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JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE AFFECTING RETENTION OF GENERATION Y SUPPORT STAFF: A CASE STUDY OF THE FACULTY OF DENTISTRY OF A UNIVERSITY IN THAILAND DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the relationship between job satisfaction, work-life balance, and retention of generation Y support staff during the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand. The questionnaire used for this study consisted of 4 parts: 1) personal characteristics; 2) job satisfaction; 3) work-life balance; and 4) employee retention. Data for this cross-sectional study was collected between March 10 to April 17, 2022. The study includes 962 participants, of whom 544 were recruited using a stratified sampling method. SPSS version 18 was used to analyze the data, and the statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and stepwise multiple regression. The result showed that job satisfaction, work-life balance, and employee retention mean scores were moderate. Age, income adequacy, job satisfaction, and work-life balance significantly correlated with the retention of generation Y staff. Moreover, job satisfaction and work-life balance were statistically significant predictors and predicted 57.1% retention of generation Y support staff. These results suggest that the Faculty of Dentistry should focus on improving job satisfaction and work-life balance for generation Y support staff to prevent them from leaving the organization.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Work-Life Balance, Employee Retention, Generation Y

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Introduction

Staff retention of healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic has been a global challenge for healthcare organizations (Ramey, 2021). The pandemic has put immense pressure on healthcare workers, leading to burnout and mental health issues (International Labour Organization, 2021). In addition, the fear of contracting the virus has also led some healthcare professionals to leave their jobs or take extended leaves of absence. To address this challenge, healthcare organizations must prioritize the well-being of their employees and provide them with adequate support and resources to cope with the demands of their jobs during these difficult times. This may include offering mental health services, flexible work arrangements, and additional compensation for those services. This has caused heightened stress, fear, and dissatisfaction among healthcare workers, as well as disrupting their daily activities. Moreover, the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and long working hours have also added to their distress (Alameddine et al., 2021; Falatah, 2021).

Unquestionably, the COVID pandemic has caused changes in healthcare organizations, especially in the dental sector. The dentists have implemented new safety protocols to ensure patients receive routine safety cleanings and screenings. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on dental practices, including financial challenges and changes in patient volume or behavior, healthcare organizations must prioritize the well-being of their employees to ensure they can continue providing quality care to patients. This issue does not address how the organizational framework can be better adapted to meet the needs of healthcare workers. We need to improve staff well-being and job satisfaction.

In 2020, there were 66,186,727 people in Thailand. 24,534,642 (37.07%) of whom were aged 25 to 49 (National Statistical Office, 2012). The World Economic Forum stated that a majority of the people came from Generation Y (World Economic Forum, 2019). This generation born between 1980 and 2000 (De Cooman & Dries, 2012), which is a driving force in the global labor market. They have confidence, communication skills, and a capacity for problem-solving; they do not tolerate being mistreated, and frequently resign if they are unsatisfied (Hayes et al., 2018). The pandemic has only exacerbated this problem, as companies have had to cut costs and reduce their workforce. To decrease infections, many countries have lockdowns and social restrictions; many young workers have been laid off or furloughed; and those who are still employed are facing new challenges such as working from home and adapting to new technologies. People in ASEAN countries between the ages of 15 and 35 face frequent job changes due to a lack of skills, attitudes, and challenges in responding to rapidly changing social conditions (Management Recruiters International, 2017). This massive crisis is the reason why the workers in this group left their jobs. As a result, there was a requirement for study on this issue.

In addition, research indicates that organizations with a focus on work-life balance have a higher employee retention rate (Humphries et al., 2020; Attar et al., 2020). Some organizations may require long hours and high levels of dedication, making it difficult to maintain a work-life balance. In these cases, employee retention may depend more on factors such as salary and career advancement opportunities. Furthermore, studies have shown that a lack of work-life balance can lead to burnout, decreased productivity, and even health problems poverty (Boamah et al., 2022). This is why many organizations are starting to prioritize work-life balance as part of their overall company culture (Kaewtawee & Oumtanee, 2014). By offering flexible work arrangements, promoting wellness programs, and providing resources for time management and stress reduction (Ibrahim, 2021), organizations can help their employees achieve a better work-life balance and ultimately improve their retention rates (Keith et al., 2021; Issahaku et al., 2020).

