

# Countermeasures against Flight Attendants' Job Burnout from the Perspective of Organizational Support

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**Abstract:** Focused on airlines, the thesis analyses the causes of flight attendants' job burnout in quite wide ranges. The following causes are contributors to flight attendants' job burnout: job role ambiguity, lack of perceived organizational support and care about employee's interests, and the enhanced fatigue due to the shortage of human resource. From the perspective of organizational support, the thesistries to provide airlines with organizational interventional strategies to manage job burnout effectively in terms of fatigue managerial duties, inflight service procedures, organizational support service, human resource investment, and employee value recognition, etc.

## 1. Introduction

The job burnout of cabin crew refers to the comprehensive state that is gradually formed due to the long-term involvement in the situation requiring emotional pay, the circadian rhythm stage or overload in the working environment of high-altitude service in the aircraft cabin, which will damage the alertness of cabin crew and their physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion and low sense of professional efficacy in performing safety related duties. Job burnout is one of the most serious consequences of work pressure. Job burnout is the imbalance between work requirements and work resources, and the result of multi-dimensional factors. At present, the industry does not attach great importance to cabin safety, has a strong sense of safety, has a high demand for cabin services, has complex procedures, and cabin crew members are suffering from occupational fatigue and burnout. We can't look at the fatigue of cabin crew in isolation, but from the perspective of the development process of job burnout. As for the Countermeasures of job burnout, it is not only necessary to take personal corresponding measures, but also more important for enterprises. Based on the perspective of organizational support, this paper will explore the Countermeasures of cabin crew burnout. Organizational support refers to the degree that employees feel that the organization attaches importance to their contributions to work and the organization cares about their interests. It is a resource for individuals to cope with work pressure and job burnout. It is not only an important factor affecting individual work pressure and job burnout, but also participates in the formation process of work pressure and job burnout. The sense of organizational support includes the organization's support for employees' work, the concern for employees' interests and the recognition of employees' values (Bai, 2011).

## 2. Analysis on the Causes of Cabin Crew Burnout

### 2.1 Unclear Post Responsibilities of Cabin Crew

In the industry, there is a common phenomenon of "service is more important than safety". The position of cabin crew members is inaccurate and their roles are vague. The one-sided pursuit of service quality in Airlines leads to the need for cabin crew to engage in too many services unrelated to flight safety during flight, which increases the fatigue risk of crew. Airlines do not pay enough attention to the fatigue problem of cabin crew, no department dedicated to the in-depth study of the fatigue risk management system for cabin crew, no leadership to take charge of the fatigue management of cabin crew, and the fatigue problem of cabin crew is poorly monitored. There are

multiple management and multiple leadership in management. The safety management responsibility of cabin crew has been weakened, and the implementation of safety production responsibility is not in place. The design of cabin service products did not fully consider the safety requirements and the fatigue risk of service implementation to crew members.

## **2.2 Lack of Organizational Concern for Employees' Interests in the System**

Due to the particularity of the working environment, the long-term and high-intensity work of the cabin crew, coupled with the excessive demands of passengers and the pressure of the public opinion to increase the crew, the crew often appear physical and mental fatigue, lack of confidence and enthusiasm for work, resulting in more and more job burnout. The imperfection of the employment nature and salary system, performance appraisal, flight scheduling and other systems aggravates the job burnout of crew members. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, one of which is that the salary growth is slow, the growth rate is small, the salary gap is large, there is no ability to establish a positive correlation with the salary, and pay no attention to non economic salary, such as paid leave.

