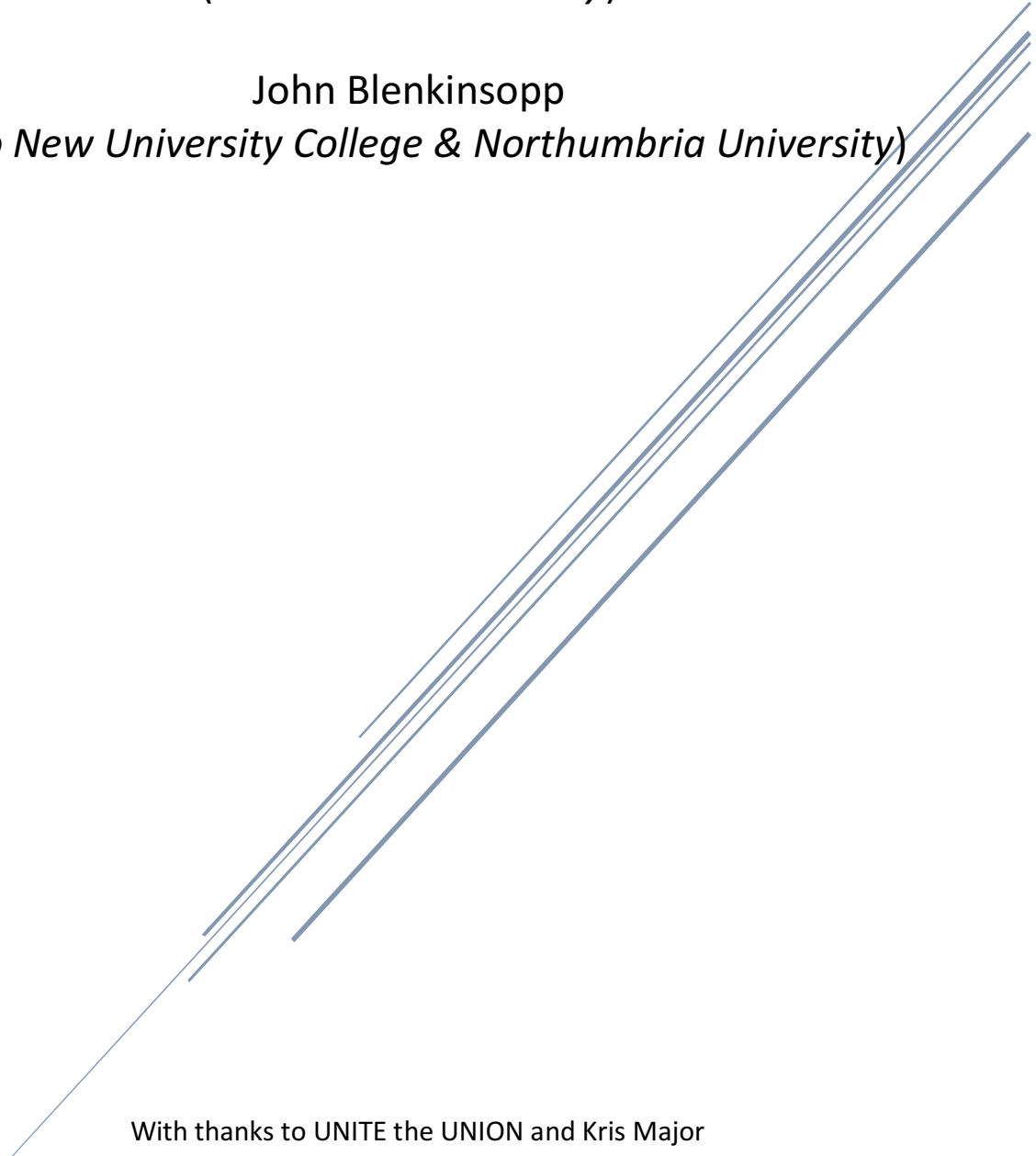


An investigation into the psychological well-being of cabin crew in the UK aviation industry: summary report

Stephanie Preston
(*Sunderland University*)

John Blenkinsopp
(*Oslo New University College & Northumbria University*)



