

JOB SATISFACTION AMONG THAI FLIGHT ATTENDANTS

NeVille, Chon¹ and Nungmon, Pakinee²
^{1,2} Naresuan University International College,
Naresuan University, Phitsanulok, Thailand

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the sensations of Thai crew for their job amongst flight attendants. This research found several result related to job satisfaction of flight attendants in their career choice. Which shown that almost all of participants admitted that they are happy with the benefits or the compensations that they have been given which is much more enough to have better quality of life and traveling while doing the job and follow the dream. Just as with most jobs, there are factors that eventually indicate whether or not a flight attendant is satisfied with their work, and this study shows the pros and cons of this profession.

Keywords: 1) Flight attendants-Individuals who work to ensure safety and provide service on airplanes 2) Job-satisfaction-How pleased an employee is according to his or her profession 3) Career choice- the selected path of employment that someone intends to continue for a consistent length of time

1. Introduction

Becoming a flight attendant is the dream of many girls and young women. Flight attendants job is interesting with its high pay, various benefits, numerous days off, opportunities for travel, and typically good employee benefit programs. Many students in Thailand are hoping to become flight attendants for major airline. In Thailand there are many airlines that students can choose. Thai Airway, Air Asia, Nok Air and Bangkok Airway are some example. However, as I was investigation what being a flight really is, there is much more to the job than just having a service mind. Thai paper will examine and investigate what flight attendants does, need to do, and whether or not they enjoy their chosen career. Working as a flight attendant can cost lots of various benefits and also many difficulties as well. But nowadays lots of Thai people also want to be in this career path. This research can answer the group of people who dream to be a flight an attendant that, are they suitable to this job or not. Being a flight attendant does not need to sit at a seat in the office and finish their tasks all long, but they will be able to travel around the world during paid but you need others abilities to work for this job such as to be able to speak different languages, being adaptable to be with different people and the most important task of a flight attendant is to take care of passengers safety. They also need to make sure passengers comfortable during the flights. Thus, if this research can figure out of the real problems that Thai flight attendants must face in everyday of their job, people that have the same goal might be able the make the better choices of the their life.

¹ Instructor
E-mail: chessur.c@gmail.com
² NUIC Student

2. Research Questions

1. What are flight attendants perceptions and attitudes regarding job satisfaction?
2. How is the reality of being flight attendant different then preconceived perceptions of being a flight attendant?

3. Literature Review

There are many Thai students who have a dream to become a flight attendant (FA) for major airlines. In Thailand there are many airlines that students can choose, Thai airway, Air Asia, Nok Air, and Bangkok Airway are some example. Many students may consider this a luxurious position that allows them to travel the world for free, meet interesting people, and experience the wonder of flight on a daily basis. However, just as with many jobs, there are some pros and cons to consider. Day-To-Day-Activities there are many jobs are required FA. One major emotional aspect of being an FA is stress. According to Leslie A. MacDonald, et. al. (2003) “there is job stress among female flight attendants” (p. 703) which may cause emotional problem. In addition Chen (2001) suggests that there is also a great deal of stressful activities that make employees tired (p. 312). However, Siew Imm Ng, et. al (2011) stated that, “an individual's inability to perform a task to expectations may lead to feelings of tension and frustration” “Since role overload is a result of resource reduction, insufficient resources certainly add to flight attendants feeling of emotional exhaustion” (p. 310).

