

# EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG THAI FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANTS OF AIR CARRIERS IN THAILAND

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## ABSTRACT

This research aimed to 1) study organizational factors affecting the engagement of female flight attendants, 2) compare these factors, and 3) develop guidelines for enhancing their organizational engagement. The sample included 254 female flight attendants, with data analyzed through frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and one-way ANOVA. The findings revealed that 1) key factors influencing engagement were work environment, job characteristics, supervisors, team/colleagues, salary and fringe benefits, career advancement, and work-life balance. 2) Team/colleagues, job characteristics, and supervisors were rated as the most important factors. 3) Recommendations for promoting engagement include revising compensation and benefits, adjusting employment contracts, developing career paths, revising work schedules to improve work-life balance, enhancing the work environment, and organizing team-building activities. 4) Significant differences were found in the importance of factors such as work environment, team/colleagues, salary and fringe benefits, and work-life balance at the 0.01 level. 5) The comparison of flight attendants with different levels of job happiness revealed statistically significant differences in factor importance at the 0.01 level in at least one pair.

**Keywords:** Employee, Engagement, Flight Attendants, Air Carriers

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## INTRODUCTION

Flight attendant career is one of the dream careers of Thai women because it is a challenging career, with the opportunity to gain a variety of experiences, both in terms of traveling experience, living abroad, learning various cultures, developing language skills, personality, as well as stable and higher salary and other fringe benefits than other careers. In addition, it is a career that is recognized by society as a whole as a career that requires high skills, especially in language, good personality in body, verbal, thought process, knowledge, and attitude, and can also improve social status very well. This is consistent with Suhaimi et al. (2021), who stated that working in airlines not only creates opportunities for career growth but also helps employees develop communication and customer service skills, which are valuable for work in all careers.

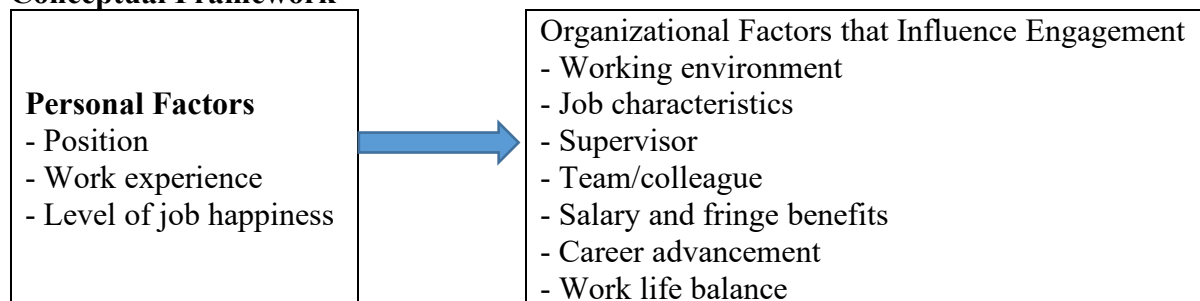
In Thailand, Thai women are often interested in flight attendant careers due to several factors, one of which is the need for social acceptance. In many cases, working in this career elevates social status and provides opportunities for high-level socializing. In addition, meeting people from various races and cultures is another important motivation for entering this career (Wijaya & Apriani, 2022).

The determination of Thai women to pursue flight attendant careers raises an intriguing question: how does this relate to employee engagement? Meyer & Allen (1991) underscore the significance of employee commitment to an organization's success. Committed employees are not only satisfied with their jobs but also enthusiastic about serving and dedicated to the long-term success of the airline. Wong and Ko (2020) said that employee engagement in the organization comes from more than reasonable compensation. But also from the feeling of being recognized and supported by the organization. Working in an environment that allows employees to continuously develop themselves, such as training and opportunities for career advancement, is another factor that makes employees feel committed to the organization.

Given the motivation of Thai women to work as flight attendants and the unique opportunities this profession offers, it is crucial to understand how these women engage with their organizations. Therefore, the proposed research on Employee Engagement among Thai Female Flight Attendants of Air Carriers in Thailand is of significant interest and importance.

The objective of this research aimed to 1) study organizational factors affecting the engagement of female flight attendants, 2) compare these factors, and 3) develop guidelines for enhancing their organizational engagement.

### Conceptual Framework



## LITERATURE REVIEWS

### The demand for working as flight attendants

Flight attendants are a career that offers networking opportunities, as working on international flights allows you to meet people from a variety of industries, which can lead to career opportunities elsewhere in the aviation industry. IATA (2021) stated that flight attendants offer the opportunity to travel to different places around the world for free, so those who work in this career are exposed to new cultures, places, and experiences abroad.

