




Article

Impact of CSR on Organizational Behavior during a Pandemic: Highlighting Public Health and Safety in the Airline Industry

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Abstract: This study expands Carroll's CSR typology with the public health and safety dimension to examine how the airline industry's CSR and public health and safety activities influence flight attendants' organizational identification, self-esteem, and commitment to the company during COVID-19. A total of 342 South Korean flight attendants participated in online surveys. Based on social identity theory and using structural equation modeling (SEM), the study reveals that ethical-, economic-, and philanthropic-CSR and public health and safety are positively related to organizational identification and that all are linked to the self-esteem and organizational commitment of flight attendants. However, legal-CSR did not affect their organizational identification. The results suggest that "public health and safety" should be applied when initiatives aim to enhance flight attendants' organizational behavior. The study's findings contribute to the literature by extending the original CSR model and providing theoretical and practical implications for academic researchers and airlines during a pandemic.

Keywords: flight attendants; corporate social responsibility; public health and safety; organizational identification; self-esteem; organizational commitment



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1. Introduction

With corporate social responsibility (CSR) now a major part of many business practices, the airline industry is under growing pressure to provide a clean, safe, and reliable transportation service to their employees and passengers [1,2]. However, the recent COVID-19 pandemic posed new CSR challenges for an industry struggling to stay viable. By October 2020, the World Health Organization [3] confirmed 30 million cases of COVID-19 and more than one million deaths worldwide. Given that researchers have shown that influenza-type diseases can spread rapidly on aircraft [4], airlines prioritized reliable health and safety protocols to reduce exposure to significant risks of infection by flight attendants and passengers. However, such activities require significant financial investment. Not surprisingly, the pandemic hit the airline industry hard with canceled flights, staff layoffs, and new hygiene practices for cabin crews [5,6]. To make matters worse, many flight attendants were furloughed [7]. As airlines neared bankruptcy, the industry explored ways to reduce costs, modify CSR activities (e.g., environmentally sustainable commitment), and overcome unprecedented challenges such as protecting employees and passengers against novel viruses [8]. As they attempt to avoid bankruptcy, airlines may struggle to balance CSR activities with business viability, at least in the short term.

Carroll [9,10] highlights the four types of CSR: (1) economic, (2) legal, (3) ethical, and (4) direct philanthropy. For airline managers, limiting the spread of disease and keeping passengers and employees safe during a pandemic is a significant new duty. Nevertheless, researchers have paid little attention to how airline companies are expanding their CSR models to keep both their employees and passengers safe, and how flight attendants view

their company's CSR management and safety protocols during a pandemic. Although the literature [11] has introduced "safety activity" as a variable for the airline industry's CSR model, safety-related CSR dimensions have typically been applied to measure passenger perceptions of how airlines avoid traffic-related accidents. To address this issue, the present study develops a new safety-CSR measure that assesses flight attendants' perception of their company's practices to mitigate and control COVID-19. The empirical evidence shows that employees respond positively when their employer cares about staff safety and well-being [12,13]. Therefore, this study posits that when employers prioritize the well-being of their employees and provide pandemic-related safety resources, the employees, in turn, increase their organizational identification, commitment, and self-esteem.

Although the extant literature has focused on the effect of CSR on consumer behavior [14–16], few studies have investigated the impact of CSR on the behavior of employees working in the airline industry. While some CSR experts investigated the employees' perception of CSR activities and how it related to their job engagement [17] and career satisfaction [18], the studies have paid little attention to the relationship between CSR perception and organizational identification. In the present study, it is believed that organizational identification has an important mediating role in the relationship between CSR and the organizational behavior (e.g., self-esteem and commitment) of flight attendants.

According to social identity theory [19], people tend to associate with a particular social group (e.g., institute affiliation, family, sports team, etc.) to experience a sense of belonging and pride. Understanding the level of organizational identification for flight attendants is important for the industry because the evidence shows that employees with strong organizational identity perform much better at work than those with lower organizational identification [20]. Nonetheless, few studies of the airline industry have examined this issue.

Therefore, guided by social identity theory, the present study fills this gap by applying Carroll's four types of CSR and "public health and safety" to examine how CSR links to the flight attendants' organizational identification and how this, in turn, leads to higher work commitments and self-esteem. Additionally, because health standards may become an airline's most important CSR activity, this study argues that pandemic-related safety plans should be part of the airline industry's sustainable business models and help airlines to re-evaluate their role of responsibilities and obligations to their customers, employees, and the global community.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

2.1. Concept of Constructs

2.1.1. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Public Health and Safety

CSR originated in the 1950s when Bowen [21] used the term 'social responsibility' to mean "the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society" (p. 6). Often cited by theorists, Carroll [9,10] summarized CSR as a company's commitment to being a good corporate citizen, by operating a profitable business and contributing to a greater social good. He identified four principal CSR practices that corporate organizations should follow: (a) economic—businesses should be profitable, (b) legal—they should abide by laws, rules, and regulations, (c) ethical—they should operate morally and ethically, and (d) philanthropic—they should contribute to and support the community.

Recent research confirms that well-established CSR activities can lead to a positive corporate image [22], improved customer satisfaction [16], higher purchase intentions [23], healthier profits, and greater trust by stakeholders [24]. Furthermore, evidence shows that CSR can improve business relationships with communities [25]. Thus, the key concept of CSR is that companies and communities can use CSR activities to their mutual benefit.

