

# The wellness of airline cabin attendants: A systems theory perspective

Dr Sanchen Henning  
Graduate School of Business Leadership  
University of South Africa  
[hennis@unisa.ac.za](mailto:hennis@unisa.ac.za)

## Abstract

This article reports on the wellness of selected cabin crew members at a South African airline. The aviation industry introduces a great amount of potential environmental stressors to cabin crew. The purpose of the research was to explore the wellbeing of cabin crew and the stressors related to their working environment. As primary safety officers on board an aircraft, cabin crew perform a vital function. In order to provide a world-class hospitality service to passengers, cabin crew need to be in an optimal state of physical and psychological wellness. A systems theoretical perspective formed the framework of the study. This approach provided a comprehensive description of the person-environment transactions. A qualitative research approach was the chosen method of inquiry and purposeful sampling fitted the rationale of the study. In total, 12 face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with cabin crew members at their offices. Content analysis was conducted in 3 different phases, where each phase was progressively more complex and abstract. During the first-order analysis the researcher constructed 18 coding categories. The next phase constitutes the second-order analysis where 8 pattern categories were identified, describing the relations between the coding categories. Finally, the third-order analysis presents a conceptual analysis, indicating how the various coding and pattern categories were integrated and how they relate to the general concepts of a systemic epistemology.

The findings of the study indicated that the stressors that cabin crew experience are all related to the disruption of personal meaningful regularities or patterns. It seems that as humans we have a need for a certain amount of regularity and predictability, a certain “lawfulness” in our world. The migratory lifestyle of airline cabin crew introduces disrupted circadian rhythms, disrupted interpersonal relationships as well as disrupted cultural patterns. Based on the findings, recommendations for intervention strategies were made. These included psycho-educational workshops to cabin crew and the introduction of limited flying periods to reduce the long-term effects on their physical and emotional wellness.

**Keywords:** airline cabin crew; aviation industry; customer service; flight attendant; work schedule stress



Source: [cabincrew.careerintravel.co.uk](http://cabincrew.careerintravel.co.uk)

## Introduction

*"I want to hear one click!"* These were the words of a strict and unsympathetic looking cabin attendant, demonstrating the use of safety belts before take-off in a television advertisement for a German airline. The advertisement jokingly demonstrated the unapproachable and rude behaviour that cabin attendants often display on board. The interaction with passengers involves emotional work which may sometimes lead to emotional dissonance in cabin crew (Kinman, 2009). The unsympathetic cabin attendant in the advertisement demonstrated how cabin attendants have to display appropriate emotions such as friendliness but in reality he or she might really feel emotions such as anger and frustration (Hochschild, cited in Pinar & Fernandez-Castro, 2011).

The primary role of airline cabin attendants is to ensure the on-board safety of passengers. However, this should not be at the cost of efficient and friendly service. Excellent customer service includes attention to safety needs as well as a warm and welcoming attitude towards customers. Rude and unpleasant customer service damages the reputation of the airline and eventually erodes its brand value and market share in the aviation industry (Peppers & Rogers, 2008). Cabin attendants must ensure a quality service and client satisfaction despite disruptive passengers because quality service forms part of competitive strategy in commercial aviation (Pinar-Chelso & Fernandez-Castro, 2011, p.21).

Airlines often spend millions on acquiring new fleets; streamlining operations and value chain processes and the upgrading of lounges and facilities. It is questionable whether the same amount of money and care are being lavished on the physical and emotional wellness of the cabin attendants (Henning, 2001). Without happy and engaged employees that are willing to go the extra mile it is difficult to have satisfied customers (Peppers & Rogers, 2008).

The following two customer complaints were received by the Customer relations section of the airline: *"I have severe arthritis and battled to get up the stairs to the upper deck. When it*

*was time to disembark, I asked the air hostess to help carry my hand luggage (one small case) down the stairs. She rudely asked why I could not do it myself! On my return flight, when I asked the steward for a refill of Scotch, his reply was: 'What – another one? Some of your crew were downright rude. Passenger X got sick during the night due to the turbulence and had to vomit. Instead of taking care of a sick person and helping her, your crew instructed Passenger X to clean the floor herself by using two plates!"*

Competition in the airline industry in South Africa is growing fiercer. To stay competitive within this market, the airline needs to improve its customer service. Frustrated and aggressive cabin crew cannot render a world-class service.

