

PREPARATION FOR RETIREMENT OF THAI AIRLINE STAFF: A STUDY OF FLIGHT ATTENDANTS AND GROUND STAFF

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to study preparation of retirement of Thai airline staff. The quantitative research applied questionnaire instrument and data collection was from March-May 2023 with 400 samples who were flight attendants and ground staff at Suvarnabhumi Airport. The statistics in use were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test and One-Way ANOVA. The results found that overall preparation of airline staff was at a high level (M=3.76, SD=0.90) and when considering each preparation, it showed that the staff have every preparation at a high level as psychological (M=3.92, SD=0.93), community and using free time (M=3.82, SD=0.91), physical (M=3.76, SD=0.92), accommodation (M=3.74, SD=0.86), and financial preparation (M=3.63, SD=0.91), respectively. When comparing the means of flight attendants and ground staff, it founded that overall flight attendants have better preparation than ground staff. The hypothesis testing found that different personal factors did not have different preparation of retirement, except ages and marital status at a statistical level of 0.05. For the opinion part, it showed that mostly airline staff would like to develop their financial knowledge, particularly financial planning and investment before retirement.

Keywords: Preparation of Retirement, Airline Staff

INTRODUCTION

Preparation of retirement is essential for Thai people when it becomes aging society in 2030. Numbers of the healthy elderly people are increasing more and they tend to be single. There are numbers of researches studied the retirement preparation of workers in Thailand. However, many limited the study to the educational organizations, government and state enterprises. The study of retirement preparation of tourism and aviation industry are rare. Though, the tourism and aviation industry retirement preparation are very important. Tourism and aviation industry are dynamic industry. It brings large income to the country. People who work in the tourism and aviation earn well when economic and tourism boom. However, the industry are not certain. There are some challenges affecting the tourism and aviation industry currently, such as pandemic, global economic crisis, fuel price fluctuation and Artificial Intelligences (AI). The organization risks and operational risks are also challenging human resources in tourism and aviation industry, such as from high work demand, long hours, and night work which caused health problems and mental health (Marqueze, 2023). Therefore, people in tourism and aviation industry, particularly airline staff as ground staff and flight attendants need to prepare for their retirement in many aspects, such as psychological, physical, accommodation, financial and free time aspects.

Research Objectives

To study the preparation for retirement of Thai airline staff.

Research Questions

How is the preparation for retirement of Thai airline staff?

Research Hypothesis

The airline staff who have different personal factors have different preparation of retirement.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

The literature review and theory in this study included 1) retirement 2) preparation of retirement plan and 3) preparation of airline staff retirement as:

Retirement is the end of the work which may be from the aging reason. The elderly people whose age is over 60 years old (World Health Organization, 2022) may retire from their work. However, the retirement could be an early retirement because of economic problems in Covid-19 and technological disruption (Srisathan and Naruetharadhol, 2022)

The preparation of retirement is important for aging society. The study showed that Thailand become aging society and people live longer in 2030 (Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, 2021). The healthy ageing or the elderly people who could meet their basic needs, learn, grow and make decision, be mobile, build and maintain relationship and contribute to society are increasing (Beard, Officer, De Carvalho et al, 2016).

The research found that retirement preparation such as psychological, physical, community and using free time, financial and accommodation preparation should be done for every occupation (Ibeme, 2014). Though, the preparation may be different because of national culture, organization culture, types of occupation and business. People in some culture prepare well since they are start working such as in Japan and Scandinavia. The static and mechanic organization such as government office and state enterprises also plan for their staff pensions and the organization may provide the welfares and benefits to the staff and family. (Vieira, K.M., Matheis, T.K., Rosenblum, T.O. and Potrich, A.C.G.,2022).

The airline business is dynamic and fast growing. The business expands due to the hotel and tourism industry, transportation development and international business. However, the characteristics of the business is seasonal, uncertain and extremely needed physical strength. The retirement for the airline staff needs preparation. In this research, it aimed to study the retirement preparation of the flight attendants and ground staff in general such as:

Psychological Preparation: Preparing for mental issues such as stress, loneliness

Physical Preparation: Preparing for heath, check-up, exercise, insurance care

Community and Using Free Time Preparation: Preparing for hobby and social work

Financial Preparation: Preparing for daily consumption, saving and investment

Accommodation Preparation: Preparing for places and facilities when getting old.

METHODOLOGY

This research used the questionnaire adapted from the previous studies in Thai context (Pornwannasiriwet, Jindarak and Kasem, 2024 and Bhisalbutra and Siritwong, 2018) The retirement preparation includes psychological, physical, community and using free time, financial and accommodation preparation. The questionnaires consists of 3 parts as 1) respondent profile of the airline staff 2) preparation of retirement for the airline staff and 3) opinion. The research instrument quality was from the content validation of 3 experts and the reliability from the questionnaire try out was 0.92. The population of the study were the airline staff including the flight attendants and ground staff. The data collection at Suvarnabhumi Airport was in March-May 2023. Since the sample size was unknown, the researcher applied the unknown sample size formula with additional samples to be 400 respondents. The researcher applied quota sampling to collect the data from 75% ground staff and 25% flight attendants.

For the data analysis, the researcher used statistics and method as follow:

Part 1 Respondent profile of the airline staff: Using frequency and percentage

Part 2 Preparation of retirement for the airline staff: Using mean and standard deviation.

The 5 Likert's Scale stating from Highest (1) to Lowest (1) as:

4.21- 5.00 = Highest

3.41- 4.20 = High

2.61- 3.40 = Moderate

1.81- 2.60 = Low

1.00- 1.80 = Lowest

Part 3 Opinion: Using content analysis

In addition, the researcher applied T-test and One-Way ANOVA for hypothesis testing.

