

The Impact Of Work-Related Stress Factors On Mental Health And Service Sabotage Behavior Of Vietnam Airlines Flight Attendants

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ABSTRACT

Stress is a common problem that people in today's society deal with in both their personal and professional lives. Ineffective stress management can have a detrimental influence on one's mental well-being and productivity at work. This study is to investigate the impact of work-related stress on flight attendants' mental health and service sabotage behavior, drawing on Hobfoll's (2001) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. 107 Vietnam Airlines flight attendants participated in the study's survey. The measurement model and structural model were evaluated using SPSS 24 and Smart PLS 4.0.9.5 software. The results of the study show that psychological contract violations and organizational silence are linked to Vietnam Airlines flight attendants' worsening mental health and rise in service sabotage conduct.

KEYWORDS: Work-related stress, organizational silence, mental health deterioration, service sabotage behavior, flight attendants, Vietnam Airlines.

1. Introduction

With approximately 12 billion workdays missed each year as a result of stress-related problems, workplace stress has become a widespread problem that negatively impacts workers' mental and physical health and reduces productivity (WHO, 2021). Moreover, stress, anxiety, and worry cause damage of approximately 1 trillion USD annually to global labor productivity (Kurian, CertifyMe, 2025). In the United States, workplace stress has resulted in the loss of approximately 1 billion working days annually and incurs estimated costs of 300 billion USD per year. The Vietnam-France Institute of Psychology reports that almost two-thirds of professionals say they are more stressed at work now than they were five years ago. Work-related stress is the main source of stress-related mental problems, which affect 15% of the Vietnamese population (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Workers get weary and less motivated as a result of mounting workloads, pressure from superiors, clients, and market expectations. According to Schabracq et al. (2003), stress at work not only lowers quality of life but also causes a variety of physical and mental diseases that impair productivity and raise turnover and recruitment expenses. According to the Workplace Options survey, approximately 45% of employees seek psychological support for workplace stress, and employees frequently experience fatigue in the workplace averaging 18 days per year (Fisher, 2021). Several studies of U.S. airline personnel have shown that nearly 82 % of cabin crew routinely operate in a state of fatigue. Alarmingly, only a little more than 26 % of flight attendants report feeling sufficiently relaxed to serve passengers, while the remaining two-thirds experience persistent tiredness and stress during duty, leading to

diminished customer-service performance (Efthymiou et al., 2021).

Flight attendants for Vietnam Airlines are not immune to work-related stress. In order to manage unanticipated circumstances during flights, meet flight schedules, and guarantee passenger safety, they usually have to get up early. Furthermore, employment insecurity and miscommunications or unfounded allegations from coworkers or passengers lead to a great deal of stress (To Ha & Thai Phuong, 2024). Many attendants find it difficult to stay committed to their careers over the long run because of these difficulties. Furthermore, a "brain drain" has resulted from the aviation industry's staffing shortfall brought on by the growth of private carriers. Additionally, Vietnam Airlines runs the danger of losing employees to rival airlines due to its lower pay compared to that of its rivals (To Ha & Thai Phuong, 2024). In order to manage stress, improve mental health, and lessen service sabotage behavior, this study looks at how work-related stressors affect the mental health and conduct of Vietnam Airlines flight attendants. Besides assist Vietnam Airlines in keeping its employees, especially flight attendants, the study also offers managerial recommendations.

2. Theoretical Framework and Research Model

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Conservation of Resources Theory

According to Hobfoll's (2001) Conservation of Resources (COR) hypothesis, employees may take steps to lessen the psychological effects of a shortage of critical resources, such as leaving their positions. On the other hand, workers who have enough resources find their jobs more

fulfilling and interesting, which helps them deal with stress and overcome obstacles. Another important component of this theory is the importance of personal resources and organizational conditions that employees value, like energy and personal qualities (Nguyen Huu Khoi, 2020; Huynh Thi Thu Suong, 2021).

