Contributions to the Debate on the Ship as a Total Institution: A Survey among Dalmatian Seafarers

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ABSTRACT The paper applies the concept of total institution (E. Goffman) to the specific reality of seafarers. During shipboard service, the mentioned social category has a limited choice of physical space, content, and social contacts. Seafarers are required to adapt to the conditions on board and to the authority of the company and of higher-ranking crew members that govern their daily lives. The challenges of working and living at sea result in the trend of increasing numbers of experienced and highly educated seafarers leaving the profession. The study aims to investigate the seafaring conditions among Dalmatian seafarers, as well as their future career projections. It was conducted between June and July 2020 using the method of online survey, which included a snowball sample of 112 respondents. The results indicate a lack of satisfaction in relation to most of the considered aspects of seafaring, except for earnings, including the possibility of promotion and communication with family and friends. While most of the seafarers surveyed consider these conditions sufficient to spend their entire working lives at sea, one in three respondents has no such intention (31.4%). More specifically, 42.6% of the respondents intend to stay at sea only because they believe finding a better job ashore would

Sociologija i prostor

be difficult, while only a fifth love their job (19.2%). The results highlight the importance of improving the conditions of seafaring in order to preserve high-quality personnel and reinforce the safety culture on board ships. Further sociological research into the topic should provide a basis for mitigating the negative effects of a total institution as an increasingly visible concept within maritime sociology.

Key words: seafarers, total institution, ship, Goffman, maritime sociology.

1. Introduction

"I am going back to prison", "It's a newer ship, so it might be better this time around", and "I find it difficult to leave home again" are just some of the statements by seafarers from Dalmatia that inspired the authors' interest in addressing this topic. Life at sea remains a life of "blood, sweat, and tears", as suggested in reports by the International Maritime Organization and various studies on the maritime industry (due to inadequate nutrition and lacking health care for seafarers, overtime work, workplace stress, deteriorating social relationships both at work and within the family i.e. the private sphere, etc.) (Thomas, Sampson, and Zhao, 2003; Oldenburg, Baur, and Schlaich, 2010; Carotenuto et al., 2012; IMO, 2018; 2019). Available sociological literature on the working conditions of seafarers is, on the other hand, surprisingly scarce. Maritime transport is the most common and most profitable mode of transport on the global market. The continued growth of the world fleet has not even been disrupted by the latest global financial crisis. Nevertheless, the number of professional seafarers in traditionally maritime countries has been declining as they are increasingly looking for well-paid occupations and jobs with better working conditions ashore (Simons, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2014).

When typing maritime sociology as key words into the Google browser, the search returns almost no textbook or monograph-type texts. Rodríguez-Martos Dauer (2009) points out that the greater part of literature within this sociological discipline is rather short papers, despite research in this field becoming more frequent as a result of the increasingly recognized importance of the human factor within the maritime industry. Ships are becoming more and more sophisticated technological systems, with their freight capacities and varieties of cargo constantly increasing, and accidents can cause not only great (financial) damage to ship companies, but also to entire coasts through the release of harmful substances in case of shipwrecks. According to the same author, maritime sociology is "indispensable" in designing the "ships of the future", participating in this process through the study of the working conditions of seafarers and highlighting the factors that impact their (in)efficiency. The implementation of sociological findings by shipping companies can have a positive impact on the safety

culture of ships and would be a responsible mode of action towards all those on board, their loved ones, and society in general.[1]

The fragmented nature of research and literature in maritime sociology accounts for the insufficient visibility of maritime topics within the broader field of sociology, the absence of clear sub-disciplinary perspectives, and the lack of rigorous research scrutiny of such topics (Poole as cited in Cocco, 2013: 13).[2] However, certain more recent endeavours within sociology reflect a shift towards gradual elimination of the unjustified land – sea dichotomy, or, more precisely, the binary distinction between the two. The sea should not be perceived as a medium in the function of life on land, but rather as a social space in which people have always lived and moved (Cocco, 2013: 8). As a result of efforts in this direction, the relatively recent conferences organised or sponsored by the European Sociological Association included sessions on maritime sociology (Turin and Zadar 2013, Prague 2015, Barcelona 2021). A paper by Elias addressing the development of the naval profession was translated into English, and the research of the socio-economic situation of German seamen undertaken by Tönnies received renewed attention (Cocco, 2013: 5). The establishment of a research network on maritime sociology within the European Sociological Association aims to strengthen discussion and collaboration among experts in the field.[3]

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[1] Rodríguez-Martos Dauer is the author of the monograph *The merchant vessel: A sociological analysis* (2009). This is one of the few systematic pieces of writing that addresses the ship as a social space, presenting both the hierarchical structure and private relations of the ship's crew, as well as their relations with the outside world, especially with their family and friends. Within Croatian sociological literature, some of these topics are addressed by Biličić in his textbook Psihosociologija rada u brodarstvu (*Psychosociology of Work in the Shipping Industry*) (2001).

[2] Other similar terms sometimes used are sociology of sailing, sociology of seafaring and marine sociology (e.g. Feinberg, 1988; Vickers and Walsh, 1999; Cocco, 2013; Longo and Clark, 2016). They rely on specifying the subject of study, much like authors using the term maritime sociology. For example, Maurizio (2013: 199) points out that it should study all actors living at the sea, from the sea, and by the sea. Rosengren (1973) and Poole (1981) see its subject of interest in studying the social forces that define the very term and use of the marine environment in a micro-macro sociological context, be it "local fishermen communities, sector-related areas such as marine tourism, fisheries, shipping, and environmental protection or more recent topics such as piracy, illegal immigrants and oil extraction" (Cocco, 2013: 14). Kołodziej and Kołodziej-Durnaś (2022: 5) also refer to other terms such as ocean sociology, which is used in countries with the given geographical position (e.g. USA, China, etc.). Likewise, researchers' interest in a multi- and interdisciplinary approach to sea and ocean issues leads to the emergence of maritime social science. Such studies critically question the influence of human activity on the mentioned space and its ecosystem (Arbo et al. as cited in Kołodziej and Kołodziej-Durnaś, 2022: 5-6). The potential of the said approach in providing data and guidelines when designing effective management policies and strategies related to sustainable development is indicated (Bennet as cited in Kołodziej and Kołodziej-Durnaś, 2022: 6).

