



Impact of Psychological Capital on Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intention: Evidence from Korean Flight Attendants

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Abstract

Background: We analyzed the effects of psychological capital on organizational commitment and turnover intention among flight attendants at a Korean airline and the mediating effect of organizational commitment.

Methods: Data were collected through a 2022 survey of Korean flight attendants, yielding 297 responses. Model reliability and validity were assessed to confirm hypotheses.

Results: Hope had a significant negative effect on turnover intention ($P < 0.05$), whereas optimism and resilience did not have significant effects on turnover intention. Additionally, hope had a significant positive effect on normative and continuance commitment, unlike optimism and resilience, which did not have significant effects on normative commitment or continuance commitment. Both normative commitment and continuance commitment negatively influenced turnover intention. Organizational commitment mediated the relationship between psychological capital and turnover intention, reinforcing the positive impact of psychological capital on reducing turnover intention.

Conclusion: This study underscores the significance of psychological capital in shaping organizational commitment and reducing turnover intention among Korean flight attendants. Strengthening psychological capital and fostering organizational commitment can bolster airline stability, competitiveness, and service quality.

Keywords: Flight attendant; Korean airlines; Organizational commitment; Psychological capital; Turnover intention

Introduction

Research on improving organizational performance highlights the pivotal role of employee attitudes and behaviors in achieving organizational success. Variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and low turnover intention are identified as critical elements of success. Numerous studies have shown the impact of these variables on organizational performance (1,2). Research has also explored the ef-

fect of employee psychological capital on organizational performance. Psychological capital refers to the internal resources a person has to manage tough situations. Employees with greater psychological capital generally experience higher job satisfaction, leading to stronger organizational commitment (3,4). This commitment motivates employees to stay with an organization longer, resulting in lower turnover (5).



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Psychological capital aids individuals in effectively managing stress and work-related pressures, thereby fostering a positive work environment (6,7). Hence, organizations recognize their employees as invaluable resources, particularly in industries like aviation, which demand unique personnel skills. Given the critical tasks performed by airline flight attendants, their psychological stability and positive work attitudes significantly affect an airline's overall service quality. Understanding the influence of flight attendants' psychological capital on organizational commitment and turnover intention holds potential for improving organizational management and organizational performance.

Amid the various global crises in the last two decades (i.e., September 11 attacks, coronavirus disease 2019), airlines have focused significant attention on strengthening employees' abilities to provide high-quality services (8,9). However, incidents such as unreasonable demands from passengers, onboard disturbances, assaults on flight attendants, and cases where airlines or other parties treat flight attendants unfairly continue to be reported. These problems can become major factors that undermine the psychological stability of flight attendants, reduce their commitment to the organization, and increase turnover rates. Thus, questions have been raised as to whether airlines are managing the psychological capital of their flight attendants effectively.

To assess how psychological resources within an organization could be more effectively managed and utilized in the airline industry, we analyzed the impact of psychological capital on organizational commitment and turnover intention in Korean flight attendants. Our hypotheses were as follows: 1) flight attendant psychological capital will have a negative effect on turnover intention; 2) flight attendant psychological capital will have a positive effect on organizational commitment; 3) flight attendant organizational commitment will have a negative effect on turnover intention; and 4) flight attendant organizational commitment will play a mediating role between psychological capital and turnover intention. We believe that the findings from this study will help airline executives gain a better understanding of the importance of psychological capital and provide a basis for strategies aimed at reducing turnover through greater organizational commitment.

Materials and Methods

Study design

We reviewed previous studies to verify the relationships among our three main variables (psychological capital, organizational commitment, and turnover intention) and to derive our research model (Fig. 1).

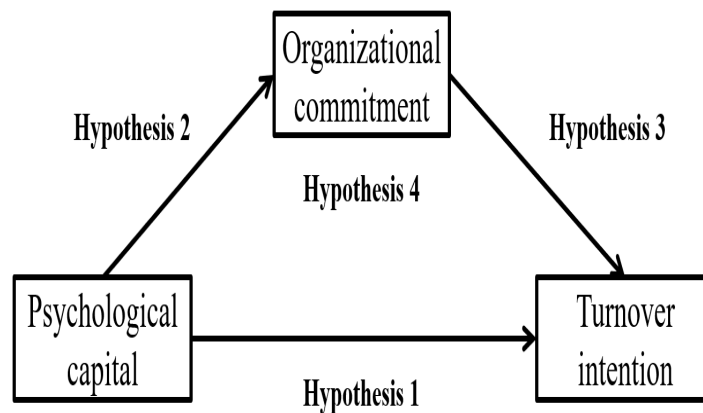


Fig. 1: Research model

We proposed that psychological capital would influence organizational commitment and turnover intention, and organizational commitment would influence turnover intention. Additionally, organizational commitment would play a mediating role between psychological capital and turnover intention.

