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Paternalistic leadership and cabin crews' upward safety communication: The motivation of voice behavior



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ABSTRACT

Being the frontline operators in the airline industry, flight attendants constantly obtain and collect first-hand information from their interactions with passengers and other crew members. Their experiences and observations may contribute greatly to airlines' safety management and policy making. It is thus critical to learn how to enhance cabin crews' voice behavior, particularly communicating safety related issues upward through specific leadership styles. The current research aims at the flight attendants working for Taiwanese international airlines. The cabin crew department managers' paternalistic leadership style is adopted to observe how it may trigger cabin crews' different types of voice behavior. This research addresses the following two major questions: 1. What is the motivation for cabin crew to conduct upward safety communication? 2. How does department managers' paternalistic leadership style impact cabin crew's voice behavior? Regression analysis is used to analyze the empirical data collected by the questionnaire survey. The results are applied to provide airlines with practical references for constituting human resource management policies, and the findings also enhance existing literature regarding management applications and employees voice behaviors.

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1. Introduction

Cabin crew members play an essential role in the development of the airline industry. Their top priority duty is to guard cabin security and ensure the execution of safety regulations. However, limited research has examined cabin crews' proactive safety related organizational behavior, such as upward safety communication between flight attendants and cabin crew department managers. Previous research regarding cabin crew's communication related topics mostly focused on in-flight communication among aircrew members (e.g. Brown and Rantz, 2010; Chute and Wiener, 1996; Murphy, 2001). Despite the importance of crew resource management between cockpit and cabin crews, flight attendants' willingness to conduct upward safety communication to the department managers may provide valuable and irreplaceable observations from the front-line working experience, benefiting greatly on organizations' overall performance. Hofmann and Morgeson (1999) propose that upward safety communication is negatively related to adverse safety events. As being the liaison among cockpit, cabin and ground while at work, communication has long been

recognized essential to flight attendants' performance. Smith et al. (1978) argue that open communication and frequent interactions between employees and managers are important factors that can lower accident rates. Meanwhile, researchers reveal that communication significantly helps employees' physical safety level of the work site and safety performances (Kines et al., 2010). It is thus expected that the more cabin crew members are willing to conduct such communication as a proactive safety behavior, the better the interactions and the understanding between flight attendants and cabin crew department managers, which may lead to better safety performance.

Voice behavior is regarded an extra-role organizational citizenship behavior, which can be defined as "non-required behavior that emphasizes expression of constructive challenges with an intent to improve rather than merely criticize" (Van Dyne and LePine, 1998, p. 109). Nowhere is the need for voice more crucial than in sets of interdependent individuals who share responsibility for work outcomes (Sundstrom et al., 1990), such as cabin crew members. In the present paper, voice behavior is viewed as safety citizenship behavior, which presents in communicating upward, particularly on safety related topics, from cabin crew to the department managers. Being the frontline operators, flight attendants constantly obtain first-hand information from their

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interactions with passengers and other crew members (Chen and Chen, 2014). The special characteristics of cabin duties, such as being a liaison among diverse groups of people, offer flight attendants exclusive opportunities to experience the practice of airlines safety policies and collect the feedback directly from various channels. Performing voice behavior demonstrates that flight attendants take proactive steps to participate in airlines safety practice. It is thus worth working to identify possible factors which affect such behaviors, and further trying to enhance the positive effects and avoid the negative ones.

Previous research indicated that leadership affects subordinates' safety attitude and team's safety culture, eventually determining safety performance of the team (Flin and Yule, 2004). Since there is a significant relationship between managers' leadership style and employees' organizational behavior (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007), including safety citizenship behavior (Conchie and Donald, 2009), how department managers' paternalistic leadership affects flight attendants' voice behavior is the major issue discussed in the current study. Such attempt may bridge the gap of the literature since less work has been conducted considering the related topics.

The target population of the current study is flight attendants working for Taiwanese international airlines. While paternalistic leadership has been prevalently observed in the Greater China region, where a relationship-oriented culture is predominant, it is believed that the three sub-constructs of paternalistic leadership performed by the department managers may influence cabin crews' voice behavior in different ways. Up to the present, employee voice has been studied mostly in relation to western leadership styles, the investigation of paternalistic leadership is expected to advance the understanding of the antecedents of employee voice in the Chinese context, as it takes into account the impact of leadership on employee voice from a cultural perspective (Chan, 2014).

Furthermore, leadership technique that encourages flight attendants to communicate upward is not the only thing that matters. As different motivations may lead to divergent work outcomes, recognizing the diverse motivations behind cabin crews' voice behavior may indeed be more critical in this context if managers truly value the feedback received from the cabin attendants. To further extend the previous observations related to the causalities between leadership styles and employees' safety citizenship behaviors, the current study applied paternalistic leadership to examine how it may trigger specific types of voice behavior, namely acquiescent voice, defensive voice and pro-social voice. The findings can be used as practical references to aid in safety managerial planning and implementation, and also enhance the existing literature regarding management applications and employees' voice behavior.

