

Emotional Labor of Flight Attendants: The Role of Occupational Interest, Happiness at Work and Job Crafting¹

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Abstract

Emotional labor, which involves managing individual's emotions and expressions to meet the emotional demands of a job, is a key concept across numerous industries. This is particularly true in the airline industry, where flight attendants are required to maintain a calm and authentic demeanor even in stressful situations due to their constant interactions with passengers. This study focuses on the emotional labor experienced by flight attendants in the airline sector, examining the factors that influence it, including occupational interest, happiness at work, and job crafting. The goal is to statistically analyze the relationships among these variables. For this purpose, a quantitative research methodology was employed. A sample of 395 flight attendants was selected through convenience sampling. Data was collected via online surveys and analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software. Hypothesis testing through structural equation modeling revealed strong, positive relationships between occupational interest, happiness at work, job crafting, and emotional labor. Additionally, the findings indicate that job crafting plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between occupational interest, happiness at work, and emotional labor. The findings obtained within the framework of an original research model, along with the evaluations made based on these findings, are expected to contribute to the literature and the industry.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Airline, Cabin Crew, Passenger Transportation

Kabin Memurlarının Duygusal Emeği: Mesleki İlgi, İşte Mutluluk ve İş Becerikliliğinin Rolü

Öz

Duygusal emek, yani bir bireyin işin duygusal gereksinimlerini karşılamak için duygularını ve ifadelerini yönetme süreci, birçok sektörde önemli bir kavramdır. Bu durum, özellikle yolcularla sürekli etkileşimde bulunan kabin memurlardan beklendiği için hava yolu sektöründe daha belirgindir. Kabin memurlarının, zorlu durumlarda bile sakin ve samimi bir tavır sergileme gerekliliği, duygusal emeğin kritik rolünü vurgulamaktadır. Bu çalışma, hava yolu sektöründeki kabin memurları tarafından deneyimlenen duygusal emeği ele almaktadır. Duygusal emeğin öncülleri olarak mesleki ilgi, işte mutluluk ve iş becerikliliği değişkenleri incelenmektedir. Çalışmanın amacı, bu değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri istatistiksel olarak incelemektir. Bu hedeflere ulaşmak için nicel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. 395 kabin memurundan oluşan bir örneklem, kolayda örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilmiş ve veriler çevrimiçi anketler aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Veriler SPSS ve AMOS yazılımları kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Yapısal denklem yapılan hipotez testleri, mesleki ilgi, işte mutluluk, iş becerikliliği ve duygusal emek arasında önemli ve pozitif ilişkiler olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, iş becerikliliğinin mesleki ilgi, işyeri mutluluğu ve duygusal emek arasındaki ilişkide önemli bir aracılık rolüne sahip olduğu bulunmuştur. Özgün bir araştırma modeli çerçevesinde elde edilen bu bulgular ve bulgular çerçevesinde yapılan değerlendirmelerin literatüre ve sektöre dönük katkılar sunması beklenmektedir.

Keywords: Hava Yolu, Kabin Ekibi, Yolcu Taşımacılığı

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1. Introduction

In the context of the airline sector, providing passengers with differentiated services is imperative for survival and gaining a competitive edge. While offering high flight safety, flight diversity, frequency, and a range of tariffs and pricing options is crucial, the interaction between passengers and employees during flights is particularly significant. Cabin crew services during flights are considered a vital element that plays an essential role in the reputation of airline companies (Lee et al., 2014, p.410-411). Similar to other business management contexts, in the airline sector, people-both employees and customers (passengers)-constitute one of the most valuable assets. Therefore, the points of contact between passengers and employees are of critical importance for airlines. These interactions are particularly concentrated during cabin services provided by cabin crew.

Cabin crew members are referred to as frontline service providers (Yuan, 2005). As part of the flight team, cabin crew members interact with passengers more frequently and for more extended periods compared to their counterparts in other departments. In this regard, cabin crew serve as a bridge between passengers and the airline, representing the organization and acting as its public face (Chang & Chiu, 2009, p.305). For this reason, the relationships between cabin crew members and passengers are of paramount importance for airline companies, both in delivering exemplary services to passengers and in achieving passenger satisfaction. Cabin crew members are not only responsible for implementing safety procedures but also for addressing passengers' needs with a warm smile and courteous demeanor. These services include baggage assistance, help with boarding and disembarkation, and overall responsiveness to various inquiries and requests. Beyond these tasks, however, their work entails a considerable degree of emotional labor.

Approximately forty years ago, Hochschild (1983) proposed that service sector had introduced a new form of labor (which is now named as emotional labor) and highlighted the necessity for employees to manage their emotions and expressions to contribute to the organization's profitability. Since this groundbreaking study, emotional labor has garnered significant attention from researchers and practitioners (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; cited by Yang & Chen, 2021, p.479). Emotional labor, defined as the process of managing someone's emotions and expressions to meet the emotional demands of a job, has become a focal point of interest across various sectors. In particular, the airline sector stands out as an environment where emotional labor plays a crucial role, as

cabin crew members are required to maintain a genuine and composed demeanor even in challenging situations.

Recent studies on the emotional labor of cabin crew members have made significant strides in understanding and improving working conditions in the sector. In this sense, it is essential to comprehend the emotional labor of cabin crew members and the factors influencing its formation. Among these factors are concepts such as occupational (vocational) interest, happiness at work, and job competence. Occupational interest refers to an individual's enthusiasm for a specific profession or field of work, while happiness at work represents the satisfaction and contentment an employee derives from their work environment. Job competence, on the other side, reflects employee's ability to perform a specific task effectively. Despite the existing literature on occupational interest, happiness at work, and job competence, there appears to be a gap in understanding how these factors collectively influence the emotional labor experiences of cabin crew members.

Although prior studies have analyzed these variables in various contexts, little is known about how they interact with one another. In a critically important field such as air transportation, empirically establishing the antecedents of emotional labor is a necessity. The theoretical model proposed in this research introduces a different perspective by being rooted in existing knowledge and theoretical foundations while also presenting a novel approach to the relationship patterns among the variables. Specifically, no previous study in the literature appears to have examined these variables together in the context of civil aviation. Therefore, the findings and evaluations obtained in this study are expected to gain significant insights.