[3] For more on research networks, see: https://www.europeansociology.org/research-networks (accessed on: 12 January 2022)

One of the concepts used by a number of authors when reflecting on the sociological reality of seafarers – and studied in more detail further on in this paper – is Erving Goffman's concept of "total institution". The author first introduces it around the middle of the last century within an ethnographic study he conducted at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C. (Goffman, 1957). He continues to elaborate on his ideas in *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, a today's classic, published in 1961. He associates the concept of total institutions with the mentioned mental hospitals but underlines its applicability to other social environments sharing similar features, such as jails, boarding schools, orphanages, work camps, army barracks, and ships (Odorjan, Balabanić, and Štefan, 2018). Although Goffman himself did not apply his ideas to the naval industry, the concept of total institution soon became widely accepted in studies on this topic (Zurcher, 1965; 1967). Numerous authors have used it to date, pointing out that shipping companies need to mitigate the implications of ships as total institutions in order to improve the health of seafarers and increase their satisfaction and efficiency, to attract and retain seafarers, and to contribute to a greater safety culture on board ships (Forsyth, 1983; Nguyen et al., 2014; Smith, 2016).

To understand the position of seafarers from the perspective of the mentioned concept, it is first necessary to specify the "nature" of an environment that Goffman defines as a total institution. According to Goffman (2011:17), "in modern society […] the individual tends to sleep, play, and work in different places, with different co-participants, under different authorities (…) The central feature of total institutions can be described as a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating these three spheres of life." A total institution is therefore a special type of formal organisation that is established and operates with a clear purpose (e.g. resocialisation, education, work, etc.). In such an institution, individuals are separated from the wider community for longer periods and the barrier to social intercourse with the outside world can be physically symbolised by high walls and locked doors, barbed wire, armed guards, and – in the case of seafarers – the sea. The total character of such institutions arises from the fact that they encompass the entirety of a human being in their internal organisation of living space and routines and one's formal and informal relationships. Following their specific purpose, total institutions represent strictly regulated models of life that ignore all human individuality (Goffman, 1959: 132).

Contrary to most people ashore, seafarers are, in many respects, not able to control their living conditions on board (choice of space, accommodation, diet, leisure, social interactions, etc.), which is also true of other total institutions. A group of friends who decide to rent a yacht and go on vacation is not a total institution, although their voyage may involve isolation. They freely decided to form the group, they decide for themselves what to do and when, and they can alter or cancel the trip without any repercussions (Rodríguez-Martos Dauer, 2009: 16). Such freedom is not enjoyed by

seafarers, who depend on the conditions determined by the shipping company. Many employers, however, do not provide good conditions, as demonstrated both by referenced literature and our own study. There is a consensus among authors regarding the increasingly shorter seafaring careers, i.e. the fact that many seafarers tend to leave the profession after ten to fifteen years, seeking to build a career i.e. life ashore. The lack of highly trained seafarers leads to less rigorous human resources recruitment practices, resulting in increasing shares of seafarers with questionable education backgrounds and in declining numbers of trained officers from traditionally maritime areas of the USA, Europe, and Japan. All of this can have quite a negative effect on the efficiency of the maritime sector and ship safety (Nguyen et al., 2014). Nevertheless, in creating better conditions on board, the ship as a total institution can be informed by the sociological analysis of maritime issues. Orbach suggests that the maritime industry should invest more in social sciences and include social scientists in their staff in order to effectively manage increasingly socially complex situations while addressing the practical organisational and political challenges of the modern maritime industry (Orbach as cited in Cocco, 2013: 15).

2. Aspects of the Ship's Totality

Goffman (2011: 17) sees institutions as a combination of physical and social establishments, specifying that these are "places such as rooms, suites of rooms, buildings, or plants in which activity of a particular kind regularly goes on". Every institution captures a certain amount of time and interest of the participants involved in their activity. Total institutions are specific as they go a step further. Their encompassing or total character is reflected in the fact that social intercourse with the outside world is (virtually) impossible and often even prohibited (Goffman, 2004: 337). There are different types of total institutions in our society. Some of them focus on protecting the society against individuals who represent a threat to the community (such as jails, quarantine stations, and mental hospitals), while others are established to care for persons in need (the elderly and disabled, homeless, etc.). There are also such institutions designed as retreats from the society (abbeys, monasteries, convents, and other cloisters), as well as institutions established to pursue certain work-like tasks (army barracks, ships, boarding schools, etc.).

"A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut-off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (Goffman, 2011: 13). Such a definition identifies a total institution as a physical and social space constructed around a set of formal rules and procedures imposed by a single line of authority (management). This reveals why Goffman sees ships as a form of total institution. Although seafarers choose it by themselves, the aforementioned aspects of totality can be observed on board a ship much like in other types of total institutions.

As the life of seafarers is defined by periods of shipboard service during which communication with the outside world – to which they periodically return – is not completely limited, it is also important to study the impacts of a total institution on relations within one's primary social groups ashore, primarily with family and friends. Given the challenges of living and working at sea, the dissatisfaction with such relationships has resulted in the trend of increasing numbers of experienced and highly educated seafarers leaving the profession.

