

Timeless Challenges Behind the Glamorous World of the Airhostess

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Abstract: The civil aviation sector is booming every day as a result of Liberalization and Globalization. The employees working for the different air carriers play a great role in the development and growth of the industry. Among the employees' cabin crews play a vital role in making the journey safe and pleasant. The role of an air hostess is not as easy a job as it seems to be where the reality is that this job is equally challenging as other jobs. It is a very challenging and responsible job where Airhostess takes care of the lives on board by keeping their issues aside. Airhostess has to do a lot of emotional labour during duty hours resulting in health issues, stress, dilemma, burnout, fatigue, jet lag, and work-life balance issues which have been discussed in the studies done on the Airhostess of different airlines. The existing research data regarding the Airhostess profession challenges had been presented in the paper in a systemic qualitative secondary data review research paper.

Keywords: Airhostess Challenges, Emotional Labour, Stress, Work-Life Balance, Quality of Work-Life.

INTRODUCTION

The world has entered into Liberalization and Globalization in the past few decades which has brought greater development and growth to certain industries such as Tourism, Travel, Hospitality and Aviation industries. India has many beautiful tourist spots and other geographical locations for foreign investment and start-ups, which has altogether brought

a boom to the Civil aviation industry in India as the global passengers have increased based on the different purposes to travel to India. The boom in the civil aviation industry has brought a greater scope for Human resources in the industry, where the professional Cabin crew has a vital role in managing the image of the carrier along with the loyalty, safety and satisfaction of the customers on board. The job of an air hostess plays a major role in making the journey from one destination to another destination safe and pleasant with their polite and responsible services. Air hostesses have to face many physical and mental health issues being female because of continuous flying. A regular sudden change in the temperature, geography, and environment caused various issues and challenges to the Airhostess which has been recorded in the past studies done on the various airline's Air hostesses. The researchers have tried to explore and address the issues of Airhostess linked with the profession which seems to be a glamorous and luxurious job. The outcomes of the past research have highlighted some particular issues such as Fatigue, Jet lag, Backache, Heal pain, Miscarriage, Stress, Burnout, Appetite problems, Work-Life balance, the challenges in performing Emotional Labour, Emotional Intelligence, and Communication with Pilots. Tableno.1 represents the crux of the research papers of the present paper theme.

Author and year	Method and sample	Variables
Lee et al., 1970	A questionnaire survey of 230 flight attendants	Emotional labour strategy, Job burnout and Performance
Okabe N, 2020	A questionnaire survey of 827 flight attendants	Task performance, Job satisfaction and Emotional Labour
Jeon A, 2015	Reviewed studies and developed a Hypothesis	Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Labour & Emotional Exhaustion
Lee, 2018	reliability analysis and frequency analysis, T-test and ANOVA	the quality of nonverbal communication and factors improving customer behaviour
Lo C et al., 2010	The relationship between the two variables was tested	Organizational culture and organizational commitment

