
Effect of Work Stress and Burnout Perceptions of Aviation Sector Employees on Organizational Commitment

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Abstract: Aviation sector employees, who have an important role in the aviation industry, wear out both physically and psychologically due to the heavy working conditions of their work and the difficulties of working in the service sector. These difficulties cause stress and burnout on employees, such as intense competition, high performance and productivity expectations, time pressure and excessive workload. Hence, the commitment of the employees to their organizations decreases over time. As a result of preventing work stress, there may be a decrease in the burnout levels of the employees and an increase in the organizational commitment of the employees.

Keywords: Aviation Sector, Work Stress, Burnout, Organizational Commitment

INTRODUCTION

People favor air transport over other kinds because it is quicker, cleaner and more convenient. The primary aim of airline companies is to provide their customers with higher performing offerings and to achieve a strategic edge that is sustainable. On the one hand, economic development, on the other hand, the expansion of people's comfort zone has increased the demand for air transport. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) predicts that 7.2 billion passengers will travel using airlines in 2035 (IATA, 2016).

Air transportation, which has a vital share in the transportation sector, has presented quick enhancement and progress, especially since the 20th century. As aviation developed, it brought along an increasing need for labor. Factors such as high competition in the transportation sector, shift working hours, high passenger and manager expectations, time pressure, and extra work during official and unofficial holidays cause stress for aviation employees.

Since aviation is a stressful sector that requires a rigorous working environment with both cost and safety concerns, working personnel struggle under this burden. This heavy workplace triggers workers depression and burnout. Besides, when the competition between companies operating in the sector and employees is combined with today's living conditions, it emerges as another factor that prepares the ground for increased stress and burnout. Stress and burnout in almost every business line have a negative impact on the personnel working in the aviation industry. This effect both disrupts employee health and social relations among employees and also disrupts the security and continuity of the sector.

The effort to please passengers with a different culture, personality, religion, language and other demographic variables by providing them with good service, passengers waiting for service, passenger taunts at the level of insult, high probability of emergencies on airplanes and safe evacuation of passengers in such cases important responsibilities can be exemplified as issues that put flight personnel under stress. The continual good-humored communication of the flight personnel with the passengers, the fact that they are confronted with situations that require to be able to master their emotions and manage their emotions correctly, their long flights that cause mental and physical fatigue, and the low level of taking initiative cause stress and naturally emotional burnout in the flight personnel.

Stress is a physiological and psychological process that has impact on employees' performance, behavior and thoughts in their work lives, and their communication with passengers. It is impossible to talk about a single definition when explaining the concept of stress. Stress, which is mostly thought to be related to discontent and tension, can be defined as physical and emotional reactions given by individuals to external factors (Çökük, 2018). Stress, which is perceived differently by everyone, has many individual and organizational reasons.

In the meantime, the perception of burnout is a long process that occurs as a result of individual and organizational stress sources, progresses slowly, decreasing the employee's performance and commitment to the organization. Burnout deeply affects both the social life and business life of the employees. Burnout is a common experience; especially among aviation sector employees, who require one-to-one communication with people and are responsible for providing direct services to their passengers. Factors such as intense competition, high performance and productivity expectations, time pressure and excessive workload experienced by aviation

sector employees cause stress and burnout on employees (Konak, 2020). Thus, the commitment of the employees to their organizations decreases over time.

Organizational commitment refers to the strength of the bond an individual feels towards the organization they work for (Akbaş, 2010). This commitment has a structure that can vary according to working conditions, organizational management, and individual interests. If there is a parallelism between the values, expectations and goals of the employee and what the organization can provide to the employee, the expectations and goals from the employee, the organizational commitment will be strengthened.

STRESS NOTION

The notion of stress, which comes from the words "estricia" in Latin and "estrece" in old French, has been given different meanings in different periods. The concept was used in the 17th century in the meaning of disaster, trouble, calamity, trouble, grief, and sorrow. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the meaning of the concept changed and it was used for objects, people, organs, or spiritual structures such as power, pressure, and force. Accordingly, stress has started to be used as a resistance to the deformation and distortion of the object and the person with the effect of such forces (Ahmedian, Shekary & Khayatmoghadam, 2012; Baltaş & Baltaş, 2016).