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1. INTRODUCTION

The public image of the work of cabin crew largely overlooks the safety critical nature of their work. Cabin crew undertake a physical and strenuous role, dealing with passenger demands, medical emergencies and in-flight such as turbulence, alongside an already busy workload. Studies have long suggested crew experience stress/burnout (Lindgren, Andersson, Dammström & Norbäck, 2002; Eriksen, 2006; Sharma, 2007), and the mental and physical health and well-being of cabin crew is a growing area of concern (McNeely, Mordukhovich, Tideman, Gale and Coull, 2018), due to the job related stressors they experience (Chen & Kao, 2012; Cho, Choi & Lee 2014; Hu and King, 2017; Batouei, Iranmanesh, Nikbin & Hyun, 2019; Cahill, Cullen, Anwer, Gaynor, Cahill and Cullen 2021).

Ai-Serkal (2006) found that critical occupations tasked with high levels of customer contact and emotional labour were areas that often experienced the highest levels of psychological exhaustion and stress. Employees typically endure complaints and frustrations from customers along with other stressors associated with employment conditions such as, pay, employment relationships, company policies and abusive supervisors (Sliter, Jex, Wolford and McInnerney, 2010). Amornpipat and Burapharat (2019) suggest the characteristic elements of cabin crew work which can create heightened stress/burnout and emotional exhaustion are:

- Quantitative job demands: workloads, time pressure, irregular working schedules linking with burnout through exhaustion experienced.
- Severity of client's problems: emotional labour of dealing with people and how this can link to emotional exhaustion
- Demands to manage their emotions: Crew sometimes experience difficult situations and have to display particular emotions in line with company policy and rules.

The study reported here sought to identify the main stressors cabin crew employees experience within their work environments, based on a survey of 1,431 cabin crew who were working in the UK aviation industry between June and October 2019. By identifying these stressors we hoped to provide insights of use to the industry in seeking to improve employee well-being and thereby the best out of cabin crew.

2. DATA COLLECTION

The survey was based largely on the Health and Safety Executive's Health & Safety Management Standards Indicator Tool. This tool is extensively used to monitor working conditions that can lead to stress (Edwards, Webster, Van Laar & Easton, 2008; Marcatto, Colautti, Filon, Luis & Ferrante, 2014). To tap into the broader context of the work setting such as work-life interface (Van Laar, Edwards and Easton, 2007) we used some scales from the COPSQQ II (Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire). Borg and Mastrangelo (2009) note researchers are reliant on the attitude of the workforce towards the intended questionnaire topic to ensure a high or low response rate. Although we were confident the topic of cabin crew well-being would be of interest to them, we were mindful of the union warning that cabin crew are 'over surveyed' and 'time poor'.

We therefore decided to use well-validated but relatively short scales which helped with the rigour of the survey while ensuring the time taken to complete it was relatively short. This did not give us much flexibility in probing cabin crew around certain specific areas that may affect their employment e.g. emotional labour is identified as a major issue for cabin crew, but this was only captured indirectly through some of the 'Demands' items in the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool.

The questionnaire was designed to be completed online, on the JISC online survey platform. It went live for completion by crew employed across a multiple of UK operating airlines between June 2019 and October 2019. The crew accessed the questionnaire through a link sent to them on an email by their union representative and all completed questionnaires were kept anonymous. Nothing in the design of the questionnaire identified respondents by name or number. They were advised their responses would be anonymous, confidential and used purely for research purposes.

Research ethics approval was obtained prior to data collection through the ethics process at Northumbria University. The ethical risk associated with collecting views for this study was graded as medium in line with Northumbria University's ethical process and the work did not involve any sensitive issues or vulnerable people. Participants were provided with details of the researcher should they need to get in touch or withdraw from the study at any time. The data that was collected was held securely on password protected outlets and any paper copies of information or meeting minutes were kept securely. There were no instances of anyone needing to withdraw from the study.

We obtained responses from 1431 cabin crew members across eight UK based airlines operating on long haul, short haul, domestic and mixed fleet flight routes. Just under two thirds of the sample were female (890, 62.59%). Most flew long haul (635) or short haul (519) routes, with the remainder flying domestic routes (8) and mixed routes (268). The largest proportion of people had flown for 21–25 years (303) and only 34 respondents in the sample had worked for their airline for less than a year. Thus most of the sample had significant flying experience, were familiar with their job role and its demands, and can be considered experienced enough to report on the condition of the industry.