In the faculty of dentistry, the most common types of practitioners were the supporting staff (1,318 or 89.17%) and staff from Generation Y (962 or 73.28%). The turnover rate of support

staff was 5.37% (Mahidol University, n.d.). The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented changes in the workplace, including remote work and increased stress levels (Scully et al., 2021). These changes may lead to a significant impact on employee retention, particularly for the younger generation. As such, this study aimed to determine the factors that affected employee retention during COVID-19. The researchers explore the relationship between job satisfaction and work-life balance among Generation Y support staff. The results of this study can provide valuable insights into how organizations can improve employee retention during challenging times.

Literature Review

Job Satisfaction

“Job satisfaction” is a person's motivation and attitude toward the work they do (Vroom, 1964). According to Herzberg the satisfaction theory is a two-factor theory that consists of motivation and hygiene, which can lead to satisfaction or lack of satisfaction in the employee (Herzberg, 1966). The study from Jamfung (2018) showed that job satisfaction can also be influenced by interpersonal, work, and management characteristics. These factors may not directly relate to the job itself, but they can greatly impact an individual's overall satisfaction with their job. It is important for employers to consider all of these factors when trying to create a positive work environment and increase job satisfaction among their employees. Furthermore, addressing any issues related to these factors can also help improve employee retention and productivity. Job satisfaction is crucial for both employees and employers, as it can lead to higher productivity, lower turnover rates, and a better work environment. Organizations also benefit from having satisfied employees, as it can improve their reputation and attract top talent. Therefore, it is important for all parties involved to prioritize job satisfaction and strive to create a positive work experience for employees (Attar et al., 2020). Job satisfaction increases the confidence of the employee and encourages them to continue in their career, which is positive for the organization (Alameddine et al., 2021; Ibrahim, 2021). Job satisfaction is a key component in retaining employees within organizations.

Work-Life Balance

“Work-life balance” is becoming increasingly important in today's society as people strive to maintain a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives. The concept of work-life balance refers to the achievement of harmony between three aspects: one's time allocation, level of engagement in social and work activities, and level of satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Work-life balance is essential for success in both personal and professional life. It allows individuals to prioritize their physical and mental well-being, while also fulfilling their responsibilities at work. Additionally, work-life balance initiatives, such as flexible schedules and remote work options, have become increasingly popular among companies seeking to attract and retain top talent (Dex & Bond, 2005). In conclusion, it is important for employers to prioritize work-life balance for their employees, as it can lead to increased productivity, improved mental health, and better retention rates (Humphries et al., 2020; Attar et al., 2020). Failure to address work-life issues can result in negative consequences such as burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and even poverty (Boamah et al., 2022). Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to create a supportive work environment that encourages work-life balance and promotes employee well-being (Keith et al., 2021; Issahaku et al., 2020).

Employee Retention

“Employee retention” is the ability of an organization to retain its employees. It involves various factors such as employee well-being, job satisfaction, and effective management techniques (Taunton et al., 1989). Employee retention is a process that involves creating a positive work environment, providing opportunities for career growth and development, offering competitive compensation and benefits packages, and recognizing and rewarding

employees for their hard work and contributions to the organization (Inda & Mishra, 2016). Studies have shown that implementing effective retention strategies can increase staff retention and ultimately lead to better organizational outcomes. A positive attitude towards the organization is also a significant factor in employee retention, as it motivates them to stay and accomplish tasks (Ramapriya & Sudhamathi, 2020; Ginting & Meilani, 2022). Therefore, it is essential for companies to develop and implement effective retention strategies to ensure that they retain their employees.

