

Age and Trust in Air Traffic Controllers: A Comparison Between Two Countries

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Abstract

Passengers' level of trust is an important metric in the aviation industry. It allows for a base understanding of the mindset of passengers travelling through the system. This study seeks to measure passengers' trust in Air Traffic Controllers. It is important for passengers to trust air traffic controllers and their ability to guide their vessel safely through a busy airspace. The idea of declining trust within the Indian population in an aging workforce is known. Additionally, gender bias is an issue world over in the job market. This study seeks to understand if differences exist between Indian and American participants in their levels of trust of Air Traffic Controllers. These levels of trust were tested using the dependent variables as the age and gender of the air traffic controllers. The United States is deemed to be a more individualistic society and India one of a more collectivistic society, each with its own set of cultural norms and characteristics. This leads to a hypothesis concerning Age-Trust relationship within different cultures. A total of 376 participants from India and the United States were asked to assess their level of trust in an air traffic controller during an emergency situation. The data recorded showed variations in trust and were used to conduct a factorial analysis. The results revealed that the American participants trusted the older controller (55 years old) much more than the younger counterparts (25 years old) regardless of gender. On the other hand, The Indian participants trusted the younger controllers more than the older counterparts so long as they were male. These findings have both theoretical and practical implications for the debate of passengers' perception of the ability of an aging controller, in addition to their gender. Future research is planned to replicate the findings of this study, with the addition of a mediation analysis using affect as a potential mediator for the results.