Moreover, workers who have enough resources aggressively seek out and amass additional resources, which lowers stress and limits detrimental psychological impacts (Hobfoll, 2001). Employees in the service sector regularly deal with rude customers, which strains their mental reserves and causes stress and a decline in mental health (Cho et al., 2016). As a stress-reduction strategy, this pressure may lead to service sabotage behavior (Spector & Fox, 2002), which would eventually lower customer satisfaction and service quality. Building on COR theory, Osman and Homa (2014) examined overcrowding, emotional dissonance, and emotional exhaustion among 129 Turkish airline employees. Their results indicate that emotional exhaustion fully mediates the link between emotional dissonance and severely impaired service-recovery performance. Similarly, Michael and Sandra (2019) analyzed the influence of social and scheduling factors on emotional exhaustion in 767 cabin-crew members of international carriers headquartered in the DACH region. Grounded in COR theory, their study confirmed that these factors significantly heighten emotional exhaustion, which in turn undermines the quality of service delivered to passengers.

In conclusion, the conservation of resources hypothesis describes how service sabotage behaviour is a method to conserve personal resources when stress and mental health diminish owing to resource constraints (Hobfoll, 2001; Spector & Fox, 2002).

2.1.2. Work-related Stress

Stress at work is a common problem that has a big influence on how well people perform on the job. It is characterized as a person's reaction to elements connected to their job that could impact their mental or physical health. According to Sager (1991), stress is a mental condition experienced when confronted with demanding yet unknown work requirements. Stress, according to Jamal (1985), is the result of a mismatch between a person's skills and the demands of their profession.

Organizational silence and violations of the psychological contract are two factors that contribute to workplace stress. When workers don't voice their ideas regarding workplace matters, it's known as organizational silence. This results in a lack of knowledge and skepticism, which can lead to stress and resignation. A psychological contract constitutes the informal set of mutual expectations between an organization and its employees; discrepancies between these expectations can create strain (Durdag, 2024). When an organization is perceived as renegeing on its obligations, employees experience a psychological contract breach, defined as the employee's belief that the organization has failed to fulfill its commitments (Robinson & Rousseau, 1998). Such perceptions can evoke affective reactions, including anger and feelings of betrayal (Robinson & Morrison,

2000). The psychological contract begins forming even before employment starts and continues to evolve throughout the employee's tenure with the organization. A perception of psychological contract breach occurs when the relationship is thought to be out of balance ... defined as the total negative perceptions of the employee regarding the degree of unfulfillment of a psychological contract. In this respect, the organization did not fulfill or keep its promises before the employee (Durdag, 2024). Organizational silence is the state of employees withholding their thoughts, opinions, and information about organizational problems from their institutions (Durdag, 2024).

2.1.3. Mental Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as the capacity to control behavior, maintain emotional stability, and manage day-to-day difficulties. It encompasses emotions, flexibility, learning, cognition, and empathy in addition to psychological problems. Mental health is also influenced by social, cultural, and physical connections.

Due to work-related stress, erratic flight schedules, and environmental conditions, flight attendants in the aviation sector have high rates of anxiety, depression, and exhaustion. Serious problems like burnout, sleep disturbances, and depression can result from these causes (Neely et al., 2014; Phillips et al., 2019). As a result, mental health is not just a personal issue; it also represents how people engage with their workplace.

2.1.4. Service Sabotage Behavior

The term "service sabotage behavior" was initially used by Harris and Ogbonna (2002) to describe intentional employee acts intended to lower customer service quality. These actions could include disrespecting customer property, causing physical or psychological injury, acting against customer wishes, manipulating service speed, disregarding service standards, or using impolite language.

Numerous studies show that when employees retaliate against customers for unfair treatment, impolite behavior, or customer pressure, service sabotage behavior frequently results. According to Skarlicki et al. (2008) and Wang et al. (2011), such actions are against organizational policies and lower the quality of services. In a 2009 survey of 291 flight attendants, Katrina and Thomas discovered that 97% of them were fatigued and that this affected their capacity to carry out their jobs; 68% of them were extremely fatigued, which had a major effect on their work and customer service while in flight (Katrina & Thomas, 2009). ABC News (2010) reports that a JetBlue flight attendant became irate when handling the luggage space problem of two female passengers. As a result, he drank beer, opened the emergency exit, and slipped down. An example of service sabotage in the aviation industry is Spirit Airlines' 2010 fine for a flight attendant who refused to let a passenger use the restroom, forcing the passenger to "handle" it on the aisle floor (Docnhanh Online Newspaper, 2023).

