue of language and communication served as a problem. As mentioned in chapter two, seafarers come from different backgrounds. They belong to different races, ethnicity groups and so forth and as a result people speak different languages and it is not everyone who has English as their first language. Not all the participants reported language is a barrier to communication. However those who did, express how language differences affect them on board the ship and the extracts from the interviews are presented below. Language differences did not only serve as barrier to communication for working purposes but also in the social interaction of seafarers while on board the ship.

“It is hard to work on a ship where you don’t even understand each other. Sometimes issues of miscommunication are there” (participant 1)

“Another challenge that we face at work is the issue of language. I’m from China, and I speak in Chinese but on ship we all have to speak in English. I understand a little bit but it is very difficult sometimes” (participant 2)

“The issue of not understanding each other is one of the challenges we face at work. Sometimes you miss work instructions which can result you even losing your job. It also limits us to having relations with our colleagues...I mean what are we going to say to each other if we can’t even understand each other” (Participant 12)

The above participants share insight on how the issue of difference in languages is prominent in the maritime industry. It causes them not to understand each other and in some cases, they miss work related instructions and information. Also, the issue of language proved to hinder social relations amongst the participants as participant 12 states that “what are we going to say to each other if we can’t even understand each other”. According to Thomas (2003, p. 51) “good social relationships with other crew members are, of course, important contributory factors to a seafarer’s experience of that particular tour of duty. Seafarers are not only dependent on their colleagues for the successful running of the workplace and work-related task completion, but they are also reliant on them for company and companionship during leisure hours. Therefore, seafarers depend on each other for the running and full functioning of the workplace as well as after work hours. However the consequences of such relationships may also be more wide reaching than whether a trip is relatively pleasurable” (Thomas, 2003, p. 51)

“sometimes we don’t understand each other because we speak different languages. You just try to make sense of what the other person is saying when you don’t understand what they were saying” (participant 15)

For participant 15, differences in languages results to seafarers not understanding one another. For participant 15, the solution to understanding one another on aboard the ship, he states that he just tries to make sense of what their fellow colleagues are trying to convey.

“uuhm... Language is a problem. It makes things hard especially at work. You miss important things. People address you in their own language. The one time, my manager, the chief engineer was speaking in his language and I remember I felt lost and confused cause I did not understand what he had said” (Participant 10)

“When you are on a ship with many people of that nation (points to a group of Chinese seafarers), who speak a totally different language, it makes life a bit hard on ship. We can’t have a conversation or even sharing work related information” (participant 3)

“The issue of language is a problem for me...in fact, for many of us at work. We come from different countries and we often speak in different languages. Even though our job requires us to communicate in English, not many people are familiar with the language and therefore it sometimes I struggle to make sense of it. For those who really struggle to understand English, they get help from their colleagues who translate whatever message or instruction I have said....which is time wasted if you look at it” (participant 13)

Participant 13 shares insight that being able to speak in English is a requirement for securing employment in the maritime industry. However, he notes that this is not the case, as there are many seafarers who are not familiar with the language. Similarly, Participant 10 shares a personal experience, where he was given an instruction by a colleague but could not understand since it was not conveyed in English. Also, as means of helping each other, they translate where they can to help those who have difficulties in understanding and communicating in English.

Therefore, we find that in this study, language serves as a hindrance that prevents effective communication amongst the seafarers. There is a negative outcome on the work aspect in the sense that miscommunication occurs and there is the possibility of information being distorted. On the other hand, communication problems can socially hinder communication between fellow colleagues thus creating a hostile living environment for seafarers. Winbon (2002, pp. 2-3) provides a few scenarios where miscommunication occurred on board the ship and the impact it had on the seafarers:

a) TANKER MOORING ACCIDENT

A 56,000 gt Bahamian flag tanker was berthing at an oil terminal in the UK when a mooring line parted and struck the crew of a mooring boat causing serious injuries. The pilot had intended to run the breast line ashore but not to make it fast until the ship was alongside and had believed that the master had understood his intention. The master, however, thought that the line should be heaved tight and instructed the mate on the fo'c'se accordingly. Because all verbal communications between the master and crew were in Korean, a language he did not understand, the pilot did not know that his intentions had been mistaken until the accident occurred. The accident was caused because of the breakdown of communications between the pilot and the ship's master.

b) BULK CARRIER GROUNDING

A 36,000 gt Panama flag bulk carrier was leaving port under pilotage when it ran aground. The pilot was conning the vessel and giving instructions to the helmsman but his attention was distracted and he failed to properly monitor the actions of the helmsman. The result was that he failed to hear the helmsman's replies and the ship swung out of the channel and aground. The accident was caused because of the poor communications between the helmsman and pilot.

c) PASSENGER SHIP FIRE

A small fire in some bedding spread throughout the ship and 158 people lost their lives. Escape routes were filled with smoke and those unfamiliar with the ship needed the assistance of crew and signage to find their way. The signs were not in a language familiar to those who were passengers on board and so provided an ineffective means of safety instructions. The officers and many of the crew did not share a common language and the language of the crew was not the same as most of the passengers. Although the fire was not related to poor communications between officers and crew, the poor safety organization on board coupled with the inability of the officers to communicate with all of the crew and the inability of the crew to communicate with the passengers, exacerbated the loss of life.

All three cases demonstrate, in their various ways, the need for effective communications to ensure safe and efficient ship operation. The cases show evidence of how language , more precisely, the issue of miscommunication can have a negative impact on the life of seafarers and the shipping company.

4.5.1.5. THEME FIVE: LACK OF COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY

In this section what was highlighted by the participants is that they experience homesickness and due to the lack of communication facilities as well as insufficient support systems, they struggle to deal with their feelings of loneliness. The majority of participants believed if they were able to communicate with their loved ones on a daily basis, they would cope better. According to Thomas (2003, p. 44), for seafarers, and their partners opportunities for face-to-face contact during voyages may be considerably limited. In these situations contact with home can be dependent on access to communication services and technologies.

However, the issue of communication, more especially in the maritime, is quite complex. So the question at hand is how do seafarers communicate with their families when they are away at sea? According to Gerstenberger (2002, p. 12), “today, most ships have satellite telephones. Aside from the fact that crew members cannot afford to regularly use them, these telephones are not easily accessible”. Firstly, not all ships have telephones and secondly, those that do, are only accessed by the captains or masters of the ship for emergencies as Thomas (2003, p. 48) states that “access to telecommunication can vary according to rank and indeed use of such facilities will be variable simply due to the constraints of cost”. Similarly, Gerstenberger (2002, p. 13) states that “there are captains who only allow crew members to make use of them in exceptional circumstances, because any private call will have to be deduced from the general bill and then from the pay of the respective crew member”. Many seafarers join the industry to attain economic freedom for themselves and to be able to support their families financially. A simple phone call for some seafarers is not that simple as participant 7 of this study explains:

“Once in two weeks maybe. A 5- minute call can cost you a lot of money.” (participant 7)

“It depends on the type of ship you work on. Some ships have telephones and others don’t. On my ship we do have a telephone but the captain don’t allow us to make calls because the phone is used if the ship is under attack maybe and just for emergencies. We have to wait to get to a port before we can make a call. Some ports don’t even have any phones and the ones that have them are very expensive....you can’t stay on the phone for hours and hours” (participant 12).