2. Conceptual background and hypotheses

2.1. Paternalistic leadership

Chemers (1993) advocates that leadership, although quasi-universal, is embedded in culture and nationality. For example, paternalistic leadership, which is deeply rooted in Chinese cultural values, expresses the traditional Chinese way of life (Tsui et al., 2004). Cheng et al. (2004) argue that paternalistic leadership is long-term oriented and extends beyond the leaders being thoughtful with regard to their subordinates' personal issues. Paternalistic leadership style highly values dignity, loyalty to organizations, and harmonious working relationships, which are expected to exert certain influence on employees' perceptions regarding open communication within the organization. It thus well represents the indicator of cabin crew department managers'

leadership style in the current research.

Paternalistic leadership has been a growing research area in management literature in recent decades (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008). Lately, instead of viewing paternalism as a form of absolute authoritarianism, a number of studies described it as a father-like leadership style that combines managerial support, protection, care and authority toward subordinates (e.g. Farh and Cheng, 2000; Redding et al., 1994). Gelfand et al. (2007) define paternalism as a "hierarchical relationship in which a leader guides professional and personal lives of subordinates in a manner resembling a parent, and in exchange expects loyalty and deference" (p. 493). In traditional Chinese societies, leaders enact a paternalistic role with fatherly benevolence (Cheng et al., 2000; Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008). The construct of paternalistic leadership has thus been recommended as presenting the fundamental features of Chinese business leaders' behaviors in family businesses and modern organizations (Farh and Cheng, 2000).

Based on the results of a series of studies, Farh and Cheng (2000) proposed a model of paternalistic leadership which consists of three dimensions, including morality, benevolence and authoritarianism. Among these, morality and benevolent leadership styles have been identified to be positively related to employees' job outcomes, while authoritarian leadership mostly has an adverse effect (e.g. Chou et al., 2005; Erben and Güneşer, 2008). Chan (2014) examines the impact of paternalistic leadership behaviors on employee voice, indicating that benevolent leadership is positively associated with employee voice and authoritarian leadership discourages employees from communicating upward. In the last decade, these three sub-constructs of paternalistic leadership have been well observed and analyzed in both field work and academic research (e.g. Anwar, 2013; Cheng et al., 2000; Saheer et al., 2013). However, it has been scarcely examined in the context of Taiwanese international airlines, the current research target, which are viewed as rooted in Chinese culture but aiming to be internationalized. Therefore, this study intends to explore how department managers' morality, benevolent and authoritarian leadership behaviors may affect cabin crew's upward safety communication, particularly on triggering the three specific types of voice behavior.

2.1.1. Morality leadership

Morality leadership indicates a leader who displays superior personal virtues through acting with self-discipline and unselfishness (e.g., never using personal relationships to obtain illicit personal gains; always practicing what he/she preaches), thus gains subordinates' respect and identification (Farh and Cheng, 2000). Those managers perform morality leadership tend to serve as role models for employees and exert referent power on them (Chen et al., 2011; Rhode, 2006). Chinese tradition highly values personal moral integrity. Moral leaders are thus greatly respected, admired, and viewed as ideal leaders by Chinese employees (Chen et al., 2011; Niu et al., 2009). As moral leaders constantly set themselves as respectful role models to staff, morality leadership may likely motivate subordinates to devote more efforts to their work, and step further in responding to the call of duty for their leaders (Colquitt et al., 2007).

Previous research has confirmed that morality leadership positively leads to employees' organizational citizenship behavior (Chu and Hung, 2009; Chou et al., 2005), obligation toward others (Aycan et al., 2000), and organizational commitment (Farh et al., 2006). Consistent with the suggestions of prior research, this paper hypothesizes that department manager's morality leadership may motivate flight attendants to conduct upward safety communication.

2.1.2. Benevolent leadership

Karakas and Sarigollu (2011) define benevolent leadership as “the process of creating a virtuous cycle of encouraging and initiating positive change in organizations through: a) ethical decision making, b) creating a sense of meaning, c) inspiring hope and fostering courage for positive action, and d) leaving a positive impact for the larger community” (p. 537).

The protection and care provided by benevolent leaders are logically accumulated in exchange for subordinates' trust, loyalty and support. In the study of Cheng et al. (2004), the empirical data show that benevolent leadership has the strongest effect on employees' identification with the leaders, as well as being the kind of leadership to be most conducive to subordinate gratitude. The same findings are also observed by Farh and Cheng (2000), who claim that benevolent leadership arouses subordinates' feelings of obligation to their role, such as greater loyalty and obedience in the Chinese context. Previous research has found that benevolent leadership is positively related to a variety of favorable work outcomes performed by employees, such as organizational commitment, citizenship behavior (Erben and Güneşer, 2008), self-ratings of performance (Chen et al., 2011; Chou et al., 2005), and proactive safety behavior (Chen and Chen, 2014). Accordingly, the current study presumes that department managers' benevolent leadership may encourage cabin crews' upward safety communication.

2.1.3. Authoritarian leadership

Authoritarianism is described as a leader's behavior of asserting strong authority and control over subordinates, and demanding unquestioned obedience from them. Due to the deep-rooted Confucius values of hierarchy and relationalism, Chinese managers often set up centralized structures and adopt a father-like role with a direct and authoritative leadership style (Peng et al., 2001).