This study aims to statistically determine the effects of occupational interest, happiness at work, and job competence on emotional labor. Furthermore, the study aims to explore whether job competence have a mediator in the relationship between occupational interest and happiness at work, particularly in relation to emotional labor. Specifically, it seeks to examine how employees' perceptions of their abilities and effectiveness in their roles may influence the connection between their intrinsic interest in their work and their happiness in the workplace, while also considering the impact of emotional labor in shaping this dynamic. This mediation could provide valuable insights into how job competence might enhance or attenuate the effects of occupational interest on happiness at work, especially in environments that demand significant emotional regulation.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Occupational Interest

Professions significantly influence individuals' social standing, lifestyles, attitudes, thoughts, goals, values, psychological, and physiological well-being, essentially affecting all areas of life. Thus, choosing a career is one of the most major decisions in the life (İnan, 2006, p.1), as the chosen profession will shape an individual's daily routines, relationships, and overall lifestyle. Identifying individuals' interests in a particular profession is crucial for ensuring alignment with the requirements of the job and their physical and psychological well-being (Yeşilyaprak, 2016, p.53). According to Kuzgun (2009, p.42), when individuals engage in certain activities voluntarily without any external pressure or reward, and derive satisfaction from these activities, it is a clear indication that they are "interested" in such activities (Cited by Çalışkan & Harmancı, 2014, p.184-190). Yılmaz (2011, p.11) defines vocational interest as "the degree of liking and inclination an individual demonstrates toward a particular profession, professional field, or activities associated with a profession." Similarly, Çetinkaya Uslusoy and Öngör (2021, p.2) describe vocational interest as a positive attitude, tendency, or selectivity toward the service area or qualities of a specific profession. It can be considered as an acceptable state of mind that directs an individual toward a set of activities and eventually toward a profession (Bennett, 2012, p.3-4).

Occupational interest is strongly associated with sustained attention, curiosity, and a consistent willingness to engage in an area of interest, even when it is complex or confusing (Turner & Silvia, 2006; Silvia, 2008). Thus, interests act as an internal motivator that influences the direction, intensity, and perseverance of human actions, while also shaping the acquisition of knowledge and effectiveness in completing tasks (Su and Nye, 2017). Occupational interest, resulting in satisfaction derived from a professional activity, leads to a repeated orientation toward that activity, sustained engagement, and willingness to meet its requirements (Kadı & Selçuk, 2012, p.27). It is noted that individuals who demonstrate vocational interest are more likely to develop in their work environment, whereas a mismatch between the individual and the profession may lead to dissatisfaction, reluctance, instability, and inefficiency (Holland, 1996, p.397 cited by Çetin et al., 2015, p.27).

2.2. Happiness at Work

The concept of happiness generally represents a phenomenon that almost all individuals strive to achieve in various domains of life. From this perspective, happiness is not only a personal sense of inner peace but also a significant factor contributing to success in work and life. However, from an organizational standpoint, happiness at work has not traditionally been a widely used term in academic research on employee experiences (Fisher, 2010; cited by Stankevičiūtė et al., 2021, p.6). Nevertheless, as studies begin to explore the structure of happiness at work, it has recently been positioned as a higher-level construct (Fisher, 2010; Moccia, 2016; Salas-Vallina et al., 2017; Díaz Pincheira & Carrasco Garcés, 2018; Salas-Vallina & Alegre, 2018; Stankevičiūtė et al., 2021). In recent times, the notion of happiness at work has gained growing significance, particularly in management and human resource management studies within the business field. Although various constructs focus on positive attitudes, there remains a notable gap in the literature for a holistic measure of individual happiness (Salas-Vallina & Alegre, 2018, p.1). Fisher (2010, p.385) defines happiness at work as positive feeling towards the job, its characteristics, and the organization holistically. Organizationally, happiness can result from the workplace environment, practices, or policies. In other words, the conditions and resources offered by a workplace can significantly influence an employee's happiness or unhappiness. Moreover, happiness and job satisfaction are distinct psychological states, satisfaction can be considered the goal, while happiness may be the means to achieve it (Rao et al., 2017, p.28).

One fundamental reason for researching employee happiness is the thesis that “a happy employee is a productive employee” (Wright, 2006; Kiran & Khurram, 2018, p.1011). Organizationally, employee happiness leads to higher productivity, profitability, performance, commitment, and teamwork, while on the employee's side, it aids in focus at work (Gupta, 2012). Employee happiness is positively related to favorable organizational and employee outcomes and significantly associated with organizational performance, commitment, and survival (Grant et al., 2007). Since happy employees are generally more engaged with the work and profession, employee happiness or well-being is considered one of the most critical aspects of any organization (Othman et al., 2018, p.863). Therefore, happiness at work is vital not only for employees' individual well-being but also for organizational success. Specifically, in the case of cabin crew working under challenging conditions, happiness at work could be seen as a variable that enables

employees to exhibit job crafting and emotional labor with intrinsic motivation in the context of demanding conditions, situational factors, and passenger interactions.

2.3. Job Crafting

In the literature, “job crafting,” originates from the term “craft,” which denotes skill, mastery, or artistry. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), who bring this concept into the literature, defined job crafting as “an alternative job design technique,” explaining it as “a process where employees consciously and voluntarily modify and expand the physical-cognitive borders of the work and tasks to enhance their job proficiency and motivation” (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p.179; cited by Güner, 2021, p.11).

Job crafting refers to the process where employees take the initiative to redesign their work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Slemp and Vella-Brodrick (2013) describe it as “an informal approach used by employees to adjust their work activities to better align with their personal preferences and values.” Through job crafting, employees have the opportunity to modify various aspects of their tasks to better suit their desires, skills, and interests (Berg et al., 2008). Those who engage in job crafting behaviors may seek out new and varied tasks to break free from the routine of their work, ultimately improving the match between job features and their individual needs, and capabilities (Berg et al., 2008; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). This proactive approach allows employees to create a work environment that is more engaging and aligned with their interests, which can lead to increased job satisfaction and enhanced well-being. By taking initiative in modifying their tasks, employees also gain a sense of control and autonomy. Such changes can foster a greater sense of purpose and motivation, contributing to overall job performance and career growth.

Job crafting includes reshaping the physical or cognitive limits of work tasks, relational limits within the workplace, or both. Altering task limits involves modifying the type or number of actions in which the individual engages, whereas changing cognitive task boundaries entails perceiving the work as a unified whole rather than a collection of distinct tasks. By modifying any of these elements, employees can redesign their jobs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p.179-180). Through job crafting, employees can adapt their work to create a personalized role, fulfilling tasks in their unique manner and gaining a sense of control on the job they are doing (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p.187).