Although Carroll's [10] framework is well established and applied in many fields, some CSR researchers include "safety" as an additional CSR principle. In the food retail

industry, for example, some retailers will not sell genetically modified foods and have a strict hygiene practices to minimize the risk of transmitting foodborne diseases [26]. Teng et al. [27] suggest that hotels that offer quarantine rooms and resources to travelers/residents returning from overseas can generate a positive CSR strategy during a public health crisis such as COVID-19. Cho et al. [11] introduced “safety activity” as a new variable for the airline industry’s CSR model, in which the authors emphasized safety protocols as an important part of the industry’s CSR. Given that passengers are often anxious or fearful when they fly, this new activity is particularly relevant during a pandemic, when customers look to the industry and flight attendants for reassurance.

Measures have been implemented to mitigate influenza-type viruses that are easily transmitted at airports and on aircraft, and can spread quickly to other countries. Air travel presents a high risk of contagion, given the proximity of aircraft seats and passengers being in confined space. To help reduce this risk, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), airplane manufacturers, industry stakeholders, and even the World Health Organization (WHO) have worked to develop non-pharmaceutical intervention guidelines to limit the spread of infectious diseases on aircraft. For example, IATA recently released new guidelines and standardized procedures for sanitizing and disinfecting aircraft cabins [28]. The WHO also gives hygiene and public health advice specifically to ground personnel and aircraft crews [3]. For this reason, the present study argues that public health and safety activity should be an integral part of the airline industry’s business models to protect passengers and crew from exposure to disease and to safeguard the industry’s reputation.

Airline companies in South Korea have taken steps to help keep flight attendants and passengers safe and informed about COVID-19. According to Korean Airline’s latest safety guidelines [29], airline authorities require all cabin crew members to perform their jobs on the aircraft while wearing facial masks, gowns, safety glasses, and latex gloves. Furthermore, the flight crew must follow protocol, including: (a) checking their body temperature with touchless temperature scanners; (b) discarding gloves appropriately in cabin waste containers; (c) washing hands before handling inflight meals; (d) keeping physical distance from passengers; (e) monitoring passengers who do not wear face masks; (f) ensuring that social distancing is practiced by passengers; and (g) advising against flight crew members leaving their hotel during a layover.

Asiana Airlines, another major South Korean airline, has employed similar safety measures. In addition to the safety rules that have already been discussed, the airline recommends that all passengers use web/mobile check-in during the COVID-19 period to reduce direct contact with airline staff [30]. Moreover, the company says that it regularly disinfects and sanitizes its aircraft cabins upon arrival. It installed high-quality air circulation systems to ventilate the cabins every 2–3 min.

2.1.2. Organizational Identification

According to Ashforth and Mael [31], organizational identification is the sense of belonging that people feel toward an organization. Riketta [32] defines it as “the process of incorporating the perception of oneself as a member of a particular organization into one’s general self-definition” (p. 360). Organizational identification is based on social identity theory [33], a widely accepted theoretical model that explains why people tend to identify with or desire to be part of a particular social group. In the workplace, employees typically view their organization as a social group, a space in which they develop their careers, earn income, and create social bonds.

A general agreement is that highly identified employees are more likely to engage with and show loyalty to the organization [34]. Empirical evidence shows that those who identify as being part of a company are likely to support its values, business philosophy, and social norms [35]. Employees who strongly identify with a company are likely to think and act from the perspective of that company [36]. For the aviation industry, employees are encouraged to believe in and trust the company’s operating practices.

2.1.3. Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is the psychological state of intensity that employees feel about the organization they work for or to which they belong [37]. In other words, employees who trust and appreciate an organization's goals and values will want to remain a member of it. Although organizational commitment is often compared to organizational identification because the two concepts have a high level of synchronization, some scholars argue that they are fundamentally different ideas. For example, according to Stinglhamber et al. [38], organizational identification can be defined as self-perceptions of identity with the organization whereas organizational commitment refers to the employee's attitude towards it. Marique and Stinglhamber [39] assert that, although organizational identification is based on an employee's subjective perception of perceived similarity with the organization, organizational commitment can be viewed as an exchange process in which members become devoted to their company and deliver high-quality work for the organization.

2.1.4. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the overall positive assessment and descriptive conceptualization that people build and maintain for and about themselves [40]. It is a feeling of self-value and the desire to have a positive feeling of oneself [41]. Because people with high self-esteem regard themselves as valuable [40], many organizations see it as an important factor in the success of the company and its employees.

In the workplace, the employee's organizational-based self-esteem is regarded as a critical and consistent performance generator, and is the degree to which an employee believes in him/herself as a competent and valuable member of the company [42,43]. Employees with high levels of self-esteem are generally more confident in their abilities and are often viewed by their peers as skilled, motivated, and authorized [42].

2.1.5. Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory proposes that individuals tend to share a sense of belonging to their group and are set apart from out-group members based on their institute affiliation, class, age, and gender [19]. Previous studies have adopted social identity theory to explain how CSR creates a virtuous reputation and encourages employees to identify with their companies. Mahmood et al. [44] showed that, when an organization engages in CSR activities, its members value being part of that organization, have a sense of belonging, and feel positive and respectful about the business. In the context of tourism and hospitality, Kim et al. [45] used social identity theory to show that employees feel personal pride if their organization cares about CSR activities. In light of this, social identity theory guides the present research to explain how the airline industry's CSR and public health and safety activities influence flight attendants' organizational identification, self-esteem, and commitment to the company during a pandemic.