RESULTS

The results showed 1) respondent profile of the airline staff 2) preparation of retirement for the airline staff 3) opinion and 4) hypothesis testing

Table 1 *Respondent Profile Results (n=400)*

Profile Factors	Particulars	F	%
Gender	Male	100	25.00
	Female	300	75.00
Age	18-29 yrs.	56	14.00
	30-39 yrs.	109	27.25
	40-49 yrs.	170	42.50
	Above 50 yrs.	65	16.25
Position	Ground Staff	300	75.00
	Flight Attendant	100	25.00
Income (Per Month)	Less than 20,000 Baht	40	10.00
	20,000-40,000 Baht	252	63.00
	More than 40,000 Baht	108	27.00

Marital Status	Single	256	64.00
	Married	72	18.00
	Married with Children	72	18.00

For part 1, the results found that the respondent’s genders were 300 females (=75.00%) and 100 males (=25.00%). The majority of the respondents’ age was 40-49 years old (=42.50%). The respondents’ positions were 300 ground staff (=75%) and 100 flight attendants (=25%). Mostly, their income per month was around 20,000-40,000 baht (=63%). The majority of the respondents’ marital status was single (=64.00%).

Table 2 Preparation of retirement for the airline staff

Preparation of Retirement	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
1. Psychological	3.92	0.93	High
2. Physical	3.76	0.92	High
3. Financial	3.63	0.91	High
4. Community and Using Free Time	3.82	0.91	High
5. Accommodation	3.74	0.86	High
Preparation of Retirement in Total	3.77	0.91	High

For part 2, the result found that overall the preparation of retirement for the airline staff was at a high level (M=3.77, S.D.=0.91). When considering each preparation, it found that psychological preparation was highest at high level (M=3.92, SD=0.93), then community and using free time (M=3.82, SD=0.91), physical (M=3.76, SD=0.92), accommodation (M=3.74, SD=0.86), and financial preparation (M=3.63, SD=0.91), respectively.

For part 3, the results of content analysis showed that the financial and accommodation preparation are the difficult tasks to do. Both flight attendants and ground staff faced the problems of financial saving and investment. They do not have enough knowledge of investment. Some flight attendants invested based on friend recommendations and trends, rather than consulting the financial advisors. Their investment were cryptocurrency, gold, foreign currency and condominium. Some ground staff informed that they invested in gold and government bonds. However, they do not force themselves to save and invest periodically. The accommodation was one of the problem the airline staff are worried. Due to the increase in cost of accommodation and pandemic, many airline staff mentioned that they preferred to rent the house and condominium, rather than buy, particularly the ones who are single. After pandemic and inflation, many airline staff consider their accommodation expenses are higher. However, some airline staff prefer to buy the condominium in the city and railway location as they consider that the condominium will be passive income and they can stay in the condominium when the room is empty. Some airline staff recommend that the airline human resource management should provide some knowledge for financial investment. The university or school should provide this knowledge to the students, particularly the one who are working in tourism and aviation industry for retirement.

The psychological and community and using free time preparation were not the problems for the airline staff. They were enjoyable people and always connect to their social and online community. The flight attendants plan for trips with friends and many plan for meditation.

The physical preparation for the flight attendants were the insurance. Some of them plan for health insurance since they heard from their senior pursers that it is very important after retirement, particularly backache. Many flight attendants go to gym when they have no flights. However, the ground staff do not pay attention much on physical preparation.

Table 3 Hypothesis Testing

Factors	Statistics	Test Value	Sig.
Gender	t-test	0.89	0.48
Age	One-Way ANOVA	7.23	0.00*
Position	t-test	12.14	0.32
Income (Per Month)	One-Way ANOVA	15.91	0.12
Marital Status	One-Way ANOVA	14.21	0.01*

(Sig.* < 0.05)

The hypothesis testing results using t-test and One-Way ANOVA at a statistical significance level of 0.05 showed that the airline staff who have different ages and marital have different preparation of retirement (Age Sig.=0.00* and Marital Status Sig.=0.01*). The airline staff with other different personal factors as gender, position and income per month do not have different preparation of retirement. (Gender Sig.=0.48, Position Sig.=0.32 and Income per month Sig.=0.12).

CONCLUSION

The results found that overall the preparation for the airline staff both ground staff and flight attendants was at a high level (M=3.77, S.D.=0.91). The highest score was psychological preparation at a high level (M=3.92, SD=0.93) and the lowest score was financial preparation was at a high level (M=3.63, SD=0.91). The hypothesis testing results using t-test and One-Way ANOVA at a statistical significance level 0.05 showed that only different the airline staff who have different ages and marital have different preparation of retirement (Age Sig.=0.00* and Marital Status Sig.=0.01*). The study found that the airline staff need to improve their financial preparation before retirement, particularly saving and investment.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results showed that overall the preparation of the airline staff was at a high level. The lowest score was at financial preparation. The research studies that the biggest problems of retirement planning is financial preparation since it is difficult to predict the global scenarios and risks. In US airline industry, the babyboomers could be the last generation that enjoy a comfortable retirement and the Generation X could be the last generation to expect higher income than their parents (King, 2017). Many Thai airline passenger service agents faced some financial problems since they do not prepare some early retirement, particularly during recession and Covid-19 pandemic (Nualsom, 2022). The related study showed that the

age affected the financial preparation for retirement, particularly generation Y who financially plan more financial retirement plan for their social aspects (Sukchoke, 2021).

The recommendation of the study was the financial preparation should be improved since the score was lowest. The future research should separate the study the retirement preparation for the airline staff and flight attendants. Regarding the results of the study, it found that the flight attendants and the ground staffs have different income level and lifestyles due to their works. Then, the study can gain more information from the qualitative method such as interview and focus group with the specific occupation.

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