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Flight Attendants Turnover, Length of Service, And Reasons for Leaving, 2009-2013

Prof. Mohammad Shehada

Dean of Business School, Amman Arab University/ Amman, Jordan

Abstract*: Flight attendants job turnover from 1999 to 2013 was studied. Data were collected from a randomized 2013 mail survey of 800 flight attendants licensed in four countries (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and United Arab Emirates). The survey instrument included questions on flight attendants demographics, work schedules, salary, and work history. A total of 541 flight attendants responded, yielding an adjusted response rate of 69%. Information was provided with start dates from 1999 to 2013. Flight attendants job turnover was fairly steady across the 2009-2013 period, averaging 11% annually. The average median tenure of flight attendants who left jobs was 32 months. The percentage of flight attendants leaving jobs and ranking stress as the reason for leaving increased, and the percentage of leavers ranking salary as the reason decreased. Women had a significantly higher annual turnover rate (15%) than men (9. 7%), and they stayed in jobs for significantly less time (25.2 months) than men (56.5 months). There were no differences in turnover rates across practice settings. A larger percentage of flight attendants leaving jobs in large institutional settings ranked stress as a reason for leaving than flight attendants leaving small flight companies. A larger percentage of flight attendants leaving small flight companies ranked salary as a reason than flight attendants in the other setting. Flight attendants job turnover averaged 11% per year between 2009 and 2013. Flight attendants who left jobs typically stayed less than three years. The percentage citing stress as a reason for leaving increased, and the percentage citing salary decreased.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nature of Flight Attendant's Job:

FLIGHT ATTENDANTS (also called stewardesses and stewards) help make flights safe, comfortable, and enjoyable for airline passengers. A Flight Attendant's work begins when the plane's crew meets for a preflight briefing covering route, weather, type of food and beverage services to be offered, and passengers with medical problems or special requests.

Each Flight Attendant is assigned a workstation and specific in-flight duties. On board the plane, Flight Attendants check to see that first-aid kits and other emergency equipment are aboard and that supplies, such as food, beverages, blankets, and reading material are adequate. As passengers aboard the plane, attendants greet them, check their tickets, and assist passengers by hanging up coats and stowing small pieces of luggage under the seats or in overhead compartments.

Flight attendants are responsible for passenger safety. They explain safety regulations and emergency procedures, check to see that seat belts are fastened during takeoff and landing, and assure that other Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) safety standards are followed. Flight Attendants are also concerned with their passengers' comfort. Depending on the length of the flight, they may operate movie and audio systems, sell and serve cocktails, and heat and distribute precooked meals. Before and after meals, Attendants make periodic trips through the cabin to ensure passenger comfort. For example, they might offer to help care for infants, bring magazines, or adjust seats. In the event of an illness or emergency, Flight Attendants may distribute medicine to alleviate symptoms or administer first aid or operate emergency equipment such as chutes to quickly evacuate passengers. At the end of the flight they see the passengers off the plane, inspect and clean the cabin, and fill out any flight attendant reports required by the airline.

Working Conditions

A Flight Attendant's job is both physically and emotionally demanding. They are on their feet during most of the flight and under pressure to complete their tasks within the scheduled flight time. At times they have to serve meals and pour drinks under turbulent flying conditions. Despite stress or fatigue, (Suvanto 1989, Smolensky 1982) they are expected to

deal pleasantly with passengers of all personality types, including those who are difficult or rude. (Fairfield 2004,Mckay 2003) Although Flight Attendants enjoy the benefits of travel; they also may have to live out of suitcases for weeks at a time. They may be scheduled to fly at any hour, weekends and holidays. The following occupational health interventions may, in general and at different degrees, face flight attendants: cancer,(Pukkala 1995,Lynge 2001,Rafnsson 2001,Reynolds 2002) abortion,(Aspholm 1999) suicide,(Ballard 2002) depression, fatigue, marital instability,(Fairfield 2004,Anderson 1999,Wiener 1989) anger, irregular sleeping and eating, backbone injuries,(Cohen 2002) ear pain, radiation, blood pressure …etc. (Barry 2002,Fairfield 2004, Mckay 2003)