Gathering from participant 12’s statement, for seafarers, making contact with their families solely depends on the type of ship you work on. Not all ships have telephones. And those that do, access is only granted to the ship master or captain of the ship. The only other place where seafarers have access to telecommunications is on port cities. However, the participant explains that, some port cities do not have phones also, those that do have them are very expensive. Therefore, lack of communication access as well as the cost of making phone calls proves to be problematic for seafarers. Similar to the experiences of participant 12 is that of participant 19’s, as he explains that:

“Communication is very hard with loved ones. It really depends on the type of the ship you are working in. some don’t have satellite or internet access. We use the satellite telephone that is on the ship but it can be costly. You cannot call them at any time you want. And when we get to port cities, you find that maybe there is no internet, let alone phones (participant 19)

According to Davies and Parfett (2002) there is growth amongst the number of seafarers who are exposed to and aware of internet facilities. Much of the present interest from seafarers relates to the use of the internet to improve communication with friends and family at home. It enables them to remain part of the family and take part in its day to day activities even when away at sea (Davies and Parfett, 2002). Seafarers make use of the internet to communicate via e-mail and social networks such as Facebook and Skype. A social network such as Facebook allows people to communicate and share what is happening in their lives at that particular time. It is characterised with sharing of videos, uploading pictures and status updates and allows people to share their views. Facebook also allows people to create support groups. Typically, seafarers use Facebook to communicate with their families and also, there are seafaring support groups that they join which help them with the challenges they are faced with.

Valcour and Hunter (2005) looked at the impact of technology in work organizations and work-life integration. Valcour and Hunter (in Kossek and Lambert, 1996, p. 61) state that “new technologies, especially advances in telecommunications and information technology, have had profound impacts on the mix of jobs and how work is organized, and on people’s experience at work”. Technology enables individuals to integrate their multiple life roles across time and space. For instance, with the use of technology, seafarers are able to communicate with their families and attend to family matters. This way, even though they are miles away, telecommunications afford the seafarers to bridge the gap between time and space. Batt and Valcour (2003, p. 311) suggest that “technology is implemented in the context of a set of organizational practices governing work-life balance. The most effective organisational responses to the challenge of work-life integration are those that combine the deployment of flexible information technology with work designed to give employees discretion and autonomy, work-life benefits and flexibility policies, adequate compensation and human resource incentives, and a workplace culture that values and supports the integration of employees’ work and non-work lives”. Therefore, when addressing work and family life integration, technology in the workplace is understood as a tool that enables workers to attain balance of the two domains and, organizations are in a way obligated to implement policies that allow achievement of this.

According to Gerstenberger (2002, p. 13), many companies either prohibit the use of any communication facilities by the crew on board their ships or still make use of low speed communication links which make even simple e-mail communication an expensive affair. The blessings of the internet have, as yet, only reached a small number of seafarers. For most seafarers the most important and affordable means of communication remains to be the telephone in ports. Regarding the interviewed participants, access to telephones, if any, seems impossible. They only have access to the telephone and internet when they reach port cities and often, not all port cities have these facilities. In the statements below, seafarers explain the amount of time they have to wait to communicate with their families. They have to wait up to a week and sometimes longer before they get to a port city.

“It’s very hard not to stay in touch with your family. Sometimes you have a really bad day at work and you really wish you could talk to someone about it...someone from home. Most of the time you have to wait for over a week before you contact them” (Participant 15)

As indicated above, for seafarers, the only way that they can integrate their roles in their familial homes is through the use of telecommunications. They achieve this integration despite the differences in time and space between the world of seafaring and the world of family life. Constant and regular contact with the family would mean that the seafarer is also a part of his family life regularly. I then asked the participants how often they communicate with family or loved ones and this is how they responded:

“once in two weeks and also it depends on the time you spend at a port city” (participant 1)

“once a week” (participant 2)

“maybe once or twice a week” (participant 3)

“once a week” (participant 4)

“once and sometimes twice a week” (participant 5)

“Once a week” (participant 6)

“once a week” (participant 8)

Three times a week (participant 9)

It depends, but mostly, it once a week (participant 10)

“once a week. Telephone and internet charges are very expensive” (participant 11)

“once in two weeks...depends on how long the ship is off-shore if it stay for a longer time than expected, then I get to make more than one call (participant 12)

“uhmm....once...twice a week” (participant 13)

“Once a week or two” (participant 14)

“Once a week” (participant 16)

“Once in two weeks” (participant 17)

“Maybe once a week” (Participant 20)

Participants have indicated that while on board the ship, it is difficult to communicate with their families. Reasons offered range from many ships not having the means of communication to financial implications as phone calls are expensive. They are also restricted from using social networks such as Facebook and my space to communicate with their families because of the cost and the lack of internet access on aboard the ship.

Flexibility is a key element of the family-supportive workplace. Clark identifies flexibility as the contraction and expansion of a border depending on the demands of one domain or the other (2000, p. 757). According to Valcour and Hunter (in Kossek and Lambert, 1996, p. 75), flexible communication technologies such as portable computers, cell phones, faxes, and e-mail, are associated with work design characteristics that have the potential to enable flexibility in the place and timing of work. With reference to Clark's (2000) theory of the work/family domain, the lack of communication technologies, both on board the ship and on-shore, can serve as a physical border or challenge that discourages the integration of the work and family domain. The lack of communication technologies inhibits seafarers to communicate with their families while they are at sea. According to Thomas (2003, p. 22), "seafaring is a very particular work environment and differs from other shore-based occupations that involve intermittent absence in that the partner may be largely hard to contact whilst away at work and methods of communication may be often slow and unreliable or very expensive". As expressed by the participants, being able to communicate with their loved ones can curb the feeling of homesickness and them experiencing loneliness. As border-keepers of the work domain, ship owners have a responsibility of attending to this matter. Clark (2000) explains that border-keepers determine the flexibility of borders. The fact that there are hardly any communication technologies on board the ships, accessing communication technologies proves to be expensive and, that often ship captains disallow the use of the telephone, indicates that there is no flexibility within the domain. As stated earlier, technology is likely to have a positive effect on employees' work-life integration only if the employer also has other flexible work policies and practices in place.

4.5.2. CHALLENGES AT HOME DOMAIN

This section of the chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the challenges that seafarers are faced with when they return home. Displacement has been identified as one of many other challenges that have an impact on the seafarers' family domain. The participants of this study identified displacement as the challenge that they face at home.

