

# Reimagining Maritime Institutional Culture in India: Policy, Leadership, and Governance Reforms for Inclusive Growth by 2047

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## Abstract

*This study examines how institutional culture, leadership practices, and governance frameworks interact to shape gender inclusivity in India's maritime sector using a qualitative, secondary-data-based approach. Drawing on Feminist Institutionalism and organisational culture theory, the paper undertakes a comparative documentary analysis of policy documents, official reports, institutional communications, and peer-reviewed literature related to central maritime agencies, state maritime boards, port authorities, and maritime education institutions. The findings indicate that while formal governance reforms and policy commitments to inclusion are increasingly visible, their influence on internal opportunity structures is frequently constrained by informal norms and leadership orientations that prioritise performance and growth over cultural change. Gender-related initiatives are often programmatic and weakly embedded in core governance processes, resulting in persistent gaps between policy intent and practice. The study proposes an interpretive framework linking formal governance architecture, leadership discourse, and workplace culture to observed inclusivity outcomes. It concludes that inclusive growth in India's maritime sector by 2047 will depend on integrating gender considerations into governance accountability, leadership development, and routine institutional processes, alongside continued regulatory and infrastructure reform.*

**Keywords :** Maritime governance; Gender inclusion; Institutional culture; Leadership orientation; Feminist Institutionalism; Indian ports; Public sector reform

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The maritime industry in India is going through a long period of institutional change due to the national development agenda and pressures of global integration. Policy statements like the Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 represent a proactive agenda that focuses on modernisation of ports, corporatisation of governance systems, digitalisation, environmental conservation and streamlining of regulations. Through these reforms, maritime infrastructure will be one of the strategic facilitators of trade competitiveness, logistics efficiency, and long-term economic growth (MoPSW, 2021, 2023). Recent empirical evidence suggests that while Indian ports are comparatively better prepared in environmental management and policy alignment, they remain less equipped in technological and decarbonisation-

specific readiness, reflecting capacity constraints in the current institutional framework (Kumar et al., 2026).

In addition to physical infrastructure and regulatory transformation, the current policy discussions are more and more accepting of the role that institutional capacity, leadership capacity, and human capital play in delivering results of reform. According to comparative public administration studies, the quality of governance and organisational culture is a decisive factor when it comes to defining the way in which formal reforms should be perceived, regulated, and maintained in the long run, especially in those sectors that are infrastructure-intensive with a complex stakeholder environment (Brunet, 2019; Johnston, 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Analyses of systemic barriers in India's shipbuilding sector highlight structural and financial constraints such as high input costs, complex regulatory mechanisms, and capital intensity as dominant

causal factors shaping governance performance and institutional outcomes (Kumar & Koul, 2026).

Gender inclusion is now getting formal attention in the Indian maritime industry with policies and initiatives like SagarMeinSamman, gender advisories, as released by the Directorate General of Shipping, and the mention of diversity and safety in official documents. However, women still remain very underrepresented in top decision-making jobs in maritime administrations, port authorities, regulatory bodies and maritime educational establishments. Although the entry and training level has been improving gradually, there is less progress to the leadership and governance levels (Kitada, 2019; Punj & Jalan, 2025; Sil et al., 2024). Moreover, stakeholder studies on green port development demonstrate that administrative, financial, and coordination barriers weaken perceived effectiveness and future commitment to sustainability actions, underlining the importance of inclusive and participatory governance approaches (Kumar & Yadav, 2026).

This obvious discrepancy makes some crucial inquiries concerning the institutional culture, the leadership orientation, and governance practices of the maritime system in India, and goes beyond the discussion of the technical policy design to the inner dynamics of the public-sector organisations.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

In the last twenty years, reforms in the maritime governance in India have been mostly structural and procedural in nature such as landlord port, the public-private partnership, regulatory concentration, and digitalisation of port and vessel operations. Efficiency gains, mobilisation of investments, and outcomes of logistics performance are the main aspects of these reforms that have been widely discussed in the scholarly literature (Dasgupta & Sinha, 2016).