Participants

To investigate the relationships among psychological capital, organizational commitment, and turnover intention, we surveyed flight attendants at a Korean airline. The participants were recruited through random sampling, and we performed the survey over a period of approximately 3 months (April 1 to June 30, 2022). The survey was conducted online using Google Forms (research explanation, informed consent, and questionnaire). Of the 303 participants who responded, we analyzed data from 297 participants after excluding those with insincere responses ($n=6$).

All study procedures were approved by Honam University, Gwangju, Republic of Korea (approval number: 2018-0128), and were conducted according to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Instruments

The main variables were all measured on Likert scales. Psychological capital and turnover intention were assessed using a 5-point scale (1: strongly disagree; 5: strongly agree), and organizational commitment was evaluated using a 7-point scale (1: strongly disagree; 7: strongly agree).

Psychological capital

To measure psychological capital, we used an instrument developed by Luthans et al. (10), consisting of four subfactors: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. Each subfactor encompassed 6 questions, for a total of 24 questions; the higher the score, the higher the psychological capital of that factor.

Organizational commitment

We used an instrument developed by Mowday et al. (11) to determine organizational commitment.

This tool consists of 15 questions under 3 subfactors: emotional commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. The higher the score measured for each factor, the higher the organizational commitment for that factor.

Turnover intention

We employed the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (12) to assess turnover intention. Two questions captured turnover intention, with scores ranging from 2 to 10 points. The higher the score, the higher the respondent's intention to change jobs.

Statistical analysis

We used SPSS software (version 28.0; IBM Co., Armonk, NY, USA) to execute our data analysis in several steps, with statistical significance set at $P=0.05$. First, we identified participant demographic characteristics through frequency analysis, and then we conducted factor analysis to verify the validity of the measurement tool. The factors were extracted through principal component analysis. Factor loading was >0.40 , communality was >0.40 , and we used the varimax method for factor rotation. Reliability analysis evaluated internal consistency using Cronbach's α . During the validity and reliability analysis process, questions that did not meet the standards were removed and further analysis was conducted. We analyzed the effect of psychological capital and organizational commitment on turnover intention using multiple regression analysis and performed mediation regression analysis to verify the mediating role of organizational commitment (13).

Results

General participant characteristics

Data on sex, age, education level, marital status, airline position, and work experience were collected (Table 1). The results show that most participants were women who had graduated from 4-year universities and were single.

Table 1: Participant characteristics (n=297)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N (%)</i>
Sex	Male	26 (8.8)
	Female	271 (91.2)
Education level	4-year university	230 (77.5)
	2-year university	54 (18.2)
	Graduate high school	13 (4.3)
Marital status	Married	92 (31.0)
	Single	205 (69.0)
Job	Junior flight attendant	119 (40.1)
	Senior flight attendant	86 (29.0)
	Purser	56 (18.8)
	Senior purser	26 (8.7)
	Manager	10 (3.4)

Reliability and validity

We confirmed reliability using Cronbach’s α , an internal consistency analysis. Our validity and

reliability results for psychological capital, organizational commitment, and turnover intention are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The validity and reliability analysis

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Question items</i>	<i>Factor loading</i>	<i>Cronbach's α</i>	
Psychological capital	Hope	9. I believe that there are multiple solutions to any problem.	0.813	0.820	
		11. I can currently think of several ways to achieve my work goals.	0.769		
		10. I currently feel very successful.	0.618		
	Optimism	8. I am currently passionately engaged in my work goals.	0.525		
		24. I work with the belief that there is a positive side to even a bad situation.	0.808		
	Resilience	19. I always think things will go well even if things are not going well.	0.696		
		22. I always expect things to go well with my job.	0.642		
		18. I think I can handle several things at once.	0.780		
		16. I usually cope well with work stress.	0.706		
			14. I somehow manage to solve the difficulties I encounter at work.		0.574
		Total variance explained (%)	66.886		
		Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin	0.926		
		Bartlett’s test of sphericity	1210.943		
		Significance	<0.001***		
Organizational commitment	Normative commitment	5. I believe that my values and the values of this airline are consistent.	0.870	0.804	
		4. I can perform any type of work for this airline.	0.848		
		8. This airline spares no effort in encouraging me to do my job well.	0.783		
	Continuance commitment	14. This airline is the best job for me.	0.653		
		7. If you do similar work, you can work at other workplaces (including airlines) other than this airline.	0.851		
	Commitment	9. I can leave this airline if I get a little better treatment at another job.	0.791		
		11. I don’t think there is much benefit to me if I continue to work for this airline.	0.617		
			Total variance explained (%)		62.866
			Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin		0.689
			Bartlett’s test of sphericity		634.890
		Significance	<0.001***		
Turnover intention		1. I often feel like quitting my job.	0.878	0.687	
		2. I plan to actively look for a new job within the next year.	0.878		
		Total variance explained (%)	77.098		
		Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin	0.500		
		Bartlett’s test of sphericity	102.407		
		Significance	<0.001***		