4.5.2.1. THEME SIX: DISPLACEMENT

In his study on the life of seafarers, Hill quotes what was said by a port chaplain over three decades ago. The port chaplain spoke of the difficulties that seafarers are faced with. He noted:

A seafarer is a peculiar animal. He is a stranger when he comes ashore and is the odd man out in almost any situation. We cater for the loneliness of the seafarer – that might sum the whole thing up. When you come home you stick out like a sore thumb – the world has gone on without you and it is not going to stop to fit you into it. Often this is part of the loneliness of seafarers. A man goes to sea, he begins to look forward to coming home. He begins to wish his time away at sea, that's a dangerous thing for a man to do. He is in danger of losing his soul, I would say – his sense of being. He comes ashore and it's fiesta time for him and nobody else. All too often the leave you look forward to falls flat on its face. (Padre in charge of a Seaman's Mission quoted in Hill, 1972, p. 68)

The port chaplain identifies loneliness as a challenge that seafarers face. He also states that because of the challenge that seafarer's experience, the seafarer finds himself in a position whereby he loses his soul and sense of being. This statement lays out a picture of the extent at which loneliness can affect the seafarer. The chaplain also mentions that while at sea, seafarers look forward to returning home but upon return, they don't often find what they have been expecting and looking forward to.

Both male and female seafarers spend lengthy periods away from home and as a result, upon return at home, the feeling of displacement overwhelms them. Displacement can be understood as the feeling that individuals experience when socially comparing themselves to certain situations. Seafarers feel displaced when they are prohibited to fulfil tasks and duties that they are affiliated to. This study found that seafarers felt out of place when they go home due to their long periods spent away from home because during that period they miss out on much in their family domains. According to Thomas and Bailey (2006, p. 133) regardless of the differences in work patterns and conditions, all seafarers share a common situation where their work takes them away from their homes and families for considerable periods of time but also, importantly,

provides them with prolonged but finite periods of time at home. Moreover, these two phases of being away and at home recur on a regular basis and involves a constant process of change, readjustment and transition for both seafarers and their families (Thomas and Bailey, 2006, p. 133). Thus Thomas and Bailey (2006, p.134) suggest that “alienation from the family group is central to these difficulties of adjustment and in order for the family to function in the seafarer’s absence, during the seafarer’s time at sea, traditional divisions of labour on the basis of allocation of role within the domestic environment were displaced”. Drawing from the transcripts, participants reflect on how displacement in the family domain is central to the challenge that they face at home.

“Both my husband and I are away from home most of the time and being away from our daughter is very hard for us. Every time I return home, I see how much she has grown and I know I miss out on being a part of her life. I am grateful that my mother is there for her but...it’s my responsibility as her mother to be there for her and it brings me so much pain that I am not the best mother to her” (participant 1)

Participant 1 is the only participant in this study who sometimes works with her partner, as they are both employed within the maritime industry. So for the participant, she feels that unlike the rest of the seafarers, life on aboard the ship is much better. However this does not mean that she does not experience any challenges within the work and family domain. What is highlighted by participant 1 is that, being away at sea means being deprived of the opportunity to fulfil her role of being a mother to her daughter. The roles of being mothers, wives, husbands, brothers, sisters and so forth is very central and important to the seafarer. Similar to her challenges, are the challenges that were attested by participant 9. Participant 9 states that:

“There are a lot of challenges that you face at home especially if you have been away for a long time. I have missed out on so much in my family. My children are all grown up and I must admit that I have not been the father I am supposed to be to them. When you are at sea, you forget that life at home moves on...you come back and a lot has changed. I have never had enough time to spend with my children. Both my daughters are married now and have kids of their own. My son plans to join the industry soon and I am proud of him but I don’t want him to experience

this....he is old enough to make his own decisions and live his life the way he wants to” (participant 9).

“Adjusting from work to family life is hard. I have been a seafarer for two years and adjusting from work to home is a challenge for me. It takes weeks before I can get into the routine of being at home. A lot can happen while you away” (participant 2)

Participant 2 explains that upon return at home, he feels that while he is at sea, many things happen at home which than results him to not knowing how to adjust to the lifestyle of the family. According to Thomas(2003, p, 57), “ seafarers’ accounts suggested that just as they may be socially isolated at sea, so seafarers may also find themselves isolated whilst at home. Their intermittent absence prevents the development and maintenance of close friendship relationships and hinders their involvement in community-based clubs and activities which require continuous”. So therefore, we gather that seafarers experience isolation or displacement both at home and at work.

“I have only been a seaman for two months...and I have not returned home since. I joined the industry for career reasons and I know my parents don’t understand why. Even explaining to them was difficult, for them, they don’t understand why it had to be a career at sea. I have been living with my parents for a very long time. I have a very close relationship with my mother. When I told them about my plans of becoming a seaman they were not happy at all, especially my mother. So that was the challenge I experienced from home. But I know that with time, they will adjust to it” (participant 3)

Participant 3 did not identify displacement to be a challenge that he has encountered. However, he states that his family did not approve for him to join the industry. He hopes that they will get used to the idea as time goes by.

“It takes a while before you can adjust to the life at home. Sea life has a very big influence to this. I mean at sea, the only thing you have to do is your job and once you are done with your daily duties, you have all the time in the world to yourself. Unlike at sea, when you return home,

there are so many things you have to do. It takes time before I can adjust to the duties at there. Being away for so long has affected my relationship with my girlfriend; in fact it is the route of our problems. She doesn't understand the hardships I face at work. Even when I am at home, we don't spend enough time to work on our relationship because she has to be at work sometimes" (participant 4)

Participant 4 feels that the work domain is more familiar to him as compared to that of the family domain. He explains that when he is at work, he is aware of his duties and knows how to fulfil them. But upon return at home, he finds it challenging to resume his duties reason being, he experiences displacement.

"From where I come from it is not normal for a man to abandon his wife and family. It is my duty to protect her from any harm but I had no choice, I had to find a job so that I can support my wife and my family. My wife is a very strong woman. Being away from home was not easy for her but over the years, she learnt to cope with our life situation. She makes it look easy but for me, every time I look at her, I feel as if I have failed to be the man she deserves" (participant 5)

Participant 5 laments that, he feels that since he became a seafarer, he has neglected and abonded his duties as a man. He states that he feels that he has failed both his wife and children. The participant acknowledges that his wife has had to take on both their roles for the stability of the family. Evidently, this proves to have a negative impact on the seafarer as the more she sees her wife capabilities and devotion to their family, the more he feels less of a man. Similar to participant's 5 challenges upon return is that of participants' 7. He explains that:

"I don't experience any problems besides that too much time at home can be a problem for me. I like having my own space and when I am at sea I have that. At home you find that there are a lot that is going on and you have to be around for that...I don't like that....but when I am at sea I also miss home" (participant 7)

For participant 7 however, rather than feeling less of a man as explained by participant 5, he feels that being at home also means sharing his space of which he is not used to. He clearly

indicates that once he is done with his work duties on board the ship, he keeps to himself since he enjoys having his own space. In as much as participant 5 and 7 experience different challenges within the family domain, they both however feel displaced from the happenings of the family domain. So therefore, the work domain awards seafarers the opportunity to be self-reliant and gain independence as Thomas (2003, p. 58) states that “just as seafarers learn to become self-sufficient whilst at sea, so too, they learn to pursue solo and family-based activities whilst ashore”.