## **2.3 Lack of Organizational Support for Employees**

Many airlines employ a lot of social supervisors to evaluate and grade the cabin service. However, these personnel are not familiar with the civil aviation rules and safety rules, and only pursue the service quality, which is unfair, causing great pressure on the cabin crew, especially psychological pressure. In the course of service, some airlines are worried about a series of consequences such as flight delay, passenger complaints, image and benefit damage, etc. they are always patient to “wayward” passengers, do not support the flight attendants, dare not take up legal weapons to protect their legitimate rights and interests, and often calm people, which seriously hit the enthusiasm of employees and weaken their sense of identity with the company. A long time will produce a psychological deviation. Excessive attention to passenger satisfaction and irrational and objective evaluation will bring too much pressure to cabin crew and cause occupational fatigue. If there are some emergencies under the condition of excessive fatigue of cabin crew, the crew will not have enough energy and physical strength to organize and guide the evacuation of passengers and cannot guarantee the safety of passengers.

## **2.4 Shortage of Human Resources**

By the end of October 2019, the scale of civil aviation industry fleet has reached 6408. Among them, there are 3771 transport aircraft and 2637 general-purpose aircraft. By the end of 2018, there were 60 transport airlines in China, a net increase of 2 over the end of last year. Among all the transportation airlines, there are 9 all cargo airlines. As of the first half of 2019, there are 107863 cabin crew members in the whole industry. The proportion of men and women in the cabin crew is about 1:3, and women account for the majority. The number of crew members increases by an average of 13% every year and is expected to increase by more than 15% every year in the future. The cabin crew is young as a whole. According to the Bureau's statistics, as of June 2014, there were 48841 flight attendants in China. The main body of the crew is 5-year-old crew, accounting for 62.3%; the number of 10-year-old crew is as high as 85.6% (Figure 1). According to the Bureau's data in 2018, the age distribution of crew members shows a significant positive skew distribution. Regardless of men and women, the peak working age of crew members is 24 years old.

For a long time, there has been a general shortage of human resources of cabin crew in various airlines. In order to meet the needs of production and operation, flight crew members who are not fully trained should be assigned to important posts. The qualification and ability of these personnel can not meet the requirements of cabin safety, which brings some hidden dangers to cabin safety, and also increases the risk of flight fatigue of crew members.

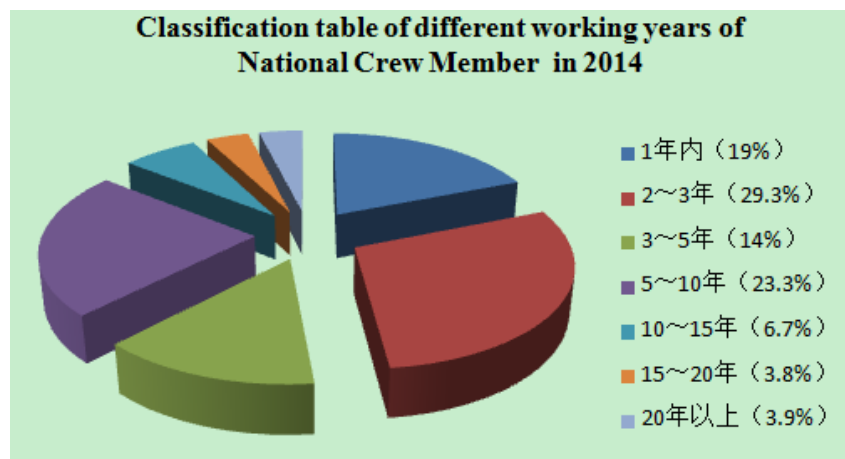


Fig.1 Classification of Different Working Years of National Crew Member in 2014

As the social status and income of cabin crew members are not as good as before, coupled with high work intensity, long working time, high service requirements, high safety risk, resulting in high loss rate (Figure 2), which further aggravates the urgency of airline talent reserve.