The responsibility for ensuring an individual's wellness remains with the individual him or herself. However, if the efforts of cabin crew to improve their quality of life are not supported by company policies all their efforts will be futile (Henning, 2001). There is an abundance of literature available on the wellness of cockpit crew of commercial airlines but inadequate research on the cabin attendant's wellness which prompted the researcher to undertake this study.

## Fundamental systemic principles

A systems thinking approach considers the person-environment transaction and focuses on the underlying processes and patterns of human behaviour. *"Mental process, ideas, communication, organisation, differentiation, pattern and so on are matters of form rather than substance"* Bateson (1972, p.31). This implies that an adequate description of mental processes, ideas and communication requires an account of the relationships *among* objects and events and not just of the objects of events themselves. It is this *pattern of actions* in human behaviour that the researcher is seeking to uncover and reveal. For Bateson (1979) it is this dynamic patterning of phenomena that distinguishes the living from the non-living.

The value of this approach is that it provides a contextual framework within which the *extent,*

*complexity* and *interdependency* of human functioning may be studied (Henning, 2001). Each transaction between individuals or between individuals and their environment forms a linkage in an intricate network of interconnections. Viewed over time, month by month, this network of transactions establishes a dynamic equilibrium as every individual strives to adapt to changing social and environmental conditions. A systemic epistemology allows the researcher to take into account all the interrelationships between the structures and their meanings.

### *Wholes and parts*

The universe is understood as a hierarchy of systems, where each higher level of system is composed of systems at lower levels. The individual is a system, consisting out of several interacting subsystems, and on a different level is also a subsystem of a greater system, namely the organisation (Henning, 2001). It is like a set of self-organising Chinese boxes, each one neatly fashioned to fit inside the other, *ad infinitum*. A system is part of a system is part of a system...

*"Systemic properties are properties of the whole, which none of the parts have. They arise from the ordered relationships that are characteristic of that particular class of organisms or systems. Systemic properties are destroyed when a system is dissected into isolated elements"* (Capra, 1997, p.36).

For the purpose of this study the man-in-environment system is the unit to be analysed. The subsystems within this system are demarcated as the physiological, cognitive, emotive, perceptual and socio-cultural subsystems.

The cabin attendant functions as a thinking, feeling, perceiving and socially interacting individual within a specific environment. Humans are inseparably bound to each other and the world through language (Keeney, 1983). Although their realities differ humans share a collective consciousness, shared patterns of experiences (Capra, 1987). It is these patterns of consciousness that contribute to the meaning that humans give to their perception and experiences of the environment.

Organisations and the people that work in them are open to many influences or forces in the external environment that can either help or hinder their performance (Hunter, 2010, p. 29). An airline as an organisation is a dynamic network of interlinked people, teams and customers that are in constant transaction across different contexts (and continents). It has unique challenges as different cultures, destinations and time zones constantly interact and influence each other. To meet organisational goals it is important that the employees adapt and overcome these challenges at work.

### *Adaptability*

The difference between living systems and mechanical systems is that most living systems are governed by processes of stability and change. A constant interplay between stability and change characterises healthy adaptation to changing environments. This implies that a variety of behaviour patterns is necessary for successful adaptation, or wellness. Both too much change as well as too much stability can be destructive to any living system. For airline cabin crew it means either physical burn-out or extreme boredom, either at home, or at the destination before returning home.

Optimal environments are those that maximise fulfilment, meet the needs of and support the accomplishment of goals that the individual has. O'Connor and Lubin (1990, p.46) stated the following: *"Not only do individuals adapt or cope with their milieu, but they also arrange or modify it to better suit themselves. In optimisation, humans actively orient to, operate on and evaluate the quality and conduciveness of the environment as a context for future goals and activity"*.