“Challenges at home...[pause], it is adjusting from sea life to home life that becomes a problem. When at home, it takes a long time to catch up to the life you leave behind...” (Participant 6)

“Adjusting between work and family is not easy. These are two completely different worlds. At sea I am just a worker and that’s all I have to be. At home I am many things” (participant 8)

“There has been no challenge so far, I have only been away for two months. But, I know my family does not like me to work at sea...they think it is too dangerous and far away from home” (participant 10)

“Being a seaman means being away from home. When you are away, you miss out on everything that happens in your absence. My daughter was born just after two days of returning to work. I don’t even know what she looks like...I have not held her in my arms....there is not a day that goes by without thinking about my family. After experiencing this I realised that I might have to find another job back home. The feeling of emptiness is too much for me. I have missed out on the birth of my daughter, what else am I going to miss? My wife is alone and has to raise her all by herself. I grew up without a father and I don’t want her to experience what I have been through...I would fail as a man if I do” (participant 11)

Drawing from participant 11’s statement, he also feels that being a seafarer has resulted to him missing out on life experiences within his family domain. He shares the pain that he felt when he missed the birth of his daughter while he was on aboard the ship. As a result, the participant states that he does not see himself having a long career at sea because he wants to be a part of his family life as well as to financially provide for them at the same time.

“it’s more of a complex dilemma situation hey...when you are on board the ship you become anxious and look forward to going home and when you are at home....you go crazy and wish nothing but to return at sea. Life both at sea and at home becomes a problem you don’t know what is right and wrong. I have been in a relationship with my lovely lady for twenty years. It has been a tough journey on us...we’ve had good times and bad times. We both decided that we will get married once I retire. She said she never wants to have a husband who is absent from home [laughs], so I have honoured her wishes and I will soon retire” (participant 12)

Participant 12 experiences displacement in the sense that he finds himself in a dilemma. He experiences homesickness while on aboard the ship but upon return at home, he wishes to go back to sea. The participant also states that he has had wishes to be married but because of his choice of career. His spouse indicated that they could only be married once the participant had retired from the maritime industry. So we gather that for the participant, he had to put on hold getting married.

“When I know I am going to return home, I become very stressed because I know of the hard work I have to put in to adjust and become a part of their lives... to become a family man. I know I have missed a great deal of being a part of their lives. And being at home is just a constant reminder for me that this is what I miss out on. My wife has taken all the burden of providing a warm home for our family. I am away from home so that I can be able to financially support them but I can’t say it is my greatest achievement. I feel I have not fulfilled my duties as a husband to my wife and a father to my daughter” (participant 13)

Participant 13 explains how it can be stressful for him to return home. He states that returning home means being reminded of the things he misses out on while he is on aboard the ship. As a result he becomes reluctant on returning home. The participant feels that in as much as he is fulfilling his duties as a man by being able to provide financial support for his family, he feels that he has neglected his other duties of being a husband to his wife and a father to his daughter. Thomas explains that for seafarers, their families are of significance in their lives. He explains the importance of having children and what it means to the seafarers. In his study, he found that the presence of children in the family had both positive and negative impacts on everyday life.

Whilst the partners of seafarers may have children in a dual parent household, the realities of the work pattern may mean that the mother may often bear the responsibilities of parenting alone” (Thomas, 2003, p. 68). Similar to the challenges of participant 13 is that of 14. He explains that:

“To be honest with you, I hate going home. I know it sounds wrong but I can’t take the pain of realising the fact of being away from home and the effect it has on my family. They have their own system that works for them and I just don’t know where I can help...what to do...when I am at home I usually spend a lot of time away from home. My children live their own lives and don’t need me anymore” (participant 14)

Again, gathering from participant 14’s statement, the seafarer finds himself displaced within his family domain upon return from the sea. Secondly, both participant 14 and 13 as well as many other participants in this study, have indicated that much of the responsibilities and demands of the family domains lies with their spouses. Participants acknowledge the effort and work that their spouses put in. The findings of In his study of looking at work life balance of seafarers, Thomas (2003, p. 63) states that the findings of the study “suggested that the combination of factors that impede the development and maintenance of seafarers’ friendships both at sea and ashore may lead to an increased dependency on their wife or partner for intimacy and emotional support. When asked about who they would turn to if they felt down all seafarers said they would turn to their partner. In over half of the cases their wife was the only person they felt they could turn to”

Researcher: and your wife, how is your relationship with her?

“My wife is a very understanding woman...she understands that I have to work so that I can be able to support her and the kids. I won’t say she is happy about me being away. We have our own problems but we work through them. I know she loves me and I love her too” (participant 14)

“I don’t have any problems so far. I just wish I could have my wife live with me at sea [laughs]. But I know that is not possible. I just miss her a lot when I’m at sea and I only get to spend four months with her...the six months away from her felt like it was forever” (participant 15)

“Sea life is very different from family life. When I am at home I am not a seaman...I am just a man, a husband and a father. I’m away for a long time and I can’t just assume my role... I have to respect them and wait for them to allow me to be that man. It is not easy, in fact it is very stressful for me but eventually they open up to me and before you know it...you have to go back at sea” (participant 16)

“The transition from sea life to family life is never pleasant. It is stressful and emotionally draining. For me, twelve years of being in the industry has been twelve years away from home. That is a lot of time if you think about it. My relationship with my family has been constant misunderstandings, fights and even spending months without talking to each other. All families have their own troubles but a seafarer’s family is different. I know that I am the cause of this... I am to blame. My wife has been the anchor of this ship....without her...I would be just a man with no family” (participant 17)

“I do not experience any challenges at home...I miss my family a lot when I am at sea so when I’m there I make use of the time I’m given. Most of my time is spent on family trips and gatherings...I visit my friends and just catch up on life” (participant 18)

“If I had known the impact of working away from home would have on my family, I would have not joined the industry. I just needed a job so that I can support and provide for them. But now that there is no turning back....I just wish I didn’t even do it in the first place. My wife and I become emotionally detached from each other, and it’s something that we have to work on every time I come back. Leaving my kids behind is always sad for me...they cry all the time...they always beg me not to go” (participant 19)

