

The Impact of Cabin Crew Work Stress on Costs

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Abstract

This research tackles the cabin crew work stress and its impact on cost at airlines. That was accomplished through a survey, designed as a main tool of the research, and developed through a comprehensive review for the previous theoretical and practical studies which addressed work stress considering opinion of specialists in the field. The field research is conducted with cabin crew in three companies representing different types of airlines (Scheduled, Low cost, Charter). A number of 157 surveys have been distributed to the mentioned types of airlines. A number of 106 surveys were analyzed after excluding the invalid forms. The required percentages were calculated and the frequency tables required to meet one of the most important descriptive statistical methods in identifying and defining the research variables and their frequency rates within the drawn sample were calculated. The research achieved several findings that work stress increases costs to the airlines as it leads for increasing sick leave rates reported by cabin crew which negatively affect operations of the flights. Moreover, training is found to be a major cost in airlines which would be required for cabin crew to manage work stress.

Keywords: Cabin Crew, Stress, Airlines, Work Stress, Cost.

Introduction

For Safety and convenience of passengers, aviation law in the whole world imposes employing professional Cabin Crew onboard the flights. Their primary role is to ensure the safety of passengers in addition to comfort. They are responsible for the application of safety procedures before, during and after the flight and including removal of the emergency and oxygen in case of emergency and storms and keep passengers in place during storms and first Aid (IATA, 2008). In case of emergencies, cabin crews are there to reassure passengers so that they follow the correct emergency procedures. The crew may have to deal with several emergencies such as cabin fires, decompression, ditching or crash landing in addition to first aid cases between passengers. At the end of a flight cabin crew members are there to make sure that passengers disembark the aircraft safely. The crew members are then asked to complete a written report that records all details of the flight (Air Arabia Egypt, 2010). On doing so, Cabin Crew are exposed to work stress which has an impact on increasing cost. There are some patterns of stresses onboard flights such as unstable speed of the aircraft, air pressure and dehydration. Fatigue is also a remarkable stress. In Addition to that, Cabin Crew encounters a stress resulting from administrative behavior.

Accordingly, this research is designed to contribute to the pool of knowledge by meeting the following objectives: -

1. Identify of work stress and its types in the environment of Cabin Crew
2. Evaluate the relationship between work stress and costs in airlines.

The research addresses the following questions:

1. What is the impact of cabin crew work stress on costs?
2. What is the impact of cabin crew work stress on increasing turnover rate?

Literature Review

Definition of work stress

There are multiple definitions given to work stress. Sizulaqa and Wallace realize it as a subjective experience makes psychological or physical imbalance for the individual. It is resulted from some factors in the external environment or the organization he works for (Sizulaqa and Wallace, 1991, p. 180). El Kobaisy sort work stress out as the environmental and organizational outcomes that generate side impacts and atmosphere of tension and frustration. It may lead for increasing the ability of the individual to deepen the psychological adjustment and raise the levels of stamina and sacrifice. On other hand its negative impact may leads for collapsing, withdrawing or burning out (El Kobaisy, 1998, p. 25). Abdel Gawad clarified it as a set of stimuli that is found in the work environment, which results in a series of reactions that are reflected in the behavior of individuals at work or in their psychological and physical state or in their performance (Abdel Gawad, 2002, p. 15). Finally, there are comprehensions of work stresses as conditions, incidents or unusual situations to workers inside work environment which affect their psychological state, feelings, emotions and spirits. They, in turn, are reflected on their mental or physical health or both (Al Otaiby, 1997, p. 179).

After reviewing these definitions and others, it is agreed with Al Sarrar that the work stress is an outcome of interaction between a number of environmental, organizational, functional stimuli on side and the characteristics and personal abilities of the individual on the other side. It could appear in the individual's attitude, performance or in their mental and physical life. It may motivate individuals to exert more effort in work and may cause severe damages either to them or to the organization as a whole (Al Sarrar, 2009). As there were many definitions provided for the concept of work stress, different terms have been used, including: management stress, job stress, organizational stress and work pressures. The term "Work Stress" is the one used in this research.

Classification of work stress

There are variable classifications of work stress as there are variable criteria used in classification. The following are different types of work stress according to criteria.