3. RESULTS

All analysis was carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). In the first stage of analysis, the measures were subject to factor analyses to confirm their structure in the sample. Next, a multiple regression and linear regression was undertaken in order to investigate the research questions and to discover what the main causes of stress/burnout were within the sample. The large sample size (N=1431) ensured the variable to participant ratio was met, for even the most stringent criteria, for these analyses.

As the data was collected from employees at numerous types of airlines operating within the UK we began by examining whether stress/burnout was experienced differently across particular types of airlines. No significant relationships were found between types of airlines and stress/burnout.

This is an interesting finding in itself, since it suggests stress and burnout are influenced more by the nature of cabin crew work (which is consistent across all airlines) than the specifics of how each airline manages its workforce.

Having established there was no difference between airlines we were able to undertake all subsequent analyses using the entire sample to determine what were the main stressors experienced. A single level linear regression was then undertaken to determine what the main predictors of stress and burnout were across the general cabin crew sample. This allowed us to compare how stress/burnout was related to various factors of interest (demands, role, control, manager's support, peer, relationships, change, work-family conflict and job security). The influence of these factors on stress and burnout is well-established, and so we might have expected all of them to affect the experiences of cabin crew to some extent. Yet in fact just four of the factors proved significant – work-family conflict, demands, job security and relationships (see Table 1 in the Appendix) – accounting for around 40.9% of the variance in stress/burnout experienced by cabin crew when at work. Why the remaining factors (role, control, change, peer, manager support) proved not to be significant will be explored further in future research but some possible explanations are presented below.

3.1 Work Family Conflict

This was identified as the most significant factor in terms of its contribution to stress/burnout amongst cabin crew. Crew spend large amounts of time away from home and family/friends, which can make it very difficult for them to achieve a good work life balance and can create a large amount of stress and tension especially if they have young children, caring responsibilities and/or have partners with whom they cannot spend much time. As a result crew often suffer with loneliness, isolation and being in unusual surroundings. Women often end up choosing between their careers and a family life, and many leave the occupation. The industry often offers fractional employment contracts which would typically attract women looking to come back into work after having a family. Another way the issue of work-family conflict can be addressed amongst crew is for management to consider employees' individual needs against crew rostering. Although this does not always work favourably and some managers cannot deploy employees in ways that make the best use of their skills, experiences and abilities. They also can struggle with accessing training and promotional opportunities within the company. As a result some crew choose to leave the industry if they cannot find a way to balance work and family commitments and this is likely to continue unless a solution is proposed.

Crew work uncommon work shifts as well as needing to be on standby for duty on occasions, they lack control over their lifestyles, and they cannot say when, where and how they will work (Fleetwood, 2007; Whitelegg, 2009; Tsaur, Hsu and Kung, 2020). They are tasked with constant alteration between adaptations to their work life and their home life in relation to their daily living and this creates a sense of two existing worlds to them known as a professional one and a private one (Eriksen, 2016). This leads to tension when role pressures from being a member of an organisation (work) conflict with pressures from the individual also being part of another group (family) (Kinman, 2009).

Social psychologists state it is normal for an individual to have over ten different roles within daily life including employee, mother/father, spouse, sibling, volunteer etc. Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Joseph, 2018). Crew regularly deal with tension at home and this can have an impact on relationships both personally and at work (Ballard, Corradi, Lauria, Mazzanti, Scaravelli, Sgorbissa, Romito and Verdecchia, 2004; Chang and Chiu 2009; Kinman, 2009; Chen and Chen, 2012; Bergman and Gillberg, 2015; Tsaur, Hsu and Kung, 2020).

Guest (2002a) and Lu, Cheng and Huang (2016) highlight that an ineffective work life balance can have negative consequences for a person's well-being and functioning. Fiksenbaum (2014) states that employees who struggled with work family conflict also reported lower levels of life satisfaction, less energy and less dedication to work. Guest (2002a) details five typical models associated with gaining an understanding of the work life balance relationship, of which the spill-over model most clearly matches the crew experiences reported in the present study. This model sees one domain influencing the other in either a positive or negative way. Guest (2002a) states there needs to be more detailed propositions about the nature, causes and consequences of spill-over. It is also quite possible that some crew may reflect the instrumental model which sees activities in one area facilitating success in the other area. In this case crew would go to work and experience the conditions they do in order to provide for their families/partner.

