An Investigation of the Preference towards Career Development of Taiwanese and Non-Taiwanese Flight Attendants in the Selected Aviation Companies in Taiwan

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Abstract: *This study seeks to investigate the preference of setting the basic salary and promotion of Taiwanese and Non-Taiwanese flight attendant; to investigate whether the preference had any effects on the staff salary and promotion both Taiwanese and Non-Taiwanese flight attendant; and, to investigate the effect of preference on the Taiwanese and Non-Taiwanese flight attendant's morale. Using a quantitative research design, data was collected using questionnaires from 489 cabin crew of Taiwanese, Japanese and Thai nationality at China Airlines, and of Taiwanese at EVA Air. The data was analysed by mean standard deviation, and regression analysis. The empirical study established that the relationship between the employee's selection and the employee morale (job involvement and organisational identification) are positively associated. The personnel system has a moderating effect on the relationship between employees' training & selection and employee morale. The Taiwan nationality also contributes to the differential benefit. Therefore, it leads to lower job involvement and organisational identification for expatriate cabin crew. This paper recommends that airlines should maintain management philosophy of peace culture for their operation when managing cross-nationality employees. By using cross-culture devotion, fostering international cooperation the airline companies can benefit from better understanding of their employees, and this will contribute to an increase in their morale.*

Keywords: employee's selection, employee morale, personnel system, flight attendant, career development, flight attendant career development

Introduction

The centrality of human resources in the development of economies had attracted widespread attention from research and practice, and in particular, labour, which is an essential part of economic development (Liao and Yang, 2007). Labour provides a crucial resource for operating and developing businesses (Bewley, 1995; Bell & Raj, 2016). Human resources perform critical roles in ensuring customer satisfaction (Chan, 2006; Franco, 2009; Rotwerescu, 2010). Passengers using airlines purchase transport services (Ostrowski et al., 1993). Thus, the fundamental determinant of customer satisfaction is the personnel involved in providing services that contribute to a wholesome travel experience. This is why Hochschild (1983) links flight attendants' competencies to the quality of service provided by airlines and eventual satisfaction of customers.

The flight attendants need to be motivated for them to facilitate satisfactory services to customers (Chen, 2014; Ilkhanizadeh & Karatepe, 2017). Abbot (2003) argues that increased morale enhances flight attendants' job satisfaction and work engagement and they pass it to the customers, who get to experience exceptional service quality; this influences their decision making processes and increases their chances of being loyal. This notwithstanding, it is important to note that provision of constant services that ensure high satisfaction for customers is entirely pegged on availability of highly motivated employees (Makawatsakul & Kleiner, 2003).

Highly motivated employees are eager and passionate to constantly ensure customers are satisfied, and their expectations are exceeded. Gaining insight into the motivation of employees is examined from the selection and recruitment exercises (Ostrowski, O'Brien & Gordon, 1993; Wen, 2009).

The purpose of this research is to analyse how employees from different nationalities view development in human resource management. The study also seeks to determine the influence of education level, abilities to use language, and new employees' appearance on the morale of airline staff; as well as, identify ways of enhancing the morale of airline staff to motivate them more. It also investigates the flight attendants' self –perception on their career development. Given that organisations strive to boost morale in their employees during their induction, this study recognises the significance of establishing the possibility of using pre-employment training to create ambassadors to boost the companies' image.

Research Questions and Objectives

The study seeks to achieve three specific objectives:
- To investigate the preference of setting the basic salary and promotion of Taiwanese and Non-Taiwanese flight attendants
- To investigate the influence of education level, abilities to use language, and new employees' appearance on the morale of airline staff
- To investigate the effect of preference on the Taiwanese and Non-Taiwanese flight attendant's morale.

Emanating from the foregoing objectives are the questions below.
- What is the preference of setting the basic salary and promotion of Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese flight attendants?
- How does the influence of education level, abilities to use language, and new employees' appearance affect the morale of airline staff?
- What is the effect of the preference on the Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese morale?

Literature Review

Carlisle (1976) describes morale as what employees reflect when working with other members in the organisation. Organisational members include managers, employees and other stakeholders who have direct contact with its daily operations. Staff morale is therefore evaluated based on how an employee relates with their immediate superiors, and a feeling of satisfaction (Carlisle, 1976). According to Jucius (1976), employee morale relates to the state of emotions and psychology, which influence the extent to which employees are willing to work, and their output levels. Staff morale inspires job engagement and organisational identity.

Enterprise administration is vital to an efficient personnel management system (David, 2004), which establishes comprehensive rules and regulations, salary clusters, training and assessment programs, job promotion protocols, reward and punishment procedures, injury pension, retirement placement, and health insurance. All these should be detailed, but McDuffie (1995) established that salaries and promotional opportunities are the greatest concerns for employees (MacDuffie 1995).