Classification of work stress according to sources

(Abdel Khaleq, 1996) classifies work stress according to this criterion into the following three types:

1. Stresses resulting from personal characteristics, such as motivation and the desire for self-achievement.
2. Stresses resulting from social environment, such as the nature of the relationship between colleagues, heads and subordinates at work.
3. Stresses that resulting from physical environment, such as levels of lighting and ventilation.

Classification of work stress according to period of exposure

According to this criterion (Hendawi, 1994) classifies work stress into two basic types:

- a. Temporary and intermittent Stress; when the employee is exposed to long working hours, or complex specific tasks lead to stress at this certain period of time.
- b. Chronic continuous stress; when the natural work environment and conditions are basically a source of pressure, which leads to a constant feeling of pressure.

Classification of work stress according to influence and consequences

According to this criterion (Anderson and Publish, 2001) classify work stress into the following two groups:

1. Positive or constructive Stress: they are stresses which push towards more work and achievement.
2. Negative or destructive stress: which negatively affect the individuals and the Organization as a whole.

Classification of work stress according to degree of influence

According to this criterion (Abdel Khaleq, 1996) classifies work stress into the following three types:

1. Simple stress: resulting from daily routine work activities. It usually has very limited influence.
2. Moderate Stress: it could have a medium influence.
3. Redoubled stresses: usually has a negative influence on the individual and the organization.

Cabin Crew Work Stress

The nature of the cabin crew profession, with its scheduled hours and destinations, requires considerable adaptation on the part of cabin crew. These changes can have a direct impact on their current lifestyle. To minimize the initial shock of their new profession, they should make arrangements that will help them deal with the new lifestyle.

General stress in Cabin Crew life style

Some of the other factors that make the cabin crew lifestyle appealing are also the aspects that can contribute to the pressures that it can add to their life. The cabin crew member should be aware of them and think about how they might respond to these changes and evaluate if these are changes they can and want to make in their life. There are several areas of their life that will change when they begin a career as a cabin crew. As they train for the job and go through the first years of flying, they will realize that they have little (if any) control over their work schedule - this includes days off, type of flying, destinations, vacation selection and holidays away from work (Chute and Hoang, 2004).

1. Personal Life

Because their month-to-month schedule is never guaranteed as either a schedule holder or stand by, they must be able to adjust their personal life accordingly. They may be flying weekends one month and the next month they might have a different series of days off (Dolgin and Gibbs, 2006). They may be gone for a day, or up to 6 to 8 days, or longer. When packing for their trip, have extra items in case of a delayed return or in case they wind up in an alternate destination. Even if their flight is scheduled to return at a particular time, their return may be delayed hours or days because of weather or mechanical issues. It's a good idea for them to think about how they will arrange their personal life and attend to things at home when they are not there. Being away from home for what might be an unknown period of time should make them think of arrangements in regards to the care of their spouse, children, pets and property (such as paying bills, mail, and security) (Musbach and Davis, 2005).

2. Relocation

Another reality they may face as a crew is that they may be relocated to a base or domicile which is not presently their home. They may have some opportunity for choice but business needs for staffing may not allow them to live in the city which they had anticipated residing in. They might even need to make decisions that impact their family. For example, will they move their spouse and children or move from the city where they live to the city where they are based? If they are single, are they comfortable uprooting themselves from where they are now? They may not be able to be near their parents, siblings and other family and friends. Even if this is something they can handle, their family and friends may not be supportive, and they may influence their career choice. These factors have to be taken into account when deciding if being a cabin crew is the right choice for them (Chute and Hoang, 2004).

3. Loneliness

Consider that even if they have been relocated, they may have little control over being home to attend events, functions and holidays as they have in the past. In fact, they may spend a holiday with people they have never met before or be on a layover in a country that does not recognize a holiday that they celebrate. All of these changes can create feelings of loneliness (Edwards and Edwards, 2004).

To help them deal with these changes, they can adopt one or more of the following strategies (Edwards and Edwards, 2004):

Stay connected with family and friends through email or cards and letters.

Educate their family and friends about their career and gain their support.