2.2. Proposed Research Model

In order to minimize, supplement, and add some aspects to suit reality, the research scale was established using Hobfoll's (2001) conservation of resources theory, an analysis of relevant research works, and in-depth interviews with ten flight attendants for Vietnam Airlines. According to preliminary findings, all participants concur with the characteristics and variables that have been noticed; nevertheless, the questions' phrasing has to be changed to make them more understandable. The following elements are part of the research model on how work stress affects Vietnam Airlines flight attendants' mental health and service sabotage behavior: (1) Organizational Silence; (2) Psychological Contract; (3) Mental Health Deterioration; and (4) Service Sabotage.

- Hypothesis H₁₋₁: Organizational silence increases the decline in mental health of flight attendants.
- Hypothesis H₁₋₂: Violation of the psychological contract increases the decline in mental health of flight attendants.
- Hypothesis H₂₋₁: Organizational silence increases the service sabotage behavior of flight attendants.
- Hypothesis H₂₋₂: Violation of the psychological contract increases the service sabotage behavior of flight attendants.
- Hypothesis H₃: Deterioration in mental health increases the service sabotage behavior of flight attendants.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Scale

Based on previous studies and the results of interviews with 10 flight attendants, the measurement variables “IL1”; “TL1” and “SK3” were eliminated because they were not suitable for the context of the aviation industry in Vietnam. Based on the revised scale, the author designed a survey questionnaire with 13 observation variables on a 5-point Likert scale in which:

- 1 = Completely disagree; - 2 = Disagree;
- 3 = Neutral; - 4 = Agree; - 5 = Completely agree

Table 1: Research scale

Encryption	Scale	Source
ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE (IL)		
IL2	I avoid suggesting solutions to company problems because of the negative consequences.	Kyungjin Kate Yum et al. (2024)
IL3	I avoid suggesting ways to improve my work because it might jeopardize my position.	
IL4	I hesitate to disclose company-related information because of the consequences.	
PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT (TL)		
TL2	Appropriate compensation for flying is essential.	Kyungjin Kate Yum et al. (2024)
TL3	There are few job-related education and training	

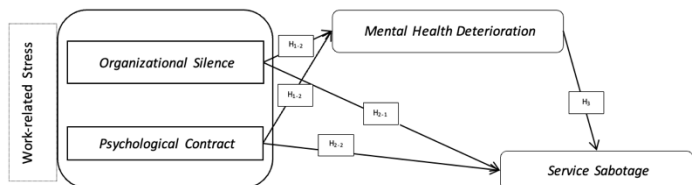


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

(Source: Author's suggestions)

	opportunities.	
TL4	Flight attendants have few opportunities for career promotions.	
MENTAL HEALTH DETERIORATION (SK)		
SK1	I often feel stressed and anxious at work.	Kyungjin Kate Yum et al. (2024); Kieun Lee et al. (2022)
SK2	Even on connecting flights, I am often not very interested.	
SK4	The duties of a flight attendant have proven to be mentally exhausting for me.	
SERVICE SABOTAGE (DV)		
DV1	I often retaliate against rude customers.	Kyungjin Kate Yum et al. (2024)
DV2	I ignore the company's service regulations for my own convenience.	
DV3	I intentionally slow down the service delivery process.	
DV4	I am not enthusiastic about my work.	

(Source: Author's data summary)

3.2. Determining Sample Size and Developing Data Collection and Processing Methods

3.2.1. Determining Sample Size

According to Hair et al. (2014), the sample size should follow a ratio of 5-20:1 (i.e., between 5 and 20 observations per indicator). Hoyle (1995) also suggested that a sample size ranging from 100 to 200 is typically a good starting point for path modeling. In the research model examining the impact of work-related stress factors on the mental health and service sabotage behavior of Vietnam Airlines flight attendants, the total number of observed indicators is thirteen. Based on the 5–20:1 rule of thumb, the sample size should be $13 \times 5 = 65$.