Much like other total institutions, ships require standardized modes of action in line with the procedures (Kuvačić, 2008: 68). The seafarer embarks for the first time on a vessel with a "presentation culture" (Goffman, 2011: 25), that is, with pre-acquired values, norms, and modes of behaviour that need to be adjusted to the objectives of working on board (Rodríguez-Martos Dauer, 2009: 99). The necessary adjustments are already taught at maritime schools and academies and should be acquired effectively in order to enable career advancement. Training programs introduce students to the structure and contents of the ship, as well as to social relations on board ships in order to prepare them to adjust to the specific features of their unique living and working environment, i.e. to the strictly regulated environment of a ship as a total institution (Simons, 2013: 66). The ship's commanding staff (captain, officers, etc.) submit written reports on the work of seafarers after each period of shipboard service, which represent the basis for their future engagement by the shipping company. After all, the staff normally report on adjustments in the behaviour of inmates of other total institutions, which affects their future treatment (e.g. release from prison or correctional facility in case of resocialization, absence or change of therapy in a hospital, military discharge or continued army service, etc.) (Goffman, 2011: 49).

The first adjustment required of seafarers concerns the physical space of the ship. The spaces in which they work, move around, socialize and sleep are mostly quite small and enclosed. While at sea, whether on or off duty, seafarers' movements are restricted similarly to the inmates of other total institutions. Hemmed in by the sea, they stay on board at all times except for brief periods while docked in ports, when due to high workload, various restrictions, or insufficient public transport connections, they are again for the most part not able to leave the wider port area (Rogošić, 2019: 79). The nature and rules of their work restrict their movement onboard the ship as well, in ways similar to the confinement of participants in Goffman's (2011) studies to their institutions. When on duty, they may even be forbidden to leave a particular cabin or room aboard the ship. Ship mechanics and engineers responsible for monitoring the mechanical operations may spend entire shifts in confined spaces, completely isolated from others. It is only members of the ship's security and hospitality staff who enjoy a wider space of movement and a wider social circle while on duty (Simons, 2013: 65). While passenger ships do offer a more diverse environment in terms of available facilities and social contacts compared to other vessels, their nature as total institu-

tions is manifested in strict regulations against socialising with passengers and visiting entertainment and leisure facilities intended for them. This is especially evident on cruise ships where seafarers can equally suffer from crises caused by separation from the mainland, but have a wider range of distractions at their disposal to help them through such moments (the crew size can exceed a thousand people and available crew facilities may include a bowling alley, a swimming pool, playgrounds, playrooms, discos, and bars) (Rogošić, 2019: 87-90).

Seafarers also need to adjust to their workmates on board. With a single nationality crew, it is possible to observe the same customs, preferences, and habits. However, an international crew can pose a challenge in terms of different worldviews, behavioural norms, and languages. It is important to strive for understanding within the crew, which both the shipping company and the commanding staff should insist upon. Professional, but at the same time friendly relations affect the quality of the work (Rodríguez-Martos Dauer, 2009: 99-100). Animosity among the crew leads to superficial relationships and solitude, which increases the risk of errors in the workplace and accidents at sea (Russo et al., 2013: 99). Despite a number of conventions regulating the communication and operating procedures at sea, poor communication remains one of the main causes of maritime accidents. More attention needs to be paid to the development of seafarers' relational skills in the course of training, while insisting on interaction, connection-building, and mutual respect among seafarers during their shipboard service (Rothblum et al., 2002; Chirea-Ungureanu and Rosenhave, 2012; Smith, 2016). Hafez (1999: 8) also underlines the importance of assessing the communication skills and openness of seafarers towards "the Other" in the process of recruitment by the shipping company.

In order to live in a psychophysically balanced way, seafarers need to engage in social contacts and be properly rested and fed. However, shipping companies still fail to appreciate the crucial impact of the seafarer as a person on the seafarer as an employee, often meeting only their primary necessities (Rodríguez-Martos Dauer, 2009: 8). Numerous studies have shown a lack of commitment to raising the quality of life aboard modern ships. Shipping company reports often reveal tensions and conflicts within the crew. A study conducted among Vietnamese seafarers shows that the majority of respondents have complaints about the working conditions onboard, pointing out extreme pressure and lack of proper rest and recreation opportunities (Nguyen et al, 2014: 232). Similar findings were reported in research among Croatian seafarers (Perišić, 2019; Rogošić, 2019). A study on Thai seafarers revealed that around 10% of seafarers that changed their ship did so because of conflicts with workmates or the captain (Rojnkureesatien and Jampaklay as cited in Smith, 2016: 5). Sometimes things can even escalate as in the case when the freighter Dumbravenin collided with the freighter Venlo in the Hamburg port and it was found that the captain was drunk, that he had been fighting with the crew, and that one of its members had fallen ill with

malaria. The crew had not been paid for several months, there were cockroaches in the kitchen and the refrigerator contained rotten meat (Lewis as cited in Hafez, 1999: 5). Another well-known case is that of the bulk carrier MV Qing May, where two crew members were stabbed to death and a third one wounded in a violent incident among the ship's crew.[4]

Sampson and Thomas (2003) point to a concerning rise in seafarers' social isolation on board ships, brought about by the constant changes in the crews they sail with and the inability to establish long-term friendships. The same authors note that shipping companies should invest more effort into synchronizing their employees' periods of shipboard service and shore/home leaves.

When many aspects of life aboard are lacking, the same is probably true of the food. There is no standardised seafarers' diet. The fact that an increasing number of seafarers are overweight points to a lack of care on the part of shipping companies (Oldenburg, Harth, and Jensen, 2013: 192). A study conducted by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF Seafarers) revealed that half of the respondents were worried about their weight (Smith, 2016: 5). Nutrition is, however, particularly important in relation to work. Poor nutrition limits productivity, not only in the conventional sense (due to lethargy and lack of drive, etc.), but also by contributing to increased absenteeism through reduced resistance to disease (Hafez, 1999: 6; Nittari et al., 2019).