Achieving improved productivity by airline companies requires employees to be highly motivated (Wang and Seifert, 2017). This is because motivation enables employees to improve and exceed expectations of their job requirements. Although the best way of retaining employees

is still debatable, researchers such as Bell and Raj (2016) and Harvey and Turnbull (2016) identify that the most popular strategies used in motivating staff are financial compensation, and related perks. However, Karatepe (2016) and Ilkhanizadeh and Karatepe (2017) contend that the most important factors that motivate employees are psychological benefits. For instance, the feeling of being a valued member of an organisation, tends to make employees loyal, and they reciprocate this by ensuring customers are satisfied with the service offerings. Financial and psychological inputs are factual; hence, their effectiveness depends on other organisational factors such as the culture. The foregoing extant literature analysed reveals a central underpinning that employees should constantly be motivated if organisations desire for their employees' input to translate into increased productivity and improved.

Hypotheses

      H1 : Rigorous flight attendant training positively affects staff selection and morale
      H2 : The personnel system negatively affects staff selection, training and morale
      H3 : Unfair salary allocation negatively affects staff selection and morale
      H4 : Unfair promotion negatively affects staff selection and morale

Research Methods

      The target population comprised flight attendants from China Airlines and Eva Airlines. At the time of undertaking this research, the information from the two airlines revealed that they had a total workforce of 7, 140 flight attendants. Owing to the resources, effort and time available to the researcher, the non-probability technique of convenience sampling was used to identify and recruit relevant participants. It is easy to use, and direct in its application was appropriate in targeting 600 respondents.

The research tool and data collection

      Questionnaires were constructed using the research purpose, aim and objectives as the premise. It was imperative that responses obtained directly contributed to achieving what the research set out to do. Questionnaires were distributed by email and line group. Time and location of the flight attendants tended to interfere with the streamlined nature of data collection. Validity of the questionnaire was established using content validity, which is concerned with the extent to which the data collection tool fully measures or evaluates the area of interest. To ensure that the questionnaire is a valid instrument, rational analysis was employed by the researcher to ensure it was readable, clear, and comprehensive enough to satisfy the purpose of the study. Further, the coefficient of correlations between the outcome variables and questions were computed to reinforce the validity. Reliability of the questionnaire was established through statistical calculation, where the questionnaire was administered on a sample on 2 separate occasions. Then Pearson correlation coefficient formula was used to compare the scores, where the scores were between +/-0.7 to 1.0 to establish a strong relationship, which underpinned the reliability of the questionnaire.

      In collecting the data, the researcher adopted a networking to distribute the questionnaires simultaneously. A network comprised of the Taiwanese staff and a questionnaire was for Japanese and Thai flight attendants. Data was collected between the 1st of March and 15th of June 2018. However, from the 600 distributed questionnaires, only 489 were returned, which translated to an 81.50% response rate; an acceptable rate in obtaining credible and reliable data (Saunders, 2012).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was carried out by coding and entering datasets using SPSS software, and generating outputs that included frequencies, percentage, means, correlations and regressions. Thus, descriptive and inferential statistics were used in this study.

Ethical consideration

Personal information that can be traced back to the participants was not collected or included in the data collection and presentation process as a way of ensuring confidentiality of the information generated. Further, appropriate safeguards were put in place to ensure that no harm was visited on the participants. To ensure privacy, the data collected was stored in a password protected folder in the researcher's personal computer, and backed up in a similarly protected cloud drive. The data was to be destroyed 14 days after finalising the study as a measure to further ensure confidentiality and privacy.

Findings

The quantitative data analysis revealed the following results.

Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Regression analysis showed the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

The Relationship between Employee Selection and Staff Morale

Table 1 below established that there is a statistically significant relationship between staff training, selection and morale and demographic characteristics including age, education, seniority and rank. This establishes that there is a positive correlation between the staff morale, their selection and demographic traits. The selection method can significantly explain the changes in an organisation identity. Thus, the hypothesis rigorous flight attendant training positively affects staff selection and morale was not rejected.

The Impact of Personnel System on the Relationship between Staff Selection & Staff Morale

Table 1 Hierarchical regression analysis among staff selection & training, personnel system and staff morale

	Beta	T	R^2	$\triangle R^2$	F
Age	.372***	3.084			
Education	.129***	2.515			
Seniority	-.485***	-3.985			
Rank	.270***	2.589			
Step 1			.088		6.705*
(Control variable)					

	Beta	T	R²	△R²	F
Staff's selection training & morale	&.405	8.444***			
Step 2 (Independent variable)			.243	.155	71.305***
Personnel system	.481	10.560***			
Step 3 (Interference variable)			.427	.184	111.521***

Note: 1. Dependent variable: staff morale.

***, P<0.001. *, p<0.05.

Number of observations: 489.