Research Methodology

Study Design

This cross-sectional design aimed to explore the relationship between job satisfaction, work-life balance, and the retention of Generation Y support staff during the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand. The setting of this study was located on two campuses. There were 1) the campus of the faculty of dentistry in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area and 2) the campus of the dental hospital in the Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. This study was approved by the Ethics Review Committee for Human Research of the Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University. (Protocol No: MU-MOU CoA No.2022-001 was approved on February 18, 2022).

Population and Sample

There were 962 Generation Y support personnel among the population. According to Daniel & Cross (2018), the calculated sample size was 340 participants. To prevent data loss as a result of Chen et al. (2021), data collection for Generation Y support staff increased by 60% to 544 participants. The inclusion criteria were: 1) male and female generation Y support personnel with at least one year of experience; and 2) ages ranging from 25 to 45 while excluding those who were absent during the survey.

Research Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire was used as a research instrument. The questionnaire was developed based on theories and literature review, and approved for content validity by three experts in public health administration with Index of Item Objective Congruence (OIC) being 0.74. The questionnaire was divided into four parts. Part 1: Personal information and working profile were obtained using 16 items, consisting of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Part 2: Scale of job satisfaction was adapted using the "Job satisfaction scale" of Jamfung (2018), that based on Herzberg (Herzberg, 1966). It contained 17 items. Cronbach's alpha was 0.89. Part 3: Scale of Work-life balance was adapted using the "work-life balance scale" of Kaewtawee & Oumtanee (2014) that is based on the concept of Dex and Bond (Dex & Bond, 2005). This part consisted of 10 items with Cronbach's alpha being 0.88. Part 4: Scale of Employee retention contained 26 items. It was adapted using the "employee retention scale" of Daengnoi (2016) that is based on the concept of Taunton, Krampitz, and Woods (Taunton et al., 1989). Cronbach's alpha was found 0.96. Totally 53 items from part 2 to 4, prepared as a 5-point rating scale, ranging from 1 to 5 representing "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The first researcher collected the data during the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand from March 10 to April 17, 2022. By using a combination of stratified random sampling and probability sampling methods, this study was able to gather reliable and valid data from a representative sample of Generation Y support staff within the faculty of dentistry. The inclusion criteria were also carefully selected to ensure that the sample was homogeneous in terms of age and experience. The exclusion criterion of staff absence during the survey period further strengthened the validity of the data collected. The questionnaire was distributed to 544 participants, and 388 were returned to the researcher (71.32%). There were 352 (90.72 %) completed questionnaires that were used for data analysis. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 18. Personal characteristics were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Pearson's

product-moment correlation and stepwise multiple regression were used to identify the correlation of the major study variables and predict the retention of Generation Y support staff at a p-value of less than 0.05.

Research Results

In Table 1, Personal characteristics revealed that 80.4% of the participants were female. The age range between 26-30 years (35.5%). Marital status reported that 66.2% were single. Education less than bachelor's degree was 57.4%. 44.6% were university staff. The monthly incomes reported between 10,001-20,000 THB was 71.0%. Most of the staff reported inadequate incomes, at 75.9%. Indebtedness was reported at 82.7%. The most domicile were 44.0%, living in the northeast region. The duration of work in the Faculty of Dentistry between 6-10 years was 39.8%. The duration of work in the present position less than 6-10 years were 40.1%. 64.0% reported working in a dental hospital (Bangkok Metropolitan). The result showed that the number of dental assistants, nursing assistants, and technicians was 82.2%. Job-training rates were reported to be 60.2%. According to this research shown that the mean scores of job satisfaction and work-life balance were moderate level ($\bar{X} = 3.55$, SD. = 0.52; $\bar{X} = 3.49$, SD. = 0.55), respectively. Moreover, employee retention mean score were moderate level ($\bar{X} = 3.52$, SD. = 0.51).