Bateson (1972) used the phrase "an uncommitted potentiality for change" to describe a living organism's flexibility to adapt to the environment. He went further and rephrased the concept of stress as a "loss of flexibility". If a system's capacity for change is large enough, reactions to stress will have adaptive value to the system. The uncommitted potentiality for change ensures that the system has the freedom to cope with and adapt to unpredictable changes in the environment. For any system to be healthy,

whether it is health in a psychological, physiological or an organisational system, the wise expenditure of flexibility is a necessity.

Health in any system refers to a vital balance of diverse forms of experience and behaviour (O'Connor & Lubin, 1984). Stability arises in the way these experiences or behaviour sequences are patterned.

Bateson (1972) compared a healthy system to that of an acrobat on a tightrope. The acrobat has to have the flexibility to be able move his arms freely, to keep a more basic variable (his position on the rope) constant. The angle that the acrobat's body makes with the vertical line of the floor is the critical variable that needs to stay within certain limits of tolerance. Within these limits, the acrobat moves to achieve balance or adaptation. If the acrobat moves too far to either side of the rope and this corner become too large, the large, the limits of tolerance will be exceeded and he will fall. The moment the acrobat's arms are fixed or paralysed, he loses his flexibility and the slightest vibration of the rope will throw the acrobat off balance. Additional variables such as a sudden gust will disturb the acrobat's equilibrium (Henning, 2001).

This principle can be applied to the experience of work stressors in the lives of airline cabin attendants. For example, consider "social relatedness" as the critical variable – that is the awareness of being connected to other individuals (Henning, 2001). The critical variable can exceed either its lower limit (social isolation) or upper limit (social suffocation) of tolerance.

If a cabin attendant experiences feelings of intense loneliness he or she might look for the company of other people. That is healthy adaptation behaviour, a change in the status quo. Social interaction will heighten the critical variable to more comfortable levels of tolerance. If a cabin attendant experience feelings of social "suffocation", the cabin attendant might withdraw from people to gain some personal space and privacy. Withdrawal will lower the critical variable "social relatedness" to more comfortable levels of tolerance.

It seems that cabin attendants often lack flexibility with regards to social interaction. They do not always have the flexibility (freedom) to choose with whom they want to spend their time. Like Bateson's acrobat, cabin attendant's arms would seem to be paralysed or tied behind their backs. It often seems that crew may have lost their flexibility. Loss of flexibility in one system has the propensity to diffuse to other systems, because systems are interdependent. Change in one of the subsystems always permeates to another system. It can be stated that some cabin attendants experience a loss of flexibility in their working environment, which leads to a loss of flexibility in their personal lives. In the same way, the physiological wellness of an individual invariably reflects the psychological wellbeing of the same individual (Henning, 2001).

#### *Positive and negative feedback loops*

All living systems need a healthy balance of internal and external factors to survive and remain well (Capra, 1997). Negative and positive loops exist to regulate a system, for example the regulation of temperature by a thermostat. The thermostat is calibrated to regulate the temperature within a certain range. If the temperature drops below the lower limit (too cold) the thermostat will warm the room again to reach the set temperature. If it rises above upper limit (too hot) the thermostat will cool the room down to the set temperature. In this way the temperature is constantly regulated to remain within tolerable limits.

*Negative feedback loops* (also referred to as homeostatic feedback loops) operate to maintain the stability of a system. They correct deviations from the preferred state by instigating some contrary or compensatory action (Henning, 2001). Against change, negative feedback loops maintain the status quo of a system.

On the contrary, *positive feedback loops* facilitate exponential change in a system by reinforcing deviations instead of compensating for them. A positive feedback loop is established when external fluctuations from the preferred state are amplified. Change is reinforced and if not countered at some stage may have an escalating snow ball effect.

These dynamics are also evident in human behaviour. An example of a *negative feedback loop* in the lives of cabin crew would be the social isolation that a crew member seeks after a long flight with demanding passengers. He or she may want to withdraw from people to regain emotional balance. After some time of peace and quiet the cabin attendant regains his or her emotional balance and feels refreshed and ready to serve again.

An example of a positive (self-amplifying) feedback loop in the working life of cabin crew is the relationship between customer service and letters of appreciation from passengers, which increase their motivation, causing them to render better customer service. The same positive feedback loop can have a snowball effect in the opposite direction: cabin attendants rendering poor customer service receive complaints from angry passengers, causing them to react more aggressively towards dissatisfied passengers.