II. RESEARCH PROBLEMS

The expanding use of flights, escalating flight costs and a growing focus on the quality of flights have increased the demand for flight attendants and created great employment opportunities for flight attendants. The rising demand for flight services has adversely affected flight attendants work environments, but a flight attendants shortage has increased salaries as employers compete to attract flight attendants labor. (Mckay 1997) The work environment, combined with the extra employment opportunities and increasing pay, can result in high flight attendants job turnover. (Gjerdingen 2000) Knowledge of flight attendants job turnover –including its prevalence, the types of employees leaving, and how turnover occurs --is important because the supply of flight attendants is limited and because job turnover is costly to flight organizations. Organizations lose the efficiency of the person leaving (the "leaver') and incur costs associated with hiring temporary employees and recruiting and training new employees. (Hochschild 1983,Mobley 1982,Fitzenz 1997) Also, employees who remain have to work harder to make up for the leaver. The cost of replacing an employee has been estimated to be up to four times the employee's annual salary. (Mckay 1997) Flight attendants labor turnover costs are probably significant in this era of reduced reimbursement for flights -possibly preventing the development of services and limiting the amount and quality of time flight attendants spend with customers. Also, turnover costs may contribute to not working as a team and the lack of social connection. Turnover rates by themselves provide an understanding of how often the event of leaving occurs but do not describe the nature of job turnover. (Mergler 1999,Mobley 1982,Pettman 1975) Coupling tenure (the length of service) of leavers with turnover rates helps determine whether turnover involves short-service workers or whether the more stable cadre of long-service employees is affected. Much like the turnover fate, the tenure of leavers is sensitive to working conditions and the labor market. Poor working conditions typically result in high turnover rates and shorter tenures, as short-service workers are proportionately more affected. Employees' reasons for leaving jobs are another measure of job turnover. (Black 1994,Ballard 2004) Factors can be related to aspects of work that can to some extent be changed by the employing firm (e.g., salary, benefits, and work schedule) or to aspects beyond the firm's control (e.g., desire for new challenges and relocation). Trends in the importance workers place on reasons for leaving are important, as they provide indirect evidence of changes in the work setting. In addition, they provide employers with information on how to address employees' problems and how to design strategies to prevent flight attendants turnover. Researchers have examined turnover by calculating turnover rates and testing behavioral models relating attitudes toward work career, and employees with intentions to leave a job. (Needleman 1996,Kvale 1996) However, understanding trends in flight attendants turnover is difficult, since measurement of turnover rates is infrequent, limited to specific practice settings, and rarely associated with reasons for leaving. Furthermore, a review of the literature did not reveal a study calculating the flight attendants / tenure of leaving jobs. From an economic perspective, job turnover is caused by the interaction of individual choice and opportunities in the labor market. (Anderson 1999,Mckay 1997) Central to this interaction is the availability (i.e., number of opportunities), attractiveness (i.e., characteristics), and attainability (i.e., skills needed) of different jobs. Workers choose to leave one job for another when the benefits of the other job outweigh the cost of staying in the current job. Previous studies have not examined or compared turnover rates, tenure of leavers, and reasons for leaving by sex or practice setting. However, flight attendants job turnover probably varies with sex and practice setting. Researchers have found that female flight attendants have less commitment to hiring organizations, experience more job stress, and have stronger intentions to leave their jobs than male flight attendants. (Gjerdingen 2000) Also, female flight attendants are more likely than male flight attendants to leave jobs because of family responsibilities. (Hochschild 1983) Consolidation of flight settings may reduce turnover by limiting the number of employment opportunities in those settings, conversely, expansion of the number of sites within the flight company provides additional employment opportunities and may increase turnover if these new opportunities are attractive to flight attendants. Researchers have found differences in salary levels, job stress, and levels of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job withdrawal intentions among flight attendants practicing in different settings. (Gjerdingen 2000,Air Navigation 1999Suvanto 1989,Ballard 2002)

III. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The first objective of this study was to assess flight attendants job turnover between 1999 and 2013. This was accomplished by determining annual flight attendants job turnover rates, the tenure of flight attendants who had left jobs, and the reasons flight attendants gave for leaving their jobs. The relationship between turnover rates and tenure of leavers was examined to determine the types of workers leaving jobs. Trends in the reasons for leaving jobs were examined to determine why flight attendants left jobs and to highlight possible changes in work characteristics. The second study objective was to describe flight attendants turnover by sex and practice setting and to identify any differences in turnover rates, tenure of leavers, and reasons for leaving by sex and practice setting**.**

IV. METHODS

This analysis used job histories collected from a cross-section of flight attendants to examine flight attendants -job turnover. Data were obtained from a national mail survey of licensed flight attendants. The study population was defined as licensed flight attendants in four countries (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and United Arab Emirates) each selected randomly from one of the four countries defined by the Middle East Bureau of the Census.