Accustom themselves to celebrating special events with family and friends such as special parties or gatherings (even if it doesn't coincide with the actual date of the event), so that it will work with their career and schedule.

Find ways to celebrate and recognize important occasions with their crew or on their flights.

Find mosques, churches, synagogues and organizations that provide an opportunity for them to worship or recognize a holiday (Stott and Walker, 2002).

Frontline Work Stress

Being a frontline service provider is exciting and ever changing. It is also very demanding and can sometimes be stressful. As cabin crew, they are "on stage" all the time and everything they do and say is seen and heard by customers. This means that there are many opportunities for them to demonstrate their skills, but if they are stressed and tired, it can also be a time of difficulty (Stott and Walker, 2002).. Cabin Crew deals with customers every day, on every flight and they experience difficult situations that are not under their control. They cannot fix what happened but they can provide an appropriate response to a specific situation. That means looking out for themselves as well as the passengers (Chute and Hoang, 2004). Below are some tips that can help them calm down:

Breathe - deep breathing will help to relax. A deep breath through the nose, hold it for a few seconds and let it out slowly through mouth.

Smile - it will make mood more positive and lighten someone else.

Relax - let tension out of muscles by making a fist and then relaxing it. Push palms together and release arms; rotate shoulders

Let it out -by keeping a journal or writing an experience down, they can express frustrations rather than taking it out on someone. Their journal can also be used as a learning tool for self-improvement by researching most challenging customer service interactions.

Talk Positively - don't make the situation worse by reliving the situation over and over. Instead, try to discuss it with others constructively.

They should also remember that taking proper care of their health, sufficient rest, exercise and good nutrition all help to minimize and deal with pressures of front-line work (Stott and Walker, 2002).

Cabin Crew Health Risks

Health issues during flying and in the cabin environment are different from those we experience on the ground. Those differences should be considered and evaluated as part of personal health - not just for the passenger who travels for business or pleasure but also for the crew who will live and work in this environment a good portion of the time. The following information is not meant to strike fear but to give them the tools to minimize the risks as well as

prepare them for the ways in which their body may react to flight (Musbach and Davis, 2005). The following tips look at some health risks associated with flying and the impacts on the human body. They will also be advised of required and probable vaccinations that the Cabin Crew will need in order to ensure their safety as well as the safety of everyone on board.

A) Health Risks Associated with Travel and Flying

It is important for anyone who applies to Cabin Crew position, to note that if he has a medical condition. He should consult with his physician to obtain professional advice before considering this career due to the health risks associated with this it (Musbach and Davis, 2005).

1. Environmental and Health Risks In-Flight

Aircrafts are not pressurized to sea level where most of us are accustomed to functioning. The aircraft cabin is pressurized between 1.828m - 2.438m, (the actual altitude of the aircraft is much higher) which is the equivalent of being on a small mountain. The two factors that impose stress on the body are less oxygen and expansion of gas in the body. The body can adjust to the lower concentration of oxygen which is about 7% less than at sea level if the person is not suffering from a heart, lung or blood disease. As cabin altitude increases and gas expands in the body as much as 25%, it can cause discomfort or problems in the abdomen (bloating or cramps), ears (crackling sounds or ear blockage) and respiratory/ sinus difficulties (Stott and Walker, 2002).

Cabin crew (and passengers) should not fly when they have an ear, nose or sinus infection as it generally prevents the air from flowing in these cavities and can result in pain, bleeding or a ruptured ear drum. Medication can be taken to relieve the pressure; however, crews need to be mindful of over-the-counter medications and their side impacts and the fact that taking medication while on duty is forbidden. Their airline's company policy will outline these parameters. When in doubt, always consulting the in-flight management for advice on over-the-counter medication and medication that their doctor has prescribed is recommended (Musbach and Davis, 2005).