Authoritarian leadership comprises five types of *li-wei* (awe-inspiring) behaviors, i.e., “powerful subduing”, “authority and control”, “intention hiding”, “rigorousness”, and “doctrine”. It is recognized that authoritarian leaders may increase employees' organizational commitment because of fear (Erben and Güneşer, 2008), due to its emphasis on absolute authority over subordinates, which may make them feel anxious and burdened. Although authoritarian leadership is considered a pervasive and effective leadership style in Chinese organizations, it is less conducive to the development of trust (Wu et al., 2010). With the negative association between authoritarian leadership and trust-in-supervisor, employees tend to perceive greater interactional injustice (Aryee et al., 2007), which may in turn affect their willingness to conduct upward communication. It is thus expected that department managers' authoritarian leadership may impede flight attendants' upward safety communication behavior.

2.2. Upward safety communication

Ensuring cabin safety to provide passengers with a smooth flight involves solid teamwork and effective communication between cockpit and cabin, cabin and ground, passengers and flight attendants, as well as flight attendants and department managers (Chen, 2014). Communication is regarded one of the most dominant and important activities in modern organizations (Harris and Nelson, 2008), and it is recognized as an extremely important strategy to reduce workplace incidents and accidents (Kath et al., 2010). In addition, it is also indicated that organizational capabilities are improved and enacted through “intensely social and communication processes” (Jones et al., 2004). Mueller and Lee (2002) point out that group cohesion, in which communication plays an important role, exerts a great influence on group performance. It is expected that a company with a good communication culture will

be better able to develop team spirit and thus achieve efficient teamwork. Accordingly, two-way communication (upward and downward) serves as a foundation for employee motivation and organizational success (Rajhans, 2012).

As for safety communication, it assesses how free employees feel to raise concerns and discuss safety related issues within organizations (Hofmann and Stetzer, 1998). Prior studies indicated that employee reports of accidents, errors, near misses, and other operational problems are valuable to managers in providing information that is unavailable elsewhere giving opportunities to correct unsafe situations and improve work systems (Cannon and Edmondson, 2005; Hogan et al., 2008). As one of the specific job characteristics for cabin duty is to communicate among diverse groups of crew members and passengers, it is indeed critical for department managers to encourage flight attendants to engage in upward safety communication.

Because encouraging subordinates to express safety concerns or propose recommendations can enhance safety performance, upward safety communication has gained increasing attention in recent years (Hofmann and Morgeson, 1999; Kath et al., 2010), and it has been widely adopted to measure safety climate in various industries (e.g. Cigularov et al., 2010; Griffin and Neal, 2000; Mearns et al., 2003). The prevalence of safety communication within an organization reflects the extent to which employees value safety at work in a communication friendly working environment. Previous research has confirmed the positive associations between communication and employee safety behaviors (Fernández-Muñiz et al., 2012; Lu and Yang, 2011). As for cabin crew, their willingness to conduct upward safety communication is found to be positively related to both safety compliance and participation behaviors (Chen and Chen, 2014). Due to their specific job context, flight attendants may easily observe the effects of company's safety policies, and collect feedback from passengers. It suggests that flight attendants can continuously gather invaluable information to benefit airlines' safety performance if upward safety communication is efficiently encouraged. It is thus critical to explore how the diverse leadership styles performed by the department managers may affect cabin crews' upward safety communication. The arguments proposed above have led to the following hypotheses.

H₁. Department managers' morality leadership is positively associated with cabin crew's upward safety communication.

H₂. Department managers' benevolent leadership is positively associated with cabin crew's upward safety communication.

H₃. Department managers' authoritarian leadership is negatively associated with cabin crew's upward safety communication.

2.3. Voice behavior

Rather than viewing employees' voice as the way to express dissatisfaction toward companies (Hirschman, 1970), Van Dyne and LePine (1998) further expand the concept of voice behavior and define it as employees taking the initiative to propose constructive suggestions instead of merely complaining about the situations they face. Walumbwa and Schaubroeck (2009) claim that voice behavior refers to upward communication, by which employees make constructive comments on standard operation procedures (SOP) and offer innovative ideas for organizational change.

The positive effects of employees' voice behavior on enhancing organizational operations have been confirmed over the last few decades. For example, Katz and Kahn (1978) indicate that voice behavior may effectively enhance organizational overall performance. Bryson (2004) claims that voice behavior is an essential technique to boost communication between managers and subordinates, which may greatly affect how employees assess their

duties. Whiting et al. (2008) further confirm that there is a significantly positive relationship between employees' voice behavior and their performance. However, different from other extra-role organizational citizenship behavior, voice behavior is target-sensitive (Liu et al., 2010). LePine and Van Dyne (1998) indicate that voice behavior may have negative impacts on employees' interpersonal relationships if their proposals have been adopted and the working routines have to be changed. Employees thus tend to assess the personal benefits and costs before they decide to conduct voice behavior (Detert and Burris, 2007). Accordingly, lots of employees would rather keep silent even when they are aware of irregular situations or come up with a solution (Morrison, 2011). Such phenomenon probably is more salient in the Chinese context than in Western context (Zhang et al., 2015). This leads to another reason why research on how to encourage Taiwanese flight attendants to exercise their voice is critical to voice literature.