Four countries were sampled because of concerns regarding an up-to-date national sampling frame for flight attendants. A systematic random sample of 100 male and 100 female flight attendants was chosen from each country list of licensed flight attendants, for a total sample of 800 flight attendants. The survey instrument was pilot tested, and the final questionnaire was mailed in August 2013. A follow-up post card was mailed one week later. [A small gift was given to help provide an incentive to respondents].

The sampling plan over sampled women to ensure an adequate sample size for comparisons and over sampled or under sampled flight attendants from each country. Thus, estimates of turnover rates, tenure of leavers, and reasons for leaving were not likely to be representative of all practicing flight attendants. Selection probabilities, adjusted for sample size and based on state of licensure and sex, were used to weight respondents because of the sampling plan.

The survey instrument contained questions on flight attendant demographics, current work schedule (hours worked per week), salary, family characteristics, and work history. The work history section asked flight attendants how many employers they had worked for as a flight attendant and solicited information related to their five most recent employers. A job was defined as a position with a new employer. Promotions were not considered for new jobs. Company closings, buyouts, and mergers were not considered new jobs, since a flight attendant could have remained in the same setting but had a new employer. (Details for property categorizing these cases were lacking.) Survey recipients were asked to provide the practice setting, date, position, salary, and work schedule when they started and left a job. They ranked their five reasons for accepting and leaving each job from a list of 33 reasons obtained from the job turnover literature and adapted from past research. (Mergler 1999) .No definitions of the reasons for leaving were provided.

A database of flight attendants jobs was created with data from the work history section of the survey. Data fields related to each flight attendants job included a respondent identifier, the sex of the respondent, the respondent's age when he or she started and left the job, the month and year the job started and ended, the practice setting of the job, and five ranked reasons for accepting and leaving the job. A job turnover event was defined as any job that ended before the date other survey's receipt. Jobs for which any of the five ranked reasons for leaving were related to closings, buyouts, or mergers were not categorized as turnover events.

V. VARIABLES

The study period encompassed the 15-year period from 1999 to 2013. Turnover rates and job tenure were determined for each year. The most important reasons for leaving-jobs were compared for three five-year periods: 1999-2003, 2004-2008, and 2009-2013. Four-year period was used to ensure that adequate numbers of respondents provided reasons for leaving jobs.

Annual turnover rates were calculated by dividing the total number of turnover events in a year by the total number of respondents employed in the year. (Mergler 1999) Using the number of turnover events each year rather than the number of individuals who leave a job results in a more accurate turnover rate, since some individuals leave more than one job in a year.

Tenure was defined as the number of months between the start dates and the end date for each Job. The median job tenure was calculated to highlight the nature of job turnover. Median values are reported because median tenure can be related in a meaningful way to labor turnover rates and because length of services typically has a skewed distribution. For example, the departure of a few long – service employees can distort the mean of a distribution and affect the median very little.

Because each respondent ranked only five reasons for leaving a job, an importance score was calculated for each reason based on rank and frequency of rank. The importance score for each reason was calculated by first assigning a value to the rank of each reason. Reasons ranked first were assigned value of 5, reason ranked second were assigned a value of 4, and so on. The mean rank of each reason was calculated by using the assigned values. The importance score was calculated by multiplying the mean rank for each reason by the number of times that reason was ranked. Reasons with the highest importance scores were determined to be most important reasons for leaving a job. For ease of comparison, the four most important reasons for leaving provided between 1983 and 1997 were determined for the entire sample, for men and women, and for each of the three practice settings.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

Turnover rates and median tenure were plotted across the 15 – year period. To examine the relationship between turnover rates and median tenure of leavers, a Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the entire sample, for men and women, and for each of the three-practice setting.

How reasons for leaving changed over the 15 – year period was determined by examining trends in the rank and percentage of leavers ranking each of the four most important reasons for leaving across each five – year period were tested with the Kruskal – Wallis test, and differences in the percentage of respondents ranking each reason were tested with chi square tests. These analyses were performed with data for the entire sample, for men and women, and for each of the practice setting.

Also examined were differences in turnover variables between men and women and across the practice setting. Differences in the average annual turnover rate and the average median tenure of leavers for 1999 – 2013 between men and women and among practice settings were tested with *t* test and analysis of variance, respectively. The Mann – Whitney *U* test was used to test differences in the mean rank of reasons between men and women, and the Kruskal – Wallis test was used to test differences in the mean rank of reasons among the three practice setting. Differences in percentage of respondents ranking each reason between men and women and among practice settings were tested with chi – square tests. The a priori level of significance was 0.10.