2.2. Hypothesis Development

2.2.1. Relationship between CSR and Organizational Identification

Although Carroll's [10] multiple dimensions of CSR are well established and have been used in many studies [11,46,47], previous studies have not applied the four dimensions of CSR to employees' organizational identification, especially from the viewpoint of internal marketing. Instead, they treat CSR as a one-dimensional factor for assessing how CSR affects organizational identification [48,49]. For example, using CSR as a single factor to examine how CSR impacts employees' organizational identification, Brammer et al. [48] found that the more a company is committed to socially responsible activities, the stronger the organizational identity is among employees. El-Kassar et al. [50] also found a positive association between CSR and organizational identification; when companies engage in corporate social activities, their employees are more likely to identify with, have a sense of belonging to, and be proud of the company. Moreover, Kim et al. [51] found that community

engagement by companies had a positive effect on their employees' perceived external prestige and enhanced their organizational identification. In reviewing the above literature, it is reasonable to propose that treating CSR as a uni-dimensional construct will positively and significantly influence the organizational identification of flight attendants. However, some scholars of tourism and hospitality have applied multiple dimensions of CSR and found that employees have a varying perspective towards their company's different types of CSR activities [11,46,47]. For example, Lee et al. [46] examined the perceptions of casino employees on CSR and found that the legal-CSR dimension has the strongest impact on organizational behavior.

Applying the same dynamics to the airline industry, we expect that the four dimensions of CSR (i.e., economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic) will help to reveal how flight attendants' organizational identification is affected by an airline company's CSR during COVID-19. More importantly, applying multiple dimensions of CSR should contribute to the organizational identification literature and help to reveal which type of CSR has a significant effect on flight attendants' organizational behavior. Thus, guided by Carroll's [10] four types of CSR, the present study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a (H1a). *Economic CSR is positively associated with the organizational identification of flight attendants.*

Hypothesis 1b (H1b). *Legal CSR is positively associated with the organizational identification of flight attendants.*

Hypothesis 1c (H1c). *Ethical CSR is positively associated with the organizational identification of flight attendants.*

Hypothesis 1d (H1d). *Philanthropic CSR is positively associated with the organizational identification of flight attendants.*

Although there is limited research empirically testing any link between health and safety-CSR and organizational identification, some researchers [52] suggest that when employees believe that their organization cares about their safety and health, the employees' level of attachment and identification towards the company increases. Other research [53] of a banking and telecommunication company in Pakistan found that internal CSR (e.g., supporting workers' health and safety) has a positive indirect effect on their organizational identification. Although Hameed et al. [53] found no direct effect of internal CSR on organizational identification, they assumed that the reason was that developing countries, such as Pakistan, invest little in internal CSR for their employees. Thus, it is possible to predict that, if developed countries or large corporate organizations (e.g., Korean Air, Asiana Airlines) treat their employees well and invest in internal CSR (e.g., flight attendants well-being and safety), the flight attendants will more likely have positive feelings for and identify with their organization.

Because workplace hygiene practices are now routine [54], airlines that prioritize their employees' health and safety should be highly valued by their employees. Thus, the present study predicts that companies focusing on internal CSR (e.g., flight attendants) and ensuring that the staff are safe and healthy during a pandemic may help flight attendants to build a strong identification with the company. Thus, the present study proposes the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *'Public health and safety' is positively associated with the organizational identification of flight attendants.*

2.2.2. Relationship between Organizational Identification and Self-Esteem

Although little research has explored the relationship between employees' organizational identification and self-esteem, one study found that high organizational identification resulted in enhanced self-esteem [55]. Collecting data from two commercial industries in Romania, Cohen-Meitar et al. [55] revealed that employees who identify with their organization have a higher level of organizational-based self-esteem, which leads to enhanced creativity. Additional research shows that positive group identification correlates with high self-esteem [56], which implies that the more people favorably identify with a group (e.g., in-group), the higher their self-esteem. On the basis of the evidence above, the present study predicts that flight attendants will feel better about themselves (i.e., have higher self-esteem) if they perceive that their organization differs positively from other groups or organizations (i.e., they will have higher organizational identification). For example, if the airline industry incorporates pandemic-specific policies, safety procedures, and capabilities into its CSR, flight attendants will respond positively to the industry, increasing their organizational identification and bolstering their self-esteem. Thus, this study posits the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Organizational identification is positively associated with the self-esteem of flight attendants.*

2.2.3. Relationship between Organizational Identification and Organizational Commitment

The idea that organizational identification can predict organizational commitment was claimed by Stinglhamber et al. [38] and Marique and Stinglhamber [39]. To support their claim, Stinglhamber et al. [38] administered an instrument (e.g., organizational identification, affective commitment) of the two models to public companies in Belgium. The results indicated a strong relationship between organizational identification and affective commitment. They found that Belgian employees who believed that their organization's success was also their success (i.e., organizational identification) displayed a higher level of organizational commitment compared to those who had a low organizational identification. Marique and Stinglhamber [39] also found a positive connection between organizational identification and organizational commitment, which revealed that work-group identification and occupational identification had a substantial effect on affective commitment. Similarly, Ellemers et al. [57] examined a link between in-group identification and group commitment in two experimental studies and confirmed group-identification as an important antecedent of commitment. After reviewing the above studies, this study predicts that the organizational identification of flight attendants will positively affect their commitment to the organization. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Organizational identification is positively associated with the organizational commitment of flight attendants.*

2.2.4. Relationship between Self-Esteem and Organizational Commitment

Lastly, the present study examines how self-esteem interacts with organizational commitment. In the hospitality organizational setting, Back et al. [58] revealed that casino employees who have high self-esteem had a higher commitment to the organization. Additional research by Akgunduz [59] reported that self-esteem is a significant factor positively affecting hotel employees' job performance. From a business organizational perspective, having employees with high self-esteem is important because it contributes significantly to a company's success. Thus, this study posits the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *Self-esteem is positively associated with the organizational commitment of flight attendants.*

Based on the literature and hypotheses above, a research model is proposed, as shown in Figure 1.