Institutional culture and leadership practices, in their turn, are comparatively poorly explored on a systematic level. Research in public administration and organisational sociology suggests that institutional change is usually accompanied by informal norms that define the functions of authority, career mobility and decision-making that frequently replicate gendered power dynamics even

where institutions have undergone a reformation (Acker, 2006; Mackay, 2014). These relations are especially acute in the maritime transport and port administration, which is dominated by males.

The current scholarly research and policy commentary indicates in the Indian maritime setting the existence of institutional resistance, symbolic adherence to gender-related instructions, and cultural change unevenness, across organisations. However, this evidence is still scattered in policy reports, sectoral studies and international comparative research. Very little synthesis exists that specifically explores the maritime governance in India in terms of an institutional and cultural approach and connects the formal governance reforms to the issue of leadership and gendered opportunity structure.

This discontinuity limits the academic knowledge as well as the policy education in a period when comprehensive development has turned into the national goal.

### 1.3 Purpose and Research Objectives

This study aims at critically analyzing the ways in which the secondary sources have understood institutional culture, leadership practices and governance structures as a factor in determining gender inclusivity in the maritime industry in pre-2047 India. The research places the issue of gender inclusion in the context of more general discussions on reforms in the governance of the public sector and institutional change as well as leadership in infrastructure-based development.

The paper is based on the peer-reviewed literature, official policy reports, and institutional literature that is publicly available to analyze the interaction between formal reforms and informal norms and leadership discourse in maritime governance institutions. The approach is based on secondary data and aims at uniting the scattered pieces of evidence and establishing structural tendencies that affect the representation, voice, and participation in the decision-making process. The aims of the research are as follows:

1. Analyze peer-reviewed studies, policy sources, and official reports concerning maritime governance and gender inclusion in India.

2. Determine cultural and procedural obstacles to women involvement and progress through major maritime institutions, which are also manifested in secondary sources.
3. Research leadership orientations and governance practices that seem to enable or limit inclusive decision-making in maritime organisations.
4. Develop a Maritime Institutional Culture Reform Framework that is consistent with India objectives of inclusive growth until 2047.

#### 1.4 Contribution of the Study

This work has three contributions, which are interrelated.

Theoretically, it touches Feminist Institutionalism and organisational culture literature on the Indian maritime setting and shows how the methods can be used to research the topic of governance reforms in a sector historically studied through the economic and technical approach.

In analytical terms, the paper summarises scattered secondary material on maritime governance, leadership, and gender into a consistent pattern of interpretation, which allows cross-institutional comparison and the determination of patterns.

In practice, the paper will provide a reform-oriented framework and indicative roadmap of policymakers and institutional heads within the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, the Directorate General of Shipping, state maritime boards, port authorities, and maritime education institutions, based on publicly available evidence and in line with national priorities of development.

## 2. Governance and Policy

### 2.1 Maritime Governance Architecture in India

The maritime governance architecture of India has been typified as multi-tier institutional structure consisting of central ministries, regulatory agencies, state level bodies and autonomous/semi-autonomous bodies. At national level, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has the role of policy making, legislative supervisory role, as well as strategy coordination of ports, shipping and inland waterways. The Directorate General of Shipping is the major maritime regulator, which

manages the safety of vessels, certification of seafarers, international standards of marine education and adherence to international conventions. At the sub-national level, non-major ports are under state maritime boards that manage based on the state-specific legislation and have the powers of regulating the improvement, concession, and the operations of ports. Significant ports, under the Major Port Authorities Act, 2021, have renewed financial and administrative independence but are subject to central control. The Indian Maritime University and a chain of related institutions controlled by the Directorate General of Shipping are the foundation of maritime education and training (MoPSW, 2021, 2023).

Hansard studies of this mode of governance underscore the constant conflicts between centralised control and institutional autonomy, bureaucracy, and commercialisation, and regulatory compliance and organisational agility (Haralambides, 2017; T. Notteboom et al., 2013). These strains affect the internal organisational cultures, leadership styles and career structures and with a direct implication on inclusion and representation.