VII. RESULTS

A total of 541 flight attendants responded to the survey, yielding an adjusted response rate of 69%. To examine no response bias the first 20% of respondents were compared with the last 20% of respondents in terms of age, sex, and number of jobs held as a flight attendant. There were no statistically significant differences between early and late respondents. Of respondents, 27.7%, 29.4%, 21.6%, and 21.3% were licensed in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and United Arab Emirates respectively. A total of 298 (55. 1%) were women, and 241 (44.5%) were men. On average the population percentage of female flight attendants in the four countries was 38.8%. As anticipated, weighting of the sample was necessary to adjust for the over-sampling of female flight attendants. A total of 28 respondents (5.2%) were retired, 20 (3.7%) were working a profession other than flight attendant, and 25 (4.6%) were temporarily not practicing flight attendance. The mean ± S.D. age of respondents was 43.5± 13.4 years.

The mean ± S.D. age for women was 37.3± 9.9 years, and the mean ± S.D. age for men were 48.7 ± 13.7 years. Respondents reported mean ± S.D. of 18.3 ± 12.9 year of experience as a flight attendant. On average, respondents had held a total of 3.6 ± 2.5 flight attendant jobs during their careers (roughly one job for every 5.1 years of experience).

Men reported holding 3.6 ± 2.3 flight jobs in 23.1 ± 13.1 years of experience (one job for every 6.4 years of experience)and women held 3.5 ± 2.7 flight attendant jobs in 12.4 ± 9.8 years of experience (one job for every 3 .5 years of experience).. Figures 1 and 2 shows the annual turnover rates and the median tenure of leavers, respectively, for the total sample and by sex plotted across the 10- year period. Figures 3 and 4 shows the annual turnover rates and the median tenure of 1eavers, respectively, for each setting plotted across the 10-year period.

Across the 10- year period, the largest number of flight attendant leaving annually was six in 2013. An individual leaving more than one job in a year occurred more often after 2008, and this event was more common for women in large chains and institutional settings. For all respondents, annual turnover rates ranged from 6.7% in 2008 to 14.6% in 2009, and the mean ± S.D. annual turnover rate across the 10-year period was 11.0 ± 3.62%. There was no noticeable upward or downward trend in turnover rates, except for a downward trend after 2010. The median tenure of leavers ranged from 22.3 months in 2008 to 51 months in 2003, and the mean ± S.D. median tenure across the period was 32.0 ± 8.90 months. Thus, 50% of flight attendant leaving jobs left after less than three years of service to an employer. There was no noticeable upward or downward trend in the median tenure of leavers across the study period. The correlation coefficient for the relationship between turnover rate and average median tenure of leavers was -0.02. Relocation was ranked the most important reason for leaving on average in each period, and desire for a change was ranked fourth (Table). There was no significant difference among the three time periods in the ranked any of the top four reasons. There was a significant change in the percentage of respondents leaving flight attendant jobs who ranked salary as one of the top five reasons for leaving (from 25% of leavers between 1999 and 2003 to 15% of Leavers between 2004 and 2008). Also the percentage of respondents leaving flight attendant job and ranking stress as one of the top five reasons for leaving increased significantly (from 17% of leavers between 1999 and 2003 to 28% of leavers between 2009 and 2013).