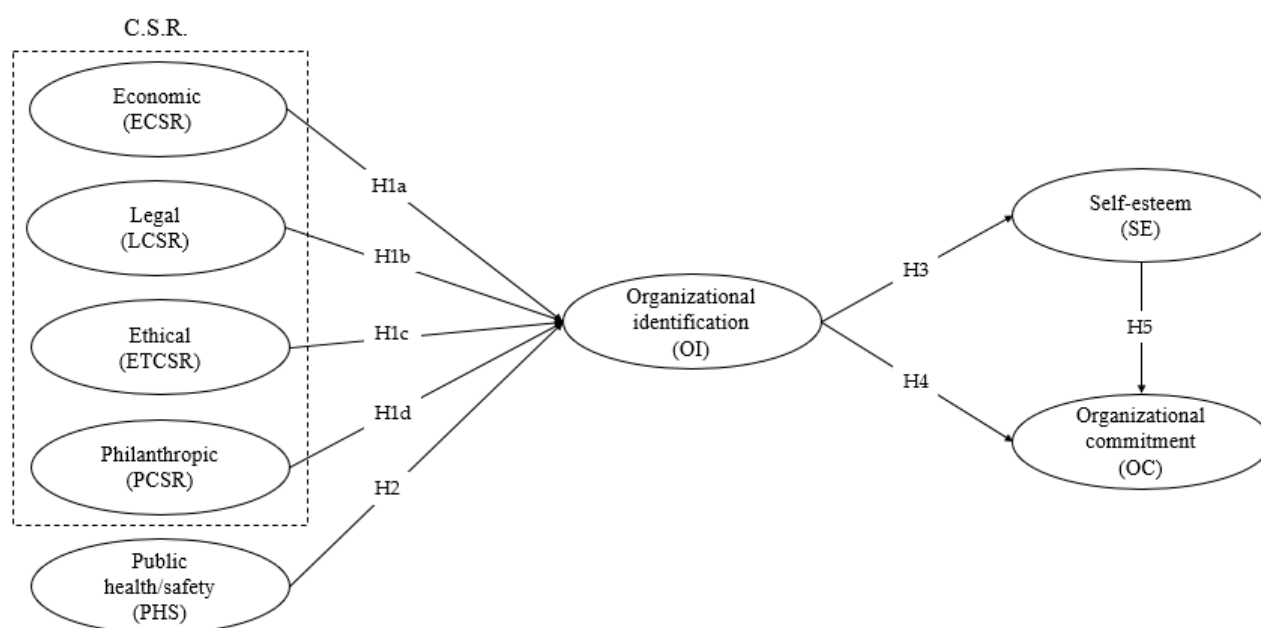


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Measures

This study extracted measurement items from previous research. Specifically, CSR included three items on each of the dimensions (e.g., economic, legal, ethical, philanthropic), which were adopted from the previous literature [10,11,46]. The public health and safety measure adapted five items from Asiana Airlines [30], Cho et al. [11], Ko and Lee [60], and Korean Air [29]. Organizational identification borrowed five items from Smidts et al. [61]. Self-esteem was comprised of three items and organizational commitment consisted of four items, which were both adapted from Back et al. [58].

Because this study surveyed South Korean flight attendants, questions were translated from English to Korean using a blind back-translation technique suggested by Brislin [62]. The translation was then reviewed by two experts (a university professor and a post-doctoral researcher), in both English and Korean to ensure there was no mistranslation. The English version was then confirmed by a native English speaker for accuracy. The study's author then invited two graduate students and five airline managers with relevant tourism/hospitality/airline work experience to take part in the pre-test. During this process, panel members confirmed the clarity of the survey items and were able to distinguish each construct appropriately. Thus, face validity was confirmed. The study then conducted a pilot test by inviting 50 flight attendants to confirm that the questionnaire was intelligible. Face validity was re-confirmed after minor changes.

All items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). After completing construct-related questions, participants were asked to provide their age, gender, marital status, education level, airline company, job title, monthly income level, years of work experience, and changes in employment status during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2. Data Collection

In light of the current pandemic, an online survey was the most appropriate method for data collection because it did not require face-to-face contact between researchers and participants. The present study used Google Forms, an online tool, to create a survey

and share links by email, social media networks, and messenger apps. Because the study targeted a specific population (i.e., flight attendants), a snowball sampling method to recruit respondents in the industry was employed. The first step was to contact airline managers and explain the study's purpose, as well as to obtain permission from the respondents. One of the present study's researchers worked for more than ten years as a flight attendant, which created a network of trust between the researcher and informants and encouraged the latter to complete the surveys. Following permission to distribute the survey questionnaire, flight attendants were invited to join Kakao Talk, a popular mobile messenger app in South Korea. Respondents who provided their contact information at the end of the survey were given a coffee gift card equivalent to USD 1 in appreciation. The survey was conducted from 14–22 October 2020, and a total of 350 flight attendants participated, of which 342 completed the survey, representing a response rate of 98%. There were no missing values because the respondents could not move to the next page or submit surveys unless they had answered all questions.

3.3. Data Analysis

This study used IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 software (New York, NY, USA). In the first stage, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted for the construct validity of safety. Then, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was estimated to examine the measurement model for the research variables. In the second stage, structural equation modeling (SEM) was estimated to examine the underlying relationships between the constructs and test the hypotheses in the research model.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were female (91.8%), married (64.6%), and had a university education (63.5%). Moreover, more than half (64.6%) were 30–39 years old, followed by 40–49 years old (26.0%) and 20–29 years old (8.5%). A third (33.3%) had worked for 10–15 years, followed by 15 years or more (26.0%) and 5–10 years (24.9%). Almost a third (31.9%) reported monthly income in the range of 3–3.99 million Korean Won (KRW), followed by income between KRW 4–4.99 million (31.3%), and an income between KRW 5–5.99 million (15.8%). Given the COVID-19 pandemic, 64.6% of respondents were on paid leave, followed by unpaid leave (18.1%) and no change (17.3%).