The requirement for personal control is one of the fundamental human drives (Adler, 1930, p.398). Therefore, having control over certain aspects of one's work can be considered a basic human requirement (Braverman, 1974; Rogers, 1995). Employees with job crafting tendencies can create new opportunities to master their roles and modify various aspects of their tasks, even in low-autonomy positions, by taking control of or reframing work-related factors (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p.182). Individuals effective at shaping their work environments are more likely to lead fulfilling lives when they feel they have greater control over their surroundings (Petrou et al., 2012, p.1135). From this perspective, the concept of job crafting may be regarded as a tool that enables individuals with high professional interest and satisfaction in their roles, who derive happiness from their work environments, to navigate challenging, demanding work settings. In this respect, professional interest and happiness at work are critical factors.

2.4. Emotional Labor

Emotional labor, introduced by Hochschild (1983, p.328), is defined as “the management of emotions to create an observable facial and bodily display within a work environment.” Hochschild (1983) highlighted how flight attendants manage “fake” smiles and exhibit specific emotions and behaviors as part of their emotional labor. According to Hochschild, service representatives engage in emotional labor when expressing socially desired emotions as part of their job roles. In this context, emotional labor refers to the behaviors required in environments where employees are expected to demonstrate empathy, sympathy, or other emotions (Humphrey et al., 2008, p.152).

Emotional labor refers to the process of expressing emotions that are deemed appropriate in a given situation, even if these emotions do not match one's true feelings. It involves following display rules, which may require suppressing genuine emotions or expressing emotions that are not genuinely felt (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993, p.90). Morris and Feldman (1996) describe emotional labor as the effort, planning, and control required to show the emotions desired by an organization during interpersonal exchanges. Similarly, emotional labor has been characterized as the regulation of emotions and behaviors within a service environment to meet organizational expectations, rules, and objectives (Kaya & Serçeoğlu, 2013, p.315). This requires adherence to display rules, which can involve either faking emotions that are not genuinely experienced or suppressing emotions that are deemed inappropriate (Kart, 2011, p.221). Emotional labor includes managing emotional expressions through facial gestures and body language

(Hochschild, 1983, p.7). Since employees might not always feel the emotions they are expected to show (for instance, feeling irritated while needing to appear friendly), they use emotional labor strategies to regulate the emotions and expressions in accordance with these display standards (Hochschild, 1983; Grandey, 2003; cited by Gabriel et al., 2015, p.864).

Emotional labor can be carried out in two distinct ways: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting includes employees putting on a facade by pretending to feel the expected emotion, even though it does not reflect their true emotional state. This method requires employees to outwardly express the emotion through behaviors like facial expressions, tone of talking, and body language, without actually experiencing those feelings. For instance, an employee may force a smile or speak in a friendly tone, even when they are feeling frustrated or upset. On the other hand, deep acting involves a more internal approach. In this strategy, employees make an effort to align their genuine feelings with the emotion they are expected to display (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Emotional labor takes a key role in numerous service-based professions where employees interact directly with customers (Gabriel et al., 2015, p.863). Research on professions that require emotional labor has identified three prominent characteristics of these occupational groups. The first is that employees engaged in emotional labor communicate with customers face-to-face and/or verbally. The second is that workers in these professions are required to influence the emotions of the other party. The third common characteristic is that employers have control over employees' emotional activities (Wharton, 1993; Polatçı & Özyer, 2015, p.134). It is particularly prevalent among employees in high-contact service sectors, such as flight attendants, waitstaff, call center agents, and sales and marketing professionals (Karaman, 2017, p.36). Given that Hochschild's (1983) theory is based on flight attendants, airlines can be regarded as a prime example of such professions.

On the other side, the antecedents of emotional labor include factors such as workplace roles and expectations, working conditions, and workplace culture. Employees' goals related to their workplace roles can influence their emotional labor (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Similarly, workplace recognition and rewards positively impact emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983). Additionally, factors like employees' degree of workplace engagement (Grandey, 2003), perceived organizational justice, and organizational support influence emotional labor (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Person-

job fit, employees' interest and willingness toward their work, satisfaction, or happiness significantly determine whether they find their jobs stressful or fulfilling, which, in turn, impacts their emotional labor (Kristof-Brown and Guay, 2011). Flight attendants are required to perform this type of labor under challenging working conditions in demanding environments at high altitudes. Such a work setting necessitates that flight attendants demonstrate job crafting skills to navigate these conditions effectively.

3. Method

3.1. Theoretical Rationale, Model, and Hypotheses of the Study

An individual's commitment and involvement in their occupation and duties serve as a significant indicator of their overall health and well-being (Mäkikangas, 2018), and are linked to various organizational outcomes (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018). Employees who exhibit higher levels of engagement are more likely to stay within their organization, thus reducing the costs associated with recruitment and retention, particularly in competitive labor markets (Amabile and Kramer, 2011; Crawford et al., 2010). Furthermore, this concept is closely related to the idea of job crafting, as job crafting inherently involves self-directed alterations within the scope of one's job responsibilities, aimed at improving the alignment between the individual and their work (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001; Tims et al., 2012).

Occupational interest is recognized as a personal trait that employees can use to guide their efforts in job crafting (Wrzesniewski et al., 2002; Berg et al., 2013; Kooij, 2017). In this light, individuals can enhance their job engagement by aligning their profession and tasks with their preferences, interests, motivations, and passions (Bakker et al., 2016; Kuijpers et al., 2020). Therefore, the connection between occupational interest and job crafting becomes a key area of interest.

A well-established framework for understanding job crafting is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, developed by Demerouti et al. (2001) and further refined by Bakker and Demerouti (2014). This model offers a comprehensive way to categorize and assess the various characteristics of a job, dividing them into two essential components: job demands and job resources. Job demands encompass the aspects of a job that require significant physical or mental effort from employees. These demands can be either short-term or ongoing, and they are generally associated with negative outcomes like stress, fatigue, and burnout if not managed effectively (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Examples

of job demands include high workloads, time pressure, emotional demands, and cognitive tasks that require sustained concentration. If these demands are not balanced with resources, employees may experience strain and diminished well-being, which can negatively impact their performance and engagement. On the other hand, job resources refer to the aspects of the work environment that help employees meet their goals, grow professionally, and handle job demands more effectively. By balancing these two elements, organizations can optimize employee well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Building on the JD-R model, Tims and Bakker (2010) introduced the concept of job crafting as the changes that employees make at the level of job demands and/or job resources (Plomp et al., 2016). Within this framework, individuals are driven to maintain their existing resources while actively seeking new ones. Job crafting, according to this approach, revolves around the idea of resource investment, where employees purposefully engage in actions that safeguard their resources, and acquire additional resources. Essentially, this means that employees utilize their existing resources to prevent depletion, enhance their capacity to cope with job demands, and further enrich their personal and professional well-being by acquiring new resources. This process helps individuals to more effectively match their work with their skills and requirements, leading to increased job satisfaction, enhanced motivation, and improved overall performance. Following this conceptualization, it is anticipated that different forms of employee well-being, such as occupational interest and happiness at work, will predict job crafting behaviors (Hakanen et al., 2018). Nonetheless, there is a notable gap in the literature concerning studies that explore the relationship between these two variables. Hence, this study seeks to investigate this relationship, leading to the formulation of the these hypotheses:

H₁. There is a significant relationship between occupational interest and job crafting.