Following this sample size determination approach, the researcher aimed to collect at least 65 samples. However, to ensure higher reliability in data processing results and meet the requirements of composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and other statistical analyses, the researcher decided to distribute 110 questionnaires, expecting to collect 107 valid responses.

3.2.2. Data Collection Method

The study employed a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods. Data were collected directly through surveys targeting flight attendants of the national carrier, Vietnam Airlines, across the country. After the initial interviews with flight attendants, investigators requested them to refer suitable colleagues to expand the survey sample. In cases where the number of referrals was limited, investigators continued to seek and interview other flight attendants until 107 valid survey responses were obtained. The survey process was conducted between July 1, 2023, and July 15, 2023, at Vietnam Airlines.

3.3.3. Data Processing Method

The research model follows a complex structural equation modeling (SEM) approach that involves multiple interrelated variables. Therefore, the Smart-PLS 4.0.9.5 software was utilized to evaluate both the measurement model and the structural model sequentially.

In terms of implementation steps, the first phase involved assessing the measurement model using the PLS-SEM algorithm, based on statistical indicators such as outer loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE. The second phase involved evaluating the structural model using bootstrapping analysis, which included assessing path coefficients, R^2 , adjusted R^2 , f^2 , and other relevant indicators to determine the relationships and impact levels among variables in the model.

4. Research Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics of survey sample

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of research sample characteristics

Categories		Number (People)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	43	40.2
	Female	59	55.1
	Other	5	4.7
Age	Between 18 - 26 years old	65	60.7
	Between 27 - 35 years old	37	34.6
	Above 35 years old	5	4.7
Academic Level	High school graduate or equivalent	32	29.9
	Bachelor	60	56.1
	Master	15	14.0
Marital Status	Married	31	29.0
	Not married	76	71.0
Job Position	Flight attendant	99	92.5
	Head of flight attendant	8	7.5
Years of service	Below 5 years	40	37.4
	From 5 - under 10 years	47	43.9
	Between 10 - 20 years	18	16.8
	Above 20 years	2	1.9

Income	Below 20 millions VND	43	40.2
	Between 21 - 30 millions VND	44	41.1
	Between 31 - 50 millions VND	17	15.9
	Above 50 millions VND	3	2.8

(Source: Author's research)

The percentage of men and women in the research sample is not significantly different, according to Table 2 figures. The majority of flight attendants (60.7%) are young adults between the ages of 18 and 26, which is appropriate given the nature of the work, which demands flexibility and good health. The majority of flight attendants (56.1%) has a bachelor's degree, which satisfies the prerequisites for customer service and communication abilities. The majority of cabin crew members are single (71%) and mostly work as flight attendants (92.5%), making them ideal for jobs requiring a high degree of flexibility to ensure the flight attendant team runs smoothly. The group's working seniority, which is centered among those with 5 - 10 years of experience (43.9%), demonstrates steadiness and dedication. Lastly, the common salary is from 21 to 30 million VND (41.1%), with a clear differentiation between management positions and regular flight attendants.

4.2. Testing the measurement model

4.2.1. Assessing the quality of observed variables

To evaluate whether the observed variables are valuable or not, the outer loading factor in the PLS-SEM algorithm is used. According to Hair et al. (2017), the recommended outer loading factor for a meaningful observed variable is 0.7 or higher.

Table 3: Standardized regression weight

	DV	IL	SK	TL
DV1	0.976			
DV2	0.969			
DV3	0.974			
DV4	0.966			
IL2		0.949		
IL3		0.949		
IL4		0.940		
SK1			0.954	
SK2			0.954	
SK4			0.933	
TL2				0.840
TL3				0.923
TL4				0.949

(Source: Author's data)

The outer loading coefficient of observed variables is a measure of the degree of link between the observed variable and the parent latent variable that is used to evaluate the quality of

observed variables. The square root of the absolute R2 value of the linear regression from the parent latent variable to the child observable variable is essentially what Smart PLS 4.0.9.5 refers to as outer loading. All of the observed variables included in the research model have good meaning, according to the results of the outer loading coefficient analysis, and they all meet the quality standards (outer loadings > 0.7).