Yeh, 2016	The relationship between the two variables was examined	customer verbal aggression and employee service sabotage
Mulay. R.V et al.,2019	Assessment of the factors causing the stress	Risk factors, Mental stress, Musculoskeletal
Kedar and Ujjain, 2020	Stress scale to analyse the factors of stress	Occupation stress factors
McNeely et al., 2018	SPR analysis, the relationship between the variables using logistic regression	Job tenure and selected health outcomes like cancer, fatigue, and depression
Kevin & Chute, 1997	122 female and 55 male Cabin crews, Frequency analysis	Cabin crew, Pilots, Technical knowledge, Awareness
VAN DEN Berg et al., 2020	Semi-structured focused group discussion, frequency and average, Qualitative study	Sufficient rest, Fatigue risk management, work-life balance
Santin Marlene & Kelly B, 2017	Participant observation and informal interviews	9/11 effects, role shield, emotional labour, institutional norms
Okabe. N, 2017	Questionnaire survey, interview and observation of 413 Asian Airline crews, mean and standard deviation, hypothesis formulation	Role ambiguity, customer loyalty,
Hajjousefi et al., 2017	Survey through questionnaire, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with flight attendants and aviation experts	Organizational occupational stressors, flight attendant, and Managerial occupational stressors
Gorlich Yvonne and Stadelmann Deniel, 2020	Online survey with the help of DASS-21, N-105, N-119	Depression, Anxiety and Stress Correlation between existential fear and fear of job loss with Depression, Anxiety and Stress
Bergman Ann and Gillberg Gunnar, 2015	In-depth interview of 7 women with 24-30 years of work experience as cabin crews	Work, vulnerability, ageing, job satisfaction, and emotional labour
Damos Diane. L et al., 2013	The conflict between the variables was analysed through Observation trips	Performance of safety and security duties
Majali Salwa. Al and Shana Zuhrieh, 2019	Surveyed 226 cabin crews including 73 pilots, used two scales to enhance sources of stress and skills to deal with psychological stress	Cognitive skills, interpersonal skills and personal skills
Okabe Noriko, 2019	questionnaire survey of the 827 cabin crews using 5 point Lickert scale	Role conflict, Emotional labour, effective delivery
Umasankar Shyam and N Shani, 2012	40 air hostesses, a scheduled questionnaire was a tool and descriptive method	Performance metrics and perceived importance
Richa, N., et al., 2015	Two different sets of questionnaires 67 flight attendants and 67 various jobs employees	Burnout syndrome, emotional demand, and working conditions
Henning Sanchen. 2015	Qualitative research and purposive sampling 12 face-to-face semi-structured interviews	Physical and emotional wellness, work schedule impacts
Hare David, O., et al. 2014	200 flight attendants and 99 pilots were investigated	Communication, teamwork, and inflight events
Reid, K. J., & Abbott, S. M. 2015	Theoretical article covering the impacts of shiftwork disorder	Cognitive and physical health, travel, work shifts
Ruscitto Cristina., & Ogden Jane. 2017	A longitudinal study of 60 flight attendants Regression analysis	Psycho-social construct, biological effects, jet lag, and long-haul
Santin Marlene., & Kelly Benjamin.2015	participant observation and informal interviews	Institutional changes, emotional labour, and role shields
C Chen & S Chen. 2012	350 Taiwan Aircrews, results of multiple variables analysed using LISREL 8.52 computer program	Burnout, work engagement, work-family conflict, health problems, Turnover intention, development and social support
Grajewski Barbara, et al., 2016	Relationships between sleep metrics and occupation using linear model, 45 flight attendants & 25 teachers	Sleep disturbance, occupation, wake and sleep time
Lovegrove. K. 2000	A book based on scientific observation and research	Identity, Culture and Airlines
Jangsiriwattana T, 2016	10 active flight attendants, in-depth interview, 5 steps analysis	Work-life, performance, leadership, teamwork, job meaningfulness, organizational culture
Abdelhakim A. S. 2019	26 cabin crews, in-depth structured interviews	Food safety, training, and board food handling
Chen C and Chen S. 2014	339 flight attendants, survey method and analysed using structural equation modelling	Job demands, job resources, upward communication, and safety behaviour

Whitelegg D. 2005	Delta Airline crews, observation and existing data analysis	Attitude, lifestyle, and representation
Murphy A. 2001	40 flight attendants, Scheduled interview qualitative method	Organizational culture, performance, feminized role
Grajewski, B., et al. 2015	2273 flight attendants, Questionnaire method	Cosmic radiation, Circadian disruption, and Miscarriage
Avers, K. et al., 2011	A surveyed report of Flight attendants' comments	Long-hour duty, fatigue, meal timing issues
Griffiths, R., et al. 2012	A literature review of the health safety issues of the Cabin crews	Safety, health, occupation
MacDonald, L., et al. 2003	Standard questions and scales were used	Job stressors, Psychological distress, Job dissatisfaction
Gunnarsdottir, K., et al. 2006	91 flight attendants, 87 Nurses, and 89 Teachers were mailed the questionnaire	Sexual harassment, health, self-assessment,
Liang, S., & Hseih, A. 2005	Survey data of 358 Taiwan flight attendants,	Job burnout, individual perceptions, and Career development
Wen et. al., 2021	930 Cabin crew respondents,	Circadian disruption, Sleepiness, Fatigue, Insomnia, Shift work disorder
Park & Hyun, 2021	230 cabin crews working in South Korea, a questionnaire was used	Courteous, Connecting, Information-Sharing behaviours, Empathy, Team Performance, Irregularity
Ko et. al., 2021	30 cabin crew using questionnaire survey, hypothesis testing	Team system, Sense of belonging, Mutual support, Communication, Mental health
Gillet & Termblay, 2021	100 qualitative interviews of the hostesses	Flight Attendants, Working Time, Work-Life Balance, Work Organisation

Table no.1: Author, year, method, sample size, and variables details of the paper

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature has been drafted in a thematic format by dividing the themes into Emotional Labour, Health issues, Stress and Burnout, and Communication of the Airhostess's challenges.