“I am tired of working at sea and being away from home. Ten years is enough. It has been the most difficult years in my life...when I joined the shipping industry I was only 28 years old...I was young and hopeful that I would achieve many things.... I have worked in the same job for ten years!!!! I am away from home...my family...I know that it might be impossible to make up for the years I have missed but I owe it to myself and them to at least give it a try...I love my family more than anything” (participant 20)

The transcripts provide an indication that the seafarers experience the challenge of displacement upon return from the sea. They recognise that it is the absence from home that causes the rifts in their relationships with their spouses and children. As a result they are unable to find ways of rekindling the relationships. They feel that their choice of career separates them from the social happenings in their family households and social lives. Thomas and Bailey (2006, p. 137) assert that “Alienation from the family group in the case of the seafarer is clearly associated with loss of role, but it is clear that seafarers remain conscious of their role as ‘breadwinner’ even when feeling excluded and indeed account for their exclusion in reference to their role as ‘financial provider’”. With the understanding of Clark’s (2000) theory of work/family border theory, displacement is a psychological border that results in seafarers being unable to achieve balance within the family domain and the permeability of the border is unachievable since there are no means that can help balance the seafarers’ dilemma of being both financial providers and family men. Seafarers find themselves in despair when they have to resume the roles of being husbands and fathers. It is evident that the more years the participants work as seafarers, the more their families become content with their absence. They do not wait upon the seafarers return for them to function as a family unit. Life goes on for them and as a result, “while the maintenance of these established routines was important to the wellbeing of seafarers’ partners and children, the continuation of such practices could leave the seafarer feeling that his return home was unimportant and his presence in the home irrelevant to the day-to-day existence and well-being of his wife and family. Such routines could exacerbate the seafarers’ sense of role displacement especially when first arriving home” (Thomas and Bailey, 2006, p. 198).

For these seafarers, there is no solution to this. Some indicate that the only way to solve this problem is to retire from the industry. Some indicate that if they could have their families on board the ships with them now and again, it would help them bridge the feeling of displacement. The male participants are very aware of the role their wives play in supporting them. Many of the seafarers’ wives have to assume both the roles of being a woman and a man during their absence. In their study, Thomas and Bailey (2006, p. 137) suggest that “Indeed, the very nature of a successful seafaring marriage was seen by many seafarers to be rooted in a wife who was independent and capable; a wife whom the seafarer felt confident could manage domestic, family and emotional responsibilities in their absence. Many seafarers interviewed for this study

described their wives in this way, praising characteristics such as their ability to ‘cope’ and their independence and self-sufficiency. As one senior officer commented:

Well the wife has definitely got to be a very confident and competent woman. If she's the sort of wife who has to ask her husband how to do or what to do about everything you will never succeed, that seems very obvious doesn't it?

According to Brannen and Moss (1987) in many cases, rather than operating along a traditional gendered-division of labour as is common in many households for the period while the seafarer was at sea, the seafarer's wife typically took on both men and women's tasks and often continued to undertake these activities and responsibilities upon the seafarers' return home". To conclude, the seafarer finds himself isolated from the family. He is isolated while at sea and upon his return home. Therefore it is evident that the work of seafaring can influence and alter one's life. The seafarer does not have coping mechanisms to deal with his social crisis and is left in despair. However, additional and dedicated research is necessary to explore the concept and experience of displacement more fully and should encompass different family forms, social classes and occupational groups" Thomas and Bailey, 2006, p. 145).

4.6. COPING STRATEGIES ADOPTED

4.6.1. THEME SEVEN: SUPPORT GROUPS

In most organisations, support for any work related challenges that an employee may face is usually available. Support is usually in the form of counselling and therapy and support groups. In the case of this study, the participants did not report any formal policies implemented by the organizations, which give support to the seafarer. Instead, being workers who experience the same challenges, the participants and many seafarers seek comfort from one another by establishing their own support groups. The support groups initiate a platform for seafarers to express themselves and share their challenges and as a collective. They discover ways of coping with and addressing their problems. According to Thomas (2003, p. 96) "Emotional problems referred to the loneliness associated with separation from their partner and anxieties and

depression associated with this absence. In both these domains the existence of a local support network of family and or friends could be vital". The support groups are thus identified as a coping mechanism that seafarers utilise to attain a balance between the work and family domains. Even though the support groups are established at work, the support groups also offer support to seafarers in finding ways of dealing with the problems they are faced with upon their return home.

The participants lauded the ways in which the support groups they established on board the ships assist them to cope and find solutions. These solutions or mechanisms enable the seafarer to attain a balance between the work and family domains. The following are statements made by some participants.

"There is no support. We just talk about our problems and when I am home I talk to my husband and sometimes my mother" (participant 1)

"As seafarers, we gather around and share our experiences now and again. When I am at home, I talk to my husband. He is very understanding" (participant 2)

"I haven't experienced any challenges" (participant 3)

"Usually when you have a problem you first talk to your peers, then your manager, before speaking to the captain" (participant 4)

"I usually keep to myself. I don't like sharing my problems; I usually wait to talk to my wife" (participant 5)

"When the day end, I talk to my friends, they talk to me and we help each other" (participant 6)

"There is no support. You just have to keep to yourself and talk to God" (participant 7)

"I don't know. I have not experienced any problems. But if I feel frustrated or unhappy, I just go to my cabin" (participant 8)

"I get support from my wife and my whole family. Talking to them helps especially when I have had a rough day" (participant 9)

"Yes, as seaman, we support each other" (participant 10)

"We as colleagues share our experiences and we are able to advise each other" (Participant 11)

"No... there is no form of support. There is but... what can I say...it is such a procedure for you to get assistance if you have a problem you encounter at work., you have to speak to your

supervisor first... then he reports to someone else and that person has to report to someone else before it is received by the captain” (participant 12)

The above statements made by the participants of this study clearly indicate that one, there are no formal structures or support systems that help them address the problems they face at work and home. Lack of these support groups can mean lack of integration between the work and family domains. Support from spouses and extended family members have been identified by the participants as the leading or main form of a support system. In his study, Thomas also found that “when seafarers were asked about factors that helped make their relationship work they often talked in terms of either characteristics of their wife or the context in which their wife lived at home rather than focussing on themselves, their own conditions of work or experiences during their leave periods. This may be because the seafarers recognised the importance of their wife’s acceptance and support to both the success of their seafaring career and also their marriage” (Thomas, 2003, p. 97).