Employees may carefully evaluate the pros and cons of conducting voice behavior before speaking out and speaking up. Van Dyne et al. (2003) emphasize that voice can be either other or self-directed, and accordingly they propose three types of voice, namely acquiescent, defensive and pro-social. Acquiescent voice reflects employees' motivation for disengagement. Defensive voice refers to employees' motivation for self-protection because of fear. Pro-social voice, on the other hand, refers to when employees intend to constructively and positively contribute to the organization by speaking out and up. Table 1 presents the conceptual framework of the multi-dimensional constructs of voice behavior proposed by Van Dyne et al. (2003).

Motivation has a substantial influence on employees' work behaviors and job performance (Grant and Berg, 2010). Employees' diverse motivations (e.g., passive or proactive) may directly lead to different voices that create greatly different values. Taking cabin crew's voice behavior as an example, flight attendants may hold back from telling the truth if they feel afraid or personally at risk. The motivation for self-protection will possibly cause cabin crew members to care more about the negative consequences rather than positive contributions when they have to speak up. Compare to pro-social voice behavior, the recommendations based on self-protection are thus less useful. In addition, managerial overtime misattributions of employee motivations may also reduce the quality of communication and interaction that occurs at work. It is thus important to observe the motivations behind employees' voice behaviors. Furthermore, although the positive effect of voice behavior on employees' job involvement, individual and organizational overall performance have been identified by previous studies, limited research has regarded voice behavior as a type of safety related behavior. Since employees' voice behavior may be viewed as the expression of their views to managers, the current paper specifies voice behavior as upward safety communication behavior. In particular, the present study is interested in learning why flight attendants express their opinions related to cabin safety issues upward. Furthermore, how department managers' paternalistic leadership may trigger different motivations of flight attendants' voice behavior is also investigated. The arguments

proposed above lead to the following hypotheses.

H₄. Department managers' morality leadership exerts more positive effects on cabin crew's pro-social voice behavior than acquiescent and defensive voice behaviors.

H₅. Department managers' benevolent leadership exerts more positive effects on cabin crew's pro-social voice behavior than acquiescent and defensive voice behaviors.

H₆. Department managers' authoritarian leadership exerts more negative effects on cabin crew's pro-social voice behavior than acquiescent and defensive voice behaviors.

Figs. 1 and 2 present the conceptual models of the current study.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and procedure

A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from Taiwanese cabin crew members during the fifteen-month period from late 2012 to early 2014. In coordination with cabin crew's changing work schedules, the paper-based questionnaires with sealable stamped addressed envelopes were distributed and collected through each airline's internal contact, either on board an aircraft or deposited in flight attendants' personal mailbox. Totally 530 questionnaires were distributed, and 402 usable replies were received after deleting any incomplete ones. Female respondents accounted for the majority (91%) of the sample. Among the respondents, 56.2% were less than 30 years old. With respect to job tenure, 38.1% had been with the company between one and five years, followed by 24.4% from six to ten years. The major range of flight time within the previous three months was from 71 to 80 h. Detailed demographic information of the respondents appears in Table 2.

3.2. Measures

The scales used to obtain the measures of the variables are described below. All items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

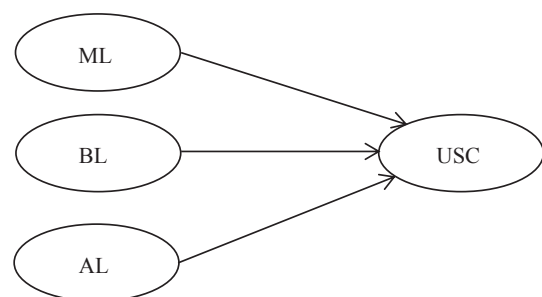


Fig. 1. The conceptual model 1.

ML, morality leadership; BL, benevolent leadership; AL, authoritarian leadership; USC, upward safety communication.

Table 1
Employee motives and specific types of voice behavior. Source: Van Dyne et al. (2003).

Employee motives	Types of voice
Disengaged: Based on resignation because of feeling unable to make a difference	Acquiescent Voice example: Agreeing with the group due to low self-efficacy to make a difference
Self-protective: Based on fear because of feeling afraid and personally at risk	Defensive Voice example: Proposing ideas that focus on others to protect the self
Other oriented: Based on cooperation because of feeling cooperative and altruistic	Pro-social Voice example: Suggesting constructive ideas for change to benefit the organization

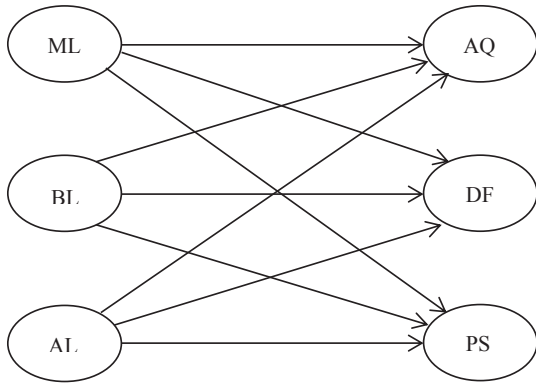


Fig. 2. The conceptual model 2.
ML, morality leadership; BL, benevolent leadership; AL, authoritarian leadership; AQ, acquiescent voice; DF, defensive voice; PS, pro-social voice.