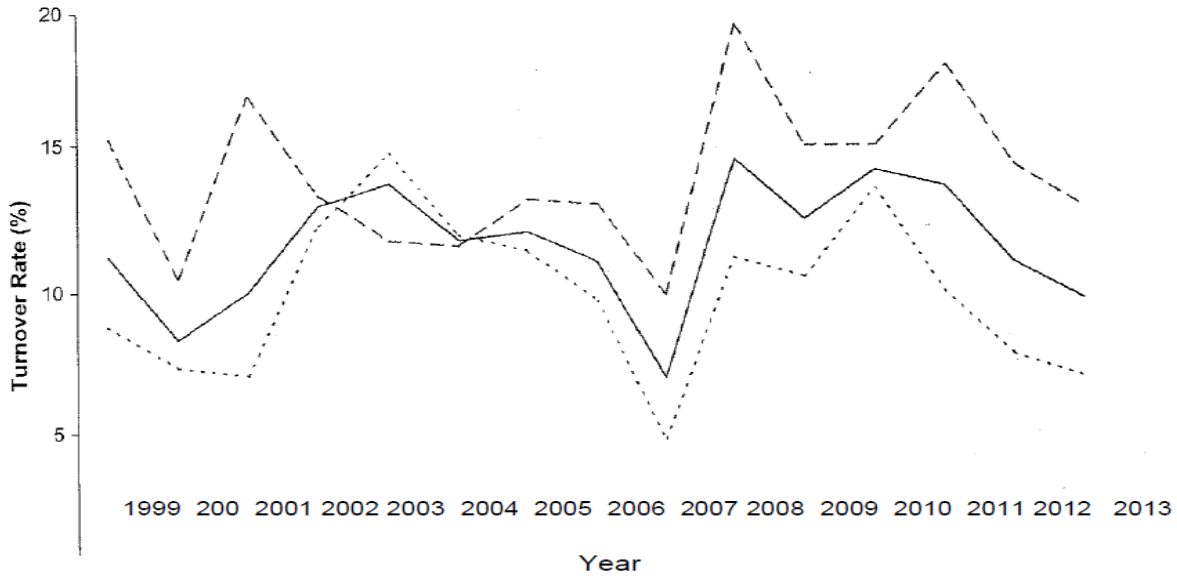

Figure 1: Annual turnover rates for total sample (solid line) and by sex (dotted line=men, dashed line= women)

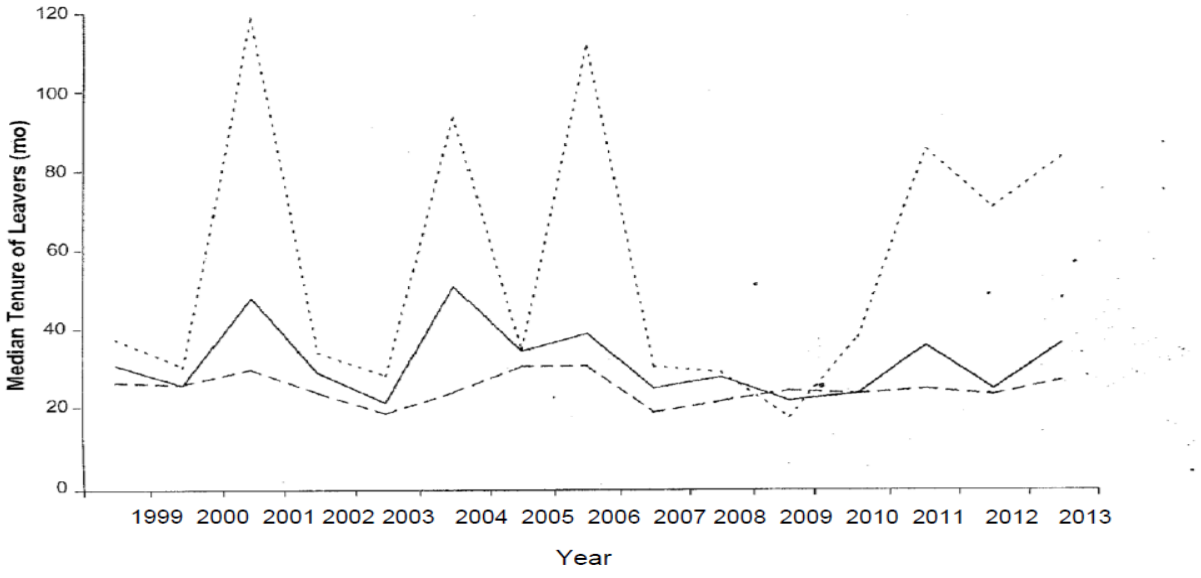

Figure 2: Median tenure of leavers for total sample (Solid line) and by sex (dotted line = men, dashed line = women)