4.2.2. Evaluation of reliability and convergence of the scale

The reliability of the scale is assessed through two main indexes: Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. Cronbach's Alpha is a traditional index measuring reliability, while Composite Reliability is more commonly used in PLS-SEM analysis. In this study, the data is considered reliable when the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is ≥ 0.7 (DeVellis, 2012) and the composite reliability coefficient (rho_C) is ≥ 0.5 (Hair et al., 2013). The results of the study show that both reliability indices are above the required level of 0.7 and are in the range of 0.8 to 1, indicating that the scales of the study are very good. Therefore, the reliability of the established construct is high.

Table 4: Standardized regression weight

Scale	Encryption (Number of Variables)	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Service Sabotage	DV (4 variables)	0.980	0.985	0.943
Organizational Silence	IL (3 variables)	0.952	0.966	0.875
Mental Health Deterioration	SK (3 variables)	0.942	0.963	0.896
Psychological Contract	TL (3 variables)	0.890	0.931	0.819

(Source: Author's findings)

The convergent validity of the scale is assessed based on the average variance extracted (AVE) index. According to Hock and Ringle (2010), a scale is considered to have convergent validity if the AVE is 0.5 or higher, which means that the latent variable can explain at least 50% of the variation of each observed variable. If the AVE index is less than 0.5, the observed variables with low outer loading should be eliminated. The results of the AVE convergent validity test in the study showed that all constructs have AVE values greater than 0.5, proving that the concepts in the model have convergent validity.

4.2.3. Evaluating the discriminant validity of the scale

When compared to other concepts in the model, discriminant validity shows how unique a notion is. The study employed the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) index to evaluate the discriminant validity of the scale. According to Henseler et al. (2015), discriminant validity is guaranteed if this value is smaller than 0.9. Kline (2015) and Clark & Watson (1995) employ a stricter cutoff point of 0.85.

Table 5: Factors' discriminant values

	DV	IL	SK	TL
DV	0.971			
IL	0.795	0.935		
SK	0.824	0.828	0.947	
TL	0.738	0.743	0.839	0.905

DV	0.971			
IL	0.795	0.935		
SK	0.824	0.828	0.947	
TL	0.738	0.743	0.839	0.905

(Source: Author's findings)

The research results show that most of the HTMT values are less than 1. Therefore, the results of the scale's discrimination assessment are still at an acceptable level. Thus, all factors meet the requirements for discriminant validity.

4.2.4. Verification of multi-collinearity violation assumption

In the research model, multi-collinearity between independent variables is evaluated using the variance inflation factor (VIF) (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982). Multi-collinearity is not a significant issue if the VIF value is less than 10, claim Hair et al. (2017).

Table 6: Variance inflation factor

	VIF
IL2	6.798
IL3	6.589
IL4	5.045
SK1	5.279
SK2	5.279
SK4	3.588
TL2	2.056
TL3	3.397
TL4	4.149

(Source: Author's findings)

The results show that the VIF coefficients of the variables range from 2.056 to 6.798, all less than 10. The VIF for each index is below the recommended threshold. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no multi-collinearity between the components in the study.

4.3. Structural model testing

The structural model showing the relationship between the research concepts was tested through bootstrapping technique (Table 7 and Figure 2).

Table 7: Path coefficients

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ((O/STDEV))	P values	Conclusion
IL → DV	0.343	0.352	0.127	2.696	0.007	Approved
IL → SK	0.453	0.451	0.067	6.793	0.000	Approved
SK → DV	0.445	0.434	0.140	3.183	0.001	Approved
TL → DV	0.112	0.115	0.112	1.005	0.315	Declined
TL → SK	0.504	0.505	0.071	7.116	0.000	Approved

(Source: Author's analysis)

The results show that all the impact relationships are statistically significant (p value < 0.05), so all research hypotheses H1-1, H1-2, H2-1, H3 are accepted. However, it is unable to demonstrate that psychological contract violations have any effect on service sabotage behavior for hypothesis H2-2 (p value > 0.05). At a significance level of 5%, the elements of psychological contract violation and organizational silence have an effect on rising mental health deterioration and service sabotage conduct in terms of impact direction. Assessing the degree to which the independent variable, the mediating variable, influences the dependent variable is also based on the path coefficient value; in particular, the order from large to small is as follows:

Psychological Contract → Mental Health Deterioration (0.504) > Organizational Silence → Mental Health Deterioration (0.453) > Mental Health Deterioration → Service Sabotage (0.445) > Organizational Silence → Service Sabotage (0.343).