Paternalistic leadership. The three sub-constructs of paternalistic leadership, namely morality leadership, benevolent leadership and authoritarian leadership, were assessed using five items for each sub-construct developed by Cheng et al. (2000). This scale has demonstrated consistent and good psychometric properties in previous research (e.g., Chen et al., 2011). Example item for morality leadership is: “Supervisor is an upright and honest person.” As for benevolent leadership, a sample item is “Beyond work relations, my supervisor expresses concern about my daily life.” The example item for authoritarian leadership is “Supervisor determined all decisions in the department whether they are important or not.”

Upward safety communication. Five items from a scale presented by Hofmann and Morgeson (1999) were applied to measure cabin crew’s willingness to perform upward safety communication, and a sample question is “I feel free to discuss safety related issues with my supervisor.”

Voice behavior. The three types of voice behavior, namely acquiescent, defensive and pro-social, were assessed using five items for each type developed by Van Dyne et al. (2003). Some modest modifications have been made to the questions based on the context of research populations and subjects. The statement of each question begins with “I communicate safety related issues upward because” An example item for acquiescent voice behavior is “I passively express agreement and rarely offers a new idea.” As for defensive voice behavior, a sample item is “I express ideas that shift attention to others, because I am afraid.” The example item for pro-social voice behavior is “I speak up with ideas for new projects that might benefit the organization.”

3.3. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics was used to provide simple summaries about the sample and the observations that have been made. To assess the reliability of the measures, Cronbach’s α coefficient was applied to evaluate the internal consistency of each construct. In

addition, analysis of variance (ANOVA) technique was conducted to reveal individual diverse motivations among flight attendants regarding conducting voice behavior. Finally, regression analysis was used to learn the causal relationships between the three sub-constructs of paternalistic leadership and cabin crew’s upward safety communication, and the three types of voice behavior.

4. Results

The detailed information regarding means and standard deviations (S.D.) of the observable items, and alpha reliabilities of each construct are presented in Table 3. The Cronbach’s α values are between 0.83 and 0.93, indicating high level of internal consistency for all measures.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been conducted to explore whether flight attendants with diverse demographic backgrounds show significantly different motivations of voice behavior. The results reveal that position and seniority have significant relationships with flight attendants’ three types of motivation for conducting voice behavior. Broadly speaking, cabin crew members with a higher position and seniority tend to hold stronger pro-social motivation toward voice behavior, while junior crew members conducting voice behavior mostly have passive or self-defensive attitudes, as presented in Tables 4 and 5.

To test the hypotheses, regression analysis was performed to investigate the relationships between department managers’ morality leadership, benevolent leadership, authoritarian leadership and cabin crew’s upward safety communication, as well as the various motivations to conduct voice behavior. The results show that morality and benevolent leadership styles are significantly and positively related to cabin crew’s upward safety communication. In contrast, authoritarian leadership significantly discourages flight attendants from conducting upward safety communication. Hypotheses 1 to 3 are thus supported. Fig. 3 shows the results of regression analysis between the three sub-constructs of department managers’ paternalistic leadership and cabin crew’s upward safety communication.

As for cabin crew’s voice behavior, the results indicate that both morality and benevolent leadership styles significantly and positively lead to flight attendants’ pro-social voice behavior, while authoritarian leadership has significantly negative effects on it. In addition, department managers’ benevolent leadership has significantly negative effect on cabin crew’s defensive voice behavior. The other five estimated causal relationships are found to be insignificant. Based on the results of regression coefficients presented in Table 6, the morality and benevolent leadership styles exert significantly positive impacts on cabin crews’ pro-social voice behavior, while authoritarian leadership has a significantly negative effect on cabin crews’ pro-social voice. The current study thus finds that hypotheses 4 to 6 are all confirmed.

Table 2
Demographic overview of respondents (N = 402).

Gender (%)	Age (%)	Tenures of year in current company (%)	Position (%)	Average flight time within previous three months (%)
Female: 91.0	<25: 15.2	<1 year: 10.9	Flight attendant: 67.7	<70 h: 15.7
Male: 9.0	26-30: 41.0	1-5 years: 38.1	Deputy purser: 18.9	71-80 h: 42.8
	31-35: 20.9	6-10 years: 24.4	Chief purser: 13.4	81-100 h: 40.5
	36-40: 16.2	11-15 years: 14.9		>100 h: 1.0
	>41: 6.7	16-20 years: 10.2		
		>21 years: 1.5		

Table 3
Descriptive statistic results and alpha values of variables.