In the other aspects, Kim, et. al. (2014) found that “flight attendants who experience emotional dissonance between organizationally prescribed emotions and true emotion had higher burnout scores” (p. 2, 579). Likewise, T J Ballard, et. al (2016) suggested that “reducing conflicts between work and private life, at minimizing job stressors, and at increasing social support for flight attendants may enhance their well being and job satisfaction” (p. 33) which can affect in the positive way of doing their work. Moreover, other consequences that come along with their job is health. Moreover, Siew Imm Ng, et. al (2011) stated that “For flying over different zones, interrupt of circadian rhythms, and sleep deprivation caused by odd working schedules, crew's wellbeing and state of health are being overshadowed” (p. 1) Furthermore, Ching-Fu Chen (2012), found that “the causality between professional development and the well-being of cabin crew. This is partially because people (particularly in Asia) usually view a flight attendants position as a temporary one that only lasts a couple of years due to the heavy physical and mental workload” (p. 45). While, working in the air can cause of several problem of FAs’ health because they have more responsibilities than most front-line employees in the service industry, as they are first trained to maintain flight safety and provide customer service on board. Sveinsdottir. al., (2007) reported “statistics of comparing teachers nurses and cabin crew that “Cabin crew reported worse gastrointestinal, sound perception and common cold symptoms than nurses and teachers cabin crew and teachers reported worse symptoms of stress and exhaustion than nurses” (p.1) means that, while working and doing their duties a crew has more potential to get sick from their jobs much more that other afore. Moreover, Megdal, et. al (2005) found that, “flight attendants had been that their occupational exposure to cosmic radiation causes an excess cancer risk. It was reasoned subsequently that the observed increase in breast cancer risk could as well be due to a melatonin deficiency resulting from work-associated exposure to light at night” (p.2014). In addition, Nagdaet, et. al (2003) shows that, “the health comfort of flight attendants (FAs) can be affected by a variety of environmental factors in airliner cabins, such as air quality, temperature, humidity, pressure, noise, vibration, and time zone shifts”

Furthermore, L Beatty (2011) adds, flight attendants experience increased rates of many respiratory illnesses compared to the general population, and some of the increased frequency of symptoms is related to secondhand tobacco smoking (SHS) exposure (p. 7). “Secondhand tobacco smoke (SHS) is associated with increased risk of respiratory illness, cancer, and cardiovascular disease” (p. 1).

The quality of the air in airliner cabins or its possible health effects on cabin crew, and there were no federal standards governing secondhand smoke (SHS)"(p.i8). Yuichiro Ono (1991) shows the analysis of the timetable of FA and fatigue symptoms of workers on international flights of Japanese FA that serious about it that, there were some work-related determinant jointly causing serious FA fatigue symptoms; night period and early morning work, too long flight hours and a huge time difference, thus disturbing their biological rhythms (p. 163) As same as, Kim, et. al (2014) stated that “Flight attendants” working conditions are harsh due to frequent night shifts, long shifts, and long sequences” This indicates that working against the nature of living is the cause of life problems.

In this case, not only health problems, being FA also included with mental health. According to, T J Ballard et. al, (2016) his research shows that “Of 222 flight personnel examined in 2001, the most frequent diagnoses for women flight attendants” illnesses were related to mental health (49%), mostly depression and anxiety, while the prevalence of a mental health diagnosis was 22% for male flight attendants and 7% for male pilots (unpublished report, Istituto Superiore di Sanita`, Rome) (p. 37). Consequently, mental health can also causes the quality of life or might including work productivity as well. Work Environment In aspect of FA quality and efficiency of FA productivity is also relied on environment. Ching-Fu Chen (2012) has said that “airlines are encouraged to establish a working environment with social support and help cabin crew build effective career development plans” because FA tend to devote more effort to their work when sensing a familiarly and supportive working environment equipped with clear views for their the future” (p.55). Likewise, MacDonald (2003) in Norway showed that only half of the flight attendants surveyed were satisfied with supervision and social support.(p.704) As well as, Xanthopoulou et. al,(2008) had recovered that “a resourceful work environment, which facilitates the attainment of work goals, may activate employees” beliefs regarding their capabilities to fulfill these goals” employees may show higher levels of work engagement, and in turn, perform better(p.346)

In contrast, Ballard et. al, (2016) recovered in his research that “ during the 12 months preceding the survey, 11% of current flight attendants experienced harassment by colleagues and 4% by passengers.(p.33) Moreover, Half of all women reported having experienced some type of sexual harassment by a co-worker or colleague during their career: 40% had experiences in the more severe category of unwanted sexual attention or sexual coercion”(p.35). In addition, Tungtakanpoung et. al, (2013) found that “including others causes of stress include “lengthy working hours, conflicts with passengers” and conflicts with colleagues that can result from a developing “negative attitude” (p. 15). Additionally, Chen (2006) supports that “ Due to high work stress and an unstable working environment, the turnover of flight attendants is an important issue from a practical. (p.274). Benefits The one main important factor for working of as a FA is returns. Ching-Fu. Chen found that: “ The three organizational commitment factors are affective commitment “normative commitment” and “continuance commitment” which means that Job satisfaction and organizational commitment were also confirmed to have negative impacts on turnover intentions” (p. 275-276). Additionally, Kim et. al, (2014) stated that “ Job satisfaction was a significant antecedent for both affective and instrumental commitment.” (p.2580). In contrast, Pamela Doyle Wood, (2015) studied by CIPD it shows that “the top reasons why employees leave still include; the attraction of a new job,