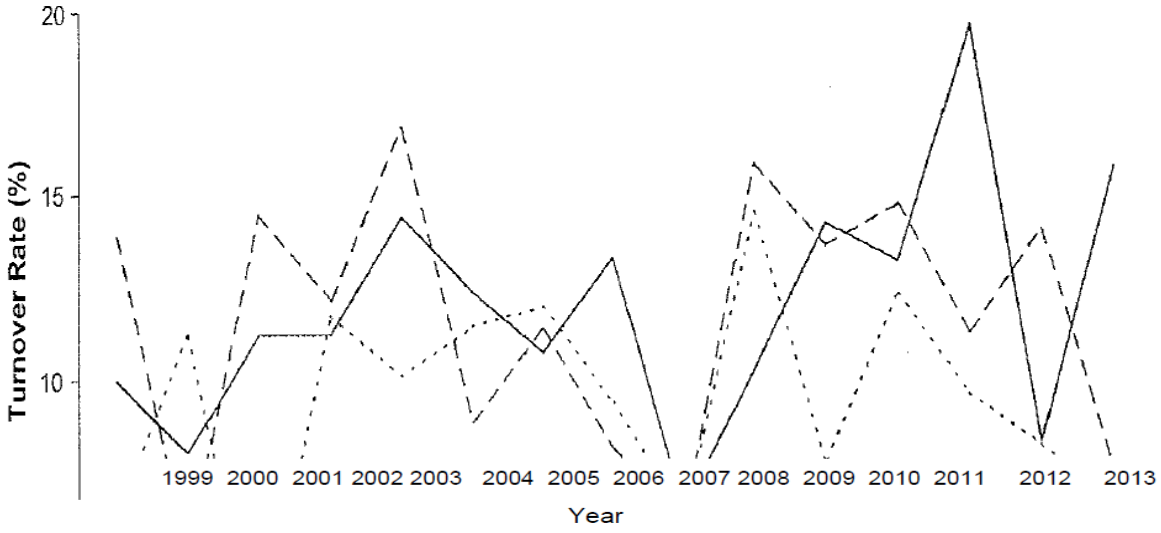

Figure 3: Annual turnover rates by practice setting (solid line = independent or small chain, dotted line = large chain, dashed line = institution).

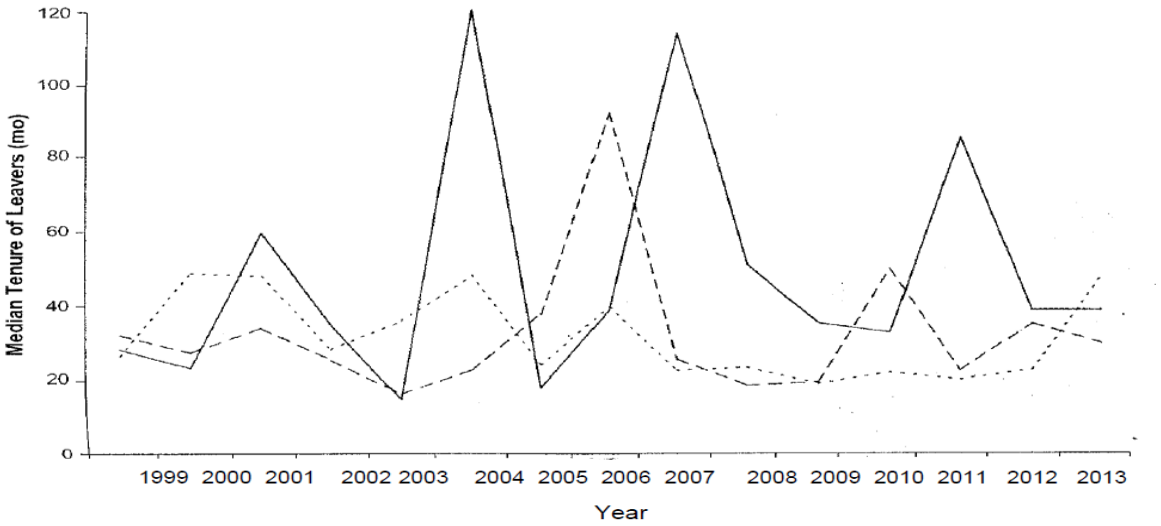

Figure 4: Median tenure of leavers by practice setting (solid line = independent or small chain, dotted line = large chain, dashed line = institution).

Table 1: Reasons for leaving a flight co. Job Reported for All Respondents, by Sex, and by practice setting, 1988 – 2002

Reason for leaving	1999 – 2013		1999 – 2013		1999 – 2013		1999 – 2013	
	Mean Ranking	%[b]	Mean Ranking	%[b]	Mean Ranking	%[b]	Mean Ranking	%[b]
All Respondents								
Relocation	4.15	19.2	3.95	23.2	4.28	19.4	4.22	16.7
Stress level	3.39	22.2	3.08	17.3[c]	3.52	20.2[c]	3.45	26.7[c]
Desire for a change	2.69	27.2	2.60	32.8	2.81	28.2	2.66	23.0
Salary	3.80	18.1	3.70	25.5[d]	4.06	16.1d	3.68	15.0[d]
Men								
Salary	3.93	21.4e	3.90	28.2	4.05	19.8	3.77	17.2
Desire for a change	2.66	30.5[f]	2.55	37.5[g]	2.78	33.3[g]	2.41	22.0[g]
Stress level	3.40	21.4	3.03	17.5	3.68	19.1	3.40	26.8
Employee's Philosophy	3.41	18.7	3.80	13.6	3.15	18.0	3.36	23.6
Women								