### 2.2 Governance Reform Agenda under Vision 2030 and Amrit Kaal 2047

The Maritime India Vision 2030 presents a governance agenda of reform that focuses on efficiency, transparency, digitalisation, environmental responsibility and capacity building. The Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 builds on this trend and the maritime infrastructure is a cornerstone of national development in 25 years.

Although the two visions also recognize the human capital building and the development of the institutional capacity as the enablers of the reform, gender inclusion is implemented programmatically rather than as a principle of governance. The academic literature on long-term infrastructure planning presents the idea that most of these visions tend to focus more on physical and financial capital, and the institutional culture and leadership practices are not operationalised or monitored sufficiently (Barber, 2021; Flyvbjerg, 2014; Salmi & Sonck-Rautio, 2018).

This generates a gap in governance whereby official promises of inclusiveness are in parallel with only weak means of cultural transformation, accountability of leadership, or systematic evaluation of gendered outcomes in institutions.

### 2.3 Global Developments in Maritime Governance and Gender

Maritime governance on the international front has taken into consideration some tenets of gender equality, diversity in leadership, and safe working environments due to the efforts of organisations including the International Maritime Organization and the International Labour Organization. Global conventions on inclusion according to peer-reviewed literature have been shown to affect the discourse of national policies, and it is also observed that the institutionalisation of global conventions on inclusion varies widely in domestic systems of government (Emad et al., 2025; Kitada, 2019).

Comparative studies of port authorities and maritime authorities in Europe, East Asia, and selected developing economies suggest that leadership commitment, formal accountability processes, and organisational learning processes are the keys to the translation of policy intent into practice (Emad et al., 2025; Turnbull & Wass, 2007). These foreign experiences can help us use them as a valuable reference point with which we can analyze the maritime governance reforms in India in an institutional, and cultural context.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Feminist Institutionalism and Organisational Culture

Feminist Institutionalism offers a very powerful analytical mode that can be used to study the way in which governance systems reinforce gender powers via both formal and informal practices. Unlike traditional institutional strategies that lay stress on legislation and structural solutions, Feminist Institutionalism previews the involvement of quotidian activities, cultural anticipations and the presuppositions that have been historically predetermined in the formation of organisational results. This is how institutions are viewed as gendered and they carry with them tacit rules of

power, leadership and professional legitimacy (Acker, 2006; Mackay, 2014).

These gendered interactions often take invisible and long-lasting forms within the context of the public-sector organisations. The existence of formal promises of equality may be combined with informal patterns which limit the ability of women to take up decision-making roles, strategic assignments, and leadership pipes. It was empirically found that institutional change is gradual and resistance is manifested not by opposing it directly, but by reinterpretation, delay, or symbolic compliance (Mackay, 2014). This wisdom is relevant especially in the transport and maritime industry where professional identity is highly associated with technical skills and top-down authority.

This analysis is augmented by the organisational culture theory. According to Schein, the organisational culture is conceptualised to work on observable artefacts, espoused values and strongly held assumptions that influence the behaviour (Schein, 2010). Another phenomenon in the application of gender inclusive language in official documentation in infrastructure agencies is that espoused values are often reflected in the language, whereas underlying beliefs about the appropriateness of leadership and the occupation remain unaltered. As a result, the leadership orientation turns out to be the crucial factor in the transition of formal promises into practice that makes or breaks reforms as internalised or rhetorical (Denison et al., 2014).

### 3.2 Governance Reforms in Maritime and Transport Sectors

A move towards corporatisation, decentralisation and market-based reforms in the maritime and transport sector is recorded in the literature on maritime and transport governance. Research on port governance describe the practice of introducing landlord models to service-oriented ones; more managerial autonomy is supposed to promote efficiency and investment appeal (Brooks & Pallis, 2012; T. E. Notteboom & Rodrigue, 2005). These reforms have been followed by a constant conflict between business demands and social responsibility in developing economies.