*** $P < 0.001$; tested by exploratory factors analysis and Cronbach’s α

We included three psychological capital subfactors consisting of hope (four items), resilience (three), and optimism (three). During the factor analysis, we removed self-efficacy because it did not meet the suggested criteria levels. The total variance explanation power of the measurement tool was relatively stable, and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin value was found to be appropriate. Bartlett’s test of sphericity and the probability of significance indicated that our factor analysis model was suitable. The analysis for organizational commitment confirmed two factors: normative commitment (four items) and continuance commitment (three items). Emotional commitment was excluded because it did not meet the criteria levels. The total variance explanatory power of the measurement tool was relatively stable. The results of Bartlett’s test of sphericity and the probability of significance indicated that the factor analysis model was suitable. The reliability for normative commitment and continuance commitment confirmed the internal consistency of the measurement items. The factor analysis for turnover intention confirmed a single factor (two

items), similar to the research design. The total variance explanatory power of the matrix of the turnover intention measurement tool was stable. The results of Bartlett’s test of sphericity and the probability of significance indicated that the factor analysis model was suitable.

Hypothesis testing

Regression analysis between psychological capital and turnover intention

Among the psychological capital subfactors, hope had a significant negative effect on turnover intention ($\beta=-0.325$, $t=-4.412$, $P<0.001$) (Table 3), indicating that flight attendants with high hope levels had lower turnover intentions. However, optimism ($\beta=-0.010$, $t=-0.126$, $P=0.900$) and resilience ($\beta=-0.016$, $t=-0.193$, $P=0.847$) did not have significant effects on turnover intention. The explanatory power of the model was $R^2=0.116$, adjusted $R^2=0.107$, and $F=12.861$ ($P<0.001$), confirming that it was statistically significant. The Durbin–Watson statistic was 1.845, indicating that the independence between truncation errors was appropriately maintained.

Table 3: The effect of psychological capital on turnover intentions

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Standard error	β	t	P
Turnover intentions	(Constant)	0.260	-	15.084	<0.001***
	Hope	0.095	-	-4.412	<0.001***
			0.325		
			5		
	Optimism	0.094	-	-0.126	-0.900
			0.010		
			0		
	Resilience	0.102	-	-0.193	-0.847
			0.016		
			6		

$R=0.341$, $R^2=0.116$, adjusted $R^2=0.107$, $F=12.861$, $P<0.001$, Durbin–Watson=1.845

*** $P<0.001$; assessed through multiple regression analysis

Regression analysis between psychological capital and organizational commitment

Among the psychological capital subfactors, hope had a significant positive effect on the organizational commitment subfactors normative com-

mitment and continuance commitment (Table 4). Flight attendants with high hope levels exhibited greater organizational normative commitment and greater continuance commitment to the organization. However, optimism and resilience did

not have significant effects on normative commitment or continuance commitment. The models were statistically significant. The Durbin–

Watson statistics indicated that the independence between truncation errors was appropriately maintained.

Table 4: The effect of psychological capital on organizational commitment

<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>Independent variable</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Normative commitment	(Constant)	0.243	-	6.043	<0.001** *
	Hope	0.090	0.394	5.965	<0.001** *
	Optimism	0.089	0.090	1.249	0.213
	Resilience	0.095	0.126	1.713	0.088
	R=0.548, R ² =0.301, adjusted R ² =0.293, F=41.823, P<0.001, Durbin–Watson=1.885				
Continuance commitment	(Constant)	0.369	-	3.184	0.002**
	Hope	0.135	0.272	3.605	<0.001** *
	Optimism	0.134	0.075	0.917	0.360
	Resilience	0.144	-0.091	-1.070	0.285
	R=0.267, R ² =0.071, adjusted R ² =0.062, F=7.508, P<0.001, Durbin–Watson=1.726				