In addition to physical isolation from the rest of society ashore and the limitations of space, content, and social contacts, hierarchical relations are another important aspect of any total institution. They are present on board ships to date, although the management of modern ships, as advanced technical systems operating in an increasingly complex marine environment, should be based on a flexible "learning organization" that encourages the participation of the crew in decision-making. This is especially important in urgent situations when there is no time to wait. The dispersal of decision-making authority prevents the company, captain, and/or officers from making arbitrary and capricious decisions, which have been the cause of numerous maritime accidents through passive acceptance of such decisions that were understood as wrong (Bielić as cited in Russo, Popović, and Tomić, 2014: 175). As with other total institutions, there is a clear division between the commanding staff and lower-ranking crew members. Forsyth and Bankston (1983: 10) point out that such a structure resembles a caste, because members of the commanding staff neither eat nor associate much with the rest of the crew informally (as they have somewhat better facilities at their disposal in terms of accommodation, food, leisure,

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[4] See more under e.g.: https://gcaptain.com/two-killed-one-injured-in-crewmember-attack-off-philippines/ and https://www.vesseltracker.com/jp/Ships/Qing-May-9492220.html (accessed on: 9 March 2022)

etc.). However, unlike in other total institutions, this can be especially difficult for the commanding staff and can lead to their isolation as they are separated from the mainland themselves. That is why certain forms of networking and socializing are nevertheless maintained, in line with the "working philosophy" of the captain, i.e. his own understanding of the ideal way to operate a ship. In this context, seafarers stress the importance of maintaining a balance between firmness and discipline on the one hand, and friendliness and approachability on the other (Hafez, 1999: 13; Bielić, 2004; Carotenuto et al., 2012).

The all-encompassing nature of a total institution implies responsibility for meeting the needs and ensuring the security and wellbeing of the social actors involved. The organization of daily routines should serve the purpose of the total institution. Neglecting the needs of the individuals involved can result in their reduced efficiency. This is especially true of the voluntary form of total institutions such as ships, which can be abandoned at one's own discretion, with negative consequences for the organisation (Goffman, 2011: 20). Shipping companies should strive to mitigate the negative aspects of life aboard the ship as a total institution, which are generally not adequately addressed.

3. Methodology

The primary aim of the paper is to examine the attitudes of seafarers regarding their working and living conditions at sea. By using a survey as the research method and a five-point Likert scale as a measuring tool, the study examined the degree of satisfaction of seafarers in relation to aspects of the ship's totality. Some of them were mentioned in the previous passages, and some were further elaborated or added as relevant for modern seafaring. The study followed the guidelines presented in monographs on organisational management in the maritime domain (Grech, Horberry, and Koester, 2008; Fei, 2018). The list of indicators used is given in Table 2. With reference to the aspects of the ship's totality, expressed in terms of satisfaction with working and living aboard ships, we inquired about the seafarers' future career projections, i.e. their intention of spending their entire working lives at sea.

The survey was conducted between June and July 2020. The snowball sampling method was used, starting from two initial sources, namely the researchers' personal contacts (friends and acquaintances employed as seafarers) and members of the Seafarers' Union of Croatia who participated in a previous study conducted by one of the authors of the paper. The sample included 112 seafarers from the territory of Dalmatia, and a detailed structure of the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics is presented in Table 1.

The questionnaire mostly consisted of closed-ended questions. The selected results, tables, and figures in this paper mainly indicate aspects of life and work on board ships that seafarers have no significant influence on. This indicates the nature of the ship as a total institution. Our study was, nevertheless, guided by Goffman's (2011: 9-10) view that life within a total institution (in his case, a mental hospital) "becomes meaningful, reasonable, and normal once you get close to it" and "try to learn about the social world of the (hospital) inmate, as this world is subjectively experienced by him." Therefore, open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire, asking seafarers to elaborate on their future career projections. Furthermore, certain results of the survey were interpreted in this paper using the findings of a qualitative study that was conducted in 2019 by means of a semi-structured interview with fifteen seafarers from Split (Rogošić, 2019). The study in question addressed the leisure time of seafarers aboard the ship and "at home", and the interview protocol covered aspects comparable to those within our study.

Drawing upon the results of previous studies and the preceding theoretical considerations, our research set out to address the following hypotheses:

1. Respondents are, for the most part, not satisfied with the aspects of the ship's totality.
2. Respondents, for the most part, intend to spend their entire working lives at sea due to a lack of better career prospects ashore.
3. Statistically significant differences exist in career projections with respect to the respondents' age as well as family and marital status.

For the purpose of credibility of the research findings, the principles of inclusive research were applied in interpreting the survey data, although this research strategy was not implemented in our study to a greater extent. Sociological studies of seafarers are scarce, with certain authors comparing this social group to the social types of "marginal man" (R. E. Park) and "stranger" (G. Simmel) (Forsyth and Bankston, 1983: 8). Since the distance and detachment of the seafarers' workplace make their sociocultural characteristics relatively unfamiliar to the wider society (but also the professional sociological community), we asked three of the respondents to comment on this text. The obtained insider insights allowed for certain reinterpretations of the text, but also helped in avoiding one-sided views and provided additional recommendations for further research.[5]

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[5] For more on inclusive research as a research strategy, see e.g. Nind (2014).

4. Results

Most respondents come from Split-Dalmatia County (41.9%), followed by those from Dubrovnik-Neretva County (25%), Šibenik-Knin County (18.8%), and Zadar County (14.3%). The study included 111 male (99.1%) and one female (0.9%) respondent, confirming seafaring as a male occupation. Similar findings were also reported in numerous international studies (e.g. Sulpice, 2011; Kitada, 2013). As far as age is concerned, 40.2% of respondents are in the 18-29 age group. A third (32.1%) belong to the 30-39 age group, while 8.1% are 40-49 years old. A fifth of respondents (19.6%) are between 50 and 59 years of age. Most respondents hold a graduate or undergraduate university degree (60.7%), while the rest mainly completed secondary school (38.4%). Half of the respondents are married (50%), with a slightly lower percentage of those who are not married (41.1%). Three respondents (2.7%) are divorced, while five (4.4%) are in a cohabiting relationship. The distribution with respect to the family status is similar. Half of the respondents have no children (50.9%), while the other half (49.1%) have one (14.3%) or more children (34.8%). The sample is heterogeneous in terms of years of seafaring service. Thus, 16.1% of respondents have up to one year of service, 34.8% have between one and ten years of service, 39.3% have between ten and thirty years of service, while 9.8% of respondents have more than 30 years of service aboard vessels.