2. Exposure to Infectious Diseases

Even though the cabin air quality is good in modern aircrafts' cabins, the fact that it is a small, enclosed environment increases the chance of person-to-person transmission of infections from coughing or breathing, as would happen in any office building or closed-in area. To protect them from potential threat, practice good self-protection as a mean to prevent illnesses. In addition, vaccinations are important for them as a crew and the types they will require may vary depending on the destinations to which they are assigned to fly. Most airlines will instruct them and validate those needs and in some cases offer the vaccinations they need either through a health plan or a contracted medical facility. Cabin crew should be vaccinated in accordance with recommendations from the World Health Organization. Some examples of the more common vaccinations required are: Tetanus, Pertussis (Whooping Cough) and

Diphtheria; Measles, Mumps and Rubella; Polio; Hepatitis B; Haemophilus Influenza; Others that may be required; Hepatitis A; Yellow Fever and Meningococcal Meningitis (Dolgin and Gibbs, 2006).

B) Other Recognized Impacts from Flying

There are some other recognized impacts of flying which must be taken in consideration. These impacts are:

The fluctuating air pressure and time zone changes impact hormonal and irregular menstruation cycles (periods) (Dolgin and Gibbs, 2006).

Jet lag is basically unavoidable if they are traveling over 3 to 4 time zones. Its symptoms are worsened by stress, overeating, dehydration, sleep deprivation and alcohol consumption.

The relative humidity in the cabin is very dry - at less than 20%. Although there is discomfort along with this, there is no real risk to their health. To offset its impact, it is recommended to consume more water and juice. At the same time, they should limit alcohol, coffee, tea and caffeinated drinks as they cause them to lose fluids (Musbach and Davis, 2005).

Contact lens wearers may notice eye discomfort. Have drops available for additional lubrication or wear glasses - especially on longer night flights.

For dry skin, apply moisturizer to skin and hands.

Motion, noise and vibration can also cause discomfort and sickness during or following a flight - especially in their first experiences working as a crew. Eat well, drink fluids, and rest to minimize reactions (Edwards and Edwards, 2004).

Methodology

To identify the problem of the research, a descriptive analytical approach based on the opinion survey is followed. It depends on researching the phenomenon - work stress in the field of Cabin Crew and its impact on costs - as it really occurs - and describes it accurately. The research also follows the quantitative approach to research and analyze the data, in addition to using averages, percentages and statistical tests as a tool of analysis. The primary data needed to tackle the analytical parts of the research is collected through a survey designed to be considered as the main tool of the research. The survey has been distributed among Cabin Crew Members, Cabin Seniors and instructors working in different airline companies.

Normal distribution test (Sample KS) is used to check if the data follow a normal distribution or not and to determine what are the necessary tests needed to analyze the data. As a result, it has been found that the significance level for each field is less than 0.05 and so he has to use non-parametric tests

Community of the research

The community is represented through different airline companies which have the big existence in the Egyptian Market. There are different types of airline companies as follows:

- a. Scheduled Airlines
- b. Charter Airlines.
- c. Low Cost Airlines.

The nature of work in every type of the previous airlines differs from the other which divides the community of the research into different categories. Three airlines, one representing each type were chosen intentionally and surveys are exclusively distributed on cabin crew in each airline.

Research Sample

A survey has been distributed to cabin crew, cabin seniors and instructors in the airline companies. The statement of distribution of those surveys is shown in the following table:

Table 1: The survey has been distributed

Types of Airline	Distributed Surveys	Missing Surveys	Invalid Surveys	Valid Surveys
Regular	66	18	8	40
Low Cost	51	10	7	34
Charter	40	3	5	32
Total	157	31	20	106

As shown in Table 1, a number of 157 surveys is distributed to the mentioned types of airlines, 66 in Egypt Air, 51 in Air Arabia, and 40 in Air Cairo. A number of 106 surveys are analyzed after excluding invalid forms. The research tool has been applied on the airline companies taking into consideration explaining the purpose of the research to the respondents in a clear and simplified method before distributing the surveys on them. Out of 157 surveys, only 126 have been given back by the respondents. While analyzing the surveys, 20 were excluded for invalidity. Thus, the research sample includes only 106 surveys.

Survey

A survey is designed as a main tool for the research, as the survey is effective in data collection. In addition, it is more practical, quicker and could be analyzed more scientifically and objectively than other forms of research. The survey was presented to the professional specialists at the surveyed airlines and to professors at the University of Sadat City to test its validity. The survey is used as a means of collecting data. The form consists of the following parts:

1) Initial Data:

This part consists of three questions that specify the name of the airline that the investigator is working in and the title of his position as well as the type of airline.