A *positive feedback loop* is not always “positive” in the sense of “being good”. Both positive and negative feedback loops can be constructive or destructive.

### **Circadian rhythms: The cycle of life**

Chronobiology reasserts the ancient emphasis on the rhythm of life and is concerned with the rhythmic properties of any living organism. The most common rhythms exhibited by man have cycles of 24 hours and are termed circadian rhythms (Henning, 2001). Physiological processes in the body exhibit regular rhythmic fluctuations which occur whether an individual is kept awake or allowed to sleep. These rhythms are controlled internally but are sensitive to fluctuations in the external environment. The disruption of these natural cycles as in the working lives of airline crew has negative effects on health and physical wellbeing.

The aviation industry is a technological advanced environment and provides a 24- hour customer service. As humans the circadian clock is our evolutionary heritage. When this clock is moved to a new work/rest schedule or put into a new time zone, it does not adapt immediately. This is the basis for the circadian disruption associated with jet lag. The body's

internal physiological rhythms do not all adjust at the same rate and therefore may be out of sync with each other for an extended period of time. It may take weeks for all the internal rhythms to come together in a synchronous 24 hour rhythm in the new time zone. It is important to note that there are huge differences in individual physiological flexibility for adaptation of the circadian clock and the ability to tolerate sleep loss (Henning, 2001). It is therefore possible that some crew members may report difficulties in adapting to the swiftly changing time zones while others adapt easier.

From the literature review (Henning, 2001) it seems that the inversion of rest and activity cycles from the normal day orientation is a major stressor for airline cabin crew. Unfortunately, the technology for overcoming this human handicap lags far behind that for overcoming our lack of wings:

*“It is questionable that man can retain his physical and mental health if he loses contact with the natural forces that have shaped his biological and mental nature. Man is still of the earth, earthly, and like Anteus of the Greek legend, he loses his strength when both his feet are off the ground”*  
- Rene Dubos

### **Qualitative research methodology**

A qualitative research methodology was adopted for this study as the purpose was to understand the lived experiences of cabin attendants at work. *“Qualitative data, with its emphasis on people’s lived experience are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes and structures of their lives: their perceptions, assumptions, pre-judgements, presuppositions and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them”* (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10).

It is not possible for anyone to know the whole of reality, that is, all the interacting components of a specific context (Henning, 2001). What a researcher observes is only a partial description, a partial arc of the complete picture. Researchers can only aim to uncover the connectedness of things and the many

intra- and inter-related patterns of connections in the data.

### **Data collection**

An important consideration in selecting the appropriate data collection method is that it should be compatible with the underlying principles of systems theory. The qualitative research interview is reconcilable with a systems theoretical approach.

In compliance with systems thinking, personal face-to-face interviews enable the researcher to place the respondents' experience within a specific context. Human conversation gives access to an individuals' lived world. Bateson (1979, p.24) stated: "*without context, words and actions have no meaning at all*". Language is used to make distinctions in order to describe and know the world, a process that Bateson (1972) referred to as the "mapping of territory". It is the process of constructing reality and giving meaning to experiences which again is interpreted by the researcher through the lenses of his or her own epistemology. In this way a self-referential observing system, which constitutes the researcher and the data, is created.

In total, 12 face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with cabin crew members to generate insights. Each interview took between 20 – 30 minutes. Recent discussions about qualitative interviewing highlight the importance of reflecting about the relationship that exists between the interviewer and the interviewee (Creswell, 2013, p. 173). The researcher did not represent a position of power but was well-known to all the respondents as a colleague during the time of the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

It is primarily through the analysing stage of a study that knowledge is derived (Henning, 2001). Content analysis was done with the aid of recommendations made by Taylor and Bogdan (1984) and Groenewald (1995). During content analysis the researcher establishes patterns and looks for correspondence between two or more categories (Creswell, 2013, p. 199). The process of data analysis can be summarised in three levels:

#### *First level analysis*

According to Groenewald (1995) the aim of first level analysis is to describe the perceptions and experiences of individual respondents. This explorative level of analysis comprises 3 steps namely exploration of the data; defining preliminary coding categories; labelling the meaningful units of data that can be grouped together.