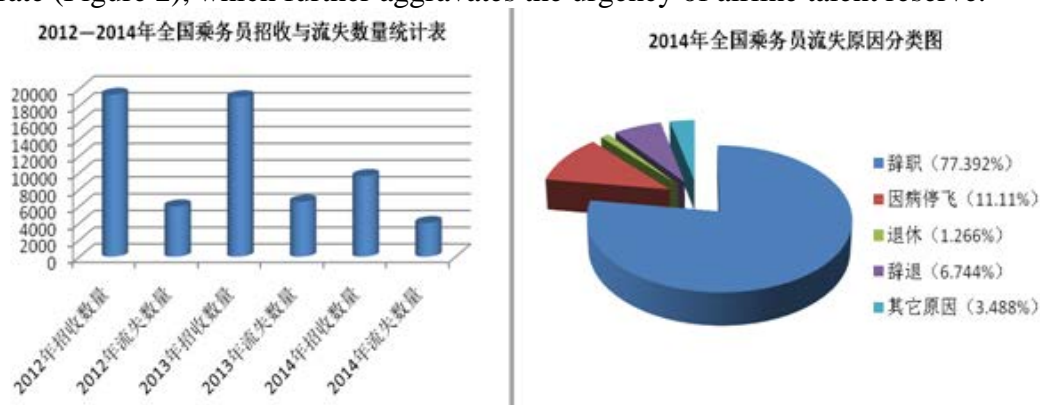


Fig.2 The Number of Recruitment and Loss of National Crew Number and the Classification of Reasons in 2012-2014

### 3. Organizational Intervention Strategies for Cabin Crew Burnout

#### 3.1 Management Responsibility of Cabin Crew Fatigue and Countermeasures of Service Procedure Standard

First of all, the airline company shall be responsible for the management of flight operation of the certificate holder in accordance with paragraph a (2) of article 121.43 of ccar-121-r5, so as to make it conform to the requirements of these rules, clarify the management responsibilities of cabin crew again, strictly implement the management responsibilities of crew operation, and the deputy general manager of operation shall be responsible for the management of crew fatigue. The safety director shall be responsible for the supervision of the operation safety management process and practically strengthen the supervision of the fatigue management of the company's units. CAAC shall regularly organize and carry out cabin safety training and fatigue management training for deputy general manager of operation, safety director and leader in charge of service of the company. The company regularly organizes and carries out cabin safety training and fatigue management training for the Department personnel who develop service procedures and standards. Make sure that the company understands cabin safety, pays attention to cabin safety and fatigue management, and takes safety responsibility as the first responsibility of cabin crew from the leadership level to ensure the implementation of all safety measures. CAAC shall regularly supervise the implementation of cabin safety training and fatigue management training in the company.

Secondly, the fatigue risk management system of crew members should be established and implemented, and the fatigue risk prevention and control should be strengthened by means of information technology. For example, by integrating data such as capacity, flight, manpower, license, service, training, attendance and indicator alarm, the airline's automatic flight scheduling system can automatically predict the demand and change trend of future personnel, evaluate the impact on personnel management, license, service and other aspects, and carry out scientific long-term planning for human resources of the whole company's cabin system. Through data mining, to achieve guidance management, evaluation management effect. Airlines should analyze the causes of potential safety hazards from the aspects of the company's safety foundation, safety management and control ability and standard system implementation, regularly carry out major safety inspections, seriously rectify the existing violations, strictly control the total amount of flight production, adjust and optimize the route structure, adjust the flight planning mode, optimize the service process, improve the assessment system, strengthen the operation monitoring and supervision, and strictly Case accountability. In order to master the dynamic data of flight attendants dispatch and carry out effective supervision and guidance, CAAC can develop a monitoring system for the airline's automatic flight scheduling system, so as to achieve the connection between the core data of the airline's scheduling system and the CAAC's monitoring system. Establish an interface to lock and control the flight plan due to the occupation of the aircrew during the rest period of official activities and study, and urge the enterprise to arrange the shift reasonably to prevent fatigue flight.