Table 1 Personal characteristics of the study participants

Category	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	69	19.6
Female	283	80.4
Age (Year)		
21-25	44	12.5
26-30	125	35.5
31-35	86	24.4
36-40	63	17.9
41-45	34	9.7
Mean \pm S.D. = 31.97, \pm 5.70 Min. = 25.00, Max. = 45.00		
Marital Status		
Single	233	66.2
Married	110	31.3
Divorced/Widowed	9	2.5
Educational Level		
below bachelor's degree	202	57.4
Bachelor's degree	141	40.0
Postgraduate	9	2.6
Employment Status		
University staff	157	44.6
Division based staff	108	30.7
Full time staff	29	8.2
Temporary staff	58	16.5
Monthly Income (THB)		
\leq 10,000	16	4.6
10,001-20,000	250	71.0
20,001-30,000	67	19.0
\geq 30,001	19	5.4

Category	Frequency	Percent
Mean \pm S.D. = 17,865.99, \pm 6,652.26 Median = 16,000.00, Min. = 8,560.00, Max. = 40,000.00		
Adequate of Incomes		
Adequate	85	24.1
Inadequate	267	75.9
Indebtedness		
In debt	291	82.7
No debt	61	17.3
Savings		
Have savings	168	47.7
No savings	184	52.3
Domicile		
Bangkok Metropolis and vicinity	72	20.5
Northern	71	20.2
Central	32	9.1
Northeast	155	44.0
Eastern	12	3.4
Western	4	1.1
Southern	6	1.7
Duration of Work in the Faculty of Dentistry (Year)		
≤ 5	120	34.1
6-10	140	39.8
11-15	50	14.2
≥ 16	42	11.9
Mean \pm S.D. = 8.50, \pm 5.57 Median = 8.00, Min. = 1.00, Max. = 26.00		
Duration of Work in the Present Position (Year)		
≤ 5	141	40.1
6-10	131	37.2
11-15	50	14.2
≥ 16	30	8.5
Mean \pm S.D. = 7.78, \pm 5.31 Median = 7.00, Min. = 1.00, Max. = 26.00		
Location of Work		
Faculty of Dentistry's Office	43	12.2
Department of Dentistry and International Dental College	8	2.3
Dental Hospital (Bangkok Metropolitan Area)	225	64.0
Dental Hospital (Nakhon Pathom)	76	21.5
Position of Work		
Dentist	2	0.6
Registered nurse	26	7.4
Psychologist	1	0.3
Administrative staff	34	9.6
Dental assistant/Nursing assistant/Technician	289	82.1
Getting Job Training		
No	140	39.8
Yes	212	60.2
Mean \pm S.D. = 0.81, \pm 0.89 Median = 1, Min. = 0, Max. = 10		

Stepwise multiple regression was used to predict the retention of Generation Y support staff during the COVID-19 pandemics, with a Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient

ranging from -0.095 to 0.741 (Table 2, 3). Employee retention was the dependent variable, whereas the independent factors were sex, age, educational level, income adequacy, domicile, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. According to the findings, age ($P = 0.022$), income adequacy ($P = 0.004$), job satisfaction ($P < 0.001$), and work-life balance ($P < 0.001$) were significantly correlated with employee retention.

Table 2 Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient between key variables affecting retention of Generation Y support staff

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Sex	1.000							
Age	.106*	1.000						
Educational level	.038	.129*	1.000					
Income sufficiency	-.095	-.006	.198**	1.000				
Domicile	.016	.134*	.033	.092	1.000			
Job satisfaction	.051	.104	-.022	.129*	.015	1.000		
Work-Life balance	.034	.048	.017	.125*	.160**	.408**	1.000	
Employee Retention	.037	.122*	.036	.153**	.057	.741***	.436***	1.000

* $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$

Job satisfaction and work-life balance were statistically significant predictors ($P < 0.001$) and predicted 57.1% the retention of generation Y support staff ($R^2 = 0.571$) (Table 3.)