Recurring regularities in the data forms a tapestry of meaningful patterns and are sorted into categories (Henning, 2001).

After the analysis of 12 protocols, 18 coding categories (CC's) were identified (see Table 1).

#### *Second level analysis*

With the description of the coding categories (CC's) the focus was on individual experiences. The second level analysis establishes and labels pattern categories (PC's) which describes the relationships between individual experiences. Second level analysis emphasises relations between experiences.

Since the construction of the pattern categories is the researcher's subjective reality, it is important to establish the validity of the labelling and description of the various pattern categories. The researcher established validity by referring back to the original protocols of the respondents to ensure that the pattern categories accurately represented the coding categories, that is, the first level descriptions of the respondents.

In total, 7 pattern categories were identified and labelled (see Table 1).

#### *Third level analysis*

Third level analysis links reality and theory by mapping lived experiences on a theoretical framework. The validity of a study is strengthened by the ability to interpret its results in the context of a theory (Henning, 2001). The aim of third level analysis is to demonstrate how the various coding categories and pattern categories are integrated and related to the constructs of the systems theoretical approach. The researcher

progresses from the empirical data to a more abstract conceptual level of thought (Groenewald, 1995). Table 1 below

summarises the 7 pattern categories with the coding categories within the specific pattern category.

Table 1: Summary of coding and pattern categories into meaningful themes

PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5	PC6	PC7	
<b>Cabin attendant</b>	<b>Context: Home</b>	<b>Transactions with Context: Home</b>	<b>Context: Destinations</b>	<b>Transactions with Context: Destinations</b>	<b>Context: Working Environment</b>	<b>Transactions with context: Working environment</b>	
CC6 Depression	CC1 Absence from home on special days	CC4 Separation anxiety before flight departure	CC5 Hotel room	CC2 Loneliness	CC3 Impersonal working environment	CC10 Hostility towards passengers	
CC8 Poor physical health	CC7 Meaningful relationships	CC14 Coming home after an overseas flight		CC9 Shopping experiences		CC12 Accusations of incompetent colleagues	CC11 Crew eccentricities
CC15 Suicidal tendencies		CC16 Substance abuse		CC13 "Flying friendships" with colleagues			
CC17 Religion							
CC18 Exercise							

**Discussion of findings: Third order analysis: Conceptual discussion**

For the purpose of this article the first and second level analyses (coding and pattern categories) will not be discussed in detail. The third level analysis which is the conceptual discussion will be described. This level of analysis presents an integrated understanding of the underlying patterns in experiences of cabin crew and attempts to indicate how the various coding and patterns categories are integrated and related to the more general concepts of systems theory.

**Positive and negative feedback loops**

The results from the first level analysis (coding categories) and second level analysis (pattern categories) suggest that recursive relationships exist between certain coding categories and/or pattern categories. This means that various categories may reinforce each other mutually, creating negative or positive feedback loops as discussed earlier.

The following *positive feedback loops* have been identified:

- The coding categories Depression (CC6) and Loneliness (CC2) seem to reinforce each other. The more depressed a cabin attendant feels, the more he or she withdraws from colleagues, friends and family. Withdrawing behaviour prevents a person from developing healthy and intimate relationships, which could alleviate feelings of depression. The following quotation supports this notion:  
  
*"I feel very much lonely, very depressed from loneliness, and homesick. O on hearing the church bells ringing I just wanted to cry my eyes out".*
- A self-amplifying loop exists between the coding categories Depression (CC6) and Substance abuse (CC16). Alcohol and drug abuse seems to intensify feelings of depression. The more depressed cabin crew feel the more they tend to escape this reality by abusing alcohol and drugs.

In turn, depressed moods escalate – reinforcing the positive feedback loop:

*“Because I have a drinking problem, I try not to go out with the crew for meals. I know that if I do, I will just drink again to forget about my worries”.*

Negative or homeostatic feedback loops instigate some contrary or compensatory action, thereby “balancing” the system. From the results the following negative feedback loop was evident, amongst others.