H₂. There is a significant relationship between happiness at work and job crafting.

The way employees feel at work can influence their behavior and, over time, affect various outcomes. Understanding the potential consequences of different forms of employee well-being is considered crucial for both theoretical and practical purposes (Hakanen et al., 2018). Employees' goals related to their tasks can affect their emotional labor (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995). Similarly, the appreciation and rewards employees receive at work can positively influence their emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983).

Additionally, factors such as employees' level of participation at work (Grandey, 2003), perception of organizational justice, and sense of organizational support also influence employees' emotional labor (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995). These factors influence employees' emotional labor. While researchers acknowledge that employees sometimes face stressful encounters, emotional labor performance has also been found to be intrinsically linked to the most rewarding and enjoyable aspects of the job. For these employees, emotional labor is seen as an enjoyable, exciting, and rewarding part of their work. Consequently, many individuals seek jobs with high emotional labor demands, with some being willing to undergo long and expensive training programs to secure these positions.

Although Hochschild (1983) based the theory on flight attendants, most of the people view the role of flight attendants as a dream job. Even today, as in the late 1970's and early 1980's when Hochschild conducted her research, flight attendants are associated with a glamorous image. As in the past, airlines today enjoy a reputation as desirable workplaces. For all types of work, person-job fit, an one's interest in and willingness toward the job or profession, satisfaction, and happiness are major determinants of whether they perceive their work as stressful or satisfying and profitable for personal well being (Kristof-Brown and Guay, 2011). In roles that involve emotional labor, both positive and negative emotions can play a crucial role and serve as important factors influencing emotional labor (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Humphrey et al., 2015). For instance,' Grandey's (2000) study revealed that employees' emotional attachment to their work increased their levels of emotional labor. This study suggests that occupational interest enhances individuals' tendencies to display emotional labor. Similarly, Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) found that employees with higher occupational interest in their work were more willing to display emotional labor and therefore exerted higher levels of emotional labor.

These findings form the basis for considering a meaningful relationship between occupational interest and emotional labor. From this perspective, the following hypotheses have been developed regarding the relationships between occupational interest, happiness at work, and emotional labor:

H3. There is a significant relationship between occupational interest and emotional labor.

H4. There is a significant relationship between happiness at work and emotional labor.

Current definitions of job crafting, which mainly view it as a process where employees modify job demands and job resources to improve psychological well being (e.g., Tims et al., 2012), can also be understood as a strategy through which employees adjust their jobs to better align with their personal resources, thus enhancing job fit (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013; Kooij, 2017). For example, Van Katwyk et al. (2000) demonstrated that employees with high job crafting abilities better manage stressful situations requiring emotional labor and display more positive emotional responses. Brotheridge and Lee (2003) also found that employees with high job crafting skills effectively managed emotional labor and had better emotional experiences at work. Similarly, empirical evidence by Hülshager et al. (2013) revealed that employees with high levels of job crafting effectively manage emotional labor. However, there remains a limited body of research on this relationship. To address this gap, these hypothesis is put forward:

H₅. There is a significant relationship between job crafting and emotional labor.

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) identified three key motivational factors that drive employees to engage in job crafting. First, employees may alter their jobs to sustain their interest and motivation in their tasks. Second, since work is a major component of many individuals' self-concept, employees are driven to reshape their work to safeguard and improve their self-image and overall satisfaction. Lastly, modifying certain aspects of work can enhance social interactions within the workplace (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

The level of satisfaction employees derive from their profession and job may be related to job crafting because changes in an employee's satisfaction level could prompt them to engage in job crafting to elevate their satisfaction to at least a threshold level. Another scenario involves using job crafting to ensure that happiness levels remain high or above the threshold while maintaining the tasks, attitudes, and behaviors required by the job (Bowling, 2012). The second scenario represents a particularly valuable application of job crafting (Kirkendall, 2013).

Employees prioritize or undertake extra responsibilities that fulfill their needs for enhancing their work while performing prescribed duties, thus becoming motivated (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Intrinsically motivated individuals are thought to exert more effort and energy into their work, including tasks with likely positive performance outcomes (Tims et al., 2012; Bakker et al., 2016). Employees who develop their motivation, skills, and competencies (increased structural job resources) and voluntarily

undertake extra tasks (e.g., emotional labor) are likely to demonstrate higher task performance than others (Weseler & Niessen, 2016). Different forms of employee well-being are recognized for their ability to predict both job crafting behaviors and other organizational behaviors (Hakanen et al., 2018). However, there is no study in the literature linking occupational interest, happiness at work, and emotional labor, while examining the mediating role of job crafting. Based on the assumption that factors such as occupational interest and happiness influence employees' demonstration of extra roles or efforts such as emotional labor through job crafting, these hypotheses are put forward to investigate the mediating role of job crafting variable:

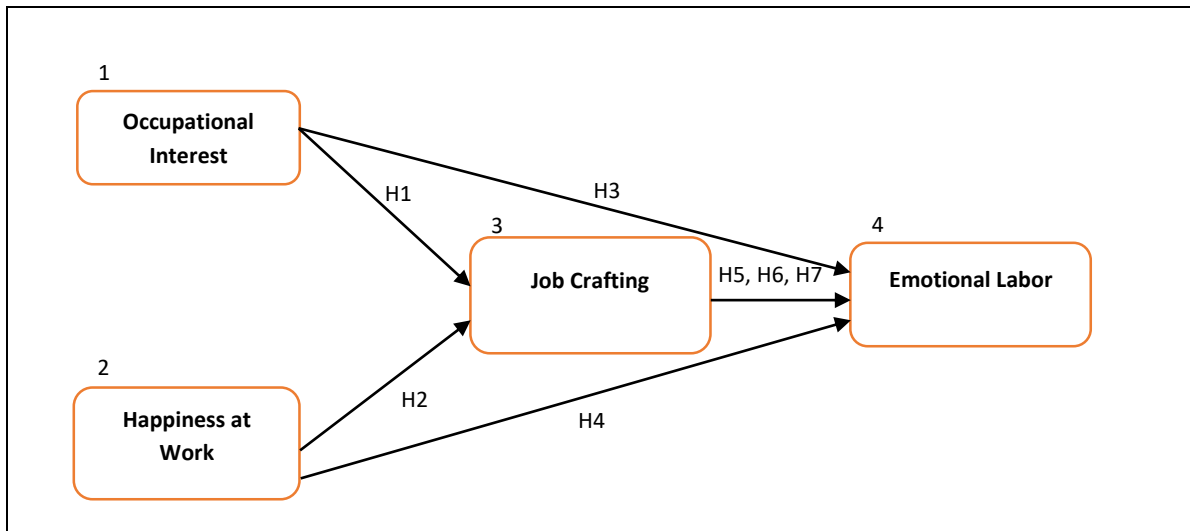
H₆. Job crafting mediates the relationship between occupational interest and emotional labor.

H₇. Job crafting mediates the relationship between happiness at work and emotional labor.

This study adopts a correlational research approach, which aims to identify the presence of mediation role between two or more variables (Karasar, 2011), and represents the relationships and hypotheses among the variables examined in the research model.

Figure 1.

Research Model, Variables and Hypotheses



As seen in Figure 1, occupational interest and happiness at work are the independent variables of the study, while emotional labor is the dependent variable. Job crafting serves as a dependent variable for occupational interest and happiness at work, while acting as an independent variable in relation to emotional labor.

3.2. Universe and Sample

The population of the study consists of all actively employed cabin crew members in the civil aviation sector. However, since it is not feasible to reach all cabin crew members, and the exact number of individuals constituting the population is unknown, a sampling method was employed. Among the sampling methods, the non-probability convenience sampling method was selected due to its suitability for the study's purpose and accessibility to the target audience. Accordingly, it was planned to collect data from a minimum of 384 participants, a sample size deemed sufficient to represent large and unknown populations in the social sciences with 0.95 reliability and a 5% margin of error (Sekaran, 2003). The survey forms were collected from voluntary participants upon obtaining informed consent. Following the acquisition of necessary scale permissions and ethics committee approval, an online survey was conducted between November 1, 2022, and March 15, 2023. A total of 395 completed survey forms were accessed, forming the dataset for the study.

3.3. Data Collection

The data collection method of the study is questionnaire, which falls within the scope of quantitative research. The questionnaire includes sections on participants' demographic and professional characteristics, along with four scales designed to measure the research variables. All scales were treated as unidimensional. The Occupational Interest Scale, developed by Kaysi (2021), has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .95. The original scale comprises 19 items. However, some items were excluded from this study as they were deemed likely to cause multicollinearity issues due to their similarity with the items in the Job Crafting and Happiness at Work scales. Additionally, certain items considered inappropriate for the cabin crew sample (e.g., "I use software related to my profession") were excluded. Consequently, the scale used in this study consisted of 14 items. The Happiness at Work Scale, developed by Polatçı and Ünüvar (2021), has a reliability coefficient of .92 and consists of 8 items. The Job Crafting Scale was originally developed by Slemp and Vella-Brodrick (2013) and adapted into Turkish by Kerse (2017), who conducted its validity and reliability analysis. The scale has a reliability coefficient of .91, indicating a high level of reliability. In the study, no distinction was made between dimensions, and 12 items under the Task Crafting and Cognitive Crafting dimensions were used. The Emotional Labor Scale, developed by Pala and Sürgevil (2016), includes three dimensions: Surface Acting, Deep Acting, and Suppression of Emotions. Two items under

the Deep Acting dimension were excluded due to their low reliability compared to other dimensions and the absence of dimensional focus in this study. In total, the study encompassed 44 items across all scales. Details of the scales are given in Table 1.

Table 1.

Scales of the Study

Scale	Item	α	Source
Occupational Interest	14	0.95	Kaysi (2021)
Happiness at Work	8	0.92	Polatçı & Ünüvar (2021)
Job Crafting	12	0.91	Slemp & Vella-Brodrick (2013); Kerse (2017)
Emotional Labor	10	0.77-0.68	Pala & Sürgevil (2016)
Total	44		

The study was deemed ethically appropriate by the Ethics Committee of Istanbul Aydın University with the decision dated June 23, 2022, and numbered 2022/11.

3.4. Analysis of Data

The data were processed using SPSS and AMOS softwares. To assess the reliability and normality of the scales, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were examined for each scale. Skewness-Kurtosis coefficients were examined to evaluate the normal distribution to decide whether to apply parametric or non-parametric analysis methods before conducting further analyses. Correlation analyses were carried out to assess the direction and strength of the relationships between the variables examined in the study. Following this, path analyses were conducted using structural equation modeling within the AMOS software, which allowed for an investigation into the relationships and explanatory power among the variables, thus testing the research hypotheses.

4. Findings

Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the research scales used to measure the variables of occupational interest, happiness at work, job crafting, and emotional labor were calculated. To determine the assumption of normal distribution, skewness and kurtosis values were examined. The results obtained are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Reliability, Normal Distribution and Descriptive Values of Scales

Scale	Item	Mean	S.D.	α	Skewness	Kurtosis
Occupational Interest	14	4.125	0.608	0.950	-0.252	0.232
Happiness at Work	8	3.585	0.798	0.907	-0.441	-0.077
Job Crafting	12	4.073	0.688	0.973	-0.628	0.857
Emotional Labor	10	3.956	0.745	0.940	-0.793	1.059

According to Table 2, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for occupational interest, happiness at work, job crafting, and emotional labor are 0.950, 0.907, 0.973, and 0.940,

In this context, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values were also calculated to test the suitability of the scale structures for factor analysis. The KMO coefficients were found to be 0.90 or higher, while the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at $p = 0.000$, with a chi-square value of 15642.899. These results suggest that the data are sufficient for measurement within the sample (Sarmento & Costa, 2017).