2) Closed questions:

In this part, each paragraph has been giving gradual numbers and measures according to Likert scale quintet.

Reliability of the scale

For all scales, Cronbach Alpha correlation coefficient is calculated to determine the internal consistency of the scale. The computation of Cronbach Alpha is based on the number of items on the survey and the ratio of the average inter-item covariance to the average item variance.

Reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social scientific research situations. The Cronbach Alpha reliability is computed and the tests show that the reliability coefficients for all the instruments are above 0.70 which indicate that the instrument is reliable for being used.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.695	4

Table 2 shows Research Cronbach alpha for all four survey instruments presented in table 3.

Analysis and results' explanation

Analyze the survey and comments on the results are processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows v.15.0. The data has been checked and verified for recording error and accuracy of data entry before further analyses are performed. This section includes the results of testing hypothesis of the research using suitable statistical tests. A discussion of the obtained results is also presented at the end of this chapter to highlight important results and give more clarification to some of their results.

Research Variables

Research Variables are as follows:

A) Independent Variable: Work Stress in the Field of Cabin Crew

B) Dependent Variables: Costs to the Airlines.

Analyses and Discussions

This section includes a list of the survey's results tested on the research's sample and questions. The section also analyzes and discusses these results in detail and finds out the level of the survey so as to characterize work-stress which faces cabin crews related to and connected with the nature of their work in different airline companies.

Normal distribution test for studied variables

The normal distribution test (Sample KS) is used to check if the data follow a normal distribution or not and to determine what are the necessary tests needed to analyze the data. Table 3 shows that the significance level is less than 0.05 which lead to use non-parametric tests.

Table 3: Normality of distribution

Mean	Normal Parameters (a,b)	3.65
	Std. Deviation	0.876
Absolute	Most Extreme Differences	0.115
	Positive	0.077
	Negative	-0.115
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	0.964
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.310

NOTE: a: Test distribution is Normal, b: Calculated from data.

The results tabulated data shown in table 3 indicate that the community is normally distributed to the degree that assures the ability of using multiple regressions for studied variables later. Variable distribution is considered normal if test statistic is 0.05 or less.

Analysis and discussion

Surveys have been distributed to a sample that represents Regular, Charter and Low Cost Airline companies. The table below shows the frequency (which means the number of observations for the three airlines) and percentage (which means the repetition of each observation divided by the times of repetition).

Table 4: Airlines in which surveys have been distributed

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Regular	40	37.7	37.7
	Charter	32	30.2	30.2
	Low cost	34	32.1	32.1
Total		106	100.0	100.0

As shown in Table 4, the percentage of Regular Airline is 37.7%, Charter Airline is 30.2%, and finally the Low Cost Airline is 32.1%. These few/little differences in the percentage of the survey's distribution result from the different numbers of respondents in each airline.

The Impact of Work Stress on Costs

This part identifies the impact of work stress on the costs paid by the airline company while operating flights. A number of four elements were suggested by cabin crew professionals and listed below. To clarify this, averages, Standard deviation, percentages are calculated and finally the signal of each element is tested.

Table 5 shows: Mean standard deviations and Sig "P. Value" for each element:

Table 5: Elements of Costs

Parameter	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (P.value)
Cabin Crew Training represents a cost to the airline.	3.81	1.373	0.000
The feeling of work stress increases cabin crew sick leaves.	3.46	1.253	0.005
The feeling of work stress increases turnover.	3.19	1.278	0.000
Work stress may leads to human mistakes that may cause a high cost to the company (e.g., opening the door, in normal cases, in armed positions)	3.26	1.297	0.004
	3.43	1.3	0.00225

NOTE: P. Value = 0.05 or less.

Table 5 shows that The impact of work stress on the suggested elements has a mean of 3.43, which refers to the acceptance of the respondents.