On the other hand, it is also possible for some crew and especially those used in this study to experience a total level of conflict and high demand in all areas of their employment and their personal/family life resulting in difficult decisions being made and the overload on the individual experiencing that situation.

The industry is very constrained in terms of how it can address the issue of work-family conflict as much of this is inherited as a characteristic of working within the industry. Traditional work life balance initiatives used within some other industries do not work for cabin crew. Flexible working initiatives could be put in place for some crew members who have family/caring commitments however there would still be the requirement for the employees to adhere to their duties and tasks such as dropping a child off at school and picking them up is not something that can be achieved if the crew member is on an eight hour transatlantic flight. Crew are made aware within the recruitment stages of entering the occupation that they will spend time away from family and friends and that it is not an occupation for someone who craves routine.

3.2 Demands

In recent years crew have needed to work more intensively with reduced numbers of employees on board. This has been dictated by their airlines. Cost saving measures were needed within some companies, but they also still need to have a level of compliance with health and safety requirements in terms of staffing an aircraft. This has impact on crew and many are finding time has become more restrictive in terms of turnaround and rest breaks. On some airlines operating on a low cost basis crew are asked to abandon non-essential tasks so that the aircraft can be back in the skies in a shorter amount of time. For crew it is making the work more challenging, pressurised and they are having to do more with less.

The crew surveyed here are experienced members of employee and as a result have witnessed the deterioration that has occurred within their employing airlines but also across the industry as a whole.

Pressure on crew to sell more products/services to passengers is a longstanding but growing issue. It brings more revenue for airlines but puts more pressure on the crew as it is an additional '*chore*' to do in the limited time they have on board. Dealing with customer demands often involves emotional labour skills (Hopfl, 1995). The items linked to 'Demands' on the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool do refer to demands from people but it does not go into much depth. It would be interesting to consider this area more in future research plans and use a different scale to probe more to determine how much and what aspects of emotional labour are contributing to the stress/burnout the crew experience.

Job demands can include task interruptions, workload, role ambiguity and work-home interference (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) and in some work contexts can overburden employees' personal capacities. This can lead to physiological and/or psychological costs such as exhaustion/cynicism i.e., burnout (Van den Broeck, Cuyper, De Witte and Vansteenkiste, 2010). Employees who have high job demands will initially try to withstand them and put more energy into completing these and will initially experience exhaustion but not disengagement in their work (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli, 2001). The real challenge arises when the employee has a prolonged exposure to demands and they have to find ways to cope with these which can wear the employee out and deplete their personal energy resources (Van den Broeck, Cuyper, De Witte and Vansteenkiste, 2010; Chen and Chen, 2012; Chen and Kao, 2012 and Cheng, Chang and Chan, 2018). To try and avoid such things these employees may look for ways to lower their performance by perhaps reducing their work tempo or not being punctual. The withdrawal can make the employee vulnerable in terms of keeping in employment but also in terms of experiencing and dealing with burnout (Van den Broeck et al, 2010). It is apparent that job demands are contributing to health impairment and they are linked with burnout (Bakker, Demerouti, de Boer and Schaufeli, 2003a; Hakanen, Schaufeli and Ahola, 2008).

Crew have a range of key responsibilities they must do as part of their role. These include working together as a team, following procedures, coping with operational problems, being the face of their airline, ensuring flight safety and satisfaction and reporting safety risks (Yelgin and Ergun, 2021). Crew also have contact with passengers for the longest time during the flight and have to extend communication during the service delivery process as well as influence the image perceptions of the passengers about the airlines through their behaviours and emotional attitudes (Yeh, 2014; Yelgin and Ergun, 2021). They are also exposed to demands through having to deal with abusive / drunk passengers, passenger incivility as well as occasional difficulties communicating with people from different cultures.

Tourigny, Baba and Wang (2010), Hu and King (2017), and Cheng, Hong and Yang (2018) all carried out research into cabin crew job demands and found these all had negative impacts on cabin crew's well-being and increased the stress/burnout they experienced within their role.