STRESS AND BURNOUT

Following 9/11, a major US airline faced tension between customer service and timely fulfilment of safety and security tasks. Flight attendants are responsible for three distinct tasks: safety, security, and passenger service. During the pilot's absence, at least one crew member must be present in the cockpit to keep an eye on the safety and security procedures (Damos Diane. L et al., 2013; Santin Marlene & Kelly B, 2017). The stress created by the job is causing general health complications including mental health. Flight attendants are so engaged in a stressful job that they don't get enough time to interact with their family members which causes conflict in the relations resulting in social stress. 74.33% of the cabin crews felt medium stress, 11.54% felt high stress, and 14.15% did not feel any job-related stress (Majali Salwa. Al and Shana Zuhrieh, 2019). Male and female cabin crews both are affected by burnout syndrome. The psychological factors were hiding emotions and

quantitative and emotional demands. As a result of the demands, the workers are facing Work-family conflict (Richa, N., et al., 2015). Air hostess job demands along with health impairments are positively related to burnout based on the JD-R model (C Chen & S Chen, 2012). The dimensions of job burnout are lethargy, cynicism, and professional efficacy. While professional effectiveness was unaffected by career happiness, career decision satisfaction and career future confidence were highly predictive of all 3 components of job burnout (Liang, S., & Hseih, A. 2005). It was found that the major reason for the stress among the cabin crew is the disruptions of personal regularities (Henning Sanchen, 2015).

The factors of stress were found as anxiety before the pre-flight checking, interpersonal problems with other crews, irregular duty time, the pressure of workload and other similar factors. On one side it was identified as perceived stress and on the other side, it was the result of interpersonal relationships (Kedar and Ujjain, 2020). In the survey, 82% of the female cabin crews are experiencing musculoskeletal disorders and mental stress due to prolonged standing on heels and not having the freedom to move the muscles to a different position (Mulay R.V et al., 2019). There is a difference in the stress levels of athletes and non-athlete crew members, so it is the prior responsibility of the officials in the aviation industry to look after the

necessity to reduce occupational stress among Airhostess (Hajiyousefi et al., 2017). Anxiety and Stress have shown a tremendous negative effect on job security as COVID-19 has created an unpredictable crisis for Airlines, which is showing negative effects on flight attendant's mental health (Gorlich Yvonne and Stadelmann Deniel, 2020). High mental or psychological job demands, an imbalance between job specifications and outside responsibilities, a need for supervisor support, and emotional unhappiness have all contributed to air hostesses' job dissatisfaction (MacDonald, L., et al. 2003). 72% of flight attendants face stress because of the role they have to play during the whole journey with the passengers according to their facial expressions (Umasankar Shyam & N Shani, 2012).

HEALTH ISSUES

Health issues increased with the loner job tenure were sleep disorder, cancer, peripheral artery disease, anxiety, alcohol abuse, sustained food surgery, infertility and other perinatal outcomes. The study reported that flight attendants have higher rates of reproductive cancers, sleep disorders, and mental health conditions than the general population of the U.S. (McNeely et al., 2018). Shift work disorder is characterized by insomnia or excessive sleepiness relating to a work schedule linked with an increased risk of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cognitive impairment, depression, and cancer (Reid, K. J., & Abbott, S. M, 2015; Griffiths, R., et al. 2012; VAN DEN Berg et al., 2020). The experience of reported jet lag in long-haul cabin crew suggests that jet lag is a psycho-social construct as well as a biological one, highlighting the significance of sense-making (Ruscitto Cristina., & Ogden Jane, 2017). More sleep disturbance was observed in the Airhostess than in the teachers. Circadian misalignment can not be completely adjusted by resting after duty hours it may anyhow affect the reproductive health of the Airhostess (Grajewski Barbara, et al., 2016).