Stress is a concept that is handled from many different angles. When looking at all the definitions made, the common point is the existence of the structure that harms the organism. The organism shows a reaction to the damage it encounters. This reaction is described as stress. Stress, which causes negative consequences in all organisms, is a universal phenomenon that affects attitudes and behaviors (Urganç, 2018). Every individual perceives stress differently. Individuals' responses to stress vary. Perceived stress reveals to what extent individuals are affected by stress (Bozyılan, 2018). Stress has been identified with many negative concepts such as anxiety, fear and tension. When the organism goes beyond its limits, both physically and mentally, it faces stress when it starts to struggle. The organism has to go beyond these limits in order to adapt to the environment. Stress has the power to affect the organism enough to cause negative psychological, physical and social consequences.

In studies, it is stated that stress occurs in three stages. In the first stage, called the alarm stage, the symptoms of stress are observed. The organism then begins to prepare itself. At this stage, physical conditions such as increased heart rhythm, increased blood sugar, increased respiration, and muscle tension occur. The organism is prepared for the second stage. During the resistance phase, the organism begins to struggle with stress. If he succeeds, the physical effects will disappear. As long as the symptoms of stress do not decrease in the long term, serious deterioration in behavior occurs. This stage is called the burnout stage. In this case, not only behavioral impairments but also many physical disorders occur. (Ömeroğlu, 2015).

Some of the organizational consequences caused by stress can be listed as an increase in occupational accidents, increase in health expenses, loss of qualified personnel, paid compensation, late going to work and absenteeism, high employee turnover rate, conflict, alienation, fatigue and burnout (Leontaridi & Ward, 2002; Soysal, 2009). In general, work stress shows symptoms such as a decrease in the quality of the work performance of the employee, an increase in burnout, a decrease in the learning ability of the employee and fighting, withdrawal (O'Neill & Davis, 2011). Job stress leads to undesirable consequences such as absenteeism, high employee turnover, difficulties in industrial relations and poor quality control. Stress can harm professional activity; distracts attention (Emmett, 2013; Robertson, 2012), decreases concentration (Bower & Suzanne, 2004), affects decision-making abilities, stress causes burnout, depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and a sense of personal failure (Bowman, Beck & Luine, 2003; Tarnini & Kord, 2011).

In the work stress study realized by Narayan and Patil (2012) with 150 pilots, the stress levels of pilots were found to be quite high. Cho, Choi, and Lee (2013) examined the relationship between work stress factors (overload, uncertainty, and conflict), emotional burnout, and voluntary quit intention, in their study with 366 airline employees. It was found that they could be exhausted and that stress could eventually lead to voluntary quitting. Accordingly, airlines need to provide coping and intervention strategies for stress management by establishing a stress management culture within the organization, providing specific training programs, developing clear job descriptions and redesigning the physical work environment.

BURNOUT NOTION

Interest in burnout gradually increased after the 1970s and the first scientific studies on the concept of burnout were carried out by Freudenberg in 1974 (Aslan & Özata, 2008). Freudenberg defines burnout, which he sees as a professional threat, as "power loss, wear out and fatigue of the employee due to excessive demands on energy, power, resources or endurance" (Bilgin, Emhan & Bez, 2011). After Freudenberg, Christina Maslach's definition and studies on burnout were given more space in the literature and this definition became one of the most valid definitions. According to Maslach's definition, burnout is defined as the physical exhaustion and long-term fatigue of employees who have to work face-to-face and who are exposed to intense emotional

demands, the increase in feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and the reflection of these feelings to other elements outside of their work and work (Bolat, 2011).

According to Maslach and Jackson, burnout syndrome, which is a chronic reaction to especially stressful work situations, has three dimensions. These three dimensions are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low personal accomplishment (Aslan & Özata, 2008).

Emotional Burnout

Emotional burnout, which is a dimension of burnout, is an important syndrome of burnout, where a person has an increased sense of emotional burnout due to relationships with other people, the development of negative and cynical attitudes towards others, and the decrease in the individual's sense of achievement, the depletion of energy and emotional resources (Yürür & Ünlü, 2011).