4.2. Test of Common Method Bias (CMB)

In this study, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to verify the existence of CMB [63]. If total variance of a single factor is less than 50%, CMB does not affect data [64]. The result of this study reveals that a single factor explained 39.64% of the variance, indicating the non-existence of CMB. Thus, CMB does not affect the data in this study.

4.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis

First, this study implemented EFA for the construct validity of public health and safety. Initially, this study employed the principal components method with varimax rotation to factor analyze the public health and safety items. However, communalities of one item were less than the criteria of 0.5 [65]; thus, the item was deleted (i.e., 'Our airline conducts quarantine inspection related procedure before boarding'). The EFA was then re-run after excluding one item. As shown in Table 2, the EFA of safety was suitable based on KMO = 0.861 and Bartlett's test of sphericity = 1096.242 ($p < 0.001$) [65]. Eigenvalues were greater than 1, factor loadings were greater than 0.6, and Cronbach's alpha was greater than 0.6, exceeding their inherent criteria [65], along with 82.67% of the total variance explained.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics.

	Characteristics	N (342)	%		Characteristics	N (342)	%
Gender	Male	28	8.2	Position	SS (Junior)	145	42.4
	Female	314	91.8		AP (Assistant purser)	107	31.3
Age	20–29 years old	29	8.5		PS (Purser)	82	24.0
	30–39 years old	221	64.6		SP (Senior purser)	8	2.3
	40–49 years old	89	26.0	Affiliated airline	Korean Air	265	77.5
	50 years old or older	3	0.9		Asiana Airlines	49	14.3
					Domestic LCC	26	7.6
Marital status	Married	221	64.6		Foreign airlines	2	0.6
	Single	121	35.4	Monthly income	Under 2 million KRW	16	4.7
Education	College	84	24.6		2–2.99 million KRW	42	12.3
	University	217	63.5		3–3.99 million KRW	109	31.9
	Graduate school	41	12.0		4–4.99 million KRW	107	31.3
Working years	Less than 2 years	20	5.8		5–5.99 million KRW	54	15.8
	2–5 years	34	9.9	Employment status	Over 6 million KRW	14	4.1
	5–10 years	85	24.9		No change	59	17.3
	10–15 years	114	33.3		Paid leave	221	64.6
	Over 15 years	89	26.0		Unpaid leave	62	18.1

Notes. 1 USD is equivalent to 1143 Korean Won (KRW).

Table 2. Results of exploratory factor analysis.

Public Health and Safety	λ	EV	VE	α
Our airline conducts thorough quarantine activities through an integrated quarantine program for safe air travel	0.927			
Our airline responds quickly to prevent quarantine accidents caused by COVID-19	0.910	3.30	82.66	0.930
Our airline complies with the Korean government's infection prevention guidelines	0.902			
Our airline makes active efforts to help relieve anxiety and make air travel safe during the COVID-19 pandemic	0.897			
KMO: 0.861, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $\chi^2 = 1096.242$ ($p < 0.001$). Total variance explained: 82.67%				

Notes. λ : Factor loadings, EV: Eigenvalue, VE: Variance explained, α : Cronbach's alpha.

4.4. Measurement Model

As shown in Table 3, the results of CFA showed a good fit to the data: $\chi^2 = 622.809$, $df = 244$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.552$, $NFI = 0.906$, $TLI = 0.926$, $CFI = 0.940$, $RMSEA = 0.067$, and $SRMR = 0.046$, as suggested by Hair et al. [65]. Six items were deleted because their factor loadings were less than the criteria of 0.5 [65], (i.e., 'Our Airline tries to save operating costs'; 'Our airline complies with international air transport-related laws'; 'Our airline does not release false and exaggerated advertisements'; 'Our airline conducts various socially responsible activities through fundraising'; 'I am sufficiently acknowledged in my organization'; and 'I feel as if this organization's problems are my own'). Standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.580 to 0.908 (Table 3), and average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.540 to 0.854 (Table 4), suggesting satisfactory convergent validity. Further, all constructs for composite reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.776 to 0.959, and Cronbach's alpha (α) values ranged from 0.721 to 0.930 (Table 4), indicating good internal consistency [65]. The AVE values for all constructs were larger than the corresponding coefficients of squared correlations (Table 4), confirming discriminant validity [66]. Moreover, all items with skewness and kurtosis values were lower than the criteria of 2 and 7 [67], indicating no problem with non-normality.

Table 3. Results of confirmatory factor analysis.