According to this research, their mental health is significantly impacted by organizational silence and psychological contract violations, which ultimately results in service sabotage. This could help to explain why flight attendants' mental health deteriorates and they may act in ways that lower the quality of service they offer when they feel ignored, uncommunicative, or unsupported by their company.

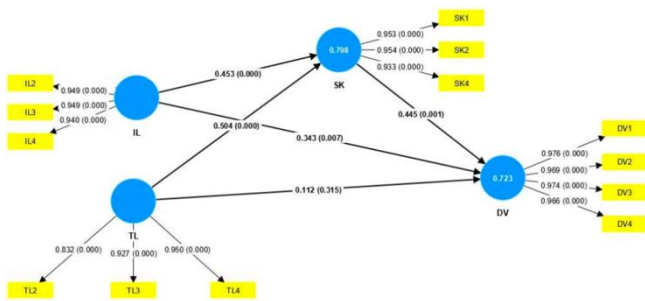


Figure 2: Result of structural model (Source: Author’s analysis)

5. Conclusion

The current study evaluates the impact of job stressors on the mental health and service sabotage behaviors of flight attendants at Vietnam Airlines. The findings confirm the relationship between workplace stressors, namely, organizational silence and psychological contract breach, and the deterioration of mental health, which in turn leads to increased service sabotage behaviors among flight attendants at Vietnam Airlines. Additionally, the study highlights the mediating role of mental health decline in the link between job stressors and service sabotage behaviors. However, the results indicate that psychological contract breach does not directly influence service sabotage behaviors among Vietnam Airlines flight attendants.

These findings reinforce and expand upon prior research on workplace stress, organizational commitment, mental health, service sabotage behaviors, job satisfaction, customer service quality, and employee turnover (Kyungjin Kate Yum et al., 2024; Kieun Lee et al., 2022). Furthermore, this study contributes to the theoretical framework and measurement scales of previous research concerning the effects of workplace stressors on

mental health and service sabotage behaviors. It provides valuable insights for managing job stress, enhancing mental health, and reducing service sabotage behaviors among Vietnam Airlines flight attendants. Ultimately, these findings can inform strategies to improve overall organizational effectiveness, retain frontline employees, and elevate the national airline’s position to new heights.

6. Managerial Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for managing workplace stress, improving mental health, and minimizing service sabotage behaviors among flight attendants.

First, to address psychological contract breaches, airline management should review and adjust employment terms, including salary, allowances, and career advancement opportunities, to ensure fairness and motivate flight attendants. In addition, implementing reasonable employee welfare policies, enhancing professional training opportunities, and fostering skill development will support career growth, reduce dissatisfaction, and strengthen long-term commitment.

Second, to mitigate organizational silence, Vietnam Airlines should establish effective two-way communication channels that allow flight attendants to share their opinions and workplace experiences more freely. Encouraging participation in meetings, innovation groups, and feedback mechanisms will create a transparent work environment, reduce organizational stagnation, and promote stronger employee engagement.

Finally, to enhance the mental health of flight attendants, the airline should organize recreational activities and team-building programs to alleviate stress and strengthen team cohesion. Additionally, providing mental health insurance packages and psychological support services will help flight attendants maintain work-life balance, leading to improved job performance and satisfaction.

7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this study successfully meets its research objectives, several limitations remain. First, the study employs a convenience sampling method, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should adopt probability sampling techniques and expand the sampling frame to enhance representativeness.

Second, this study focuses only on two independent variables related to job stress. Future research could explore additional attributes that may influence flight attendants' mental health and service sabotage behaviors.

Lastly, this study does not account for control variables such as gender, age, education level, and income. Future studies should consider these demographic factors to gain deeper insights into how job stressors affect the mental health and service sabotage behaviors of Vietnam Airlines flight attendants.

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