Constructs	Items	Mean	S.D.	α Values
Morality Leadership	Supervisor is an upright and honest person.	3.74	1.47	0.93
	Supervisor treats staff very fair.	3.66	1.54	
	Supervisor does not obtain illicit personal gains.	3.97	1.51	
	Supervisor is a good role model to follow.	3.83	1.71	
Benevolent Leadership	Supervisor always practices what he/she preaches.	3.94	1.67	0.93
	Supervisor expresses concern about daily life beyond work.	3.87	1.68	
	Supervisor shows a kind concern for the comfort.	3.87	1.79	
	Supervisor helps when in an emergency.	3.65	1.65	
	Supervisor takes thoughtful care.	3.92	1.78	
Authoritarian Leadership	Supervisor also takes good care of family members.	3.28	1.68	0.88
	Supervisor covers real intention from revealing to us.	4.29	1.55	
	Supervisor determines on all decisions regardless important or not.	4.03	1.45	
	Supervisor always has the last say in the meeting.	4.15	1.55	
	I feel pressured when working with him/her.	4.44	1.69	
Upward Safety Communication	Supervisor scolds us when we can't accomplish tasks.	3.90	1.68	0.88
	I'd like to propose suggestions regarding safety issues.	4.63	1.32	
Acquiescent Voice	I feel comfortable discussing safety with supervisor.	4.17	1.29	0.92
	I try to avoid talking about safety with supervisor. (R)	4.35	1.41	
	Supervisor openly accepts ideas for improving safety.	4.26	1.26	
	Reluctant to discuss safety-related problems with supervisor. (R)	4.58	1.52	
Defensive Voice	I passively support the ideas of others because I am disengaged.	4.37	1.46	0.83
	I passively express agreement and rarely offer a new idea.	4.25	1.32	
	I agree and go along with the group, based on resignation.	4.86	1.25	
	I only express agreement with the group based on low self-efficacy to make suggestions.	4.25	1.24	
	I passively agree with others about solutions to problems.	4.34	1.40	
Pro-social Voice	I don't express much except agreement with the group, based on fear to be left behind.	3.99	1.31	0.93
	I express ideas that shift attention to others, because I am afraid of being the target.	4.04	1.26	
	I provide explanations that focus the discussion on others in order to protect myself.	4.06	1.21	
	I go along and communicate support for the group, based on self-protection.	4.40	1.27	
Pro-social Voice	I express ideas because I am afraid of being in danger if any accident happened.	5.50	1.25	0.93
	I express solutions to problems with the cooperative motive of benefiting the organization.	4.69	1.35	
	I develop and make recommendations concerning issues that affect the organization.	4.37	1.28	
	I communicate my opinions about work issues even if others disagree.	3.86	1.27	
Pro-social Voice	I speak up with ideas for new projects that might benefit the organization.	4.28	1.78	0.93
	I suggest ideas for change, based on constructive concern for the organization.	4.70	1.37	

Note: (R) denotes reversed item and has been reverse coded.

Table 4
Relationship between cabin crew seniority and the motivations of voice behavior.

Motivation of voice behavior	<1 year (1)	1–5 years (2)	6–10 years (3)	11–15 years (4)	16–20 years (5)	F test	Scheffe test	Comparison
AQ	4.82	4.42	4.60	4.15	3.90	4.033**	(1,5)	1 > 5
DF	5.05	4.42	4.41	4.11	4.05	6.531***	(1,2)(1,3)(1,4)(1,5)	1 > 2 > 3 > 4 > 5
PS	4.44	4.13	4.07	4.76	5.36	11.765***	(1,5)(2,4)(2,5)(3,4)(3,5)	5 > 4 > 1 > 2 > 3

Note. ** denotes $p < 0.01$; *** denotes $p < 0.001$.

AQ, acquiescent voice; DF, defensive voice; PS, pro-social voice.

Table 5
Relationship between cabin crew position and the motivations of voice behavior.

Motivation of voice behavior	Cabin attendant (1)	Deputy purser(2)	Chief purser(3)	F test	Scheffe test	Comparison
AQ	4.49	4.76	3.55	20.611***	(1,3)(2,3)	2 > 1 > 3
DF	4.55	4.33	3.76	16.016***	(1,3)(2,3)	1 > 2 > 3
PS	4.25	4.09	5.44	31.575***	(1,3)(2,3)	3 > 1 > 2

Note. *** denotes $p < 0.001$.

AQ, acquiescent voice; DF, defensive voice; PS, pro-social voice.

5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1. Discussion

One observation made by the current study, which has never been reported in previous research, is that flight attendants with different seniorities and positions have significantly different

motivations to conduct voice behavior. First of all, senior crew members and chief pursers tend to speak up with the aim of improving the overall safety performance and benefiting the entire organization. Being experienced professionals or leaders, they realize better than other crew members that safety is regarded the core value in the airline industry (Atak and Kingma, 2011), and how important overall organizational performance is.

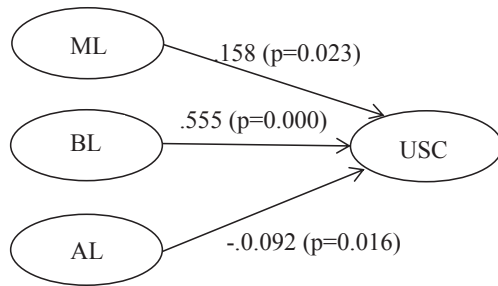


Fig. 3. The regression analysis result between paternalistic leadership and upward safety communication.

Table 6
Results of regression analysis between PL and cabin crew voice.

	AQ	DF	PS
independent variable			
ML	- 0.017	- 0.086	0.206***
BL	- 0.048	- 0.120*	0.279***
AL	0.070	0.064	- 0.134**

Note. * denotes $p < 0.05$; ** denotes $p < 0.01$; *** denotes $p < 0.001$.