A survey of Young Professionals on Career Preferences (2023) highlighted the appeal of the flight attendant career to recent graduates. It offers the thrill of traveling the world, with few qualification requirements, attractive compensation and benefits, and a flexible work-life balance. The abundance of social interaction, the sense of adventure, and the luxurious image make this career an exciting option for those seeking a diverse lifestyle. AFA (2023) discussed factors that support working as a flight attendant as a career as follows: 1) The basic qualifications for the job are not too high because when hired, the airline will provide training in work skills. 2) The airline has attractive welfare and other fringe benefits. 3) The opportunity to interact with diverse cultures from both colleagues and passengers. PayScale (2023) stated that the flight attendant career is a career with attractive salaries, per diems, bonuses, and travel allowances.

Therefore, the few qualification requirements, attractive compensation and other benefits, flexibility in work and personal life, the abundance of social interaction, the sense of adventure, and the luxurious image of work meet the lifestyles of the new generation.

### **Organizational Factors**

The organizational factors influencing Thai female flight attendants in the aviation industry are crucial to understanding their job satisfaction and overall career experiences. Each of these factors plays a significant role in shaping their work environment, which ultimately affects their performance and decision to stay in the industry. Key elements include: Working Environment, a supportive working environment that prioritizes safety and cultural respect enhances job satisfaction among Thai female flight attendants. Positive atmospheres lead to higher retention rates and employee engagement (Wijaya & Apriani, 2022). Job Characteristics, according to Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model, aspects like autonomy and task variety are vital for job fulfillment. Flight attendants who find their roles meaningful are generally more satisfied and committed (Kulik, 2020). Supervisor, supportive leadership significantly impacts flight attendants' experiences. Transformational leadership fosters trust and motivation, enhancing job satisfaction (Bass, 1990; Judge et al., 2021). Team/Colleague, strong colleague relationships contribute to a positive workplace culture. Social support within teams reduces stress and enhances job performance, creating a sense of belonging (Gittell, 2003). Salary and Fringe Benefits, fair compensation is crucial for attracting and retaining female flight attendants. Adequate salaries and comprehensive benefits promote loyalty to the airline (Milkovich & Newman, 2020; Pfeffer, 2018).

Career Advancement, opportunities for growth are essential for retention. Airlines that provide clear advancement pathways and professional development are more likely to keep talented employees (Noe, 2021; Baruch, 2019). Work-Life Balance, flexible scheduling is vital for female flight attendants, especially given the demanding nature of their roles. Airlines that support personal commitments lead to higher employee satisfaction (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; HBR, 2022).

In conclusion, the organizational factors influencing Thai female flight attendants are interconnected and crucial for enhancing their experiences. By creating a supportive work environment, ensuring fair compensation, and promoting work-life balance, airlines can significantly improve job satisfaction and commitment among female employees. These efforts not only meet the needs of flight attendants but also enhance overall organizational performance, benefiting the airline industry as a whole.

### **Employee Engagement**

Many theorists have commented on the factors that are important in creating employee engagement: Bakker and Demerouti (2008) stated that providing employees with flexibility and supporting a healthy work-life balance positively influences employee engagement. Saks (2006) stated that work environment and culture with a positive work environment that promotes collaboration, inclusivity, and recognition significantly impacts employee

engagement. An organizational culture where employees feel safe, respected, and part of a cohesive team fosters higher levels of engagement. Macey and Schneider (2008) describe recognizing and rewarding employee achievements can reinforce their sense of engagement and continue to perform well. The Bruke Institute identified key factors influencing employee engagement, including organizational goals, managerial style, coworkers, job characteristics, career growth opportunities, and customers. Breevaart et al. (2014) underscore the crucial role of leadership and management style in fostering employee engagement.

Therefore, factors that influence employee engagement in this research include the working environment, job characteristics, supervisor, team/colleague, salary and fringe benefits, career advancement, and work-life balance.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Population and Sample**

The population used in this study was female flight attendants of Thai airlines. The purposive sampling method was 254 people who were still working at Thai airlines before the COVID-19 situation until now.

### **Research Instrument**

The instrument used in this research was a questionnaire developed from a study of concepts, theories, and related research. The questionnaire was divided into 3 parts as follows: Part 1 is a general personal factor question. Part 2 is a question on the level of opinions on organizational factors affecting engagement. Part 3 is an open-ended question on approaches to promoting organizational engagement.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher used the questionnaire to conduct an online survey by giving the female flight attendant scanning a QR code after their flight duty outside the arrivals lounge at Don Mueang Airport from February 1 to March 31, 2024

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher analyzed the statistical data using a Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) as follows: 1) Personal factors data were analyzed by finding the frequency and percentage. 2) Data on the level of opinions on organizational factors affecting female flight attendant engagement were analyzed by using the mean, standard deviation, and ranking. 3) Comparison of the differences in the mean levels of opinions on organizational factors was done using t-test and One-way ANOVA at a significance level of 0.01. And 4) Guidelines for promoting organizational engagement among female flight attendant were analyzed by using content analysis method.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS**

### **Personal Data**

The study of personal data of 254 female flight attendants found that the majority were between 26-30 years old (59.10 percent), almost all of them were single (94.10 percent), and had a bachelor's degree (94.90 percent). They had an average monthly income of more than 40,000 baht (61.80 percent). Most female flight attendants were happy with their work (73.20 percent) and were confident that their contract would be renewed when it expired (52.00 percent). Most employees were not interested in changing career paths when the opportunity arose (65.00 percent).