Governance reforms in ports, shipping, and inland waterways have been widely studied by Indian scholarship in prospect of logistical cost reduction, port-led industrialisation and multimodal integration. Studies of national waterways have shown that institutional coordination, regulatory transparency, and leadership dedication determine the success of infrastructure investments. The recent research on port-industrialisation and maritime-based clusters highlights the importance of governance institutions in facilitating the regional development performance, industrial connection, and job creation. However, economic performance, operational efficiency, and investment results are mostly the priority of this body of work. Little attention is paid to organisational culture and internal governance dynamics, and gender inclusion is an uncommon institutional governance question. In situations where governance issues are detected, they are usually presented in the context of bureaucratic capability, regulatory duplication, or project implementation instead of informal norms and leadership approaches. This gap constrains the knowledge of the structural reforms and its impact on the internal opportunity structures in the maritime institutions (Chauhan et al., 2021; Dasgupta & Sinha, 2016; Kumar, 2025; Kumar et al., 2024; Kumar & Yadav, 2024; Notteboom et al., 2013).

### 3.3 Gender, Leadership, and Decision-Making in Maritime Institutions

Global studies have continued to reveal that women are still underrepresented in leadership roles in maritime administrations, ports and maritime education institutions. Research notes that there are several obstacles, such as male-dominated professional contacts, gender-based demands on leadership behaviour, and the lack of access to high-visibility jobs, which are entry points to senior leadership (Kitada, 2019).

According to the leadership diversity literature, the inclusive leadership styles are linked to the increased organisational learning, transparency, and engagement of stakeholders in the public sector (Ng & Sears, 2017). Nonetheless, the institutional change is not necessarily brought about by the existence of women in top leadership posts. Representation by token may also remain with the

same norm of decision-making especially when women are not represented in the strategic committees or in the main operations (Kanter, 1977).

Empirical evidence is still disjointed in the context of India. The extant research on the subject of transport and infrastructure organisations suggests that women are exposed to compounded barriers due to hierarchical bureaucratic cultures, opaque systems of promotion, and informal requirements regarding mobility and availability (Gandhi & Sen, 2021; Kulkarni et al., 2023; Wadhwa & Retnakaran, 2020). The industry-specific research on the inland waterways and maritime ecosystem in India also indicates that the governing institutions still reflect traditional administrative cultures with little focus on diversity in leadership and inclusive decision-making (Kumar et al., 2022; Kumar & Kumar, 2022; Samanta, 2019).

### 3.4 Policy Instruments and Gender Inclusivity

Instrument policy proposals on the gender inclusion in the maritime industries generally focus on safety, training opportunities, and labour involvement. The International Maritime Organisation and the International Labour Organisation have international projects that encourage gender mainstreaming, the development of leadership and safe working environments. According to scholarly assessments, though, the implementation is not even and institutionalisation is inadequate on both national and organisational scales (Emad et al., 2025; Kitada, 2019).

In India, the programs related to gender in the maritime industry are expressed in the official programs, guidelines and organizational messages. Although these tools indicate formal purpose, studies reveal that their framing factor frequently depicts women as recipients of the action as opposed to institutional agents or leaders, and this constrains their potential of effecting any changes (Punj & Jalan, 2025; Sil et al., 2024). The recent practical research on inland water and maritime governance reveals how social entrepreneurship, community involvement, and policy-inclusive design can be utilized to increase the developmental impact, but all these measures remain on the periphery of the

dominant governance discourse (Kumar & Kumar, 2022).

According to emerging studies on digital governance and use of advanced technologies, such as using generative AI in the development of maritime transport policy, new avenues of transparency, customisation, and less discretion in administrative decision-making are emerging (Kumar & Yadav, 2024). However, researchers warn that technology cannot be used on its own to break the institutional culture. Digital reforms can recreate existing hierarchies instead of fostering inclusion without the commitment of the leadership and culture change.