- For some cabin attendants the practice of Religion (CC17) counteracts Loneliness (CC2). These respondents reported that they experience a sense of belonging and relatedness through spiritual practices. Feelings of detachment are minimised and they can engage in solitary activities with renewed inspiration:

*“There is a small church in High Street Kensington, close to the hotel where we stay in London. I walk there whenever I feel down or miss home. There is something about the place that is comforting and reminds me of home”.*

### **Disrupted personal meaningful patterns**

Throughout the process of analysis it became clear that the majority of cabin attendants experience a lack of personal meaningful patterns in their working as well as personal lives. “It is true that human beings are born with a deep-rooted belief in the lawfulness of their world or in the regularity of causes and effects” (Perold, 2000, p.16). This belief may be destroyed when a person is repeatedly exposed to contexts where the sequences of events are completely devoid of pattern regularity. Eventually the person may learn that it is futile to try to predict the outcome. The context will have become predictable in its unpredictability. In systems thinking, pattern, redundancy, meaning and information can all be regarded as synonyms. Where there is pattern, there is redundancy; regularity, predictability and therefore meaning.

Three different disruptions in personal meaningful patterns were identified on a third level of analysis and will be discussed in short.

### *Disrupted circadian rhythms*

Disrupted circadian rhythms seriously affect the physical and emotional health of some cabin attendants. Changes in circadian rhythms imposed from the outside – rotating shifts or flights across time zones often result in fatigue, bodily upset and mental stress (Lynch, 1972). Proper adjustment of the body clock never occurs and there is only distortion of rhythms, never adaptation (Henning, 2001). The body is not allowed to function according to its own internal wisdom for growth and healing because its cyclical lawfulness is continually disrespected.

### *Disrupted interpersonal relationships*

The irregularity of the work schedules of cabin attendants makes it difficult for them to establish meaningful interpersonal relationship patterns. Some crew members seem to experience relationships that are completely devoid of any pattern. The knowledge of the state of a certain relationship creates expectations about what future interaction and behaviour within that relationship will be like. However, these expectations are more than often not met in the lives of cabin crew. What is experienced as true and real in a personal relationship is no longer valid the following day. That is, relationship patterns cannot be predicted with certainty:

*“You are never home for special occasions... weddings, funerals or whatever...So people seem to eventually distance themselves from you because you are never around”.*

Physical presence and closeness to meaningful people on a regular basis build familiarity, trust and loyalty. These relationship patterns seem to diminish in the migratory lifestyle of cabin attendants:

*“What stresses me most of flying is not being there when you are needed”.*

Some respondents seem to acquire a sense of learned helplessness in their personal relationships and do not take the trouble to nurture these relationships. The personal relationship context has therefore become predictable in its unpredictability.



### *Disrupted cultural patterns*

Cultural norms and values constitute the context in which interaction between individuals takes place. Cabin crew from traditional African ethnic backgrounds seem to experience a disruption of cultural patterns in their lives. Cabin crew realise those familiar and known values and behaviour from an often native and rural lifestyle cannot be put into practice in a first world environment. In a sense, a cultural evolution is taking place in the lives of the cabin attendants which were recruited from rural areas in South Africa. They experience a kind of identity split, as depicted by the following quotation:

*“Eish! Yesterday I bought these expensive Gucci shoes in London. Tonight, back home in Kwa-zulu Natal I’ll be slaughtering a beast with my family, dancing with my new Gucci shoes around the fire!”*

For many of these crew members from rural backgrounds the new environment is experienced as highly unpredictable and without meaning. The conflict between the western and ethnic cultures seems to deplete their flexibility to adapt to the new working environment. For them, the new culture has also become predictable in its unpredictability.