“Personally, I don’t think that when we are at sea we are alone. There is no support here at work...we don’t have anyone to go to who can help us. If you have a problem during working hours, the only person you talk to help solve the problem is the supervisor or the captain. What we do is we just share our problems with our colleagues” (participant 13)

“I don’t like sharing my problems with other seaman because what if they think I can’t handle the pressures of the life we live....i don’t want people to think I can’t do it because I have problems so normally, I talk to my wife. But this can be hard sometimes because there are no phones or internet on the ship... so I have to wait for weeks to talk to her” (participant 14)

“Talking to other seafarers helps sometimes. It’s not right to talk to strangers about your personal problems but what can you do? Your family is miles and miles away. You just trust in your fellow colleagues and hope that they understand because we almost have the same problems... so they understand what I go through... ” (participant 15)

“There is no support, we just share our experiences with one another” (participant 17)

“Well, I haven’t experienced any challenges but if it does happen that I miss home, I just talk to them once in a while” (Participant 18)

“We support one another, my friends and I. I feel it is better that way cause sometimes your family does not understand what we go through every day. They are not working these long hours, they don’t experience being surrounded by strangers...the world of seafaring is lonely... they just would not understand” (Participant 19)

“As seafarers we support each other, we have prayer groups, when we are not working we meet at the dining hall and we talk about how the day was and we share our problems that we have at work...problems at home...” (Participant 20)

It is evident that within the family and work domains, there are no formal systems that helps seafarers to find a balance. When they are at work, seafarers form their own support groups where they share their day to day experiences and this helps them to cope with the challenges. While at home and also at sea, talking to family members proved to another form of support system. There is no formal source of support. Support such as counselling and therapy that ensures the mental and psychological well-being of individuals appears not to be available to participants.

4.7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter the raw data was provided and presented in the form of themes. These themes were gathered from the twenty interviews that were conducted with seafarers who pass through the port city of Durban. The themes that developed from the data are homesickness and loneliness; hierarchy within the work place; gender inequality; lack of communication with family; language as a barrier to communication; displacement and finally, the coping strategies that seafarers adopt to find balance. To understand work life balance of seafarers, the work/family border was used to analyse the data. You should summarise the key findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Central to this thesis, are the two main objectives of the study. Firstly, to understand the relationship between work and family life of seafarers and secondly, to understand the challenges they face in both domains and their attempts to achieve a balance.

The seafaring industry is characterised by men and women from developing and developed countries such as the U.K, Germany, Philippines and China. They enter the profession as ratings and officers with officers usually being from developed countries. Reasons for joining the industry vary. Some are forced into a life at sea for economic reasons, to seek better employment and better development of profession achievement, while others join the industry purely for the enjoyment of travelling the world. Seafarers spend over six sometimes up to nine months; and sometimes over a year, on board ships. While away, they are separated from their families and loved ones. This thesis provides some understanding of the challenges that seafarers face both at work and at home upon return.

In this study, the researcher used Qualitative means of enquiry to collect and analyse data. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) qualitative research is a process whereby “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, and phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”. The nature of this thesis is exploratory in nature since a relatively new phenomenon such as that of work/family life balance is being explored. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with seafarers who pass through the port city of Durban. The interviews were conducted at the Seafarers mission in Durban (Bayhead). To ensure safety and protection of the participants, ethical considerations were made. I ensured my participants safety by issuing a consent form that clearly states the aim of the project and that participation was voluntary. Secondly, I assured my participants that their identities and participation will be confidential and anonymous.

The researcher made use of the non-probability sampling method, namely the convenient sampling method. While convenient sampling is not always an ideal choice, the nature of this study and its participants demanded the use of this method since access to seafarers is limited and unpredictable. In this study, the researcher used unstructured one-on-one interview as a tool to gather data, it is useful to determine individual seafarer's perceptions, opinions, and facts about their lived experience of work life balance under difficult and strenuous situations

Data was collected and organised and transcribed for the process of analysis. In analysing the data provided by the twenty participants, I used Clark's Work/family border. The theory suggests that:

- Work and family should be treated as two different domains that do however, influence each other
- Within these domains, there are borders that influence and shape human behaviour within the work and family domains
- There are three kinds of borders namely; Temporal, physical and psychological borders. Clark states that these borders are permeable and flexible.
- *permeability*, which is understood as the degree to which elements from other domains may enter and *flexibility* as:
- "The extent to which a border may contract or expand depending on the demands of one domain or the other" (2000, p. 757).

Within the context of this study, 'borders' are understood as the challenges that seafarers experience at home and at sea. The study found that within the work domain, the borders or challenges that seafarers face are:

5.2. HOMESICKNESS AND LONELINESS

The study found homesickness and loneliness to be the biggest challenge that the participants face while on board the ship. Participants indicated that individually they have no means of curbing this feeling. However, the study did identify that a number of the participants depend on

their families and each other as co-workers to make means of the situation. They experience homesickness and loneliness due to the lengthy periods spent away from home and also due to lack of shore-leave. Homesickness and loneliness is a very serious issue central to the participants and seafarers at large. The study found that mostly, it was the participants who were married and have children who were greatly affected by homesickness and loneliness. In relation to the theory adopted, homesickness and loneliness is a psychological border that has a negative influence on the participants which may result to them being unable to function at work. The border is thus impermeable as there are no distinguished support systems set out by the work domain. To support this statement, I extract the following transcript from the interviews conducted where participants explain the general conception of how seafarers experience homesickness and loneliness as a challenge:

“uuhm... life at sea is very lonely. There is nothing to do once the day at work is over ...there is nothing to do really and you barely have any friends but I think I am really really lucky because I work with my husband. I know a lot of women wish they could be with their husbands or boyfriends. On the other hand, I often miss my family from time to time...I miss my sisters...my mother. What I mean is, I just miss having my family together[pause] ...maybe if I spoke to them every day would make things better... but personally, I’m just fortunate because I work with my husband. So for us... it’s not so bad...cause I also know that he misses his siblings as well.”
(Participant 2)

5.3. HIERARCHY WITHIN THE WORK PLACE

The phenomenon of homesickness has received only modest attention over the years. However, we do know that homesickness involves a sense of loneliness, dysphonia, emotional distress, and ruminations about home (Fisher, 1988, p. 156).

The homesick response may be a sign of separation anxiety and subsequent grief, as conceptualized in the attachment literature (Ainsworth, 1979), or it may reflect strain in trying to cope with a novel environment (Fisher and Hood, 1987).