1. Comparing to other elements, "Cabin Crew training" is ranked the first cause of costs, with a mean of 3.81, standard deviation 1.373 and Sig "P.Value" of 0.00 (less than 5% which indicates acceptance with superior degree of confidence 95%). Which indicates that the training represents a high cost to the airlines, and this includes the training of newly appointed cabin crew or continuous in-job training during the period of employment.
2. There is general acceptance of the dimension "Work stress may lead to increase the proportion of Cabin Crew sick leaves", with a mean of 3.46, a standard deviation 1.253 and the level of significance 0.005, less than 0.5 which means acceptance with superior degree of confidence 95%. Where the respondents assert that work stress lead to an increase in the sick leave rate, which directly affects the cost, such as the cost resulting from delaying flights or disturbing the operation schedule.
3. There is neutrality about the dimension "Work stress may lead to turnover (resignation), with a mean of 3.19, a standard deviation 1.278 and the level of significance 0.000. This indicates that work stress not necessarily leads for increasing turn over.
4. In general, it was found that work stress increases costs to the airlines according to what have been mentioned above.

Conclusion

The Research titled " Impact of Cabin Crew Work Stress on Costs at Airlines ". Two objectives were targeted; Identify work stress and its types in the environment of Cabin Crew and Evaluate the correlation between work stress and costs at airlines. After targeting research objectives, the research achieved several findings that work stress increases costs to the airlines as it leads for increasing sick leave rates reported by cabin crew which negatively affect operations of the flights. Moreover, training is found to be a major cost in airlines which would be required for cabin crew to manage work stress. The research highlights the importance of managing work stress in cabin crew as it leads to increase cost to the airlines. However, work stress was not found to be a reason of increasing turnover rate for the cabin crew.

Recommendations

According to what have been reached in the research, the recommendations are as follows:

1. Developing a new work stress management training for the cabin crew in order to enhance their ability to manage stress.
2. Providing cabin crew with proper operation schedules in order to avoid stress resulted from heavy schedules as stress is found to be resulted from scheduled hours and destinations, which requires considerable adaptation from management side.

3. Cabin Crew should arrange dealing with the new lifestyle. To minimize the initial shock of their new profession.
4. Cabin Crew should make arrangements in regards to the care of their spouse, children, pets and property in order to cope with being away from home for what might be an unknown period of time.
5. In order to cope with loneliness which is a cause of work stress, cabin crew are advised to:
 - Stay connected with family and friends through email or cards and letters.
 - Educate their family and friends about their career and gain their support.
 - Accustom themselves to celebrating special events with family and friends such as special parties or gatherings so that it will work with their career and schedule.
 - Find ways to celebrate and recognize important occasions with their crew or on their flights.
 - Find mosques, churches, synagogues and organizations that provide an opportunity for them to worship or recognize a holiday (Stott and Walker, 2002).
6. Increasing academic researches related for aviation management generally and cabin crew particularly is highly recommended. As the research found scarcity at the related studies.

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أثر ضغوط العمل لدى المضيفين الجويين على زيادة التكاليف

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الملخص العربي

يتعرض المضيفون الجويون للعديد من الضغوط البدنية والنفسية والتي قد تؤثر على زيادة التكاليف، يستهدف البحث تحديد ضغوط العمل وأنواعها في بيئة الضيافة الجوية وتقييم العلاقة بين ضغوط العمل والتكاليف في شركات الطيران، وتتبع الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي القائم على استطلاع الرأي، وقد توصل البحث إلى عدة نتائج تفيد بأن ضغوط العمل تزيد من التكاليف على شركات الطيران لأنها تؤدي إلى زيادة معدلات الإجازات المرضية التي يلجأ إليها طاقم الطائرة مما يؤثر سلباً على تشغيل الرحلات. علاوة على ذلك، وجد أن التدريب يمثل تكلفة كبيرة على شركات الطيران والتي ستكون مطلوبة لطاقم الطائرة لإدارة ضغوط العمل..ويسلط البحث الضوء على أهمية إدارة ضغوط العمل في وظيفة الضيافة الجوية لأنها تؤدي إلى زيادة التكلفة على شركات الطيران. ومع ذلك، لم يعتبر ضغط العمل سبباً لزيادة معدل دوران طاقم الطائرة.

الكلمات الدالة: ضغوط العمل، زيادة التكاليف، المضيفين الجويين، شركات الطيران.