Desensitization

Desensitization, the second dimension of burnout, refers to the employee's deliberate ignoring of service areas by distancing himself from the elements related to work and the unique and attractive characteristics of the people he/she has relationships with (Özen Kutanis & Tunç, 2010). Desensitization manifests itself with behaviors such as exhibiting negative attitudes towards people who are served, treating them as objects and not paying attention to them. Employees in this situation have moved away from themselves and the working environment, have lost their idealism and enthusiasm towards the job, and seek escape ways to reduce the emotional burden on them. Intense emotional wear at this stage can cause employees to lose their meaning in numerous values from business life to family life (Düz, 2015).

Low Personal Success Feeling

Employees who are emotionally and physically exhausted begin to have a negative attitude towards them and find it strict to fulfill their demands. This situation results in a decrease in the feelings of personal competence and success in the employee (Bilgin, Emhan & Bez, 2011). In the dimension of burnout where personal success is reduced, the individual considers oneself inadequate in solving the problems he encounters. The decrease in the thoughts of "being successful in business life" and "being sufficient for the job" caused by the emotional burnout and desensitization of the individual is effective in the emergence of this thought. The individual who cannot solve his problems begins to attribute the negative attitudes he imposes on others to himself as time passes. This situation includes symptoms such as low personal accomplishment, feeling of failure, low morale, inadequacy, interpersonal conflicts, decreased self-confidence and respect (Yerlikaya, 2015).

Work performance and motivation of individuals who experience burnout decrease, these individuals who feel stopped, do not care about their work, do not feel any desire, desire to be more creative and successful, and do not care about the results. As a result, individuals face failure and occupational decline. In addition to the negative effects of burnout on the individual, it creates similar effects at the organizational level. It causes a decrease in organizational productivity by creating results such as a sense of individual burnout, a decrease in organizational commitment and an increase in the intention to leave the job, and the inability of the assigned tasks (Yağcı, 2020).

To the study titled "The Effect of Burnout Levels of Cabin Crew on Organizational Commitment and Work Performance" conducted by Tuna (2019) 312 flight attendants participated. As a result of the research, it was determined that the emotional burnout of the cabin crew negatively affects their emotional attachment, positively affects the sense of personal accomplishment, and desensitization does not make a significant contribution. It was determined that attendance commitment was explained by desensitization alone, emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishments did not make a significant contribution. Finally, it was determined that the normative commitment of cabin crew members was negatively affected by emotional burnout, the sense of personal accomplishment positively affected, and desensitization did not significantly contribute to normative commitment.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

According to Meyer and Allen, organizational commitment refers to the psychological approach of the employee to the organization and is a psychological condition that reflects the relationship between the employee and the organization and leads to the decision to continue membership in the organization (Shikhi-Fini & Abmal, 2017). Organizational commitment can be defined as adopting the goals and values of the organization, making an effort to be a part of the organization, and feeling like a strong member of the family (Suma & Lesha, 2013). According to Kiesler, Sakumura and Salancik, organizational commitment is "behavioral actions that emerge as a result of individuals' commitment attitudes" (Boylu, Pelit & Güçer, 2007). Organizational commitment is one of the main activities and ultimate goals of organizations' efforts to protect their assets. Because individuals with organizational commitment are more compliant, more satisfied, more productive, work with a higher degree of loyalty and responsibility, and cause less costs in the organization (Khiavi, Dashti & Mokhtari, 2016).

Allen and Meyer (1991) classified organizational commitment as emotional commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Colquitt, Lepine & Wesson, 2015; Okechukwu Agwu, 2013)

Emotional Commitment

In emotional commitment, employees consider themselves as part of the organization and continue to stay in the organization of their own will, not because they need it (Gültekin, 2008). It is the emotional closeness of the employees to their organizations and their identification with it. Employees, who are connected to their organizations in this way, internalize the values, goals and objectives of the organization, endeavor to sustain its existence and achieve these goals and objectives, and desire to remain a part of the organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) consider this type of commitment very important because it stems from the person seeing himself/herself as a part of the organization. Strong emotional commitment is expressed as individuals staying in the organization and accepting the goals and values of the organization (Amponsah-Tawiah & Mensah, 2016).