Step 1 of Table 2 shows the control variables (such as age, education, seniority and rank) significantly influence staff morale, R² was 0.088, F was 6.705, which was statistically significant (P <0.005). Step 2 showed that after adding staff selection and training to the independent variable, R² was 0. 243, R² increases to 0.155, the change of P<0.001 reaches a significant level. This indicates that staff selection and training have a positive influence on staff morale. After adding the personnel system as disturbance variable in step 3, R² becomes 0.427, R² increases to 0.184. This change P<0.001 reaches a significant level, which indicates that the personnel system significantly impacts change in staff morale. Thus, the second hypothesis: The personnel system negatively affects staff selection, training and morale, was not rejected.

Table 2 Hierarchical regression analysis among staff selection & salary and staff morale

	Beta	T	R²	△R²	F
Age	.372***	3.084			
Education	.129***	2.515			
Seniority	-.485***	-3.985			
Rank	.270***	2.589			
Step 1 (Control variable)			.088		6.705*
Staff's selection & training	.078	1.613			
Step 2 (Independent variable)			.085	-.003	7.649***

	Beta	T	R²	△R²	F
Salary	.318	6.453***			
Step3			.265	.180	41.647***
(interference variables)					
Selection	method-2.868	-5.637***			
*Salary					
Step 4			.327	.062	31.779***
(Interaction)					

Note: 1. Dependent variable: staff morale.
***, P<0.001. *, p<0.05.

Number of observations: 489.According to the results from Table 3, there was a statistically significant relationship between the employee selection method, and their work involvement and organisational identity. Next, unfair salary and promotion were added as interference variables to analyse the hierarchical regression in order to illustrate their impact on staff morale. From Table 4-21, it is evident that the selection method has a direct and positive impact on staff morale. R², the coefficient was 0.078, and was significant given that P<0.001. The effect of the selection method on staff morale increased after adding the unfair salary allocation as the interference variable and the Beta coefficient becomes 2.868, which is significant (P<0.001). This shows the far-reaching impact of salary, irrespective of whether it is unfair or not, on the morale of employees. This shows that salaries are essential in incentivising employees and boosting their morale. The variants increase by 0.062, revealing a negative correlation between the selection method and unfair salary allocation that would produce a negative interference effect. Therefore, the third hypothesis: Unfair salary allocation negatively affects staff selection and morale was not rejected.

Table 3 Hierarchical regression analysis among selection method, promotion and staff morale

	Beta	T	R²	△R²	F
Age	.372***	3.084			
Education	.129***	2.515			
Seniority	-.485***	-3.985			
Rank	.270***	2.589			
Step 1 (Control variable)			.088		6.705*

	Beta	T	R^2	$\triangle R^2$	F
Selection method	.078	1.613			
Step 2			.085	-.003	7.649***
(Independent variable)					
Promotion	.543	12.295***			
Step3			.427	.340	151.162***
(interference variables)					
Selection method	-2.309	-7.483***			
*Promotion					
Step 4			.506	.079	55.997***
(Interaction)					

Note: 1. Dependent variable: staff morale.
***, P<0.001. *, p<0.05.
Number of observations: 489.

The results of the analysis of the disturbance from unfair promotion illustrated in table 3 indicate that the R^2 has increased its effect on staff selection method and staff morale, with a coefficient 0.078 and a significance of P<0.001. After adding unfair promotion as an interference variable, the effect of the staff selection method on staff morale increased, the Beta coefficient was -2.309, the significance was (P <0.001), and the variance had increased by 0.079, which represents a negative correlation between staff selection methods, unfair promotion and staff morale. Hence, the fourth hypothesis: Unfair promotion negatively correlates to staff selection and morale was not rejected.

Conclusion
In relation to the preference of setting the basic salary and promotion of Taiwanese and Non-Taiwanese flight attendant, the discussion finds that a system of meritorious remuneration guided by the employee position and role is essential to boosting morale. Additionally, preferences have negative effects on the staff salary and promotion for both Taiwanese and Non-Taiwanese flight attendants. More so, education level, abilities to use local language and new employees' appearance positively affect employee morale. The study revealed that employee training is positively correlated to employee morale. It follows that the more rigorous the selection process of the flight attendants, the higher the staff's input to work and the higher the level of employee recognition of the organisation. Personnel system interferes in the relationship between the staff training and morale. Employee morale can be negatively affected by unfair salary allocation and promotion. Therefore, the study recommends that:

　　　　1. Airlines should execute near perfect staff selection and training in order to accelerate staff morale.

　　　　2. Pre-service training should be implemented to improve the airline staff's familiarity with their work, and their work willingness. Therefore, the companies should arrange pre-service training for new staff that includes general training and inner incentive effect training courses to enhance work efficiency and work engagement (Chen 2014).

　　　　3. There should be adequate salary distribution because it has a significant impact on employee's satisfaction, morale and job performance. It improves staff efficiency and enhances the competitiveness of enterprises (Williams and Brower, 2008).

　　　　4. Employers should not treat employees differently based on their nationalities. They should ensure all exercises and measures adopted apply across the board, in a fair and equitable manner. This will improve the staff satisfaction levels, and stimulate morale, as well as make them loyal and committed.

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