### 3.5 Knowledge Gaps

Three critical gaps can be seen in the reviewed literature. To begin with, it is a lack of scholarship that analyzes the maritime governance reforms in India gendered institutionally. Second, gender inclusion and governance reform are perceived as parallel policy agendas, which lacks a proper understanding of how they interact within organisational cultures. Third, leadership talk, institutional communication and policy framing are still not well-explored as sources of empirical research on inclusion and resistance.

To fill the gaps, an integrative approach is needed that interprets policies, reports, and the studies of sectors as indicative of norms and power structures. The current study, as the synthesis of peer-reviewed research and applied and policy-oriented studies in the Indian context of maritime and inland waterways, helps to identify the aspect of institutional culture and leadership in maritime governance with more in-depth insight.

### 4. Conceptual Framework and Propositions

This research paper hypothesises a series of interpretative conceptual framework based on Feminist Institutionalism, organisation culture theory, and scholarship of governance to discuss the construction of gender inclusivity in the maritime institutions of India. Since the question is narrowed to secondary sources, the framework is designed to help comprehend the policies, institutional texts, and previous studies in a systematic way, but not draw a cause-and-effect relationship.

The framework is structured on five constructs of analysis that are interrelated.

Formal Policy and Governance Architecture (PGA) is the formal institutional context of maritime organisations, including statutes, regulations, policy documents, circulars, schemes and strategic visions. This in the Indian context consists of the core legislation, operational policies by other agencies like the Directorate General of Shipping, state-wide port laws and sectoral long-term strategies. Feminist Institutionalism underlines the role of formal rules, outlining what can be done but their impact is moderated by informal practices and power relations (Mackay et al., 2010).

The Informal Norms and Workplace Culture (INWC) describes unspoken rules and shared assumptions which were deduced through the use of the institutional language, reporting systems and organisational stories. These include expectations in the area of leadership behaviour, career mobility, availability and professional legitimacy. Organisational culture studies indicate that these norms can be rather inertial despite official reformation and are at the heart of gendered reproduction within organisations of the public sector (Acker, 2006; Schein, 2010).

Leadership Orientation (LO) is defined as priorities and interpretive frames which are given by the senior leadership in the form of speeches, forewords, and strategic messages. Instead of measuring individual leadership attributes, this construct is concerned with the leadership discourse that reveals commitment, neutrality, or opposition to inclusion. According to studies conducted earlier, leadership discourses play a central role in the way that institutional reforms are framed and implemented (Denison et al., 2014).

Gendered Opportunity Structures (GOS) are those patterns related to the access to recruitment, training, postings, promotions, and strategic assignments recorded in both official reports and empirical research. According to feminist institutional scholars, the interaction between informal norms and leadership practices and allegedly neutral procedures can produce unequal results (Mackay, 2014).

The Institutional Inclusivity Outcomes (IIO) are the patterns of representation and participation that can be observed, among them the presence of women in leadership positions and in decision-making entities reported by secondary research.

The framework conceptualises inclusivity as an eventual outcome of interaction between PGA, INWC, and LO and is evident in GOS and IIO. In line with organisational studies, structural reform cannot be effective without its congruency to culture and leadership only (Ng & Sears, 2017).

Based on this, three interpretive propositions will be used in the analysis:

(P1) more favourable opportunity structures are linked to explicit and consistently articulated gender-inclusive instruments of governance;

(P2) Leadership commitment, as visible, enhances proposals to policy and institutional practice fit;

(P3) Informal rules can constrain or weaken the impact of formal gender inclusive policies.

Together, the framework provides a systematic perspective of the interactions between governance, leadership, and culture to determine gender inclusivity in the Indian maritime industry.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Research Design

The current study utilises a qualitative type of research design which is based on the secondary data but through a comparative documentary analytical approach that examines the institutional culture, leadership practices, and the governance arrangements in the maritime sector of India. The qualitative approach is qualitative and is inspired by Feminist Institutionalism and organisational culture theory, which focuses on how formal governance structures interrelate with informal norms in the transformation of the institutional consequences.