The study found that the issue of hierarchy is another challenge that is experienced by the study participants. Firstly, the issue results from the participants socially comparing themselves in terms of their positions within the workplace. Even in the process of employment of seafarers, they are distinguished as two types of seafarers; the officers and the ratings. Officers are employed in the higher rankings of the shipping industry, “the better jobs” as suggested by the participants while ratings resume duties in the lower rankings of the industry. Participants who are employed in the lower rankings reported that there is no growth for them within the industry. They also believe that a higher ranking means a better life for the seafarers both in terms of the social and work life within the work domain. Hierarchy within the workplace in this study is understood to be a psychological border that can lead to job dissatisfaction. The prevalence of hierarchy within the work domain is due to the fact that the border is again, a psychological border that is created by the participants. The study found that not all the participants experience the issue of hierarchy as a challenge the female participants reported gender inequality as the key challenge they experience in the workplace

In summary, the participants find that there is a form of hierarchy within the workplace. Thus they begin to compare themselves amongst each other. Looking at the issue of hierarchy amongst seafarers in the work place, seafarers psychologically compare themselves to one another. This can lead to levels of unhappiness and can pose as conflict between the individual and his colleagues

5.4. GENDER INEQUALITY (FACED BY THE FEMALE PARTICIPANTS)

Gender inequality in the workplace prevails in almost every company. This study acknowledged that even in the modern society, women are still considered unequal to men. This study acknowledged that more and more women are entering the corporate world to seek employment. The study also acknowledges that there are less female seafarers than male seafarers in the maritime industry. In the maritime industry, women only make up 2% of the 1.5 million seafarers across the globe. As a result, this study only consists of two female participants and eighteen male participants. Drawing from Clark’s concept of borders, the issue of gender inequality and discrimination that is experienced by female seafarers can be understood as a

challenge that falls under temporal borders. A large number of female seafarers are employed as ratings usually, they assume the role of what has been traditionally conceived as a woman's job in other words, they are employed as cabin stewards, waitresses, hotel stuff and so forth. However there are women who are employed as officers in the industry. Just say one of the participants of this study is a cabin steward while participant 1 is a qualified mechanical engineer but works as a junior assistant to the chief engineer. With these two differential factors, one would expect that participant one gets better treatment than participant two. This study found that it was not the case. Both these women are subjected to gender discrimination in the workplace and are unfairly treated by their male colleagues as they indicate:

The ILO (2003) suggests that provisions should be made to ensure the safety of women as well as improvement of working conditions for women seafarers should be made.

5.5. LANGUAGE: AS A BARRIER TO COMMUNICATION

The study found that another challenge that seafarers face at work is the issue of miscommunication. The study finds that this is caused by the language difference. Seafarers are from different parts of the world. They come from different backgrounds and social lives. The participants of this study come from different nations such as the U.K, Singapore, Egypt, Ethiopia, Belgium, China and Russia. They significantly differ in terms of culture and ethnicity. As a result they speak in different languages. The requirement of the shipping industry is that the English language must be adopted as the primary tool for communication on board the ship. Not all seafarers are fluent in English as it is not their mother tongue. Even during the interview process, I had difficulties understanding what some of the participants were saying. This is also the case on board the ships. This results in miscommunication which can sometimes result in fatal accidents. The study also found that the barrier of language also has an effect on the social lives of the participants in this study.

So this proves that participants battle to communicate with each other and it makes work life difficult. Participants also stated that because of this, people rather isolate themselves from the social scene on the ship. Within the industry are key terminologies that every seafarer should be

aware of and should understand. The study also notes that the English language is also complex within its own spectrum. Thus, for the smooth running of passing information should be every seafarer's responsibility as a slight miscommunication can bring serious damage to the ship and could cause companies a great loss. With reference to Clark's work/family border theory, the lack of communication falls under the perimeters of the temporal border. The temporal border distinguishes when and how tasks can be completed. Because the border is impermeable, it makes the passing of information through communication impossible for the participants and seafarers at large. In this study, the participants shared their views on why language is important for the functioning of the shipping industry. They stipulate personal and professional reasons why it is a necessity to share information.

Communication is the most important part of human interaction. The general concept of communicating is that it is a social phenomenon that enables the sharing of knowledge in all aspects of our personal and professional lives.

5.6. LACK OF COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY

Together with homesickness and loneliness, lack of communication with the family proves to be the greatest challenge that the participants of this study are faced with. In fact, these two borders (challenges) prove to be closely related and have an influence on each other.

The participants reported that they spend long periods of time away from home. Participants reported that being away from home for so long causes a great rift in personal relationships in their home domains. While at sea, the participants indicate that constant and regular contact through the use of telecommunications could possibly bridge the gap of feeling separated from their loved ones. Through the rise of technology, people are able to communicate across time and space using telecommunications. These include telephones, e-mail and, social networks such as Facebook, Skype, Whatsapp and other forms of social networking.

The participants indicate that they communicate with their loved ones not more than twice in two weeks. For the participants this is due to the fact that, 1) there are hardly any telephones on the ships, 2) in the case where there is one, the telephone is only used by the Captain or the Master

of the ship for emergencies only, 3) not all port cities have internet access nor telephones and lastly and most importantly, 4) the greatest challenge is that the participants find the telecommunications to be expensive.

The study found that the challenges or borders that seafarers face within the family domain is usually displacement.

5.7. DISPLACEMENT

Upon return, seafarers feel displaced from their family domains. This was felt mostly by participants who are married and have children.

The study found that both the male and female participants feel that while they are at sea, life back home goes on without them. Upon return, they are overwhelmed by the feeling of being out of place as they do not know how to get into their families routine and assume the roles of being husbands to their wives and vice versa.

The study found that the participants have estranged relationships with their children and spouses. The study found that the participants acknowledge their spouses for maintaining stable homes for them and that their spouses play a big role in the seafarer's life.

Lastly, the study found that the issue of displacement can result to participants planning a shorter planned-stay in the shipping industry.

5.8. SUPPORT GROUPS

The last aim of this study is to understand the coping mechanism that seafarers adopt. After research was gathered, the study found that, 1) the participants did not report any form of support system from the organization that is available and offered to them both on-shore and off-shore.

The study found that, while on board the ship, participants share their life experience with their colleagues. They find it to be easy to talk to one another as there is a mutual understanding and awareness of the challenges.

Through the sharing of lived experiences, participants reported that they form what can be understood as support groups. Because of these support groups, participants clearly indicate that they are able to make means of the life at sea and the challenges they experience and as a result, they are able to attain balance both in the work and in the home domain.

The study also found that within the family domain, participants reported that their spouses are mostly their source of support. However, we note that not all the participants felt this way. For some, being at home was even more stressful due to the feeling of displacement.

In conclusion, participants identified support groups to be a source of coping mechanism that they adopt. While when they are at home, the participants found that there is no precise mechanism they adopt, besides sharing their life experiences with their families.

5.9. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To eradicate the problems that female seafarers face, the ILO suggests that what can be done to improve conditions for women at sea and attract them to the seafaring profession is that first, the maritime community has a number of parts: companies, trade unions, seafarers' welfare organizations, and others. They each may have a role. Companies, for example, could try to place new recruits aboard vessels with women officers. Sexual harassment policies are, of course, important. Trade unions should take up these matters and other issues, such as maternity benefits, when negotiating collective agreements. We also can't forget that improving conditions of women at sea is also related to improving conditions of work for all seafarers – male or female. Therefore, any efforts to improve conditions of work at sea will also benefit women (2003, p. 15),

Thomas and Bailey suggest that in order to attempt to improve the seafarers life, "organizations and policy makers could consider strategies to promote enhanced communication between

families during separations, provide opportunities for families to visit the workplace or relocate to the region of the workplace, promote awareness raising among families about the potential difficulties associated with these work patterns and take proactive steps to help workers maximize their periods at home such as by providing subsidized leisure club membership and facilitating social meetings between different workers and their families.