Finally, airlines should reorganize the service procedures and standards, which should be evaluated jointly by the safety supervision and operation management departments. During the design of service products, it is necessary to determine the applicable operation (such as route, flight, service class, service period, crew member allocation, crew base, etc.) of the products. Different operations have different fatigue causes or safety risks, which may require corresponding adjustment or even cancellation of the service products; collect and analyze data, and feed back the operation of the service products by the crew and passengers To determine whether there are potential fatigue risks and safety risks, so as to identify risks and identify the characteristics of fatigue and safety risks that may need to be managed. The service standards designed by airlines shall fully consider the completion time of cabin crew to ensure that all passenger service procedures can be completed 20 minutes after takeoff or 30 minutes before landing. After the aircraft enters the descent stage, it shall no longer provide meal service for passengers. Cabin service procedures and standards set up by the company must ensure that cabin crew have enough energy to perform safety responsibilities, and any procedures and standards that conflict with and affect safety shall be deleted and adjusted. Reasonably optimize and simplify the service procedures, reduce the work intensity of cabin crew, and enable cabin crew to pay more attention to cabin safety.

### **3.2 Strategies for the Construction of Cabin Crew Support Service System**

#### **3.2.1 Optimization of cabin crew dispatch**

The essence of crew dispatch work is human resource management. On the premise of not violating the CAAC's regulations, the crew should strive to maximize the use of human resources. Crew dispatch work involves many parameters such as task attribute, model, segment, license, crew level, business qualification, identity, status, nationality, gender, attendance, etc. Crew scheduling shall strictly comply with the restrictions of CAAC and the company on flight time, duty period and rest period of crew members. The crew arrangement system shall be strictly implemented. The new purser will take flight with the flight instructor / inspector in charge of the flight, and reasonably and practically carry out the crew matching, so that the crew matching has rules to follow and the flight safety factor can be improved. Sufficient safety margin shall be reserved for shift arrangement. Under the condition of sufficient crew members, the cabin crew of all stations shall be arranged as much as possible to improve the cabin safety factor and ensure the cabin service quality. It can also reduce the labor intensity of cabin crew and better protect the physical and mental health of cabin crew.

In order to improve the professional happiness of crew members, scheduling should also pay attention to humanization. For example, every birthday and wedding anniversary, flight attendants enjoy the right to rest and increase their happiness. In addition to enjoying the normal right to rest, the company gives special groups such as mothers, double flight attendants and excellent old passengers love. For example, in order to allow mothers to spend more time with their babies and gradually adapt to the work rhythm, flight attendants can choose the upper limit of monthly flight hours according to their own conditions within 12 months after maternity leave. The upper limit of monthly flight hours can be divided into several grades according to the company's transportation capacity and human resources, so that the mothers can choose the appropriate upper limit grade according to their own conditions. On the premise of meeting the cabin safety, try to maximize the daily flight time of the crew, reduce the flight day of the crew every month as much as possible, and increase the rest time. When carrying out multiple flight tasks on a single day, try to arrange consecutive flights of the same aircraft to reduce the number of attendants on duty. For the part-time steward, train instructor or steward with management task or training task on the next day, ensure that they have enough rest time after performing flight task and before carrying out management work, teaching work or receiving training. For the steward with special circumstances at home, take the initiative to arrange him to fly around the base, and try to avoid staying overnight outside the station. Many parameters need to be input into the automatic scheduling system, which may be quite difficult, and may greatly increase the scheduling verification work after the completion of automatic scheduling. However, humanistic care plays an irreplaceable role in modern enterprise management, and is an important medium for the integration of enterprise owners and grass-roots employees.

### **3.2.2 Improvement of food and accommodation support capacity**

As for the guarantee of rest places, hotels above three-star level shall be arranged for the crew stationed abroad, and crew apartments shall be arranged for the crew to rest. Special personnel shall be assigned for on-the-spot investigation to fully evaluate the software and hardware conditions of the rest place of the unit and the interference factors of the surrounding environment, so as to avoid the impact of noise, peculiar smell, light, etc. on the rest of the unit. Regularly collect the environmental assessment of the unit on the rest place, and eliminate the interference factors affecting the unit's rest in time. For the alternate flights in other stations, the company shall appoint the local business department to arrange special personnel for crew support, and the dispatcher shall negotiate with the crew the second day's make-up time as soon as possible after the flight ends, so as to ensure that the crew has a undisturbed rest period. In case of flight delay caused by weather, aircraft replacement and aircraft failure, the dispatcher shall reasonably arrange the time for the crew to enter and leave the site, so as to guarantee the crew to have a rest as much as possible (Zhang,2018).