Cosmic radiation exposure of 0.1 mg or more may be associated with an increased risk of miscarriage in weeks 9–13. Flight attendants work for 15 hours of physical strain crossing different time zones in a short time during the home base sleeping hours which increases the risk of miscarriage among the flight attendants associated with cosmic radiation

(Grajewski, B., et al., 2015). More percentage of smokers among flight attendants in comparison to teachers and nurses causes health issues. 40% of flight attendants consume alcohol and 31% of sexual harassment was in the flight attendant's profession. In all responder groups, extended exposure to sexual harassment, teasing, violence, and threats was related to worse physical and psychological well-being (Gunnarsdottir, K., et al., 2006). The long duty hours and consecutive day duty make flight attendants fatigued as they skip breakfast (Avers, K., et al. 2011). Most cabin crews experienced drowsiness, fatigue, depression, work shifts, and insomnia before the COVID-19 pandemic. After a pandemic, there is a chance to schedule a timetable that will minimize the weariness and drowsiness of the air hostess (Wen et al., 2021). The feeling of belongingness, the flexibility of work, and communication play a vital role in building a healthy team environment along with an individual cabin crew's mental health (Ko et al., 2021). The cabin crew's job is far more unusual than our daily jobs, as we work in the same environment in the same time zone daily, which is quite opposite to the Air hostess profession they got to work in different time zones. Time and seniority may provide better schedules for work (Gillet & Tremblay, 2021).

EMOTIONAL LABOUR

Emotional labour has a direct and significant impact on job burnout and work performance among air hostesses (C. Lee et al., 2014). In today's airline industry 24x7 all weekday operations create many challenges for flight attendants. Casual analysis indicates that deep-acting emotional work has negative effects on the task performance and satisfaction of flight attendants (Okabe, 2020). Flight attendants use emotional intelligence, emotional labor, and emotional exhaustion to provide effective in-flight customer service (Jeon, 2015). The air hostess must display emotions in an institutionally accepted form (Santin Marlene & Kelly B, 2017). Positive feelings such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment have declined because of exploitative and morally reprehensible working circumstances (Bergman et al., 2015). The emotional labour culture and the managed heart of the flight attendants changed after 9/11, and flight attendants started more assertive interaction with passengers (Santin Marlene & Kelly Benjamin, 2015).

A high level of flight attendants' hospitality skills can affect customer satisfaction, which the IT system cannot do. A theoretical model (Fig 1) was designed to examine the relationship between organizational

stress, emotional strategies, emotional intermediary displays, and overall job performance (Okabe. N, 2017).