Bergman and Gillberg (2015) state that as cabin crew gain in experience they generally learn to handle the level of demands better and this is done through various mechanisms such as exercising, resting when they can and watching what they eat and drink. Recovery and a fit body are prerequisites for coping with the work that they do. As such employees can access benefits such as gym memberships to help encourage them towards achieving a more 'healthy mind and body.'

3.3 Job Security

Job security, defined as *"the level of uncertainty a person feels in relation to his or her job continuity"* (Wang, Lu and Siu, 2015, p.1), was identified as a stressor contributing to cabin crew's well-being. Service industries generally have a high level of instability due to being dependent on people having disposable income and peaks and troughs within the economy. The contractual arrangements offered are usually part time, fractional and seasonal and therefore do not generally offer a great deal of stability to an employee who may be wishing to buy a house, start a family or have a steady monthly income/annual salary. Many charter and low cost airlines take employees on for the peak of the tourist season and work until the end of the season with a small amount of employees being kept on to cover reduced winter season flights.

This arrangement can work for some employees but not all. Considering when this data was collected it was mid to late season and the timing of its collection may have been at a time where the lack of job security was on many of the respondent's minds. It also happened at a time when the industry was witnessing companies such as Thomas Cook going bankrupt and prior to this airlines such as Monarch who also went bankrupt. Some respondents will have lost colleagues through redundancies. It would be interesting to revisit this area in future studies to determine if there is a difference in views in relation to this area and whether employee perceptions have changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Another concern amongst crew which linked to job security was around the limited level of progression opportunities. They could either progress by leaving the company or they would be faced with lots of competition when positions do become available due to the vast number of employees all at the same level who all would be wishing to progress their careers. Many of the crew involved in this sample all were considered as being with their airline for a number of years and many in the same role from when they were recruited to the airline.

Constantly experiencing job insecurity can be one of the most stressful experiences an employee can go through in their career. Individuals can react differently to the level of threat, with the reaction dependent on factors such as labour market characteristics, employability, individual characteristics, family responsibility, age and gender (Sverke and Hellgren, 2002). If a person feels they can get a job quite easily they may view the situation of job insecurity positively.

Organisations could show some support and initiatives towards upgrading skills in employees who have been with the airline for several years to make them prepared for advancement opportunities when they arise. The issue of job instability and unemployment is one recognised as a serious national problem and there are calls for governments to actively help and support the aviation industry (Kim, Wong, Han and Yeung, 2022).

Kim, Wong, Han and Yeung (2022) detail that in Scandinavian countries there is a motto “*Protect the worker, not the job.*” This notion helps their citizens to sustain their livelihoods by providing financial support to citizens for training and enhancing their employability. This could be one way a UK government could show some willing towards supporting the aviation workforce.

3.4 Relationships

The relationship scale on the HSE Management Standards Indicator tool includes very different types of relationship issues, from ‘*friction between colleagues*’ to bullying and harassment. The items based around bullying and harassment had scored high loadings on the factor analysis, whereas items such as ‘*relationships at work are strained*’ and ‘*friction between colleagues*’ had much lower loadings. Future research will consider if relationships needs to be split into two facets, one measuring day to day working of crew in terms of relationships and another measuring bullying and harassment they may experience. The relationship scale also does not distinguish between managers and colleagues for some of the items, so we have no way of knowing whether a respondent agreeing with the statement ‘relationships at work are strained’ is referring to relationship with management, colleagues or both.

Crew may have also considered when answering these items that they may not get on particularly well with one another so may have strained relations, but it may not be something which could be identified as bullying and harassment. Future work would need to consider how to identify where the problems are with relationships between crew and whether these are problems which are inherent of how the industry functions or whether it is an area which the industry could look to address better.