Relocation	4.44[h]	22.7[i]	4.88	23.2	4.64	23.7	4.35	21.8
Stress level	3.39	22.9	3.18	17.4	3.30	21.4	3.50	26.3
Desire for a change	2.74	23.9[t]	2.66	26.1	2.60	22.7	2.84	23.7
Better job opportunity	3.07	18.3	3.50	10.1	2.95	19.6	3.05	21.2
Independent for Small Chain								
Salary	3.83[j]	19.3	3.50[k]	20.3	4.27[k]	18.3	3.86[k]	17.7
Retirement	4.91	12.3l	5.00	5.4[m]	4.81	8.3[m]	4.94	20.3[m]
Employee's Philosophy	3.90	14.6	3.86	11.9	3.44	15.0	3.71	16.5
Relocation	3.75	15.0[n]	3.45o	18.6	3.44[o]	15.0	4.47[o]	10.1
Large Chain								
Stress level	3.46	33.1[p]	2.91	31.4	3.67	27.7	3.56	40.0
Desire for a change	2.79	34.9[p]	2.27	31.4	3.00	41.5	2.81	31.8
Relocation	4.15	18.8[n]	3.86	22.9	4.43	10.8	4.05	22.4
Employee's Philosophy	3.43	21.2	3.71[r]	20.0	4.07[r]	21.5	2.80[r]	23.5
Institution								
Relocation	4.34	23.5[n]	4.18	19.6	4.45	31.7	4.50	19.4
Stress level	3.51	22.7[p]	3.45	19.6	3.21	22.2	3.65	24.7
Desire for a change	2.49	31.1[q]	2.35	41.0	2.37	30.2	2.68	26.9
Salary	3.87[j]	19.1	3.95	35.7[s]	3.89	14.3[s]	3.67	12.9[s]

[a]Calculated on basis of assigned value (range,1-5) where 5= reason ranked most important and 1=reason ranked fifth most important

[b]percentage of respondents leaving jobs who ranked reason.

[c]Significant difference across times periods in the percentage who ranked stress level as a reason for leaving (P<0.05, chi-square test)

[d]Significant difference across times periods in the percentage who rankedsalary as a reason for leaving (P<0.05, chi-square test)

[c]Significant difference between men and women in the percentage who ranked salary as a reason for leaving (P<0.05, chi – square test)(women,14.9%)

[i]Significant difference between men and women in the percentage who ranked desire for a change as a reason for leaving (P<0.05, chi – square test)

[h]Significant difference between men and women in the mean ranking of relocation as a reason for leaving (P<0.05, chi-square test)(men,15.7%)

[j]Significant difference across practice setting in the mean ranking of salary (P<0.05 Kruskal – Wallis test)(ranking for large chain,3.24)

[k]Significant difference across time periods in the mean ranked retirement as a reason for leaving (P<0.05, chi – square test)(large chain,2.7% institutions 2.3%)

[m]Significant difference across time periods in the percentage who ranked retirement as a reason for leaving (P<0.05,chi-square test).

[n]Significant difference across setting in the percentage who ranked relocation as a reason for leaving (P<0.10, chi-square test)

[o]Significant difference across time periods in the mean ranking of relocation(P<0.10,Kruskal – Wallis test)

[p]Significant difference across time periods in the percentage who ranked stress level as a reason for leaving (P<0.05, chi-square test)(independent or small chains,10.6%)

[q]Significant difference across practice setting in the percentage who ranked desire for a change as reason for leaving(P<0.05,chi-square test)(independent or small chains,18.2%)

[r]Significant difference across time periods in the mean ranking of employer's philosophy(p<0.05, Kruskai Wallis test)

[s]Significant difference across time periods in the percentage who ranked salary as a reason for leaving (p<0.05, chi – square test)

Results by Sex: For male flight attendant, annual turnover rates ranged from 4.5% in 2007 to 14, 9% in 2003, and the mean ± S.D. annual turnover rate across the 15-year period was 9.7 ± .85%. For female flight attendant, annual turnover rates ranged from 9.7 % in 2007 to 19.5% in 2008 and the mean ± SD. annual turnover rate was 15.0 ± 4.39%. After 2004, the trend in turnover rates across time was generally the same for men and women. Across the 15 -year period, the

average annual turnover rate for women was greater than the rate for men (t= 3-89, p= 0.001). There was more variability in median tenure of leavers for men than for women.