a lack of career opportunity, better pay or dissatisfaction in their present position” (p. 14). Furthermore, Kim, et. al (2014) employees who perceive tangible benefits from their employment tend to favorably evaluate their job status. (p. 2579)

Self-efficacy Kim et. al, (2014), “level of organizational support if the organization provides them with verbal support and encouraging messages, and even offers a financial reward for excellent performance and flexible flight schedules self-efficacy can be further developed by offering clear roles, organizational support, and the skills that will contribute to effective performance, as this will further enhance flight attendants’ specific, task-based self-efficacy. In the same time, self-efficacy can be further developed by offering clear roles, organizational support, and the skills that will contribute to effective performance, as this will further enhance flight attendants’ specific, task-based self-efficacy” (p.2579) According to, SiewImm Ng, et. at, (2011) states that, “the reductions of layover period, rest time and flight attendants may affect cabin crew through increased fatigue, disruptions to efficient service delivery and low morale”(p.1) shows that not only work overload or stress during flight but having much time to take a rest also cause to efficient service during a flight as well but The display of friendliness and good cheer are expected in an array of service occupations including flight attendants, servants, and sales clerks. In a recent study about work-life balance, Ballard et. al, (2016) showed that, “work related factors that increase stress among working women include difficulties in balancing work and family, and variable or unpredictable work schedules that include long periods away from the home, relevant to women who work as flight attendants”(p.33). This indicates that just only few of people who work as a crew can manage their work life balance.

4. Methodology

This paper examined the perceptions of being a flight attendant. It took place at Phitsanulok airport. Since it was the main airport of the lower northern of Thailand and also it was the popular airport which had several airlines were available such as Nok Air, Lion Air, Air Asia. All participants would be at least 20 years old and be current or retired flight attendants. We used semi-structured interviews, using random purposeful sampling, with four interviewees per airline, totally 12 interviews. Each participant had a secret identity and all information was been in a password-protected file or social media messenger site. Data collection took a few days to complete and the data was saturated. This study followed this theory: Motivator-Hygiene Theory by Frederick Herzberg, which focused on ‘Motivating’ factors like FAs salary and benefits, recognition and achievement need to be met in order for an FA to be satisfied with. In this case, ‘hygiene’ factors (such as, working conditions, company policies and structure, job security, interaction with colleagues and quality of management) are associated with job dissatisfaction of FAs.

The 11 majority answers from 12 of participants admitted that they were satisfied with the benefits, salary and their colleagues which helped FAs to work smoothly and happily during a flight and after flight. Thus, these factors lead to the satisfaction point. On the other hand, dissatisfied conditions came from their health’s getting worse from the working environment which is working on the air and the air pressure changing as well as the uncertain working time mad FAs need to be adaptable all the time which was the cause of the exhaustion problems. Therefore, these three were the determinant that can lead to the dissatisfaction.

5. Limitations

Working with very high compensation or good benefits as an FA needs to exchange with several consequences such as health, time etc. The limitations of this career study about to get the real information in dept. to provide to people who are interested in this career but in the other hand only the FAs three airlines in Phitsanulok can answer only some aspect of these Thai airlines that came from only Thai FA. Consequently, the providing information is might not comprehensive for all readers that might seek to know more in the other field of being as an FA beyond the job satisfaction or the private information.

6. Recommendations

However, this study still has the other aspect that can still be developed in the future with the new manners. I would suggest that healthcare providers better understand the often-multifactorial nature of quality of life in female flight attendants to achieve more effective health management. Healthcare providers may even develop specific health promotion and

disease prevention plans targeting fatigue alleviation, sleep promotion, and so on. In the other suggestion according to the limited time to spend during a semester to work on this study, the scooped area is too narrow. There for, construct the same research in a new context, location and/or culture might make this study is much more completed because this study still has some obstacles to declare such as interview the FA or the located is too limited.