Tsaur, Hsu and Kung (2020) suggest crew can experience issues with working relationships when any of three problems occur – uneven work assignments, poor work cohesion among crew and poor work cohesion between cockpit and crew. Further stress can occur when crew are on duty and they have to work with people they have never worked with before (Tsaur, Hsu and Kung, 2020). This can sometimes require them to blend their personalities to accommodate the team dynamics (Smith, Harrington and Neck, 2000; Tsaur, Hsu and Kung, 2020). The need for crew to work in this way is deliberate and it is so familiarity is not gained and crew do not become complacent at work (Tsaur, Hsu and Kung, 2020). It is expected crew should always be ready to face an unfamiliar emergency situation which may include aircraft defect, medical emergency or sudden turbulence (Ko, Lee and Hyun, 2021). If a team is skilled and cooperative an unexpected occurrence should not cause major panic and crew should be responsive (Ko, Lee and Hyun, 2021). The idea of working with someone new per flight helps to cause less preparedness, relaxation and prevent attention not being made to vital security aspects (Wahlstedt, Lindgren, Norback, Wieslander and Runeson, 2010). Crew often work with limited space and time and also cannot directly contact the outside world so the need for teamwork is considered as a crucial factor for sophisticated work performance (Ko, Lee, Hyun, 2021; Kim, Yu and Hyun, 2022). On a long-haul flight crew can work in a team of up to ten or more members and a minor mistake by one can negatively have an affect on the remaining team members (Kim, Yu and Hyun, 2022).

Partridge and Goodman (2016) outline that cabin crew must work so dynamically with each other in order to pull together and work quickly as a team from when they first check in for a flight and attend pre-flight briefings.

The crew on any given flight need to reach a point where they are functioning as team before passengers are even starting to board. Yet after the flight they often go their separate ways to their next flight. Compared to many work teams cabin crew experience a lack of continuity and team development, as they may start the whole process of team development from scratch with a whole different crew on every flight. This process of working with unfamiliarity and the tacit understanding among team members can often lead to conflict when performing duties and lead to frustrations between the crew (Tsaur, Hsu and Kung, 2020).

Some members of cabin crew can have a negative influence on team performance due to maladjustment and/or neglect of work. Kim, Yu and Hyun (2022) refer to these as '*problem employees*', who they define as employees who are indolent, lack ability and who fail to perform in a project. The lack of continuity in cabin crew teams may result in problem employees not being dealt with, as they are not an ongoing problem for a stable group of staff. These '*problem employees*' within the crew will provide passengers with poor service quality, offer poor cooperation with team crew members, lack of self-management, inadequate knowledge regarding work and failure to respond to supervisors or feedback (Kim, Yu and Hyun, 2022). '*Problem employees*' are seen as a challenge for the aviation industry with no studies specifically focusing on how to manage '*problem employees*' and their impact on teamwork within the industry. Personality clashes can also make working together as crew difficult from time to time and can play a significant role in influencing employees experience of stress and burnout (Drayton, 2021).

Other issues that can arise for crew is when they are being asked to do something which may be different or conflict with their own thoughts/knowledge/experience on doing things and this can then create further tensions (Tsaur, Hsu and Kung, 2020). As the literature summarises there are many areas which can influence why relationships could have a significant impact on crew well-being. The area is also worthy of further exploration as it is difficult to determine what particular aspects of crew relationships are contributing to the stress/burnout they experience.

3.5 Factors found not to be significant

In this section some of the relationships which were not found to be statistically significant will be explored and suggestions will be made as to why these may not have had an impact on cabin crew well-being. It may seem unusual to spend time discussing what was not insignificant but as the HSE tool is so widely used and well validated it is worth taking time to consider why some of their established factors for predicting stress and burnout proved not to be significant for cabin crew.

3.5.1 Peer

The 'Peer' scale on the HSE standards indicator tool asks specific questions around help and support at work and respect between each other. Cabin crew are people who regularly work within a team of strangers, so they become use to differing levels of support within their work. The general consensus amongst crew is that they will work together civilly and respectfully to get the job done and if there are difficulties, they will work together to overcome these.

Having said this the relationships at work are not always happy ones as detailed earlier on within the section. Peer may have been considered as insignificant to crew's well-being as crew would know that if they did need some support some would be available to them. It is worth exploring how crew feel about peer support in future research and whether they would consider each other as friends which again if this were the case it would support why they would not have felt this area had any impact on their well-being. In literature Bolton and Boyd (2003) acknowledge that teamwork and support friendships from colleagues was critical to the work of cabin crew. If there is a high presence of team spirit and fun it can help to promote group conformity and relieve boredom (Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Baptiste, 2008).