The documentary approach will suit three reasons. To begin with, maritime governance in India has largely been made up of the formal texts i.e. legislation, policy documents, circulars and official communications making documentary evidence a key source of understanding institutional intent and priorities. Second, leadership orientation, and

organisational culture are often implicitly articulated in language, framing and stress in published statements as opposed to explicit statements. Third, the long-term orientation of the reforms to 2047 as the subject of the study requires working with the strategic visions, historical data, and the general pool of secondary sources instead of brief behavioural observation.

The research does not intend to test the causal relations and also does not intend to measure the personal attitudes. Instead it attempts to understand the patterns of reform, continuity, and resistance in terms of institutional text and available scholarly literature.

### 5.2 Case and Source Selection

The discussion provides the main aspects of maritime governance system in India by means of secondary sources. Those are central bodies like the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and the Directorate General of Shipping, state level maritime administrations, large port authorities with reformed governance structures, and maritime education and training institutions, including the Indian Maritime University and its subsidiaries. These are taken as an analysis reference point as opposed to limited case studies.

The criterion used to select sources was their relevance, credibility, and accessibility to the public. The corpus comprises of official institutional records, lawmaking and oversight records, academic literature reviewed by peers and applied and policy-focused scholarly literature, and communicated government leadership. Rigorous journalistic commentary was not allowed unless it referenced institutional agents or even statements directly.

### 5.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The institutional websites, government repositories, academic databases, and citation tracking were used to identify documents systematically. All the documents were catalogued according to their institutions, year, type and thematic relevance. The conceptual framework defined analytical constructs, which were used to organise material.

The qualitative content analysis- thematic coding was used as an analytical process. A deductive coding framework was initially created and then

inductively developed and refined by close reading. The analysis within-case examined the way in which the matters of governance reform, leadership priorities, and gender issues were framed, whereas the cross-case comparison helped to reveal the patterns of recurrent institutions. Language usage, silences and framing decisions were attributable as discursive cues of resistance or accommodation.

#### 5.4 Rigour and Credibility

Rigour was facilitated by the fact that the selection criteria of sources was consistent, triangulation of various document types was done, and that there was a good separation of description and interpretation. The issue of reflexivity was preserved by keeping in mind the threshold of the secondary data and the understanding that the results are institutional self-presentation and not informal practice.

### 6. Findings

#### 6.1 Institutional Profiles from Secondary Sources

The interpretation of official sources and the literature suggests that Indian maritime institutions have quite similar formal mandates but show a significant difference in the formulation and implementation of governance reform and inclusion. The central level state bodies like the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and the Directorate General of Shipping constantly promote a reformist image with its focus on efficiency, digitalisation, environmental sustainability, and internationality. Although the development of human capital and the well-being of the workforce are constantly mentioned, the deliberate discussion of leadership diversity and institutional inclusion is still rather narrow and, as a rule, is implemented in programmatic instead of structural ways.

It is clear that there is more variance between state maritime boards and port authorities. A number of institutions project a developmental story that is based on port led growth, industrialization and regional competitiveness. In such contexts, the governance reform is addressed mostly in terms of concession schemes, facilitation of investment and autonomy of operations. Where gender based commitments do exist, they are usually found in more generic human resource or corporate social

responsibility paragraphs, rather than in the general governance provisions.

Maritime education and training centers have demonstrated a relatively high level of concern with gender issues, largely due to the compliance with regulations and the safety of workforce. Nonetheless, leadership structure and composition in these institutions is not well documented, and little data is disaggregated at a senior level. In all the categories of institutions, organisational charts, and leadership listing, still show low female representation at middle and senior management levels, though some have made some improvement in entry and training levels.