As for the guarantee of meals for the flight crew, the relevant guarantee units shall provide meals for the flight crew according to the dining time. At present, there are basically no household registration restrictions on the recruitment of flight attendants in various airlines. The flight attendants come from all over the world. Therefore, the meals of the flight crew should be reasonably matched, with rich varieties and diverse tastes, so as to be nutritious and delicious. At the same time, in order to make the flight crew eat well, eat well and eat healthy, the airline should also change the menu regularly, so that the flight attendants can feel the concern of the enterprise and get satisfaction. Eating behavior has a subtle magical effect, which conveys rich information. Some people call intestines and stomach the "second brain" of human body, and human happiness experience depends on the information transmitted from gastrointestinal tract to brain to a certain extent. Through the research of food psychology, the company can provide more scientific and effective food strategies, enhance the sense of career acquisition of the crew members, and improve the enthusiasm of the crew members.

### **3.2.3 Employee care plan**

First of all, the implementation of humanized service management model. Due to the particularity of the occupation, for the daily work of the unit and individual, the cabin crew need to travel between the residence, the airport and the company, so as to occupy the precious rest time of the crew. If the airline can adapt to the rapid development of the company, build a flexible organization, implement a flat management mode, establish an online service platform and crew Affairs Service Center, provide convenient one-stop service for all crew members, provide sales of crew supplies, foreign currency exchange, wage receipt certificate, invoice reimbursement, leave application, flight application, meal card recharge, free printing and copying Massage physical therapy services and other services can reduce the flight crew's rush, ensure the crew's rest, make every crew member have no worries, perform flight tasks safely and steadily, and improve employee satisfaction, sense of belonging and happiness.

Secondly, care for the mental health of cabin crew. From time to time, mental health lectures, salons and training will be held to improve the health care awareness of crew members. Regularly through new media channels to provide stewards with the latest soul chicken soup information, shaping the sunshine mentality. Through the introduction of professional psychological service institutions, customized psychological service content for the company, free psychological care service for cabin crew, to achieve the comfortable work of staff, so as to achieve the goal of strengthening team building and enhancing team cohesion.

Employee care is a quiet work. Employee care can reduce employee turnover rate, stabilize the loyalty of old employees and make employees feel at home. The contents of care include occupational care, humanistic care, logistics support, cultural entertainment, employee welfare, etc. What the company has implemented can be precipitated and solidified. If it is not implemented, it shall be implemented step by step according to the actual situation of the company. Of course, employees are more eager for spiritual care (Smith,1992). The pressure from passengers, the pressure from the company's performance appraisal, the psychological haggard and anxiety brought by the cabin narrow working environment are the main reasons for the cabin crew's job burnout and high loss rate. The company needs to establish a people-oriented corporate culture. In management, it needs to understand, respect and care for people, inspire people with vision, unite people with spirit, motivate people with mechanism and cultivate people with environment. Advocate a happy culture and family culture. Through understanding crew morale, atmosphere and efficiency, analyzing crew mentality and working status, mastering the needs of staff care, determining the overall improvement ideas and key points, and formulating targeted care methods.

### **3.2.4 Handle passenger complaints objectively and fairly**

In order to publicize cabin safety positively, airlines should treat passengers' complaints with truth-seeking and rationality, establish employee complaint mechanism, and ensure cabin crew can normally perform safety duties and have a sunny attitude to engage in cabin service. Flight attendants are disgusted by some passengers due to their normal performance of safety management responsibilities. Airlines should protect such complaints from punishment and criticism brought by complaints. In the face of unreasonable demands, insults, beatings and other extreme behaviors and illegal acts of passengers, airlines should resolutely protect employees, ensure their reasonable interests, and prevent employees from feeling occupational pressure. Airlines should ensure that they fully meet the requirements of cabin safety regulations when formulating cabin service policies, designing service processes, innovating service products and carrying out service assessment. When there is a conflict between service and safety, they must insist on putting safety first. When the flight attendants feel that the cabin service policy is squeezing the cabin safety work and their own health, which is likely to cause passengers' dissatisfaction or complaints about the service, the cabin safety department or the flight attendants shall actively advocate to maintain the cabin safety and their own interests.