Constructs and Items	λ	M	SD	SK	KU
Economic CSR (ECSR)					
Our airline contributes to economic development through profit-making	0.667	3.61	0.889	−0.264	−0.292
Our airline generates much employment impact	0.580	3.16	0.935	0.086	−0.242
Our airline is committed to long-term economic growth	0.810	3.69	0.779	−0.182	−0.331
Legal CSR (LCSR)					
Our airline is committed to operating the business legally	0.735	3.81	0.815	−0.356	−0.299
Our airline complies with customer protection laws for customers	0.818	3.98	0.726	−0.195	−0.482
Our airline complies with airline service-related regulations	0.745	4.09	0.705	−0.327	−0.295
Ethical CSR (ETCSR)					
Our airline tries to build a more transparent company	0.896	3.20	0.994	−0.216	−0.601
Our airline tries to be a reliable company with correct moral principles	0.852	3.32	0.885	−0.173	−0.148
Our airline provides customers with accurate corporate management information	0.718	3.45	0.854	−0.194	−0.265
Philanthropic CSR (PCSR)					
Our airline provides a variety of donations	0.873	3.59	0.811	−0.156	−0.278
Our airline develops a campaign for helping the needy	0.873	3.77	0.772	−0.109	−0.454
Our airline is committed to building a better community	0.840	3.69	0.802	−0.026	−0.555
Public health and safety (PHS)					
Our airline responds quickly to prevent quarantine accidents caused by COVID-19	0.883	4.17	0.758	−0.578	−0.196
Our airline conducts thorough quarantine activities through an integrated quarantine program for safe air travel	0.908	4.07	0.778	−0.423	−0.443
Our airline makes active efforts to help relieve anxiety and make air travel safe during the COVID-19 pandemic	0.852	4.07	0.772	−0.423	−0.400
Our airline complies with the Korean government's infection prevention guidelines	0.865	4.19	0.727	−0.487	−0.359
Organizational identification (OI)					
I feel strong ties with my organization	0.804	3.49	0.899	−0.238	0.005
I experience a strong sense of belonging to my organization	0.827	3.62	0.897	−0.336	−0.067
I feel proud to work for my organization	0.859	3.82	0.820	−0.161	−0.628
Self-esteem (SE)					
I am important in this organization	0.872	3.51	0.738	−0.197	−0.041
I am valuable in this organization	0.833	3.53	0.749	−0.164	−0.064
I am trusted in this organization	0.904	3.59	0.695	−0.365	0.580
Organizational commitment (OC)					
I have no intention to leave this organization	0.859	3.47	1.018	−0.449	−0.354
I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization	0.901	3.46	1.071	−0.354	−0.600
Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as a desire	0.825	3.35	1.022	−0.380	−0.367

Notes. Measurement model fit: $\chi^2 = 622.809$, $df = 244$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.552$, $NFI = 0.906$, $TLI = 0.926$, $CFI = 0.940$, $RMSEA = 0.067$, and $SRMR = 0.046$; λ = standardized factor loading, M = mean, SD = standard deviation, SK = skewness, KU = kurtosis.

Table 4. Correlations and discriminant validity.

CR	ECSR	LCSR	ETCSR	PCSR	PHS	OI	SE	OC
ECSR	0.540							
LCSR	0.676 (0.457)	0.716						
ETCSR	0.681 (0.464)	0.613 (0.376)	0.728					
PCSR	0.426 (0.181)	0.473 (0.224)	0.423 (0.179)	0.821				
PHS	0.553 (0.306)	0.747 (0.558)	0.431 (0.186)	0.523 (0.274)	0.854			

Table 4. Cont.

	CR	ECSR	LCSR	ETCSR	PCSR	PHS	OI	SE	OC
OI		0.707 (0.500)	0.57 (0.325)	0.661 (0.437)	0.54 (0.292)	0.619 (0.383)	0.744		
SE		0.397 (0.158)	0.316 (0.100)	0.323 (0.104)	0.363 (0.132)	0.312 (0.097)	0.624 (0.389)	0.854	
OC		0.345 (0.119)	0.315 (0.099)	0.55 (0.303)	0.354 (0.125)	0.195 (0.038)	0.543 (0.295)	0.477 (0.228)	0.732
CR		0.776	0.883	0.889	0.932	0.959	0.897	0.946	0.891
α		0.721	0.807	0.858	0.896	0.930	0.900	0.925	0.890

Notes. Bold diagonal values represent average variance extracted. Values in parenthesis represent squared correlation coefficient. CR = composite reliability and α = Cronbach's alpha.

4.5. Structural Model and Testing Hypotheses

Figure 2 shows that the SEM had a generally good fit to the data: $\chi^2 = 678.817$, $df = 254$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.673$, NFI = 0.898, TLI = 0.921, CFI = 0.933, RMSEA = 0.070, and SRMR = 0.056, being close to or exceeding the minimum criteria of Hair et al. [65].