Table 1
Socio-demographic sample characteristics (%)

		f	%
County	Zadar	16	14.3
	Split-Dalmatia	47	41.9
	Šibenik-Knin	21	18.8
	Dubrovnik-Neretva	28	25
Sex	male	111	99.1
	female	1	0.9
Age	18-29	45	40.2
	30-39	36	32.1
	40-49	9	8.1
	50-59	22	19.6
Education	primary school	1	0.9
	secondary school	43	38.4
	undergraduate/graduate university degree	68	60.7
Marital status	married	56	50
	not married	46	41.1
	divorced	3	2.7
	widow/-er	2	1.8
	cohabitation	5	4.4
Family status	no children	57	50.9
	one child	16	14.3
	two or more children	39	34.8
Years of service	up to one year	18	16.1
	1 – 10 years	39	34.8
	10 – 30 years	44	39.3
	30 years and more	11	9.8

Most of the seafarers surveyed have employment contracts that include from three to six months (50%) or up to three months (41.3%) of continuous shipboard service. Longer periods of continuous shipboard service are generally rare. Only 6.7% of respondents reported mostly working under contracts involving periods of continuous shipboard service from six months to a year (see Figure 1). The results indicating relatively short contract periods support the conclusions by Sampson and Thomas (2003) on the difficulty of establishing long-term friendships and the problem of social isolation of today's seafarers due to frequently changing the crews they sail with. The same problem was underlined by respondents within our study in their answers to one of the open-ended questions.

Figure 1
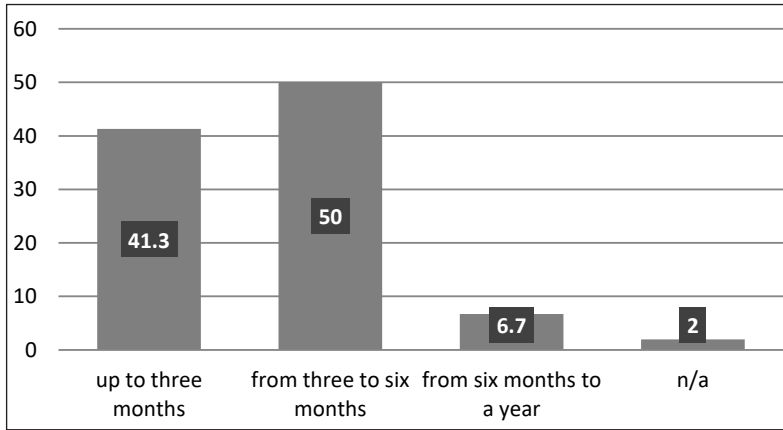Most frequent periods of shipboard service in the last five years (%)

Figure 2 shows the results concerning the respondents' general job satisfaction. Most of them reported being satisfied with working aboard (69.3%), although 22.7% stated being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. In addition, 8% of respondents expressed being dissatisfied with their job. Considering the sociodemographic features of the sample, the category of dissatisfied respondents mainly consists of those who have children ($\chi2=8.347$; df=2; p=0.007), while those without children are more often neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
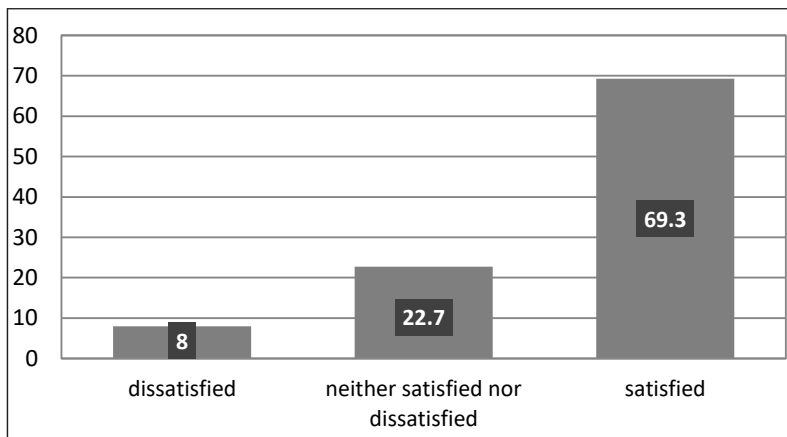
Figure 2
Satisfaction with working aboard (%)

Table 2 gives a more detailed overview of the satisfaction with certain aspects of living and working at sea, which can be observed in approaching the ship as a total institution. Seafarers have little influence over these aspects, meaning that they are not able to change them significantly, nor to distance themselves from them when at sea (unlike in the normal lives of people ashore). The arithmetic mean values of most indicators $(2.5 \leq M < 3.5)$ show that respondents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the aspects considered. A greater level of satisfaction was established only with respect to salary (M=4.41; SD=0.97). Judging by the results presented, as well as the respondents' own statements regarding their future career projections in response to one of the open-ended questions, a high salary appears to be the ultimate motive for working on board.

As far as the physical space and contents of the ship are concerned, respondents show a lack of satisfaction with the level of comfort of sleeping cabins (M=3.08; SD=1.02), noise and vibration levels (M=2.68; SD=0.94), leisure time options (M=2.83; SD=0.99), nutrition (M= 3.14; SD=0.98), health care (M=3.16; SD=0.83), the quality of psychological assistance offered (M=2.61; SD=1.16), the quality of working equipment (M=3.2; SD=0.92) and the dynamism and interestingness of their work (M=3.24; S=0.97). A lack of satisfaction is also expressed in regard to social relations on board, including both formal relations (measured by the attitude of superiors towards the respondents – M= 3.34; SD=0.82) and the general personal relations (M=3.23; SD=0.76).