### **3.3 Strategy of Human Resource Allocation and Planning**

Airlines should consider the development scale, route structure, production season, man-machine ratio, training scale, team age structure, personnel turnover and other factors when formulating personnel introduction plan and conducting crew recruitment. In order to optimize the allocation of human resources, implement the standard allocation of routes, and match the qualifications of front and rear cabin personnel, airlines should strengthen the cultivation and introduction of managerial cabin service personnel with high professional titles, high skills and high qualifications, and establish a crew echelon with reasonable age structure, reasonable skill levels and reasonable academic qualifications. Through the company's ground service personnel, social part-time flight attendants, the introduction of foreign flight attendants, retirement reemployment and other methods to temporarily solve the problem of personnel shortage.

Airlines should strengthen the cooperation with schools and enterprises directly under the CAAC, make use of the advantages of the industry running of the colleges directly under the CAAC, expand and deepen the order type talent training cooperation, and cultivate high-quality technologies with good professional ethics and humanistic quality, the ability of career development, service awareness and safety awareness, and the knowledge and operation skills of cabin service and safety management Skilled personnel. Schools and enterprises jointly formulate talent training programs, jointly set up courses, carry out joint teaching, and implement the school enterprise dual counselor system. The school enterprise cooperative personnel training mode not only saves the training cost of the enterprise, but also shortens the training cycle of the trainees, which meets the urgent need of the enterprise for high skilled personnel.

### **3.4 Organization's Strategy for Employee Value Identification**

Civil aviation transportation belongs to the service-oriented industry, and the service-oriented occupational groups are prone to burnout. According to the influence of traditional concepts, the social status of the service-oriented industry is low, and the impact of this low social status on people's psychology is often negative and negative. In addition, the lack of sense of achievement and prominent interpersonal conflicts are also the reasons for the burnout of service-oriented professionals. Airlines need to establish an objective and fair evaluation mechanism, scientific and reasonable evaluation and reward mechanism to identify the work value of employees. Employees are eager to protect their legitimate rights and interests, get strong support for their reasonable demands, have smooth job promotion channels and corresponding remuneration, and achieve a balance between work and life (French,1982). The selection of cabin crew model workers, the operation mode of model studios and model teams fully reflect the company's attention to high-value employees. Airlines should focus on the cultivation and publicity of excellent employees, cultivate more service stars, let employees enjoy the material rewards, training rewards, free scheduling rewards, etc. provided by the company, so that employees can feel the continuous support of the organization and recognize its value. The object of recognition is not only the work performance, but also the all-round attention to the steward, from attitude to behavior to result. To encourage crew members to participate in the design of service products, the construction of service evaluation system, etc., to improve the visibility or accessibility of managers, to encourage crew members to support each other in their work, to enhance the awareness of care and service of superior management to subordinates, and to create a harmonious working environment are all effective ways to enhance the sense of organizational support of cabin crew members.

### **3.5 Summary and Prospect**

The organization intervention of cabin crew's job burnout is a complex system engineering, this paper can't be all inclusive and has some emphasis. In the future, the industry will pay more and more attention to the phenomenon of crew burnout, and the authority will continue to strengthen the supervision of the phenomenon. In recent years, CAAC has vigorously promoted the construction of regulatory information system. By building an information platform, CAAC has gradually formed an electronic plan for the effective supervision of the safe operation of airlines by CAAC

authorities. This supervision tool should be a platform and work system integrating information, management and supervision. With these systems put into use, a large number of safety data are generated in the regulatory system of CAAC. The concept and method of big data can be used to evaluate the fatigue level of cabin crew more scientifically, effectively and accurately, and realize timely warning.

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