Secondly, this study finds that deputy pursers perform voice behavior because of resignation or disengagement rather than altruism. This is something that requires immediate attention, since deputy pursers are in a position that supports all cabin work. After working on board for a certain period of time (usually three to five years), qualified flight attendants are eligible to be promoted to deputy pursers, who are responsible for leading cabin service and handling emergency situations in designated classes (e.g. first, business or economy class). Deputy pursers are expected to be proficient in handling various situations independently, and obligated to guide and pass on valuable experience to junior crew members. To play such an essential role well, they not only have to continuously strengthen their professionalism, but also devote efforts to enhancing their leadership and being role models to the junior staff. It is thus regrettable to learn that deputy pursers' pro-social motivation for voice behavior was ranked last among the three cabin crew's positions (namely flight attendant, deputy purser, and chief purser). This indicates that deputy pursers are forced to speak up to either show their passive obedience to airlines' safety policies or for reasons of self-protection, neither of which are associated with positive outcomes (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Consequently, the phenomena will have adverse impact on creating a positive safety culture over time.

Through the author's previous cabin work experience, constant field observations, and interviewing flight attendants working for Taiwanese international airlines, some potentially possible causes of the above results are identified, as follows. Many deputy pursers consider their rewards are less than their contributions. While working on board they are expected to play multiple roles and undertake great responsibilities with limited authority. Deputy pursers who wish to be promoted in the near future tend to play it safe by behaving in conformity with company policies and managers' commands. Keeping a low profile and avoiding making mistakes are thus their main strategies for conducting voice behavior.

As for the relationships between the three sub-constructs of paternalistic leadership and cabin crew's upward safety communication, the empirical data confirms the proposed hypotheses. Morality and benevolent leadership styles exert significantly positive effects on cabin crews' upward safety communication, while

authoritarian leadership has a negative impact. The results reveal that benevolent leadership has the highest positive effect on cabin crews' upward safety communication. Similar to the findings by Farh and Cheng (2000), who claim that among the three sub-constructs, benevolent leadership exerts the greatest effect on stimulating subordinates' feelings of obligation to their role. This indicates that the parental care and benevolent support expressed by department managers are the most efficient strategies to form close connections with cabin crew and boost the cohesion among flight attendants. When cabin crewmembers are motivated to work better as a team to achieve a shared vision, they are more likely to focus on improving team performance. As such, they are more willing to participate in activities which may enhance the entire airlines safety performance, such as communicating any safety concerns or proposing recommendations upward.

The morality leadership style also exerts a significantly positive effect on cabin crew's willingness to conduct upward safety communication. It is thus confirmed that a moral leader would not only motivate subordinates to perform regular organizational citizenship behavior, as in other industries, and as argued by previous research (e.g. Chu and Hung, 2009), but also enhance flight attendants' willingness to conduct upward safety communication. A moral leader wins respect from employees, who then reciprocate their identification by providing details of their practical experiences and opinions, which can greatly benefit safety performance.

As expected, the authoritarian leadership performed by department managers may discourage flight attendants' from conducting upward safety communication. Although authoritarian leadership is widely viewed as an effective leadership style in Chinese organizations because it fits well with traditional values (Cheng et al., 2004), this leadership style is more likely to induce employees' fear and anger, rather than helping develop mutual trust between leaders and subordinates (Farh and Cheng, 2000; Farh et al., 2006). If there is a lack of trust in the workplace, it is not surprising that the willingness of flight attendants to conduct upward safety communication would be reduced. Considering the direct and positive effects that upward safety communication may exert on flight attendants' safety behavior (Chen and Chen, 2014), authoritarian leaders are obligated to adapt the leadership style to create a communication friendly environment within the organization.

Regarding the relationships between paternalistic leadership and the three types of cabin crews' voice behavior, the empirical results indicate that morality and benevolent leadership styles exert significantly positive effects on pro-social voice behavior. In contrast, the authoritarian leadership performed by the department managers may discourage flight attendants' pro-social voice behavior. Among the three types of voice behavior motivation, it is certain that pro-social voice may lead employees to make more recommendations that enhance the entire organizations' effectiveness, rather than simply aiming to increase personal advantages (McClean et al., 2013). Taking an initiative to speak up for altruism presents that flight attendants highly value safety practice. Supporting such voice behavior by appropriate leadership is indeed a proactive way to improve safety climate and develop positive safety culture within the organization. Contrary to aforementioned results, authoritarian leadership adversely affects the development of mutual trust between managers and employees for leaders trying to have everything under control (Farh and Cheng, 2000; Farh et al., 2006). Authoritarian leadership discourages flight attendants from conveying knowledge, information and feedback that may help rectify mistakes, improve process and find solutions to facilitate positive safety climate and culture. Flight attendants are thus inclined to passively follow the leaders' instructions or protect their own interests when they are forced to speak up. Eventually, airlines

will encounter the consequences of lacking valuable front-line observations because flight attendants are reluctant to communicate openly and frankly.