### **The study of organizational factors affecting female flight attendants' engagement**

The study of organizational factors affecting female flight attendants' engagement found that there were 7 dimensions: working environment, job characteristics, supervisors, team/colleagues, salary and fringe benefits, career advancement, and work-life balance. The overall value was very importance ( $M = 3.43$ ) and the respondents gave importance to the top 3

organizational factors in 3 matters: team/colleagues ranked first ( $M = 4.24$ ), working environment ranked second ( $M = 3.85$ ), and the third ranking was supervisors ( $M = 3.76$ ), as detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1** Means and Standard Deviations of the Importance Levels of Organizational Factors Influencing Engagement of Female Flight Attendants.

Organizational factors	M	S.D.	Meaning	Rank
Working environment	3.34	.7298	Important	4
Job characteristics	3.85	.4464	Very important	2
Supervisors	3.76	.6717	Very important	3
Team and colleagues	4.24	.4573	Most important	1
Salary and fringe benefits	2.92	.9074	Important	7
Career advancement	3.25	.7003	Important	5
Work-life balance	3.09	.8886	Important	6
Overall	3.43	.5351	Very important	

**The results of the study on the guidelines for building organizational engagement through content analysis are summarized as follows:**

- 1) Review the criteria, regulations, and methods for paying compensation and other benefits, both in the form of regular wages and welfare, to be appropriate for the current competitive situation in the aviation industry. There should be a survey of compensation payments from other airlines, including surveys of employee satisfaction and needs, to maximize the efficiency in paying compensation. From this research, it was found that benefits such as ticketing and health benefits are what flight attendants expect, etc.
- 2) Review the employment contract in terms of the employment period to be appropriate to support the growth of the organization. There may be criteria, qualifications, and conditions for renewing employment to be consistent with the current situation, including increasing employment options for employees, such as allowing employees to transfer to work in different parts of the organization, which still requires going through the internal selection process.
- 3) Build employee confidence in their careers by planning to develop various work skills to support career growth. A career path plan should be created so that employees can see their growth path, understand the criteria, qualifications, and responsibilities of the job. In addition, airlines should increase knowledge and skills in various areas according to their interests to create confidence in their careers after the employment contract expires.
- 4) Review the criteria for arranging work schedules for employees to create a balance between work and personal life. The airline's human resource department must consider finding a balance between the number of flights, aircraft, flight routes, passengers, and employees (Manpower) to achieve maximum efficiency in work and support the organization's growth. Manpower planning, employee skill development training, recruitment planning, career path planning, other benefits, and team building (Team Spirit) are continuous processes that the human resource department must consider in line with the situation. From this research study, it was found that employees need appropriate holidays and leave.
- 5) Develop and improve the employee's work environment to make employees proud of their own airline, such as developing cabins and equipment in the cabin, including adding equipment used for customer service to be sufficient for service, providing a clearly proportioned resting area for flight attendants (Crew Lounge), providing a reading room, a fitness room, and improving the quality and quantity of food and beverages for flight attendants on duty. Provide sufficient parking space for the number of flight attendants on duty.
- 6) Organize activities that build good relationships, create love and unity among employees in the unit and among employees in other units within the organization. Activities should be

organized consistently and continuously to build a strong team, including organizing activities that build good relationships with the community and society.

**The results of the comparison of differences in the importance of organizational factors affecting female flight attendants' engagement found interesting points as follows:**

1) The results of the comparison in groups of employees with different job positions between general flight attendants and lead flight attendants found that the importance of organizational factors affecting female flight attendants' engagement was significantly different at the 0.01 level in 4 areas: working environment, team and colleagues, salary and fringe benefits, and work-life balance (sig. = .000, .001, .002, and .000, respectively). It was found that the supervisor group had a higher average importance than the general flight attendant group in 5 areas: working environment, team and colleagues, career advancement, and work-life balance. In general, flight attendants placed more importance on supervisors and compensation aspects, as detailed in Table 2.