From the findings of this dissertation, the following recommendations are suggested that can be made both in the work and family domain. To curb the issue of 'lack of communication with family', perhaps the maritime organization should increase and improve access to telecommunications. The participants found that communicating with their families on a regular basis proved to be expensive, thus implementations of cutting down costs or perhaps some form of funding should be made. There should be an increase in accessing of emails and mail while on board the ship. Seafarers spend either four to six months on board the ship but often find themselves spending more months than expected which as a result has a negative impact on them. Thus, organizations must ensure that tours of duty are no longer than four months in duration. Improvements in the predictability of seafarers' work schedules so that seafarer's arrival and departure from home can be more accurately anticipated. The study found that seafarers experience homesickness and loneliness while on board the ship, from the views of the participants interviewed, they expressed how life at sea would be better if their families were allowed to visit them. So therefore, I recommend that the maritime organization should increase opportunities for partners, and where possible children, to sail. The organization should promote social contact between the seafarer and the family domain. In times of crisis back home, the organization should make provisions that ensure immediate return back home for the seafarers. Where possible, seafarers should sail with same crew, thus facilitating opportunities for social relationships aboard.

5.10. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study found that many of the challenges that the participants face arise mostly within the work domain and that these challenges in turn affect and causes problems for them within the family domain. The nature of the maritime industry impels long separations from their families,

lack of shore-leave as well as poor working conditions. Secondly, the study found that participants only recognise support from their families and their colleagues as the only form of support system that they have. They did not report on any support that is offered by their companies. Thomas (2003, p. 110) states that “work conditions and employment contracts have a significant impact on experiences of seafarers and their families in terms of the effects of a seafaring lifestyle”. As suggested within the findings of this study, seafarers use telecommunications to keep in touch with their families and friends. In the month of October 2014, two months after I had completed collecting data, participant3 contacted me through Facebook. He wrote that:

I'm in USA. You know what. As I speak to you. Even if it is good profession and I like it but because they did not allow me to do what I should do, discrimination etc...Finally I desert from it in USA... I never ever back on 2 (to) ship.... I hate... I do not need to be crazy. I write this to you because it can help you during your presentation. I wish your paper to be address 2 (to) problem of most seafarer's face. we are all not happy here. they treat us badly. I am angry. But who knows, God has a reason for it. tnx (thanks) for your conversation. I wish you all the best for your study.

This lamentation from the participant proved to me the seriousness of the challenges that seafarers face. It was of shock to me that participant 3, when I first met him had only been working as a seafarer for only three months and already was quitting his job. This is a clear indication that seafarer's issues and challenges should be addressed. Therefore a suggestion made is that, further research should be conducted on ratings and seafarers of different nationalities in order to fully explore possible issues and consequences relating to such differing work conditions.

APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:

1. Name?
2. Age?
3. Gender?
4. Nationality?
5. Marital status?
6. How long have you been married?
7. Do you have any children?
8. How many?
9. How much do you earn every month?
10. How many months do you work a year?
11. What does your spouse do?
12. How much does he/she earn?
13. Are you the sole breadwinner?
14. How much time do you spend at home in a year?

FAMILY

15. How would you describe your relationship with your family?
16. How would you describe your relationship with your spouse?
17. How would you describe your relationship with your children?
18. How often do you see your family?
19. What are their views/opinions on your choice of career?
20. Who takes care of your children?
21. Do you pay them?
22. What happens if there is an emergency?

23. Do you communicate with them while at sea?
24. How?
25. How much does it cost to support your family?
26. What do you do when you return home?
27. Do you face any challenges upon return?
28. Do you spend enough time with your family?
29. Is it easy to adjust to life at home when you return?
30. Is it easy to adjust to life on board the ship?

CAREER

31. What is your job description?
32. How long have you worked in this position?
33. How often do you get promotions?
34. How often do you get salary increases?
35. In your opinion, what does it mean to be a seafarer?
36. Why did you become a seafarer?
37. How did you become a seafarer?
38. How long have you worked as a seafarer?
39. Do you enjoy being a seafarer?
40. Why?
41. What is the best thing about being a seafarer?
42. What is the worst thing about being a seafarer?
43. How do you plan on working as a seafarer?

CHALLENGES

44. What are the challenges you face at work?
45. How do you cope with these challenges?
46. What support do you have at work?
47. What are the challenges you face at home?

48. How do you cope with these challenges?
49. What support do you have at home?
50. How do you cope with the long absence from home?
51. How do you cope on board the ship?
52. What activities do you engage in on board the ship?
53. What are the activities you engage in with your family?
54. Is your family allowed to travel with you?
55. If yes, how often do they travel with you?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN MARITIME RESEARCH: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL

PROJECT TITLE:

A sociological investigation into the relationship between work and family life balance of Seafarers who passes through the port city of Durban.

RESEARCHER: Ms Zoleka Pearl Molefe **STUDENT NUMBER:** 208512093

The Department of Sociology (Society and Social Change)

University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban South Africa

Dear Participant

Project Title: A Sociological Investigation into the Relationship between Work and Family Life Balance of the Seafarer.

I am a Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in the Department of Sociology. I am currently conducting a study on ‘The Relationship between Work and Family Life Balance of the Seafarer’. The main aim of the study is to determine how workers in the seafaring industry balance both work and family life, and how they impact on each other.

I would like to request your participation in the study. Participation is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time. You may refuse to answer questions to respond to during the interview. Confidentiality is guaranteed. Pseudonyms will be used will be used to guarantee confidentiality. All interviews will be recorded. You are also free to request that the interview not to be recorded, or that the tape recorder be switched off at any time you wish to make “off-the-record” remarks. The recordings will be transcribed and translated to English if necessary and the data may be used at a later stage. The information will be kept under lock and key and destroyed in five years.

Please fill in the blank spaces on this form and do not hesitate to contact me at zoemolefe@gmail.com or my supervisor Dr Mariam Seedat-Khan at seedatm@ukzn.ac.za or

I,on this day of.....2013, agree to be interviewed for research *on A Sociological Investigation into the Relationship between Work and Family Life Balance of the Seafarer* .I understand that I will be asked any question that the researcher finds relevant for the purpose of the study. I also understand that the interview will be recorded, the recordings will be transcribed and translated and that the data may be reused at a later stage.

NO

I..... (full name of the participant) understand that the contents of this interview that I have agreed to; will be used for a masters study that is currently being conducted by Ms Zoleka Pearl Molefe at UKZN.

I have been notified by the researcher Ms Zoleka Pearl Molefe that I may withdraw from the interview at any time. I can also refuse to answer questions.

DATE _____

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