Another interesting observation is that department managers' benevolent leadership significantly and negatively relates to cabin crews' defensive voice behavior. When employees feel personally at risk or would like to shift attention to others, they may downplay a statement if it is seen as going against their own interests (Johnson, 2012). However, benevolent leadership style may provide flight attendants with greater security and personal care, and thus proactive self-protection is not compulsory when expressing their opinions.

5.2. Conclusions and managerial implications

In safety-critical organizations, communication plays a crucial role to ensure the safety performance (Rafidah et al., 2014). Previous research proposed that communication positively lead to employees' safety behavior (Al-Haadir et al., 2013). The significantly positive effect of cabin crew's upward safety communication on their safety behavior has also been identified (Chen and Chen, 2014). Regarding employees' willingness to conduct upward safety communication, leadership behavior undoubtedly exerts great influence on it (Kath et al., 2010).

Cabin crews' specific job characteristics and multiple role requirements denote that teamwork and communication are very important in this context. Being the frontline employees with changing work schedules and tremendous job demands, flight attendants have a great need for support from the department managers to lessen the pressure they face, and thus present their best safety practice on-board and off duty (Chen and Chen, 2014). The current study explores how paternalistic leadership affects flight attendants' upward safety communication and the different motivations behind such behavior. The findings provide empirical evidences to support the proposed hypotheses. Meanwhile, the results indicate that deputy pursers conduct less pro-social voice behavior than acquiescent and defensive voice behavior. The observations of this work could have particular relevance for managing cabin crew department, as follows.

Organizations generally benefit from employees' discussion and report of crucial issues (Moeidh et al., 2015). To motivate flight attendants to take the initiative in safety communication upward and making practical contribution by providing recommendations which are difficult to obtain in other ways, cabin department managers should utilize more effective management strategies to enhance flight attendants' pro-social voice behavior. For example, department managers' parental care and benevolent support may strengthen cabin crew cohesion and identification with the organization, which can lead to a family-like environment in the workplace (Aycan et al., 2013). Since department managers' benevolent leadership may encourage cabin crew to conduct upward safety communication, and there is also a positive relationship between benevolent leadership and pro-social voice behavior, as well as a negative one between benevolent leadership and defensive voice behavior, it is strongly recommended that a benevolent leadership style is the appropriate management technique when working with cabin crew.

Cabin crew's direct feedback and practical suggestions related to airlines safety practices are essential to continuously establish and adjust airlines' safety policies. Department managers are thus obligated to eliminate the negative factors which stop flight attendants from speaking up. The empirical data presented by the current paper confirm that authoritarian leaders not only create an unfriendly environment for communicating safety issues upward, but also discourage cabin crew from suggesting ideas for change,

based on constructive concern for the organization. The airline industry is highly competitive and requires contributions from all employees to form a solid team. Frazier and Bowler (2015) propose that a supervisor's attitude strongly impacts employee perceptions of organization's voice climate, and has a significant influence on group performance. The current research thus suggests that providing sufficient and open channels to welcome employees' voice may be the first step to evolving collective intelligence, which eventually benefits the airlines overall safety performance.

As for the observation regarding deputy pursers' voice behavior motivation, department managers are suggested to take immediate actions to address this finding. Deputy pursers take the responsibility for executing and monitoring cabin service and safety practices in the designated classes, and they should be empowered so that they can carry out the tasks effectively, in an environment of trust and respect. In addition, pro-social voice behavior should be effectively promoted by developing a fair and accessible internal reward system. For instance, flight attendants' pro-social voice behavior may be taken into account when considering promotion decision. Rather than worrying about making mistakes or proposing suggestions which may be against managers' opinions, deputy pursers should be encouraged to freely express their ideas and receive adequate rewards for providing constructive suggestions to enhance safety performance.

5.3. Limitations and future research

Despite the groundbreaking observation and strengths of this work, several limitations should be stated and considered for future research directions. Firstly, the current study population is limited to Taiwanese flight attendants, and the results may not apply to other professions or cabin crews from different cultural backgrounds. It is thus recommended that future research obtains diverse samples from different professions and cultures to increase the robustness of the findings.

Second, voice behavior is regarded as an extra-role organizational behavior (Platow et al., 2006). Aside from managers' leadership style, previous research also suggested a number of factors as possible antecedents to predict organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). For instance, personality (Penner et al., 1997) and job satisfaction (Brown, 1993) are commonly mentioned as individual level antecedents. At the group level, organizational climate (e.g. safety climate and voice climate) is widely perceived as the cause of OCBs (Neal and Griffin, 2006; Frazier and Bowler, 2015). Future research may thus use factors from different levels to observe the cross-level effects on employees' voice behavior. Particularly, the efforts should be devoting to identifying the possible antecedents that may evoke employees' pro-social voice behavior on communicating safety issues upward.

Third, human motivation is a complicated psychological state. Using quantitative self-reported survey questionnaires to collect data to analyze the relationships between department managers' leadership style and cabin crew voice behavior, as in the current work, is thus regarded an exploratory attempt to obtain primary observations. On the one hand, future studies may extend the causality by applying personal and exterior mediators or moderators to obtain more thorough insights. On the other hand, it is suggested that researchers employ qualitative techniques to verify and further strengthen the quantitative findings of this study.

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