Pinar-Chelso and Fernandez-Castro (2011) stated that cabin crew have to deal with safety while providing a quality service without suffering excessive stress. In their research they referred to emotional self-efficacy as a critical variable in dealing with disruptive

passengers and their own psychological wellness. In addition, they identified the ability to identify emotions in others as a necessary ability to preserve psychological wellness when dealing with disruptive passengers.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

All living organisms have a natural rhythm and seem to have a need for a certain amount of regularity, predictability or lawfulness to survive. Furthermore, in a healthy human ecology, there is a match between the flexibility of the people and the flexibility of the civilisation (Bateson, 1972). Humans were clever enough to invent technology to help them overcome their lack of wings. The steel-winged giants in the sky can adapt to a variety of environmental factors such as turbulent weather conditions, loss of engine power or a sudden loss of altitude.

In contrast, humans have not been clever enough to prevent the disruptive effects of disturbed circadian rhythms or to correct dysfunctional communication patterns in interpersonal relationships. The prevention or healing of emotional wounds cannot be accelerated by technology.

The failure of cabin attendants to execute their tasks due to emotional stress may be catastrophic. It is important that the results of the study be taken serious to proactively plan intervention strategies.



Source: <http://cabincrew.co.in/wp-content/uploads/>

Stress can occur from both under stimulation or overstimulation (Werner, 2014) and cabin crew need to recognise and balance their lives to

optimize their own functioning. Professional training will improve their performance regarding self-mastery at work. Pinar-Chelso

and Fernandez-Castro (2011) suggested *crew resource management training* to improve cabin crew wellness through emotional intelligence training.

Stokols (1991) remarked that research findings should be able to suggest intervention plans. Based on these findings, mandatory psycho-educational workshops could be integrated into the recurrent safety training of cabin attendants. A greater sense of self-awareness and emotional self-efficacy (Pinar-Chelso and Fernandez- Castro (2011) may empower cabin crew with coping skills to adapt with greater flexibility to their challenging working environment.

In addition, limited years of flying may reduce the long-term effects of flying on physical and psychological health. For example, crew members may be employed for flying duties for two years, after which they are given the choice to work in another section of the company.

Employees can be regarded as a system as she or he is expected to achieve certain goals by producing the required quality of system, interacting with the working

environment (Hunter, 2010). This man-environment system does not always portray a picture of health. Bateson (1972, p.503) remarked: *"It appears that the man-environment system has certainly been progressively unstable since the introduction of metals, the wheel and scripts"*.

In the light of the results of this study, it seems appropriate to conclude that the invention of "the wing" added to the instability of the man-environment system and mandatory recurrent training of emotional skills are recommended to enhance the psychological wellness of cabin attendants.

## References

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York: Ballantine.

Bateson, G. (1979). *Mind and nature: a necessary unity*. London: Flamingo.

Capra, F. (1987). *The turning point: Science, society and the rising culture*. London: Flamingo.

Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design*. London: Sage.

Groenewald, A.E. (1995). *Toeriste se belewenisse van waterlandskappe in die Nasionale Krugerwildtuin: 'n ekosistemies studie*. Meestersgraad skripsie: Universiteit van Pretoria.

Henning, S. (2001). *SAA cabin attendant's experience of environmental stressors*. Masters degree thesis: University of Pretoria.

Hunter, C. (2010). *Managing people in South Africa: a systematic approach to Human Resource Management*. Durban: Sherwood Books.

Kinman, G. (2009). Emotional labour and strain in frontline service employees: Does mode of delivery matter? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 24(2), 118-135.

Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). London: Sage.

O'Connor W. & Lubin B. (1990). *Ecological approaches to clinical and community psychology*. Florida: Robert Krieger publishing company.

Peppers, D. & Rogers, M. (2008). *Rules to break and laws to follow*. New York: Wiley & Sons.

Perold, J. (2002). *Paradox and pedagogy: The double bind hypothesis and the culture of teaching and learning in South African schools*. Masters thesis: University of Pretoria.

Pinar-Chelso, M.J. & Fernandez-Castro J. (2011). A new scale to evaluate disruptive passenger management by cabin crew. *Aviation psychology and applied human factors*, 1(1), 21-30.

Stokols, D. (1987). *Handbook of environmental psychology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Taylor, S.J. & Bogdan, R. (1984). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: research for meanings*. (Second edition) New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Werner, A. (2014). *Organisational behaviour: a contemporary South African perspective*. Pretoria: Van Schaik publishers.