Although the values obtained are marginal, respondents may be said to be satisfied with the possibility of moving up within the ship's ranks, i.e. promotion (M=3.54; SD=1.04). The preceding indicator belongs to the sphere of formal relations as it depends on the ship's commanding staff, who prepare reports on the performance of seafarers, but also on the company's advancement policy. Future studies should focus in more detail on the satisfaction of seafarers with the factors of advancement within the ship's ranks. Marginal values were also established with regard to the possibility of communication with family and friends, which respondents stated to be partly satisfied with (M=3.59; SD=1.14). Finally, respondents reported to be neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with gaining useful work experience through working on board the ship (M=3.39; SD= 0.88), the average period of shipboard service (M=3.37; SD=1.08), and getting to know new people and places (M=3.23; SD=0.91).

Table 2
Satisfaction with aspects of living and working at sea

	M	SD
salary	4.41	0.97
level of comfort of sleeping cabins	3.08	1.02
noise and vibration levels	2.68	0.94
leisure time options	2.83	0.99
nutrition	3.14	0.98
health care	3.16	0.83
quality of psychological assistance	2.61	1.16
quality of working equipment	3.2	0.92
dynamic and interesting work	3.24	0.97
formal relations – attitude of superiors	3.34	0.82
personal relations	3.23	0.76
possibility of moving up within the ship's ranks	3.54	1.04
communication with family and friends	3.59	1.14
gaining useful working experience	3.39	0.88
average period of shipboard service	3.37	1.08
meeting new people and places	3.23	0.91

Leisure time was given more attention in this paper. Previous studies have shown that well-spent leisure time can be an important factor in maintaining a good atmosphere among the crew. Furthermore, it can positively impact the performance of seafarers and make the ship's routines more bearable by reducing boredom, social isolation, and the problem of depression often faced by seafarers (Oldenburg and Jensen, 2019; Sampson and Ellis, 2019). Nevertheless, the results of our study point to a lack of awareness of shipping companies on the needs of seafarers (see Figure 3). A fifth of respondents (21.3%) consider the quality of organised leisure time during shipboard service insufficient, while a third (32%) rate it as neither sufficient nor insufficient. About a half find it sufficient (46.7%). Similar results are reported with respect to the quantity of leisure time. Around a third consider it insufficient (29.7%), while 13.5% find it neither sufficient nor insufficient. Just over a half of respondents believe they have enough leisure time while on board (56.8%). Such results come as no surprise if we consider the findings of previous studies, but also the warnings of trade unions and other professional organisations within the maritime industry. All of them point to the intertwined processes of technological development that allow for faster modes of operation, the reduction of ship crews (as a part of work is performed by machines), and unrecorded overtime hours that seafarers are forced to work to ensure their companies' efficiency within an increasingly competitive environment (Bielić and Zec, 2004; Russo et al., 2013; Bhatia, 2019).

Figure 3
Quantity of leisure time during shipboard service and quality of organised leisure time (%)
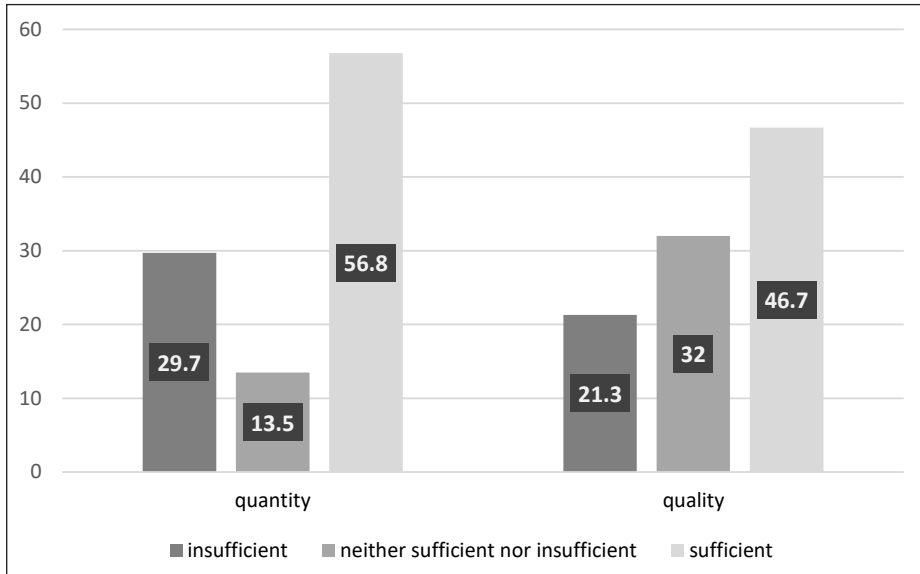
Only 13.5% of respondents state that shipping companies invest effort into the seafarers' leisure time, while 38.2% say this is true of the commanding staff within the crew. A higher percentage is understandable in this case since the commanding staff shares the fate of other crew members. They are also not able to leave their total institution and go home or somewhere else after work, or to socialize with some other people. On the other hand, as many as 57% of the seafarers surveyed believe they would do their job better if their leisure time was richer in content. A third of respondents say they are not able to estimate (30.7%), while 12% state the opposite to be true. Most respondents believe that the leisure time they spend at home is of higher quality (84%), and that time seems to pass more quickly at home than aboard the ship.

The lack of quantity and quality of leisure time during shipboard service is also indicated in the statements of participants of a qualitative study conducted by Rogošić (2019: 33-51) on seafarers from Split. The participants pointed out port stays as a special problem, where "you don't sleep for two days in a row" so people "can't wait to get back to the open sea." Among the relatively standard leisure contents available on board, they listed the gym, table football, billiards, PlayStation, basketball, karaoke, and movie watching. Their availability, however, depends on the shipping company and the type of vessel in question. They also stressed that "the crew should be O.K." or otherwise leisure time boils down to staying in one's cabin, watching movies and TV series, or surfing the internet if available. Several participants said they had too much free time, indicating precisely its poor quality. Thus, they pointed out that they could not "just lay in the cabin staring at the ceiling" and that it would be better to "work constantly for these four months on board to pass as quickly as possible."