P<0.01, *P<0.001; assessed through multiple regression analysis

Regression analysis between organizational commitment and turnover intention

Among the organizational commitment subfactors, normative commitment had a significant negative effect on turnover intention, indicating that strong organizational normative commitment is an important factor in reducing turnover intention ($\beta=-0.355$, $t=-6.489$, $P<0.001$). Continuance commitment also had a significant negative effect on turnover intention ($\beta=-0.108$, $t=-1.978$,

$P=0.049$). This suggests that the effect of continuance commitment on turnover intention is relatively weak compared to that on normative commitment. The explanatory power of the model was $R^2=0.151$ and adjusted $R^2=0.145$, indicating that the model explained approximately 15% of the variables. The model was confirmed as statistically significant. The independence between truncation errors was appropriately maintained (Table 5).

Table 5: The effect of organizational commitment on turnover intention

<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>Independent variable</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Turnover intention	(Constant)	0.226	-	17.888	<0.001***
	Normative commitment	0.052	-0.355	-6.489	<0.001***
	Continuance commitment	0.040	-0.108	-1.978	0.049*
	R=0.388, R ² =0.151, adjusted R ² =0.145, F=25.975, P<0.001, Durbin–Watson=1.898				

*P<0.05, ***P<0.001; assessed through multiple regression analysis

Mediating effect of organizational commitment between psychological capital and turnover intention

The results for the mediating effect of normative commitment showed that hope had a significant positive effect on normative commitment ($\beta=0.528$, $t=10.656$, $P<0.001$) and a significant negative effect on turnover intention ($\beta=-0.341$, $t=-6.223$, $P<0.001$). In the third stage, both hope and normative commitment contributed to reducing turnover intention, but the negative impact of hope lessened. Optimism and resilience

showed similar trends but did not have the same mediating effect as hope.

The results for the mediating effect of continuance commitment revealed that hope also had an effect on continuance commitment ($\beta=0.133$, $t=2.305$, $P=0.022$), but its direct effect on turnover intention was stronger ($\beta=-0.341$, $t=-6.223$, $P<0.001$). In the third stage, when considering hope and continuance commitment, the influence of hope lessened and continuance commitment had a weak effect on reducing turnover intention (Table 6).

Table 6: The mediating effect of organizational commitment

Independent/mediator/dependent	Mediating effect test	β	t	P	R^2
Hope/normative commitment/turnover intention	Stage 1	0.528	10.656	<0.001***	0.279
	Stage 2	-0.341	-6.223	<0.001***	0.116
	Stage 3 (independent)	-0.222	-3.555	<0.001***	0.175
	Stage 3 (mediator)	-0.256	-4.096	<0.001***	
Optimism/normative commitment/turnover intention	Stage 1	0.416	7.853	<0.001***	0.173
	Stage 2	-0.214	-3.760	<0.001***	0.046
	Stage 3 (independent)	-0.069	-1.155	0.249	0.143
	Stage 3 (mediator)	-0.345	-5.793	<0.001***	
Resilience/normative commitment/turnover intention	Stage 1	0.438	8.354	<0.001***	0.192
	Stage 2	-0.228	-4.015	<0.001***	0.052
	Stage 3 (independent)	-0.084	-1.406	0.161	0.145
	Stage 3 (mediator)	-0.336	-5.594	<0.001***	
Hope/continuance commitment/turnover intention	Stage 1	0.259	4.610	<0.001***	0.067
	Stage 2	-0.341	-6.223	<0.001***	0.116
	Stage 3 (independent)	-0.322	-5.680	<0.001***	0.121
	Stage 3 (mediator)	-0.074	-1.300	0.194	
Optimism/continuance commitment/turnover intention	Stage 1	0.173	3.015	0.003**	0.030
	Stage 2	-0.214	-3.760	<0.001***	0.046
	Stage 3 (independent)	-0.192	-3.353	<0.001***	0.061
	Stage 3 (mediator)	-0.124	-2.155	0.032*	
Resilience/continuance commitment/turnover intention	Stage 1	0.133	2.305	0.022*	0.018
	Stage 2	-0.228	-4.015	<0.001***	0.052
	Stage 3 (independent)	-0.210	-3.705	<0.001***	0.068
	Stage 3 (mediator)	-0.129	-2.271	0.024*	

* $P<0.05$, ** $P<0.01$, *** $P<0.001$; assessed through multiple regression analysis