**Table 2** Comparison of Organizational Factors Influencing Engagement by Employee Group.

Organizational factors	Employee Group	M	S.D.	T-test	Sig.
Working environment	General Flight Attendant	3.2257	.71761	-3.835	.000**
	Lead Flight Attendant	3.5882	.69721		
Job characteristics	General Flight Attendant	3.8284	.44457	-1.547	.123
	Lead Flight Attendant	3.9200	.44663		
Supervisors	General Flight Attendant	3.7670	.61901	.207	.837
	Lead Flight Attendant	3.7485	.76970		
Team and colleagues	General Flight Attendant	4.1775	.42962	-3.234	.001**
	Lead Flight Attendant	4.3706	.48549		
Salary and fringe benefits	General Flight Attendant	3.0604	.79517	3.180	.002**
	Lead Flight Attendant	2.6494	1.04967		
Career advancement	General Flight Attendant	3.2140	.66173	-1.432	.153
	Lead Flight Attendant	3.3471	.76774		
Work-life balance	General Flight Attendant	2.8442	.89386	-7.743	.000**
	Lead Flight Attendant	3.5961	.63223		

\*\*P<0.01

2) The results of the comparison in the groups of flight attendant with different level of job happiness found that at least 1 pair had different importance with statistical significance at the 0.01 level in all aspects as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3** Comparison of Organizational Factors Influencing Engagement Among Employee Groups with Varying Levels of Happiness.

Organizational factors	source of variance	df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Working environment	Between group	2	18.338	9.169	19.764	.000**
	Within group	251	116.442	.464		
	total	253	134.780			
Job characteristics	Between group	2	7.016	3.508	20.280	.000**
	Within group	251	43.418	.173		
	total	253	50.434			
Supervisors	Between group	2	16.006	8.003	20.466	.000**
	Within group	251	98.151	.391		
	total	253	114.158			

<b>Organizational factors</b>	<b>source of variance</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Team and colleagues	Between group	2	1.976	.988	4.868	.008**
	Within group	251	50.939	.203		
	total	253	52.915			
Salary and fringe benefits	Between group	2	20.534	10.267	13.723	.000**
	Within group	251	187.793	.748		
	total	253	208.328			
Career advancement	Between group	2	19.458	9.729	23.341	.000**
	Within group	251	104.621	.417		
	total	253	124.079			
Work-life balance	Between group	2	23.919	11.959	17.060	.000**
	Within group	251	175.861	.701		
	total	253	199.780			

\*\*P<0.01

When comparing each issue, it was found that the group of employees who were happy at work had different opinions on the 7 organizational factors from the unhappy employees and the employees who were not sure that they were happy. The average value of giving importance was higher than the other 2 employee groups. It is noteworthy that in the group of employees who were unhappy and the group of employees who were not sure that they were happy at work, there were no different opinions on every issue.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that the factors affecting the organizational engagement of female flight attendants can be divided into seven key areas, which align with other studies emphasizing the significance of organizational factors on employee engagement. The results showed that employees placed the most importance on team/colleagues ( $M = 4.24$ ), which is consistent with the findings of Liu et al. (2020), who discovered that collaboration and mutual support within a team significantly impact employee engagement and satisfaction, particularly in service industries where relationships among employees play a vital role in building organizational engagement. Similarly, the emphasis on job characteristics ( $M = 3.85$ ) and supervisors ( $M = 3.76$ ) were two other critical factors that align with the study by Bakker and Demerouti (2017). Their research highlighted the importance of clear job roles and the role of competent leadership in enhancing organizational commitment and improving employee retention over the long term.

However, the study also found that work-life balance management is an area needing further development ( $M = 3.43$ ). This finding is supported by Javad et al. (2022), who pointed out that organizations prioritizing work-life balance tend to have higher employee retention rates, which contributes to fostering employee engagement. Other significant studies from 2020 to 2024 confirm the role of work-hour management and work-life balance in creating employee satisfaction and commitment. Chen and Li (2021) found that employees with appropriate and flexible work schedules are more likely to be committed to the organization, a point that aligns with the findings of this study, emphasizing the importance of maintaining work-life balance. From this content analysis, it can be concluded that there is a need to review compensation, employment contracts, and employee skill development. This recommendation aligns with the findings of Armstrong et al. (2021), which stated that ongoing development and revision of compensation systems and work environments to match market conditions and future trends will promote stronger employee commitment and sustainably improve organizational performance.

## Research Limitations

This study has a few key limitations. By focusing solely on female flight attendants, it doesn't fully account for the experiences of other groups or job roles within the airline industry. The findings are also shaped by a specific cultural and organizational setting, which limits how well they apply to other contexts. Additionally, because the data was self-reported, there's a chance of bias in the responses. Lastly, the study looked at a narrow set of factors, leaving out others, such as organizational culture and external environmental influences that could also be important.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

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