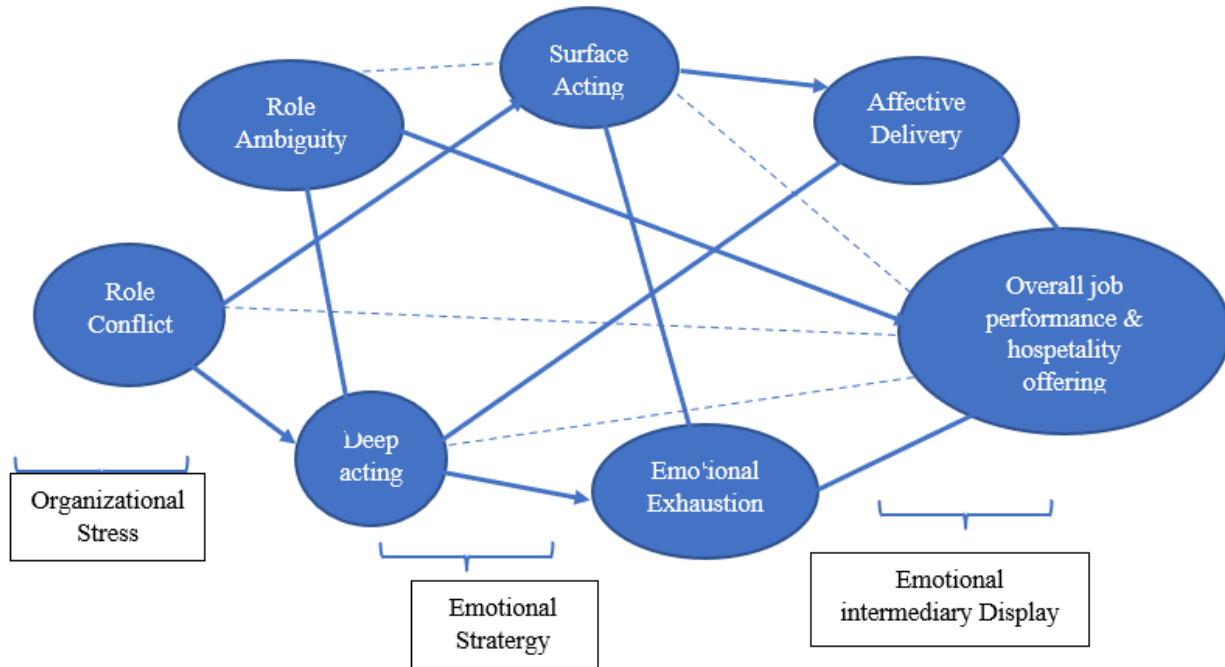


Fig no. 1: Theoretical Model of Emotional Labour

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER CHALLENGES

The nonverbal communication of flight attendants has a significant impact on customer behaviour to build customer loyalty towards the airline (Lee, 2018). Flight attendants' service quality indirectly depends on the organizational culture in which flight attendants also feel happy to provide good service in a supportive culture than in a bureaucratic culture (Lo C, 2010). Service employees are the interface between the technical knowledge of the crew at a very low level, where the fact is that it can help in safe flight operations and will lead them to convey the technical situation to the pilots to avoid the loss of safety that was observed in past accidental situations of the flight (Kevin & Chute, 1997). The expected roles of flight attendants are changing because, as a result, role conflict and ambiguity are perceived, which decreases trust in the employer (Okabe, 2019). The airline believes in the air hostesses and considers them as the representation and face of the airline (Whitelegg,

2005). Communication among cabin crews is essential for smooth and pleasant working conditions when encountering irregularities (Park & Hyun, 2021). The air hostess had her heyday during the post-war period, which was associated with the exclusivity of flying; air travel was limited to the chosen few, and luxury was frequently excessive (Lovegrove, 2000). Job demand has a positive causality with cabin crew safety behaviour, whereas job resources are positive for upward safety communication, extra-role safety, and in-role safety behaviours (Chen & Chen, 2014). Organizational culture plays a key role in creating a dominant role in flights and in promoting the feminized role of flight attendants (Murphy, 2001). Flight attendants have to take care of the food that is at high risk, such as salad, fish, meat, etc. Unless carefully and critically practised, this may lead to microbiological, chemical, physical, and allergic hazards. The catering process involved the steps presented in Fig 2 (Abdelhakim, 2019).

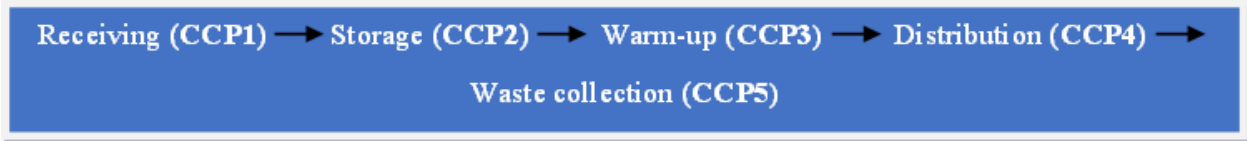


Fig no.2: Catering Process Inflight

CONCLUSION

Studies on the air hostess profession have concluded that their job is much more challenging and seems to be only a glamorous job. The studies have brought out the various issues Airhostess faces while performing their duty, which include two types of problems: physical health and the second one is mental health. The issues were related to customer service, food safety, security of the passengers, emotional labour, physical suffering due to the change in the environment, sleep disorders, and many other interrelated issues of the air hostess were highlighted, which showed that the job of an air hostess is not easy, as it looks like in fact, it is equally and more challenging, as other jobs. The gender bias in the study results was found to be very low, which is a positive face of the profession with equality. The dressing of the air hostess has also been an obstacle in performing the duty, as the few studies highlighted ankle or heel pain due to long-standing hours wearing heels.

LIMITATIONS

- Most of the studies included in the review are done on foreign airline crews.
- The majority of the studies focused on health-related issues.

FURTHER STUDY

The current studies included in the paper have focused on health-related issues, but their issues related to societal perceptions towards the profession have not been addressed; in particular, there are very few studies on the air hostesses of Indian airlines. Therefore, further studies should be conducted in these areas.

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