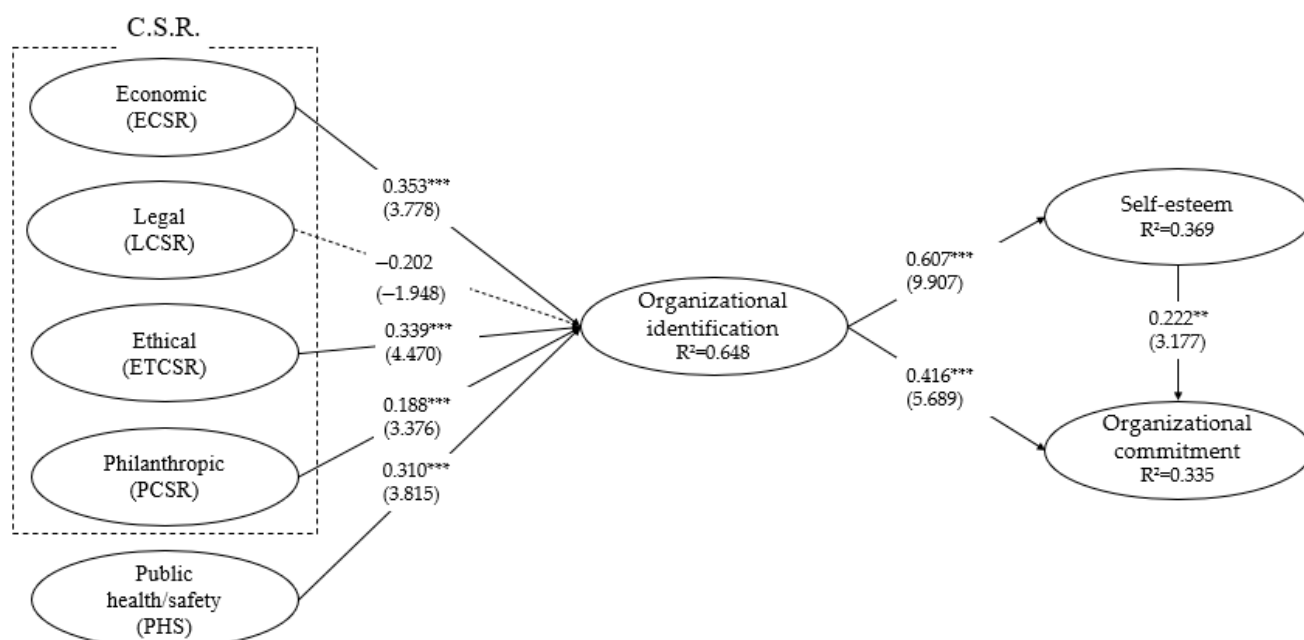


Figure 2. Estimation of the structural model. Notes. $\chi^2 = 678.817$, $df = 254$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.673$, NFI = 0.898, TLI = 0.921, CFI = 0.933, RMSEA = 0.070, and SRMR = 0.056; ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

As shown in Figure 2, organizational identification was positively affected by economic CSR ($\beta_{\text{ECSR} \rightarrow \text{OI}} = 0.353$, $t = 3.778$, $p < 0.001$), ethical CSR ($\beta_{\text{ETCSR} \rightarrow \text{OI}} = 0.339$, $t = 4.470$, $p < 0.001$), philanthropic CSR ($\beta_{\text{PCSR} \rightarrow \text{OI}} = 0.188$, $t = 3.376$, $p < 0.001$), and public health and safety ($\beta_{\text{PHS} \rightarrow \text{OI}} = 0.310$, $t = 3.815$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1a, H1c, H1d, and H2. Organizational identification positively influenced self-esteem ($\beta_{\text{OI} \rightarrow \text{SE}} = 0.607$, $t = 9.907$, $p < 0.001$) and organizational commitment ($\beta_{\text{OI} \rightarrow \text{OC}} = 0.416$, $t = 5.689$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3 and H4. Self-esteem was found to have a positive effect on organizational commitment ($\beta_{\text{SE} \rightarrow \text{OC}} = 0.222$, $t = 3.177$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H5. However, legal CSR was insignificant on organizational identification, rejecting H1b. In addition, CSR factors explained 64.8% of organizational identification, which was explained by 36.9% from self-esteem and 33.5% from organizational commitment.

5. Conclusions and Implications

This study applied a conceptual framework to examine how Carroll's four types of CSR, together with a 'public health and safety' dimension, influence organizational identification, self-esteem, and the commitment of flight attendants to their organization. The study's findings indicate that organizational identification plays a mediating role in the relationships between CSR, public health and safety, self-esteem, and organizational commitment. In particular, ethical-, economic-, and philanthropic-CSR, and public health and safety significantly relate to flight attendants' organizational identification, which subsequently links to increased self-esteem and organizational commitment. However, legal-CSR did not interact with other constructs. This study also found that the public health and safety construct had a significant indirect effect on self-esteem and organizational commitment via organizational identification, suggesting that public health and safety should be an integral part of the airline industry's business model when its initiatives are to enhance organizational behavior. Lastly, the study found that self-esteem is an important determinant of the flight attendants' commitment to their company. Based on these results, the study has several theoretical and practical implications for airlines studies.

5.1. Theoretical Implication

The present study confirms the theoretical factor structure which is in line with Carroll's [9,10] theoretical model, in which CSR is best explained when researchers consider CSR as having multiple dimensions. Therefore, the proposed conceptual model contributes to the literature by broadening our perspective of this important construct. Moreover, the study's results reveal that economic-CSR was the highest indicator for predicting self-esteem and organizational commitment through organizational identification, whereas the lowest indicator was philanthropic-CSR. Contrary to the authors' expectation, legal-CSR was the only statistically insignificant factor. An insignificant relationship between legal-CSR and organizational identification may be attributable to the fact that flight attendants have not considered legal-CSR to be a significant factor affecting their organizational identity. The reason for this is unclear; thus, further investigation is needed to see whether the relationship interacts with other cases. We can explain the positive effect of economic-, ethical-, and philanthropic-CSR on organizational identification using social identity theory, which suggests that employees feel a strong sense of belonging and have a better self-image when their organization values CSR activities [19,45]. Thus, from the perspective of social identity theory, airlines that behave ethically and philanthropically have a positive effect on the self-image of flight attendants, which encourages them to see themselves as valued members of the company.

Further, although there is considerable literature about airline's CSR-related research and most airlines have implemented environmental sustainability-related CSR activities [68,69], scholars have yet to examine how 'public health and safety' plays a role in the airline industry's CSR model. This study found that using a CSR and public health and safety as an additional factor for the airline industry is feasible. Given that public health and safety is theoretically and statistically validated as an important factor in the airline industry's business model, the study adds to the extant literature by extending the original CSR of Carroll with pandemic-related public health and safety measures during an infectious outbreak. The proposed conceptual model provides a broader understanding of how the CSR dimension and public health and safety influence the organizational behavior of flight attendants.