#### 6.2 Policy-Practice Tensions

Another general trend throughout the documentary corpus is the lack of correspondence between institutional results and formal policy intention. The notion of inclusiveness and workforce development is becoming more frequently mentioned in strategic vision documents, but it is often presented with no clear implementation mechanisms, timelines, or accountability indicators of the representation of leadership or the inclusion in its decision-making. The gender-oriented initiatives are commonly placed at the periphery of the governance processes instead of being incorporated into the governance practices of appointment of a board of directors, promotion systems or succession planning. Sensitisation and training are often highlighted but there is no real discussion of structural barriers and therefore, inclusion is seen and approached as an individual problem, and not as a systems issue.

#### 6.3 Leadership Narratives and Informal Norms

There are three narratives that dominate leadership communications. A performance-based narrative gives precedence to growth, efficiency, and competitiveness and puts the inclusion as a secondary consideration. An inclusion of gender in terms of safety and access is a welfare-oriented discourse of gender, which supports the protective over the leadership assumptions. A smaller yet significant group of communications uses an inclusivity-oriented narrative about the connection between diversity and institutional effectiveness and learning. Nonetheless, this story is not evenly spread and seldom supported with the help of formal

governmental tools. The lack of leadership pathway discourse, the use of general workforce language, and silences all create informal norms favoring continuity over change.

#### 6.4 Comparative Synthesis

Synthesising among institutions demonstrates three patterns, namely policy-rich, culture-static institutions; Leadership-based, weakly institutionalised reform; and a small group of initial integrated reformers in which policy, leadership discourse, and practice partially align. On the whole, the results indicate that the governance reform cannot be used on its own to transform gendered outcomes. The nature of inclusion is a result of the interpretation of formal policies as perceived through leadership orientation and the systematic nature within the day to day organisational practices.

#### 7. Discussion

This paper has explored the interplay between institutional culture, leadership and governance systems in influencing gender inclusivity in the Indian maritime industry using secondary and documentary sources. The results reveal that despite the fact that governance reforms have gone a long way in terms of formal and technical aspects, their translation into inclusive results has not gone even. This imbalance can be best attributed to the mediating effect of informal norms and leadership orientation, which is in line with Feminist Institutionalism and the organisational culture theory.

##### 7.1 Formal Reform and Informal Continuity

A core insight from Feminist Institutionalism is that formal institutional change does not necessarily disrupt entrenched power relations. The findings strongly support this proposition. Across India's maritime institutions, new governance structures, procedures, and performance frameworks have been introduced, yet informal norms relating to authority, leadership legitimacy, and career progression remain largely intact. Institutional texts frequently emphasise efficiency, transparency, and modernisation in line with Vision 2030 and Amrit Kaal 2047, but gender inclusion is typically positioned as a secondary or supportive objective rather than a core governance concern.

This framing enables formal compliance without substantive change in everyday practices. As Mackay (2014) argues, institutions often absorb reform language while adapting it to existing cultural expectations, resulting in incremental or symbolic change. The absence of explicit discussion of promotion pathways, leadership succession, and decision-making authority in gender terms further signals that inclusion is expected to occur within existing organisational frameworks rather than through their redesign.

##### 7.2 Leadership Orientation as a Mediating Factor

The leadership orientation turns out to be a significant intermediary between the desirable policy and the consequences within the institution. Leadership narratives that focus on performance and are driven by the need to grow, become competitive and efficient are usually viewed to marginalise the inclusion factor which makes any initiatives related to gender a peripheral factor and poorly institutionalised. However, in the instances where leadership discourse makes a direct connection between inclusion and organisational effectiveness, organisational learning and organisational legitimacy, there is more correspondence between policy commitments and reported practices.

These results correlate with organisational culture studies that stress the importance of leadership in the development of a common meaning and legitimisation of change. Nevertheless, the analysis also indicates the shortcomings of reform that can be driven by leadership. In the environments where the lack of inclusive narratives is not reinforced through the system of reporting needs, open processes, or mechanisms of accountability, its influence is weak and relies on the time span of the respective leadership. This illustrates the significance of institutionalizing an inclusion aspect in governance structure instead of depending on a leadership expression of interest.