Figure 2.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Research Model



As shown in Figure 2, the CFA results for the integrated theoretical model suggests that all the coefficients exhibit statistical significance, meaning that each relationship within the model is robust and reliably contributes to explaining the observed outcomes. Observed variables are appropriately loaded onto their latent variables based on the factor loadings. This indicates a strong and meaningful connection between the variables, supporting the validity of the proposed framework. Detailed CFA results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
CFA Results and Goodness of Fit of the Research Model

Latent Variable	Observed Variable	β	Std. Error	t	p
Occupational Interest	OCCINT14	0.736	-	-	-
	OCCINT13	0.714	0.067	14.37	***
	OCCINT12	0.792	0.052	16.07	***
	OCCINT11	0.794	0.054	16.12	***
	OCCINT10	0.775	0.056	15.69	***
	OCCINT9	0.768	0.062	15.54	***
	OCCINT8	0.821	0.064	16.72	***
	OCCINT7	0.732	0.068	14.75	***
	OCCINT6	0.766	0.057	15.50	***
	OCCINT5	0.819	0.062	16.68	***
	OCCINT4	0.739	0.065	14.90	***
	OCCINT3	0.683	0.066	13.69	***
Happiness at work	OCCINT2	0.777	0.064	15.74	***
	OCCINT1	0.740	0.061	14.93	***
	WORKHAP8	0.804	-	-	-
	WORKHAP7	0.875	0.054	19.61	***
	WORKHAP6	0.782	0.056	16.96	***
	WORKHAP5	0.736	0.055	15.66	***
	WORKHAP4	0.653	0.064	13.56	***
	WORKHAP3	0.669	0.057	13.98	***
Job Crafting	WORKHAP2	0.685	0.065	14.36	***
	WORKHAP1	0.647	0.065	13.39	***
	JOBCRA12	0.837	-	-	-
	JOBCRA11	0.891	0.048	23.59	***
	JOBCRA10	0.779	0.055	18.88	***
	JOBCRA9	0.907	0.045	24.39	***
	JOBCRA8	0.814	0.050	20.23	***
	JOBCRA7	0.906	0.042	24.35	***
	JOBCRA6	0.921	0.043	25.11	***
	JOBCRA5	0.927	0.044	25.41	***
Emotional Labor	JOBCRA4	0.912	0.044	24.65	***
	JOBCRA3	0.878	0.046	22.98	***
	JOBCRA2	0.797	0.057	19.57	***
	JOBCRA1	0.791	0.054	19.32	***
	EMOLAB1	0.819	-	-	-
	EMOLAB2	0.753	0.061	17.10	***
	EMOLAB3	0.829	0.053	19.67	***
	EMOLAB4	0.831	0.054	19.73	***
	EMOLAB5	0.744	0.062	16.84	***
	EMOLAB6	0.788	0.062	18.25	***
	EMOLAB7	0.767	0.063	17.56	***
	EMOLAB8	0.749	0.061	17.00	***
	EMOLAB9	0.778	0.054	17.92	***
	EMOLAB10	0.776	0.054	17.86	***

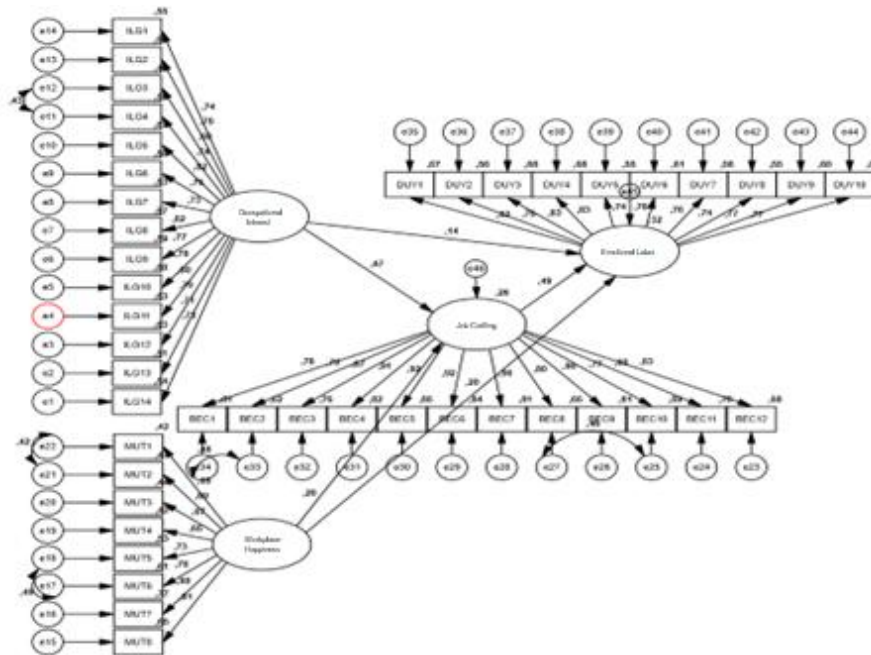
Goodness of Fit	Cut-off Points	Achieved Value	Results
CMIN/ DF	$0 \leq \chi^2 / \leq 5 \text{ DF}$	2.364	Good fit.
GFI	$0.80 \leq \text{GFI} \leq 1$	0.805	Good fit.
AGFI	$0.80 \leq \text{AGFI} \leq 1$	0.783	Acceptable.
NFI	$0.90 \leq \text{IFI} \leq 1$	0.871	Acceptable.
RFI	$0.90 \leq \text{RFI} \leq 1$	0.863	Acceptable.
IFI	$0.90 \leq \text{IFI} \leq 1$	0.921	Good fit.
TLI	$0.90 \leq \text{TLI} \leq 1$	0.916	Good fit.
CFI	$0.90 \leq \text{CFI} \leq 1$	0.921	Good fit.
RMSEA	$0 < \text{RMSEA} \leq .08$	0.059	Good fit.

* **Reference sources for goodness of fit cut-off points:** Bentler, 1980; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schermelleh-Engel & Moosbrugger, 2003; Marsh et al., 2006; Byrne, 2012; İlhan & Çetin, 2014; Kline, 2015

The findings reveal that all observed variables are significantly ($p < 0.001$) associated with their latent variables. The z-values obtained are both high and significant. The highest beta coefficients are 0.736 for occupational interest, 0.804 for happiness at work, 0.837 for job crafting, and 0.819 for emotional labor. Regarding goodness-of-fit indices, the obtained coefficients meet the recommended thresholds. However, the AGFI, NFI, and RFI values are slightly below the cutoffs but remain close enough to be considered within acceptable tolerance ranges (Schreiber et al., 2006; Hair et al., 2014; İlhan & Çetin, 2014; Kline, 2015). Overall, these results suggest that the model and data exhibit a satisfactory level of goodness of fit. Based on the final CFA results, the structural model of the research is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3.

