

Team Efficacy of Flight Attendants: The Effect of Shared Leadership

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Abstract. The research goals of this study were to investigate how service standard communication and team process among the flight attendants affects team efficacy. Data were obtained via a mailed questionnaire survey of a sample of an airline company in Taiwan. A total of 600 questionnaires to flight teams in an airline company, which yielded a usable response of 275 fully completed questionnaires in the end. The model and the hypotheses were tested using a structural equation modeling approach. Our findings suggest that facets of team process are helpful in explaining team efficacy, increasing flight attendants' job satisfaction is more important for airline companies. Communication within flight attendants requires not just the delivery of information but also receipt and comprehension of the knowledge interchange, and shared leadership develops in a flight team; it will emerge over time through flight attendants' interactions, mutual influence, and negotiation.

Keywords: Shared Leadership, Team Process, Team Efficacy.

1. Introduction

Collaborating work among flight attendants is important, much of the work in airlines is completed through flight teamwork, and flight attendants working together to achieve something beyond the capabilities of individuals working alone (Hampson et al., 2012). Success team work is not only a function of team members' talents and the available resources but also the processes team attendants use to interact with each other to accomplish the work. From the leadership perspective, shared leadership as a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in work groups in which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group goals (Harvey and Turnbull, 2010; Pearce and Manz, 2011). However, few studies discussed shared leadership among flight attendants team.

From the perspective of shared mental models, the tasks for flight attendant teams are often highly structured and dynamic. Moreover, service tasks are specialized, roles are differentiated, coordinated interactions of interdependence are specified, and expertise is distributed among individuals composing the team (Mathieu et al., 2010). Flight teams with these characteristics have elsewhere been labeled attendants, ad hoc teams, high reliability, or ephemeral teams (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). Flight attendant teams are formed because collective resources are required to work on tasks that are too complex or large to be handled by one person, and shared understanding among team members is an important factor linked to team performance.

From the shared leadership perspective, Research argued for the importance of leadership being shared among team members and those shared leadership concepts have gained more interest as reflected in recent literature. Scholars suggested that the shared leadership approach potentially provides a more suitable solution to team management than the classical, hierarchical, or vertical leadership, as represented by the solo leader approach. The research goals of this study were to investigate how service standard communication and team process among the flight attendants affects team efficacy. Data were obtained via a mailed questionnaire survey of a sample of an airline company in Taiwan.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

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In flight teams, airline companies need to take into consideration many elements when setting the flight teams. As depicted in Figure 1, this research model takes the collaborating flight attendants' view, with team efficacy based on the service standard communication and job satisfaction of attendants and its team process.

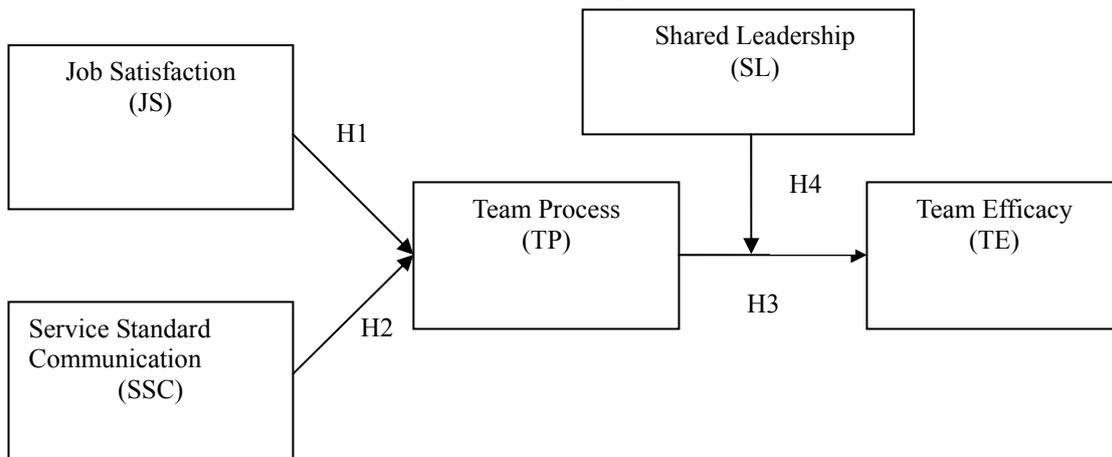


Fig 1: Research model.