Discussion

We analyzed the impact of psychological capital on turnover intention and organizational commitment in flight attendants working for a Kore-

an airline and verified the mediating effect of organizational commitment in this relationship. Our findings yielded four major insights. First, among the psychological capital subfactors, hope had a significant negative effect on turnover intention. Flight attendants with higher levels of

hope exhibited lower turnover intentions, indicating that hope plays a crucial role in enhancing job satisfaction and job continuity. These findings are consistent with previous studies demonstrating that hope fosters positive behaviors and attitudes (14,15). Conversely, optimism and resilience did not have significant effects on turnover intention. Although these factors may be associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, they do not appear to be primary variables directly affecting turnover intention. This aligns with the findings of Gom et al. (16), who also reported variability in the effects of psychological capital subfactors on turnover intention.

Second, hope had a significant positive effect on both normative commitment and continuance commitment, subfactors of organizational commitment. Flight attendants with higher hope levels likewise showed higher levels of normative and continuance commitment, implying that hope fosters positive feelings towards the organization and strengthens organizational commitment (17,18). In contrast, optimism and resilience did not have significant effects on these subfactors, highlighting that they play a less critical role in forming organizational commitment. Previous research has similarly found that resilience does not significantly affect organizational commitment, suggesting that the influence of psychological capital factors on organizational commitment may vary depending on the context (19). This underscores the importance of designing support programs that target specific psychological capital factors.

Third, among the organizational commitment subfactors, normative commitment had a significant negative effect on turnover intention. Strong normative commitment emerged as a crucial factor in reducing turnover intention, consistent with previous research (20,21). Continuance commitment also had a significant negative effect on turnover intention. This indicates that individuals who show more commitment to the job are less likely to leave the organization, although the effect of continuance commitment on turnover intention was relatively weaker than that of normative commitment. The continuance com-

mitment is driven by the economic and social costs associated with leaving an organization, meaning individuals stay because they fear the potential losses from leaving. Therefore, people with continuance commitment are more likely to leave when a better opportunity arises, driven primarily by economic necessity. Normative commitment, however, is built on intrinsic motivation and a sense of responsibility to the organization, making employees more committed and less likely to leave.

Fourth, organizational commitment was confirmed as an important mediating variable that strengthened the positive effect of psychological capital and reduced turnover intention. The mediating role of normative commitment is particularly notable, as it lessened the negative influence of hope on turnover intention. This implies that normative commitment significantly mediates the relationship between psychological capital and turnover intention. However, the weaker mediating effect of continuance commitment suggests it may not adequately represent attachment or organizational commitment. Thus, organizations should develop comprehensive approaches that consider various aspects of organizational commitment (22,23).

Our study's findings provide several practical implications for airline executives. First, programs that strengthen the psychological capital of flight attendants, particularly those that enhance hope, can reduce turnover rates and increase organizational commitment. Second, to bolster organizational commitment, activities that enhance employee normative commitment are essential. These activities could include shared organizational goals and values, team-building activities, and improved internal communication, all of which can increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover rates. Third, further research is needed to understand why optimism and resilience did not significantly affect turnover intention and organizational commitment, and to identify other strategies for improving these factors. For the airline industry, this involves increasing overall job satisfaction among flight attendants. Fourth, organizations should continuously evaluate and

improve their programs and strategies based on feedback. Monitoring employee satisfaction through periodic surveys and interviews can help adjust and enhance support programs. Finally, providing customized support tailored to each crew member's individual situation is crucial.

This study has limitations. First, it focused solely on flight attendants of Korean airlines, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to flight attendants in other countries and employees in other industries. The results may be specific to Korean culture and the airline sector. However, our findings are consistent with similar studies conducted in Turkey (23) involving employees from government agencies and related organizations. Future research in the airline industry could improve sample representativeness by including cabin crews from various countries, facilitating comparative analysis across cultural contexts. Additionally, as the data relied on self-reports, subjective bias or social desirability bias may have influenced the results. Future research should use objective data, such as actual turnover rates or performance evaluation data, to complement the limitations of self-reported surveys.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the impact of psychological capital on organizational commitment and turnover intention, confirming the mediating role of organizational commitment within the airline industry. We offer practical implications for airline management, advocating for strategies to enhance organizational stability and sustainability by strengthening psychological capital and improving organizational commitment. This approach may enhance airline competitiveness and service quality.

Journalism Ethics considerations

Ethical issues (including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission,

redundancy, etc.) have been completely observed by the authors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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