3.5.2 Managers Support

This factor was also found to be non-significant in relation to its impact on crew well-being. The way cabin crew are managed however is different from what many might experience in other industries and they have never been a group of employees that are overly managed. As such crew often do not see a line manager and may only contact a member of management if they have a problem or are called upon. Once on-board an aircraft crew work autonomously but will have a point of contact onboard known as a cabin services manager who will allocate on board work tasks and provide direction where needed. Cabin services managers often do not consider themselves as management and engage as part of the working team on board. When asked the items around Managers Support from the HSE standards indicator tool some of the respondents may have felt that overall, they were being treated reasonably however the negative impact of management activity may have been better picked up in other items aligned with 'Relationships' or 'Demands' which consequently came out as significant stressors to impact on their well-being. Crew may have a neutral opinion on management because it is also possible that because of the absence of line managers much of their work such as rostering is controlled by technological systems which tells them where and when they need to be somewhere. It is also possible that as a result of this crew would not necessarily go to management with an issue they may have as they may feel they do not know them enough to approach them.

3.5.3 Role

The 'Role' scale on the HSE standards indicator tool explored whether respondents know what is expected of them at work and whether they are clear about their duties and responsibilities. Cabin crew generally felt they had a clear understanding of how to do their job and some of the reasoning to support this could be that the sample was representative of experienced crew who had carried out the role for many years. Some aspects of the work of cabin crew do not change and can be very prescribed tasks where every member of employee would have the same responsibility e.g. safety.

Crew therefore would have a good level of understanding of what was expected of them and could be considered as having extensive role clarity. This would possibly suggest why this area has resulted in not having much impact on crew's day to day well-being or contributing to stress/burnout within the role. The industry offers very rigorous and comprehensive training to anyone who joins it and as such this details clearly what employee roles are (Bolton and Boyd, 2003). Most airline companies believe that training employees is a top priority activity because this ensures the safety of the flights that they operate (Tobisová, and Vajdová, 2018).

3.5.4 Control

The HSE standards indicator tool items in relation to 'Control' probed respondents around having choices over how employees did their work and deciding what they did at work. Some of these items are not choices crew can have much control over due to the nature of the work they do. The concept of control generally may be seen to some as a stressor because they have no control when boarding an aircraft to carry out their work. However, experienced crew would recognise that this is the nature of their work and this would be something they would need to accept and sign up to at the time of application/recruitment. Crew are compliant with much of their work and there is no choice a lot of the time for them to deviate therefore the crew may have answered questions in relation to this item and considered that control is not a feature of their role and as a result they do not get stressed about it or let it affect their well-being.

3.5.5 Change

The scale on the HSE standards indicator tool in relation to change is quite a small one and only consists of a few items. This area was not highlighted as having much impact on cabin crew well-being and there could be a number of reasons as to why this may have occurred. It is expected that the organisations crew work on behalf of will engage with change but the changes are generally seen as broad trends which will have an impact on the whole of the aviation industry such as more work intensification for crew through direct selling or dealing with increasing demands of passengers. Change therefore could be perceived by crew as not being deliberate changes from their employer and therefore for this reason they do not see it as having any impact on their well-being levels at work. Crew also as part of their recruitment process are often selected for being people who can adapt well to change due to what is required of them within their role and this also could be a reason as to why this area did not have much impact on their well-being.

4. CONCLUSION

The aviation industry is sensitive to any economic changes and as such it is known for being unstable, unpredictable, largely responsive to political and environmental circumstances and precarious for investors (Wensveen and Leick, 2009; Brezoňáková, Badánik, and Davies, 2019). Countries are reliant on this form of travel due to globalisation and airlines success is built upon this. The exceptional pressures caused by Covid-19 linked to other long-standing pressures are likely to see challenging times continue for many airline companies. New ways of working and instilling employee and customer confidence is going to be vital for successful airline operations as well as being able to be responsive to the levels of demand for air travel from consumers of the future.

This study's aim was to explore the psychological well-being of cabin crew employed by UK based airlines. It has collected data from a substantial sample of unionised cabin crew employees employed across full cost, low cost and charter airline carriers operating from the UK. The key stressors to cabin crew well-being were found to be demands, relationships, work-family conflict and job security and these have all contributed towards stress/burnout which is experienced in the occupation.

Another intention from research was to determine if airline organisations were able to offer crew employment consistent with a mutual gains perspective in terms of support for employee well-being. The findings suggest many have attempted to show some goodwill to employees however they have been forced to adopt approaches consistent with the critical perspective to ensure their businesses remain viable (Sivapragasm and Raya, 2018).