Structural Model of the Research



The values and goodness-of-fit indices for the structural model, which tests the research hypotheses, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
Coefficients of the Structural Model

Pattern	Std. Regression Coefficient	Std. Error	t	p
Occupational Interest– Job Crafting	.470	.052	8.907	**
Happiness at Work – Job Crafting	.202	.036	4.229	**
Job Crafting– Emotional Labor	.491	.064	8.569	**
Occupational Interest– Emotional Labor	.138	.057	2.649	.008*
Happiness at Work– Emotional Labor	.204	.034	4.603	.026*
Goodness of Fit	Cut-off Points	Achieved Value	Results	
CMIN/DF*	$0 \leq \chi^2 / \leq 5 \text{ DF}$	2.455	Good fit.	
GFI*	$0.80 \leq \text{GFI} \leq 1$	0.800	Good fit.	
AGFI*	$0.80 \leq \text{AGFI} \leq 1$	0.776	Acceptable.	
NFI*	$0.90 \leq \text{IFI} \leq 1$	0.866	Acceptable.	
RFI*	$0.90 \leq \text{RFI} \leq 1$	0.857	Acceptable.	
IFI*	$0.90 \leq \text{IFI} \leq 1$	0.916	Good fit.	
TLI*	$0.90 \leq \text{TLI} \leq 1$	0.910	Good fit.	
CFI*	$0.90 \leq \text{CFI} \leq 1$	0.915	Good fit.	
RMSEA*	$0 < \text{RMSEA} \leq .08$	0.061	Good fit.	

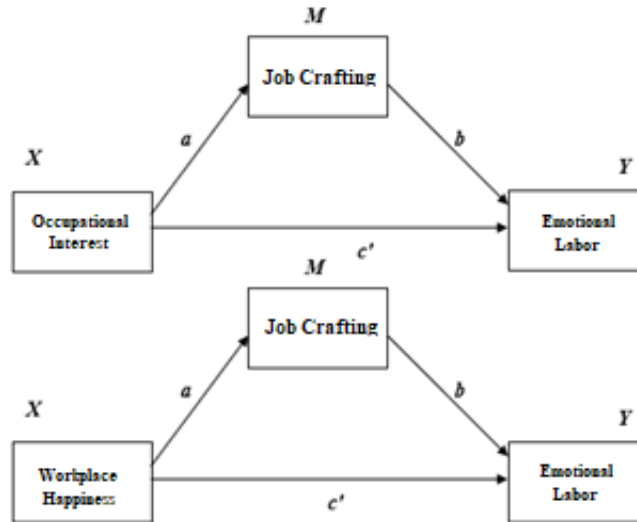
The findings indicate that the relationships within the structural model are statistically significant, and the model demonstrates an acceptable level of fit. Occupational interest has a positive and strong effect on job crafting ($\beta=0.470$, $p<0.01$). Similarly, happiness at work has a positive and significant effect on job crafting ($\beta=0.202$, $p<0.01$). Job crafting significantly affects emotional labor ($\beta=0.491$, $p<0.01$). Moreover, occupational interest has a significant but weaker effect on emotional labor ($\beta=0.138$, $p=0.008$). Finally, happiness at work also has a significant effect on emotional labor ($\beta=0.204$, $p=0.026$). Collectively, these results demonstrate that occupational interest and happiness at work influence job crafting and emotional labor and that these variables are interrelated. As a result of the analyses, the hypotheses **H₁**, **H₂**, **H₃**, **H₄**, and **H₅** were found to be supported, indicating that the proposed relationships between the variables were statistically significant. This suggests that the evidence collected from the data aligns with the theoretical assumptions outlined in these hypotheses, thereby validating the expected patterns and associations. The support for these hypotheses strengthens the overall framework of the study, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how the variables interact and influence each other within the context of the research.

On the other side, the research hypotheses **H₆** and **H₇** pertain to the mediating role of job crafting in the relationships between the variables of occupational interest, happiness at work, and emotional labor. Based on the proposed structure, mediation models were established to first examine the mediating role of job crafting in the relationship between occupational interest and emotional labor, followed by the mediating effect of job crafting

in the relationship between happiness at work and emotional labor. A representative model based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal steps approach is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4.

Model Established Regarding the Mediator Role



In line with the causal steps approach, the mediation effect was verified using bootstrapping techniques. The bootstrapping test was conducted in the AMOS program with 5.000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval. The results of the direct and indirect effects are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Testing the Mediating Effect Using the Bootstrapping Method

	Job Crafting			Emotional Labor		
	β	R ²	Std. Error	β	R ²	Std. Error
Occupational Interest (path c)				.451	.343	.061
Occupational Interest (path a)	.548	.290	.055			
Job Crafting (path b)				.548		.057
Occupational Interest (path c')				.151		.060
Indirect Effect			.300 (.048 - .371)	p=.000		
Happiness at Work (path c)				.029	.330	.043
Happiness at Work (path a)	.398	.159	.041			
Happiness at Work (path b)				.614		.060
Happiness at Work (path c')				.218		.041
Indirect Effect			.218 (.040 - .303)	p=.000		

For the mediation role of job crafting in the relationship between occupational interest and emotional labor, the indirect effect was calculated as $\beta=0.300$, $p=0.000$. For the mediation effect of job crafting in the relationship between Happiness at work and emotional labor, the indirect effect was calculated as $\beta=0.218$, $p=0.000$. Both indirect effects were found to be significant. Thus, these results indicate that the job crafting

variable has a mediating effect in both models. Accordingly, the research hypotheses H6 and H7, which address the mediation effect, are supported.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the complex interaction between emotional labor experienced by cabin crew in the airline industry and key variables such as occupational interest, happiness at work, and job crafting within a statistical context.

The findings from testing the research hypotheses revealed a substantial and positive correlation between occupational interest and job crafting, highlighting the influence of an individual's passion for their work on their ability to reshape and adjust their job roles. Additionally, the results demonstrated a significant and positive association between occupational interest and emotional labor, suggesting that employees with a strong connection to their work are more likely to engage in emotional regulation to meet job requirements. These relationships underscore the importance of aligning personal interests with work-related tasks, as it not only affects job crafting behaviors but also influences the emotional dynamics at play in professional settings. This findings suggests that as occupational interest increases, both job crafting and emotional labor also increase, moving in a linear direction and enable the inference that individuals genuinely interested in their profession may be more willing to engage in emotional labor to fulfill job requirements. The results indicate that individuals with higher levels of occupational interest are likely to experience greater alignment between job crafting and emotional labor, contributing to their overall job satisfaction and well-being.