7. Conclusion

All 12 participants provided salient feedback about the rigors and joys of being a flight attendant. The most beneficial aspects of this profession are the salary, the travel, and a sense of pride about being a flight attendant. On the other hand, the biggest challenges to this job were difficult passengers, lazy co-workers, and long, stressful hours. Basically the job is difficult physically and emotionally, but at the end of the day the salary and ability to fly for free and see the world makes up for the difficulties.

8. References

- Abraham, R. (1998). Emotional dissonance in organizations: Antecedents, consequences, and moderators. **Genetic, social and general psychology monographs**, 124(2), 229.
- Ballard, T. J., Romito, P., Lauria, L., Vigiliano, V., Caldora, M., Mazzanti, C. and Verdecchia, A. (2006). Self perceived health and mental health among women flight attendants. **Occupational and environmental medicine**, 63(1), 33-38.
- Beatty, A. L., Haight, T. J. and Redberg, R. F. (2011). **Associations between respiratory illnesses and secondhand smoke exposure in flight attendants: A cross-sectional analysis of the Flight Attendant Blettner**. M., Grosche, B. and Zeeb, H. (1998).
- Chen, C. F. (2006). Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and flight attendants' turnover intentions: A note. **Journal of Air Transport Management**, 12(5), 274-276.
- Kim, Y. and Back, K. J. (2012). Antecedents and consequences of flight attendants' job satisfaction. **The Service Industries Journal**, 32(16), 2565-2584.

- MacDonald, L. A., Deddens, J. A., Grajewski, B. A., Whelan, E. A. and Hurrell, J. J. (2003). Job stress among female flight attendants. **Journal of occupational and environmental medicine**, 45(7), 703-714.
- Medical Research Institute Survey. **Environmental Health**, 10(1), 81.
- Megdal, S. P., Kroenke, C. H., Laden, F., Pukkala, E. and Schernhammer, E. S. (2005). Night work and breast cancer risk: a systematic review and meta-analysis. **European Journal of Cancer**, 41(13), 2023-2032.
- Nagda, N. L. and Koontz, M. D. (2003). Review of studies on flight attendant health and comfort in airliner cabins. **Aviation, space, and environmental medicine**, 74(2), 101-109.
- Nagda, N. L. and Koontz, M. D. (2003). Review of studies on flight attendant health and comfort in airliner cabins. **Aviation, space, and environmental medicine**, 74(2), 101-109.
- Ng, S. I., Sambasivan, M. and Zubaidah, S. (2011). Antecedents and outcomes of flight attendants' job satisfaction. **Journal of Air Transport Management**, 17(5), 309-313.
- Ono, Y., Watanabe, S., Kaneko, S., Matsumoto, K. and Miyao, M. (1991). Working hours and fatigue of Japanese flight attendants (FA). **Journal of human ergology**, 20(2), 155-164.
- Siegel, P. V., Gerathewohl, S. J. and Mohler, S. R. (1969). **Timezone effects**.
- Sveinsdottir, H., Gunnarsdóttir, H. and Frioriksdóttir, H. (2007). Self-assessed occupational health and working environment of female nurses, cabin crew and teachers. **Scandinavian journal of caring sciences**, 21(2), 262-273.
- Tokumar, O., Haruki, K., Bacal, K., Katagiri, T., Yamamoto, T. and Sakurai, Y. (2006). Incidence of cancer among female flight attendants: a meta-analysis. **Journal of travel medicine**, 13(3), 127-132.
- Tungtakanpoung, M. and Wyatt, M. (2013). Spirituality and cultural values in the reported cognitions of female cabin attendants on Thai Airways. **Journal of Air Transport Management**, 27, 15-19.
- Woods, P. D. (1915). **An investigation into the reasons cited by low cost airline cabin crew for resigning within the first year of service**.
- Xanthopoulou, D., Baker, A. B., Heuven, E., Demerouti, E. and Schaufeli, W. B. (2008). Working in the sky: A diary study on work engagement among flight attendants. **Journal of occupational health psychology**, 13(4), 345.