Veld and Alfes (2017) state that organisational climate was a relevant mediator between HR and employee outcomes in their research and concluded that there are a range of positive and negative mechanisms that organisations can adopt which can have a counterbalancing impact on employee well-being. This is a likely reflection to what is largely experienced amongst cabin crew at the time when this data was collected. Veld and Alfes (2017) suggest that a stern environment where an organisation is having to do more with less, employees can still encourage a good level of well-being if the organisation supports a culture where the employee feels valued.

The industry has acknowledged the difficulties that face their cabin crew employees and they have attempted to provide the necessary support in place (IATA, 2021). Some of the findings suggested in this research can be considered by industry employers and union bodies as ways to practically help support and enhance well-being offers to employees who are struggling with stress and burnout.

Data was gathered in autumn 2019, so before the Covid pandemic and before the UK left the EU. A lot has changed within aviation in a short amount of time, all of it likely to have impacted negatively on cabin crew well-being. We intend to gather a second wave of data in late 2022/early 2023 to see if and how things have changed. We will adapt the survey by taking out measures of factors found to have no significance for crew well-being and add measures that may be more relevant.

There may now be a greater emphasis on health and well-being within aviation due to the pandemic with suggestions that added job stressors may now feature alongside hygiene requirements, safety concerns and unstable jobs (Kim, Wong, Han and Yeung, 2022). IATA (2021) noted many crew have worked at home for prolonged periods of time and partners and children began to become used to having them at home more. This has probably been the one time when crew managed to gain some extra time at home and some could have achieved a better work-life balance as a result of this. A post pandemic study may find that the return to work has presented more tension in areas linked to work-life balance.

Cabin crew have had to deal with experiences that nobody could have anticipated yet the next few years will be no less difficult for them (IATA, 2021). As the world makes a recovery attempt from the pandemic there is now a new crisis for the industry to respond to in relation to staffing and recruitment obstacles. The industry is having to employ employees quickly to deal with pent up demand for travel. The industry has lost large volumes of experienced and skilled employees during the pandemic and now as the industry prepares for a more sustainable future, employees who do enter now need to have the correct skills set (IATA, 2022). Training is going to be an important resource as people start to join from various sectors and an understanding of the importance of safety culture is going to be a key detail for new entrants. Aviation has set itself an ambitious target in relation to sustainability and alongside this it is going to need training around how to support this (IATA, 2022). There are some vast challenges ahead for the industry to address and only as time evolves will we see if these are achievable and whether these will have a positive or negative outcome on employee well-being.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Some recommendations from the study which can help to enhance future cabin crew well-being experience at work can include:

- Airline companies reviewing their current offerings in relation to how they are supporting employee well-being and having/or introducing specific well-being officers/well-being champions or points of contact who crew would feel comfortable liaising with to discuss any aspect of their well-being or experiences. Some airlines already have employee assistance programmes in place to provide counselling for employees (and sometimes their dependents) from mental health professionals. The idea of having a specific well-being officer would not only be to deal with those employees who are psychologically distressed but also looking after the whole workforce even if employees appear to be coping well. The designated officer ideally will have worked as crew and would understand the pressures of the role, share good practice and promote good health and well-being habits amongst the workforce to help them deal with the demands and challenges their occupation presents them with.
- Investment in e-training that is flexibly delivered online to fit around a crew member's shift patterns that would help them become more aware of handling stress and burnout within their occupation and to help promote good well-being practices in the workplace.
- There is a need to build more trust and visible value and recognition efforts into the employment relationship cabin crew have with their employers to make them feel valued and recognised for the work that they do. This would lead to increased sense of belonging and better overall well-being levels.
- Better engagement, visibility and communication between management figures and employees. Starting from executive level management right down to front line employee level.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Results of Linear Regression

	β	T	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F
			.645	.416	.409	59.313
Work Family Conflict	.321*	9.953				
Demands	.242*	6.937				
Job Security	.117*	3.742				
Relationships	0.90*	2.461				
Peer	-.061	-1.887				
Manager Support	-.060	-1.745				
Change	.059	-1.855				
Control	-.050	-1.598				
Role	-.041	-1.341				

* These results are significant at $p < .01$.