2.1. Job Satisfaction

Flight attendants' jobs are highly demanding both with respect to the requirements associated with emotion work and to high physical demands, job stressors and psychological distress will be influenced job dissatisfaction of flight attendants, enhance social support may be important steps toward improving the well-being and satisfaction of flight attendants. From shared mental perspective, a front-line employee of an airline company identifies how certain emotional abilities may be learned on the job, in particular those associated with how emotions are managed.

2.2. Team Process

Teams are characterized by members working interdependently toward collective goals and by a period of stable membership (Hackman, 2002). When flight attendants with a high degree of job satisfaction, they can call upon to deal with complex, new, and redesigned airline service knowledge, technologies, and helping behavior. This leads to our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Job satisfaction is positively associated with team process of flight attendants.

2.2.1. Service Standard Communication

The service standards communication was valued the degree to which the organization measures, controls and communicates the standards of service quality (González and Garazo, 2006; Lytle and Timmerman, 2006). When airline companies expand continuously, they must determine the attendants' service strategy and the strategy that will best maintain the firm's competitive advantage. This leads to our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Service standard communication is positively associated with team process of flight attendants.

2.3. Team Efficacy

Team efficacy is a team's belief in its ability to perform effectively and has been found to be a determinant of the effectiveness of team performance (Gibson, 1999). Accordingly, we would expect that the degree of team process that develops among flight attendant teams, particularly in temporary contexts alternative communication mechanisms, will be positively related to their team efficacy that the flight attendant team will be able to appropriate prospectively the information, knowledge, and resources among attendants. This leads to our third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Team process is positively associated with team efficacy of flight attendants.

2.4. Shared Leadership

Shared leadership is defined a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both (Fan and Ku, 2010). In the study, we argued flight teams in which leadership functions are distributed are expected to experience increased coordination, collaboration, and commitment. This leads to our hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Shared leadership moderates the effect of team process on team efficacy of flight attendants.

3. Research Methodology

We randomly selected 40 flight teams whom we sent questionnaires to; at first we asked an airline company to provide a name list of flight schedule, in order to identify flight team and avoid duplicating teams. Meanwhile, we confirmed chief purser of each flight team in advance. Afterwards, each chief purser was requested to passed on 10 questionnaires to their team members; which yielded a usable response of 275 fully completed questionnaires in the end. Table 1 describes the demographic information of samples.

3.1. Measures

We then developed the questionnaire items based on the literature. The measures used to operationalize the constructs in the research model were mainly adopted from some of the related studies conducted in the past, with minor wording changes tailored to the interviewees.

4. Analysis and Results

The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of the construct is greater than 0.9, which is above the acceptable threshold. The range for factor loadings was 0.61 to 0.85, and the model fit for CFA was reasonable; all AVE estimates are well above the cutoff value, thus suggesting that all measurement scales have convergent validity. Results also show that the square root of all AVE estimates for each construct is greater than the interconstruct correlations; thus, discriminant validity is supported. We used the LISREL 8.50 software for this analysis. Structural equation modeling was performed to test the hypothesized model. The overall goodness-of-fit was assessed in terms of the following eight common model fit measures: GFI, 0.91; AGFI, 0.91; RMR, 0.05; RMSEA, 0.069; NFI, 0.92; CFI, 0.91, PNFI, 0.73; PGFI, 0.67, and the χ^2 degrees of freedom ratio (1.67). Thus, overall, the data indicate a favorable fit for our hypothesized model.

5. Conclusions and Implications

First, increasing flight attendants' job satisfaction is more important for airline companies. The findings of this study provide interesting insights for airline companies interested between job satisfaction and team behavior. Management job satisfaction of flight attendants to team efficacy plays a very important role in developing the team process. Most airline companies believe that they already have increase to job satisfaction of flight attendants.

Second, our findings also predict that the service standard communication will positively influence the team process on team behavior. Communication within flight attendants requires not just the delivery of information but also receipt and comprehension of the knowledge interchange. Airline companies will provide emotional support related to an individual's ability to recognize and describe emotion in him-/herself and in others; this is a cognitive skill.

Third, effective flight teams that work in dynamic environments continually monitor systems, and effective teams have been described as producing a broad range of service quality improvements. Likewise, keeping an open channel for team's communication, engaging in problem-solving communication during periods of low workload, and encouraging two way communications lead to better attendants' team process performance.

Finally, the finding of the study suggests that higher shared leadership will increase the team efficacy. Shared leadership develops in a flight team; it will emerge over time through flight attendants' interactions, mutual influence, and negotiation. Flight team members must be willing to engage in shared leadership. A willingness to cooperate and work interdependently with others and to influence and be influenced by other team members is likely to be associated with engaging in shared leadership.

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