Continuance Commitment

This commitment is that workers should take care of and continue as a duty of the costs and negative aspects of leaving the firm. Employees' investments in their organizations come to the forefront in this commitment and are based on the idea that they will lose their gains such as the status and money they have gained with the effort, time and effort they will lose when they leave the organization (Obeng & Ugboro, 2003). Lamsa and Savolainen (1999) defined continuance commitment as "the status of continuing membership in the organization because it is thought that the cost of leaving the organization will be high". Continuance commitment emerges through the employee's assessment of their willingness to remain in the organization, their total investment in the organization, their loss when they leave the organization, and the limited availability of comparable alternatives (Yıldırım, 2002). In studies fulfilled within the framework of continuance commitment, it has been revealed that continuance commitment is related to the concepts of age, organizational service duration, promotion opportunities, and satisfaction from payment; desire to leave the organization, business cycle and marriage. Another factor that is thought to affect the continuance commitment is the job alternatives that the employee has. Employees who think they have different and many job alternatives have a lower level of continuance commitment than employees who think they have fewer alternatives (Okechukwu Agwu, 2013).

Normative Commitment

Employees in this type of commitment, feel obliged to their employer. They stay in the organization as a result of a feeling of gratitude. This is mainly because employers have value judgments that it would be the right thing to hire them at a time when they really need them or staying with their employer. Employees in this situation are of the opinion that the organization behaves well to them and therefore they have a debt to the organization for working in the organization for a while (Measurement, 2004). Normative adherence is affected by the individual's life in the organization both before and after entry. Therefore, it affects the organizational commitment norms of the employees. The psychological contract, which means accepting a well-defined task before employment, that is, at the beginning, has important effects on the normative commitment of employees (İnce & Gül, 2005). Normative commitment differs from emotional commitment in that the individual sees working in the organization as a duty for himself/herself and believes that it is correct to show commitment to his/her organization, and also differs from continuance commitment because it is not affected by the losses that will occur as a result of leaving the organization (Amponsah-Tawiah & Mensah, 2016).

It is monitored that employees with high organizational commitment also have higher participation in the organization and production than those who do not and show a better performance within the organization. In addition, employees with high organizational commitment establish good relationships with other members of the business and have higher job satisfaction levels. Therefore, it is very important for organizations to determine the organizational commitment of employees (Yalçın & İplik, 2005). Generally, positive behaviors towards the organization with a high level of organizational commitment are accepted as appropriate behaviors that ensure organizational efficiency. For example, it is believed that the high level of organizational commitment is related to low labor turnover, less delay to work, low absenteeism and high job performance (Okechukwu Agwu, 2013).

While the job satisfaction, motivation, the desire to participate in decisions and stay in the organization are positively associated with commitment, job change and absenteeism are the most important behavioral results that are negatively related to commitment (İnce & Gül, 2005).

RESULT

On one hand, economic development, on the other hand, the expansion of people's comfort zone has increased the demand for air transport. Recently, these changes and developments have gained momentum, and accordingly, conflicts, rivalries and concerns that employees are exposed to have increased. This situation gradually causes the aviation sector employees who try to fulfill many professional and individual

responsibilities by forcing themselves in a limited time to experience adaptation problems and put pressure on them.

Flight crews working in the aviation industry work in a high-risk environment and they are exposed to potential stressors such as; temperature, acceleration, noise and communication, decompression sickness, vibration, hypoxia, exhaust fumes, frequent time periods, poor cabin air quality, elevated ozone levels, and motion sickness. Besides, factors such as; high competition in the aviation sector, shift working hours, high passenger and manager expectations, time pressure, and extra work during official and nonofficial holidays cause stress for employees (Çökük, 2018).

The continuation of these situations increasingly causes burnout in the employee. Employees experience despair, boredom and unwillingness towards work and life. In the employee who is caught in burnout, indifference to both himself and his social environment begins.

The aviation industry, where the pace of work never slows down, can cause both passenger dissatisfaction and serious financial losses for the aviation business as a result of the increase in work stress and burnout in the employees, and negative feelings and thoughts in the loyalty of the employees to their organizations in the ongoing processes. In general, individuals who work in shifts and intensively will increase the possibility of communication weakness, decrease in job performance, and making mistakes in the working environment. The momentous issue is that the work done in the aviation sector has a direct connection with human life. This is why the commitment of the employee to the company is extremely important, as is often the case, in places where stringent work and high efficiency, such as air transport is required.

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