A third of respondents in our study (31.4%) do not intend to spend their entire working lives at sea (see Figure 4). A slightly higher percentage state the opposite, but only because they believe that it would be difficult to find a better job ashore (42.6%). Only a fifth intend to continue sailing because they love their jobs (19.2%), and 6.8% of respondents have no clear career projection.

Figure 4
Intention of spending one's entire working life at sea (%)
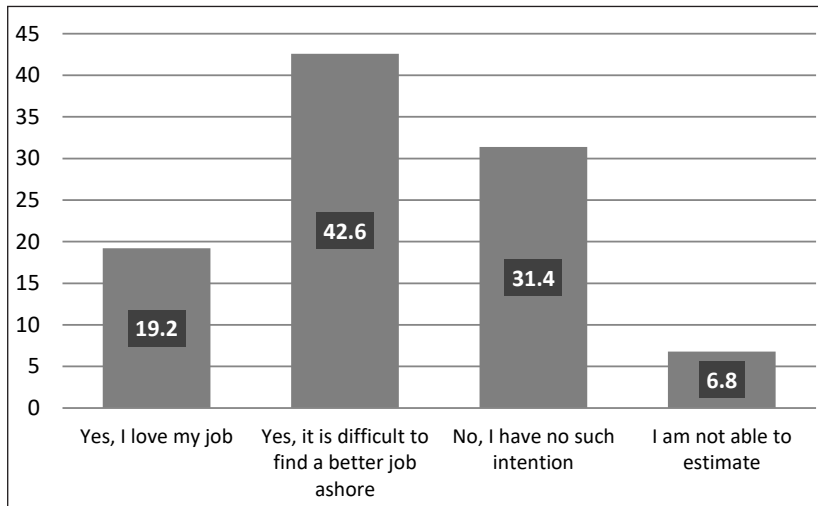
The preceding results are elaborated further in the respondents' answers to the open-ended question on their future career projections. It was set as follows: "*If you do not intend to spend your entire working life on board, what are the reasons for that?*". The total nature of living and working at sea proves to be a major challenge for many of the respondents. This should be a particular point of concern for shipping companies if they want to retain high-performing crew members:

> "*Working on a ship requires a lot of sacrifices. The human population lives on land, and we seafarers give half our lives to the sea. We're away from family, friends, and everyday life. Life passes us by quickly, the children grow up too fast. The upside is the salary and home leaves. As it turns out, the optimum is to spend some ten years at sea and to turn to jobs ashore in the same rank right after your first promotion into a commanding rank.*"

> "*My goal is to go home. I will give up the sea as soon as I take care of my family's housing issue and save up enough to start a business that will bring in twelve thousand kunas a month. The only thing is that we seafarers are bad investors and don't really like to take risks, so I will probably continue sailing until I buy two or three apartments and start living off rental income. It is the safest investment, but it also takes the longest time to achieve this goal. Spending time with my family is the reason why I want to give up seafaring.*"

"I don't intend to work as a seafarer for the rest of my life because of the lack of freedom to leave the ship and the personal relations among the crew."

"People are the problem – arse-lickers and chancers."

"I wish to leave each time when there is a quarrel among the crew."

"No one completely sane can do this job for their whole life. My goal is to find a suitable job ashore. I already tried, but it didn't work out. Adaptation is difficult, many people stay at sea because they don't have a better option."

5. Discussion

The paper applies the concept of total institution in studying everyday life of seafarers aboard modern ships. A number of authors have reflected on this concept within maritime sociology, with some advocating it and others critically questioning or challenging it (see more in Kołodziej-Durnaś, Kołodziej, and Królikowska, 2021: 31-41). When discussing the differences between ships and total institutions in the classical sense – such as prisons and mental hospitals – authors point out free choice, the difference in conditions depending on one's rank and type of ship, occasional returns home and to one's family, and the contact with different cultures while docked in ports (Gerstenberger, 1996; Maurizio, 2013; Kołodziej-Durnaś et al., 2021). Ships do not involve complete isolation, especially since the advent of the Internet, which crews have access to from time to time. In addition, there is no strict supervision on ships as in the total institutions mentioned, so seafarers perform their work relatively independently, and they can also decide about their free time without reporting to their superiors. However, even critics of the concept agree that differences between life on land and at sea do exist, especially in terms of greater limitation of space, content, and social contacts aboard the ship, i.e. its limited access to the outside world in general. For this reason, Kołodziej-Durnaś et al. (2021: 41) see ships as 'quasi-total institutions', noting that instead of making far-reaching generalisations scholars should focus on examining the applicability of the concept among different social environments and social actors.

Drawing upon previous studies and their use of the concept of total institution in investigating the maritime industry, our research set out to test three hypotheses. The first hypothesis was accepted. The respondents are, for the most part, not satisfied with the aspects of seafaring that concern the physical space and contents of the ship, as well as social relations within the crew (Table 2). Although no clear dissatisfaction with the indicators offered (1≤ M ≤ 2.4) was established, the results of the study point to modern ships as a voluntary form of total institutions in which greater attention should be paid to the crew. Additional efforts should be directed towards addressing

the psychophysical and social needs of seafarers with the aim of raising the crew's efficiency and preventing the attrition of employees to other industries. The general job satisfaction of the respondents (69.1%) is mainly based on salary. However, it is not a sufficient condition for long-term employment for many of them, according to the answers on career projections.

The results indicate the rejection of the second hypothesis. Respondents mostly intend to spend their entire working lives at sea (61.8%), but not only due to a lack of better career prospects ashore. Some of them, by contrast, do point out that they love their jobs (19.2%). The findings indicating that a significant proportion of seafarers do not intend to spend their working lives at sea should, nevertheless, become a particular point of concern for ship companies (especially when this involves high-performing seafarers and trained officers).