A significant and positive relationship was also identified between happiness at work and job crafting. This suggests that an increase in happiness at work is associated with a rise in job crafting. Thus, happier employees may achieve more favorable organizational outcomes, such as higher levels of job crafting. Similarly, a positive and significant relationship exists between happiness at work and emotional labor, suggesting that as happiness at work increases, emotional labor tends to rise. These results underscore the importance of employee happiness in influencing job crafting and emotional labor levels. Providing a positive and supportive work environment, fostering work-life balance, rewarding employees, and offering skill development opportunities could enhance happiness at work and, consequently, contribute to increased job crafting and emotional

labor. Organizations prioritizing employee happiness and well-being are likely to benefit from higher levels of job crafting and emotional labor.

A positive and significant relationship was identified between job crafting and emotional labor, suggesting that the application of job crafting can enhance emotional labor in the workplace. This finding supports the results of a limited number of studies in the literature (Kim & Lee, 2017; Yang et al., 2022) that examined the relationship between job crafting and emotional labor and identified linear relationships. This positive relationship implies that employees who engage in greater levels of job crafting may experience higher levels of emotional labor. Considering that job crafting involves the ability to adapt tasks effectively, solve problems, and innovate within the work context, its positive relationship with emotional labor indicates that employees with a higher capacity for job crafting may also display higher emotional labor proficiency.

Analyses regarding the mediating role of job crafting in the relationships between occupational interest, happiness at work, and emotional labor revealed that job crafting serves as a significant mediator in both models. This indicates that the effects of occupational interest and happiness at work on emotional labor can occur through job crafting. Given that occupational interest refers to the tendency to gravitate toward a profession or activity due to the satisfaction or fulfillment derived from it and the contentment experienced while fulfilling professional requirements (Çalışkan & Harmanlı, 2014), it can be anticipated that cabin crew members with high occupational interest levels are more likely to exhibit job crafting and engage in emotional labor.

When these results are evaluated in light of the relevant literature, it is possible to argue that happiness at work, defined as a state in which employees feel generally satisfied with their workplace, experience positive emotions and thoughts more frequently, and perceive their work life as adding value to them (Hyun et al., 2013), can act as a variable that facilitates job crafting and emotional labor in the demanding conditions, situational factors, and passenger interactions characteristic of the cabin crew profession. Job crafting essentially involves self-initiated changes that individuals make to improve the alignment between themselves and their jobs (Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Van Katwyk et al. (2000) found that employees with high levels of job crafting are better equipped to handle stressful situations requiring emotional labor and exhibit more positive emotional responses. Similarly, Brotheridge and Lee (2003) demonstrated that employees with high job crafting levels manage emotional labor more effectively and have better

emotional experiences at work. Hülshager et al. (2013) provided empirical evidence showing that employees with high job crafting levels can manage emotional labor more efficiently. To meet organizational demands and requirements, employees are often expected to display emotions dictated by their employers based on emotional labor (Jeon, 2015). Cabin crew members, in particular, are required to do so under challenging conditions during high-altitude flights. Such a working environment necessitates job crafting on the part of cabin crew members, linking these variables from this perspective.

No specific findings directly addressing the relationships between occupational interest, happiness at work, job crafting, and emotional labor were encountered in the literature. However, studies investigating the relationships between occupational interest and variables such as emotional labor and job satisfaction have identified positive correlations (Psilopanagioti et al., 2012; Hur et al., 2015; Çelik & Topsakal, 2016; Wen et al., 2019; Lee & Jang, 2020; Kocakula, 2021). Similarly, studies exploring the relationship between job crafting and these variables have identified positive correlations (De Beer et al., 2016; Kerse, 2019; Ceylan & Nazari, 2020; Rachmawati et al., 2022; Yıldırım, 2023).

Based on the findings it is essential for airline management to implement programs and initiatives fostering and sustaining occupational interest. Additionally, practices addressing the well-being, work-life balance, and satisfaction of cabin crew members, along with providing appropriate resources and support, should be adopted. This is because employees who are engaged with their profession and derive happiness from their work are more likely to manage job crafting and emotional labor effectively, leading to positive organizational outcomes.

From an industry perspective, it is crucial for businesses in this field to consider the scope of emotional labor expected of cabin crew and its long-term impacts on their health. It is vital for businesses to offer incentives and opportunities to enhance employees' occupational interest and motivation. For instance, sustainable career development programs and training opportunities could be provided. Although the airline industry already offers extensive programs and opportunities in this regard, reviewing them for potential improvements could be beneficial. On the other hand, a positive workplace atmosphere can help employees manage emotional labor more effectively and improve their job crafting.

This study has provided significant insights through its proposed model and findings. However, like all research, it has certain limitations. First, the study's context is

limited to the civil aviation sector and cabin crew working within this industry. Furthermore, the study was conducted using a sampling method and a total of 395 participants' surveys were evaluated. Consequently, the findings and evaluations made are generalizable within this sample framework. Future research involving more comprehensive and diverse sampling structures and sizes could contribute significantly to the discussion of findings and the literature by providing results that could be generalized to a broader population.

Future research efforts could investigate similar variables in various sectors and cultural contexts. The findings could contribute to a broader understanding of how these findings can be translated into universally applicable principles, shedding light on potentially universal insights. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how such perceptions and experiences develop over time in terms of demographic and occupational characteristics.

Additionally, conducting in-depth research on the work durations, rhythms, and experiences of cabin crew members across different airlines could enable the discussion of similar and divergent findings. Examining the experiences of cabin crew members working for various airlines comparatively could provide opportunities to explore different findings. In this respect, employing qualitative research approaches, such as conducting focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, could be highly beneficial for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. These methods would allow for the exploration of nuanced perspectives and provide richer, more detailed insights into the complexities of the relationships between occupational interest, job crafting, and emotional labor. By capturing individuals' experiences and interpretations, qualitative research could uncover underlying factors and motivations that are not easily revealed through quantitative analysis alone. This could enhance the overall depth of knowledge on the subject, offering a broader view of how these variables interact in real-world settings.

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Conflict of Interest: On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval: An ethics committee certificate for the conducted surveys was obtained from the Istanbul Aydın University Rectorate Ethics Committee with the decision dated 23/06/2022 and numbered 2022/11.

Informed Consent Form: Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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