##### 7.3 Gendered Opportunity Structures and Organisational Design

The obstacles to female progress are seldom openly expressed in the policy documents. Rather, they grow out of the interplay of formal practices and informal demands in terms of the availability,

mobility, and career sustenance. These processes are the reflections of the Acker concept of gendered organisations, in which seemingly neutral processes produce unequal results. Within the maritime industry, operational assignments, field work and ad hoc working arrangements remain a tacit indicator of leadership aptitude, judgment of who gets the promotion or a new assignment despite the inclusion policy.

In turn, the results imply that only specific programs or sensitisation campaigns are ineffective. Effective inclusion must be questioned on the fundamental organisational practices which are the nature of defining merit, the way leadership opportunities are organised and how discretion is exercised in postings and nominations.

#### **7.4 Implications for Long-Term Maritime Reform**

In spite of the fact that it is the inclusive growth that is presented as the national goal, the correspondence of the objectives with the institution practices is still partial. The reforms in governance have contributed to the improved autonomy and efficiency, however, the cultural and leadership aspects of inclusion are not yet developed. There is international evidence to indicate that diversity enhances organisational resilience and adaptability. In an industry where technology, environment and coordination are issues, small leadership pipeline can limit long term institutional capacity.

On the whole, the discussion supports the main thesis of the study, according to which there is a need but not enough official reform. The long-term success of the process of inclusive maritime governance will rely on the ability of the institutions to interpret, prioritize, and internalise the concept of inclusion as part of the daily organizational activity.

### **8. Implications and Reform Roadmap**

#### **8.1 Policy Implications**

The results suggest that gender integration into the Indian maritime industry cannot be attained across schemes or advice schemes. In its place, inclusion should be considered a part of the governance design, implementation and monitoring. In the case of organizations like the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and the Directorate General of

Shipping, it means ploughing beyond a symbolic commitment into more explicit and systematic expectations.

To start with, the policy frameworks and strategic visions would be enhanced by ensuring that regular gender-disaggregated reporting on recruitment, training participation, postings and leadership representation are mandated. These disclosures would increase transparency, facilitate cross-institutional benchmarking, as well as longitudinal policy learning without being punitive.

Second, the accountability mechanisms should be strengthened. Institutional audits, performance reviews or governance scorecards that contain signs of gender inclusion would reflect that inclusion of gender is not a discretionary project, but an ultimate governance agenda.

Third, the upcoming policy documents that are associated with Vision 2030 and Amrit Kaal 2047 may clearly outline inclusion as one of the factors to enhance the institutional effectiveness, adaptability, and administrative capacity. Movement of gender diversity out of a welfare-lens and the capability to govern might enhance its presence in mainstream policy-making discourse.

#### **8.2 Institutional Reform Strategies**

Reform at the organisational level will necessitate coordinated change both in the leadership practices and in the daily administrative processes. A gender approach needs to be incorporated into leadership development and succession planning, encompassing expanded definitions of merit, availability of high-profile posts and official succession opportunities.

Career progression beyond entry level participation can be reinforced through structured mentoring and support systems whereby the support and mentoring is institutionalized and supported by the senior leadership. Transparency in postings, promotions and training nominations are also very important. Differentiation in terms of clear criteria, written procedures, and institutional control can diminish discretionary bias especially in the areas where mobility and exposure to fields have a role in leadership eligibility.

#### **8.3 Contributions and Future Directions**

The experience of maritime governance in India can be added to the global discourse on the matter by proving that the commitment to international standards is not enough, without consideration of the institutional culture and the leadership practice. The analysis of documentation is also highlighted by the importance of the study in the situation, where the internal processes are not readily available. It is limited by the use of secondary sources; the results indicate that further studies based on interviews, surveys, and cross-country comparisons are necessary to learn more about the issue of inclusion as a governance challenge. The institutional culture and the ongoing regulatory and infrastructural reform will be important in attaining inclusive growth by 2047.

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