Another point of interest in our research concerned the relationship between the seafarers' age and marital and family status on the one hand, and their future career projections on the other. The preceding results show that the separation from family and friends represents a problem due to which some seafarers intend to leave the profession, as confirmed by a number of other studies. The risk of deculturalisation is also observed, in the sense that seafarers can have difficulties in adjusting to the life on land once they get used to the ship's routines (Forsyth and Bankston, 1983; Rodríguez-Martos Dauer, 2009). They have quite a bit of time on their hands after returning home from their shipboard service, and the organisation of this time can be quite challenging. A source of frustration can be found in the lack of time of their loved ones who are burdened by work, education, household duties, children, etc. The seafarers' return imposes quite a different pace on their partnerships and family lives (additional obligations, questioning decisions, etc.) (Russo et al., 2014: 176-177). Partnerships can also be burdened by a lack of trust and loneliness during shipboard service. Also, seafarers often miss important family events, and their children may not even recognize them when they return from the sea or may find it difficult to accept the authority of a person who is absent for a significant period of time (Maurizio, 2013: 202-203). The problems of undermined self-concept and the challenges of social reintegration experienced by seafarers have also been observed as consequences of the time spent in other total institutions (Simons, 2013: 67). The issues concerning seafarers' intimate relationships, private lives, and life on land in general are a great challenge for seafarers, and one that the maritime industry needs to find ways to address (e.g. by establishing cheap or free communication networks, providing services and counselling to family members during shipboard service, arranging occasional visits of partners on board, or paid tourist trips, etc.) (Russo et al., 2014: 177; Sampson and Ellis, 2019).

The results have disproved the third research hypothesis. No statistically significant differences were found between the seafarers' age ($\chi2$=13.314; df=9; p=0.068), their marital ($\chi2$=10.33; df=12; p=0.587) and family status ($\chi2$=3.059; df=3; p=0.383), and the intention of spending their entire working lives at sea. The results show that a significant proportion of the sample have no such intention. Future studies should take into account seafarers' perspectives on the possibility of marriage and/or parenthood in the future and consider how these impact their career projections. The harmony of such relationships can be disrupted by the long-term performance of maritime activities. According to the study by Rogošić (2019: 41), seafarers state that partnerships can be a significant source of support both at sea and at home. Those who have lost a stable network of relationships ashore feel the need of finding a partner and establishing an intimate relationship, although they are often concerned with how stable it could be if they intend to spend longer periods of time at sea.

Some of the limitations of our study are, at the same time, associated with recommendations for future research. Greater attention needs to be paid to the different policies of ship companies, the types of ships, and the hierarchy ranks of crew members. Such factors can have a significant impact on the conditions of seafaring, the seafarers' perception of the total character of the environment, and their overall satisfaction (Rogošić, 2019; Sampson and Ellis, 2019; Kołodziej-Durnaś et al., 2021). It is also necessary to conduct studies in an international context for the purpose of establishing any national differences in seafarers' attitudes. In line with Goffman's (2011:10) view on the study of total institutions, insider perspectives of ships are also necessary as a trustworthy and precise method of getting closer to this world. Seafarers themselves tend to use expressions denoting the total character of the ship. Despite their frequent comparisons of life at sea with a "moving prison", systematic perspectives of the ship's actors on ships as total institutions represent quite a rare analytical approach (Lamvik as cited in Kołodziej-Durnaś et al., 2021: 33).

6. Conclusion

The conducted study points to the benefits of applying and developing the concept of total institution within maritime sociology. It can also be an important source of information for shipping companies wishing to improve the conditions on board their ships for seafarers. Studying and mitigating the totalizing aspects of living and working aboard ships can contribute to the human resources policies of shipping companies and help them in retaining high-performing seafarers and attracting new ones. Although detailed recommendations including actual operative measures are becoming more frequent (e.g. Nguyen et al., 2014; Sampson and Ellis, 2019), the human factor within the maritime industry remains an under-addressed and under-studied issue.

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Prilozi raspravi o brodu kao totalnoj instituciji: anketno istraživanje dalmatinskih pomoraca

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Sažetak

U radu je primijenjen koncept totalne institucije (E. Goffman) na specifičnu stvarnost pomoraca. Tijekom plovidbe spomenutoj su društvenoj kategoriji ograničene mogućnosti izbora fizičkog prostora, sadržaja i ljudi za uspostavljanje odnosa. Pomorci se trebaju prilagoditi uvjetima broda te autoritetu kompanije i nadređenih unutar posade koji određuju njihovu svakodnevicu. Izazovi rada i života na brodu rezultiraju trendom napuštanja ovog zanimanja od strane iskusnih i visokoobrazovanih pomoraca. Cilj je studije istražiti uvjete plovidbe dalmatinskih pomoraca, kao i njihove karijerne projekcije. Istraživanje je provedeno metodom online ankete tijekom lipnja i srpnja 2020. godine, pri čemu je uzorak snježne grude obuhvatio 112 ispitanika. Rezultati upućuju na izostanak zadovoljstva u odnosu na većinu razmatranih aspekata plovidbe, izuzmemo li zaradu, mogućnost napredovanja te komunikaciju s obitelji i prijateljima. Dok su većini istraživanih pomoraca ovo dovoljni uvjeti za boravak na brodu tijekom cijelog radnog vijeka, svaki treći ispitanik nema takve namjere (31,4%). Preciznije, 42,6% ispitanika namjerava ostati na brodu isključivo jer smatraju kako je teško pronaći bolji posao na kopnu, dok samo petina voli svoj posao (19,2%). Rezultati upućuju na važnost unaprjeđivanja uvjeta plovidbe radi zadržavanja kvalitetne posade i jačanja sigurnosne kulture brodova. Sociološka istraživanja trebaju biti podloga u ublažavanju negativnih učinaka totalne institucije kao sve vidljivijeg koncepta unutar maritimne sociologije.

Ključne riječi: pomorci, totalna institucija, brod, Goffman, maritimna sociologija.