Moreover, although most CSR-related literature has examined the customer perceptions of CSR activities [14–16], the present study considers these activities from the employees' (e.g., flight attendants) perspectives and identifies which have the most influence on their organizational behavior. The study's findings indicate that the public health and safety dimension had the highest average mean score, suggesting that flight attendants perceive that their company has managed its safety-activities (e.g., preventing quarantine accidents) well during the outbreak. This result is consistent with Kucukusta et al. [70],

who found that airline staff in Hong Kong consider safety issues (e.g., food and alcohol safety) to be the most important element in the airline's CSR. Similarly, Amponsah-Tawiah and Mensah [52] found that employees have a higher emotional attachment, identification, and commitment to a company when they believe that it provides a safe and healthy work environment for its staff. These results are consistent with organizational support theory, which posits that work performance and commitment improve significantly when employees feel valued by their company [71]. The current study thus contributes to the general understanding of how flight attendants' perception of an airline's public health and safety activity links to organizational behavior.

To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to empirically test and suggest the mediating role of organizational identification on the relationship between CSR/public health and safety, and self-esteem within the airline industry. This study also explores the mediating effect of organizational identification on CSR and public health and safety, and organizational commitment linkage. Given that organizational identification is an important factor in employment, any insights gleaned from its study should interest organizational researchers and airline practitioners.

Finally, this study adds to the growing literature by identifying organizational identification as an important factor that directly influences the self-esteem and organizational commitment of flight attendants. This study revealed that those with higher organizational identification had greater self-esteem and commitment to the organization. The results are consistent with a study by Spinner-Halev and Theiss-Morse [56], who revealed that when people hold favorable feelings towards and a high opinion of their group (i.e., high group identity), they are likely to have higher self-esteem. Thus, the present study highlights that organizational identification can be treated as a key mechanism that positively affects the organizational behavior of flight attendants.

5.2. Practical Implication

This study has several practical implications for the airline industry's CSR strategies. Given that an airline's economic-, ethical-, and philanthropic-CSR, and public health/safety, have been identified as significant determinants of predicting the organizational behavior of flight attendants, airlines should consider internal CSR marketing efforts. This means that the effectiveness of CSR is not only restricted to external stakeholders (i.e., customers) but also affects internal stakeholders (i.e., flight attendants). As mentioned earlier, Hameed et al. [53] revealed that companies that treat their employees well and invest in internal CSR (e.g., their well-being, welfare) increased the employees' respect for and identification with the company. Consistent with Hameed et al. [53], the present study shows that flight attendants are more likely to have an increased organizational identification, self-esteem, and commitment to the organization when their company has a clear CSR agenda. Additionally, if there are no vaccines or pharmaceutical treatment interventions during a pandemic, the airline industry should establish non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI) to safeguard their airline staff. Airline managers should develop a CSR/safety marketing strategy for airline staff. For example, airlines and airport quarantine departments should provide advanced clinical/hygiene services for their employees. An interview with a Korean flight attendant (female, 38 years) confirmed that major airline companies in South Korea now require staff to check body temperature with touchless scanners and report their health status through a self-diagnosis mobile app before departure. For a more secure and thorough quarantine practice, management should provide mandatory weekly antibody tests (i.e., a COVID-19 test kit) for flight attendants, install a full-body disinfection tunnel, and provide shower facilities, sanitized changing rooms, and laundry/dry-cleaning services at airports. While most Korean flight attendants are required to wear uniforms (skirts and heels) while commuting to and from work, managers should consider whether wearing uniforms outside the airport presents a risk to the general public. Easing dress codes and permitting employees to change after landing should be explored to increase organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Airlines may consider adding a corporate logo to uniforms (or gowns) so that flight attendants can define themselves as employees of that airline and advertise its brand to passengers. Because personal protective equipment such as gowns, masks, and safety glasses can add to the anxieties of passengers, companies should re-design their personal protective equipment to advertise their safety-CSR and build a friendly image. For example, they may provide a ‘visible mouth mask’ or ‘protective bubble’ that covers the head to the chest such that passengers can see the flight attendants’ facial expressions (i.e., smiles).

Before releasing the company’s CSR report to the public, the company’s CSR efforts may be more successful if it shares and celebrates its protocols with employees. In this way, managers can encourage flight attendants to understand the positive impact of CSR practices by publishing CSR reports on the company’s webpage, and forums or training them online. Because some scholars have argued that simply sending an internal CSR newsletter may not be effective [49], an open discussion and communication between managers and employees regarding the company’s CSR agenda should contribute to flight attendants’ organizational commitment, which will ultimately increase passenger’s satisfaction.

Still, it is important to note that, regardless of how good a safety program is, its effectiveness will be compromised if it is not conscientiously followed. Airlines should collaborate with public health experts and epidemiologists to develop mandatory health and safety training courses for flight attendants. Those who complete the courses may be certified to participate in safety management committee meetings, which should help employees to develop new safety skills and implement infection-prevention protocols. Understanding how to safeguard against viral transmissions on aircraft will boost confidence, satisfaction, self-esteem, and commitment to the company. Inevitably, incorporating such programs into CSR programs will increase costs, but not doing so might be more expensive in the long term.

5.3. Limitation and Future Direction

Although this study contributes theoretically and practically to the CSR literature—specifically for the airline industry—it contains several limitations. First, the sample was collected solely from Korean-based airlines and, while findings may have relevance to other airlines that operate under similar standards, nevertheless, they may be limited in generalizability. Flight attendants from different nationalities or working for other airlines may have different perceptions of their company’s CSR activities. For this reason, future studies should collect samples from other regions for generalizability. Second, because the study’s proposed conceptual model focused on flight attendants, replicating it in other hospitality sectors (e.g., hotels, cruise lines) or jurisdictions (e.g., airline ground-staff) would extend its scope and value to an industry (travel, tourism, and hospitality) that has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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