VIII. DISCUSSION

The relative magnitude of flight attendants turnover is determined by comparing it with turnover figures for the entire economy in each country and another related profession. Flight attendants -job turnover was 6.6% in 2007, or 0.5 percentage point less than national estimates.. The national estimates do not control for educational level. It is likely that turnover rates for men and women with professional degrees are higher because their degrees allow them more latitude in searching for jobs. (Mergler 1999). The results of this study show how flight attendants job turnover changed from 1999 to 2013. Turnover rates for the entire sample and by sex and practice setting did not show all pattern except a decrease for men . Also there was a drop in flight attendants turnover in 2007, which may have been due to the downturn in the economy of each country . Furthermore, the correlation between turnover rate and tenure of leavers was low; suggesting that no particular type of worker was the cause of turnover. One implication is that turnover is a persistent characteristic of the flight labor market. Fry (1973) suggested that turnover results when there are few opportunities for staff promotion within an organization. Thus, turnover may be a flight attendants mechanism use to advance in their careers. The results suggest that half of flight attendants turnover events occur before flight attendants have worked three years for an employer. Whether this is a relatively long or short period is unknown because of a lack of information on the tenure of leavers in other occupations. Half of female flight attendants leave after 25 months of service. Since job performance typically improves with experience, it is important for an organization to have a cadre of experienced workers. (Pfeffer 1976,Barry 2002,Jovanovic 1979)

Changing Work Environments

Including reasons for leaving with information on turnover rates and the tenure of leavers provides evidence of how work environments are changing and how the changes are associated with turnover. During the study period the percentage of leavers ranking stress as a reason for leaving increased and the percentage ranking salary as a reason for leaving decreased. This trend was most prominent and occurred despite a reduction in turnover after 2005. Perhaps relatively higher salaries may alter the effects of stress and change flight attendants' intentions to leave. (Kvale 1996) Conversely, despite relatively low levels of stress in an environment, relatively low salaries may result in turnover. Raising salaries maybe a particularly effective method for retaining men, since significantly more men than women ranked salary as a reason for leaving. An important question is whether increasing salaries to compensate for stress is a good mechanism for reducing turnover. Researchers have examined the aspects of work that are important to flight attendants and that prevent them from leaving jobs. However, employers may not be able to adjust these factors and may instead focus on salaries as a retention device. The mechanisms firms can and cannot adjust in order to retain employees is an area for future research. An additional question is whether turnover should be controlled. The turnover literature often discusses the negative aspects of turnover. (Black 1994,Mergler 1999) However, even though turnover is costly, it may be beneficial to organizations and employees. Organizations may obtain new ideas from new employees, thus becoming more innovative and possibly more competitive (Barry 2002). Employees may reduce their psychological stress and their error rates by entering new work environments (Ballard 2004).

The nature of the turnover of female flight attendants is an important issue for employers. The high turnover and short tenure result in higher turnover costs. Implementing strategies to prevent turnover of women is difficult because women often relocate, as in accompanying a spouse to a new geographic area. Female flight attendants turnover will probably continue to be an issue for employers and the profession; women outnumber men in flight attendants schools by a ratio of 3 to 1, and by 2014 a majority of practicing flight attendants will be women.

Potential Sources of Bias

Data were collected from flight attendants licensed in four countries. Thus, the generalizability of the results is limited to this sample. The analysis used information pertaining to jobs held by respondents up to 15 years before they participated in the survey. Thus, respondents' recall of information about previous jobs may be suspect. Still, respondents were likely to be able to remember much of the information requested, such as job start and end dates and practice setting.

Although respondents probably accurately recalled the first and second most important reasons for leaving, recall bias likely may have influenced less important reasons.

IX. CONCLUSION

Flight attendants job turnover averaged 11% per year between 1999 and 2013. Flight attendants who left jobs typically stayed less than three years. The percentage of flight attendants leaving jobs and mentioning stress as a reason for leaving increased, and the percentage mentioning salary decreased. Female flight attendants had higher turnover, stayed for shorter periods, and were more likely to relocate than male flight attendants.

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