Table 3 Results of Multiple regression statistics

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	0.668	0.141		4.739	< 0.001
Job satisfaction	0.657	0.037	0.676	17.606	< 0.001
Work-Life balance	0.149	0.036	0.160	4.178	< 0.001

$R^2 = 0.571$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.569$

Conclusion and Discussion

This cross-sectional study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand and aimed to determine the relationship between job satisfaction, work-life balance, and retention of Generation Y support staff. The results revealed that job satisfaction, work-life balance, and employee retention were at moderate levels. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of teamwork and empowerment may vary depending on the organizational culture and management style (Daengnoi, 2016). Furthermore, other factors, such as compensation and career growth opportunities, may also play a significant role in employee retention (Steele-Moses, 2021; Elsafty & Oraby, 2022). In addition, the study found that the level of support and recognition from supervisors also had a strong impact on employee retention (Sanguanpak, 2020; Attar et al., 2020). Managers who valued and appreciated their employees were more likely to stay. On the other hand, those who felt ignored or undervalued were more likely to seek employment elsewhere. Therefore, it is important for organizations to not only focus on teamwork and empowerment but also on creating a supportive and appreciative work environment (Sishuwa & Phiri, 2020).

The study found that age, income adequacy, job satisfaction, and work-life balance were significant predictors of employee retention for Generation Y support staff in a dentistry faculty. To improve employee retention, organizations must create a supportive and appreciative work environment that takes into account these various factors (Keith et al., 2021; Issahaku et al., 2020). Previous research by Dex & Bond (2005) found that work-life balance

correlates highly with employee retention. This suggests that organizations need to focus on not only providing work-life balance but also addressing the unique needs and preferences of different generations in order to improve employee retention (Ibrahim, 2021).

Further research has also shown that the work environment plays a crucial role in employee retention. A positive work culture, clear communication channels, and opportunities for growth and advancement are all factors that can contribute to a nurse's decision to stay with a healthcare organization. Additionally, the availability of resources such as staffing support and technology can greatly impact job satisfaction and ultimately influence retention rates. It is important for healthcare organizations to not only focus on attracting and hiring skilled nurses but also to prioritize efforts to retain them. This can be achieved through implementing strategies such as providing opportunities for professional development, offering competitive compensation and benefits, and creating a positive work environment that values and recognizes the contributions of nurses (Steele-Moses, 2021; Elsafty & Oraby, 2022; Ginting & Meilani, 2022). By investing in the retention of their nursing staff, healthcare organizations can improve patient outcomes and overall organizational success.

Previous studies concentrated on the job satisfaction and work productivity of healthcare workers working in various settings, such as general hospitals, who had not been affected by a worldwide crisis (Alrawashdeh et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020; Ginting & Meilani, 2022; Steele-Moses, 2021). This study focused on the dental field and comprised participants in different positions such as dentists, dental nurses, dental assistants, and non-clinical staffs. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented numerous challenges for organizations, including the need to maintain staff retention (Ginting & Meilani, 2022; Ramey, 2021). Effective staff management plays a crucial role in employee retention. It creates a positive work environment that fosters job satisfaction and commitment. Job satisfaction is an essential factor in keeping employees engaged and motivated. It helps staff feel valued and appreciated. Finally, work-life balance has become an important factor in retaining Generation Y support staff during the pandemic (Issahaku et al., 2020; Humphries et al., 2020), as they prefer flexible working arrangements that allow them to balance both their personal and professional lives.

In conclusion, this study examined the correlation of various factors such as age, gender, education level, and job tenure on job satisfaction and work-life balance. This allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of Generation Y support staff in the dental field. The findings of this study have important implications for dental practices looking for attract and retain young talent, as well as for policymakers interested in promoting job satisfaction and work-life balance among healthcare workers. Overall, this study represents an important contribution to our understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Generation Y support staff in the dental field.

Recommendation

In terms of limitations, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a drop in response rates (73.32% of response) due to staff absences and self-reported data from participants. To mitigate the potential bias resulting from non-response, the researcher recommended increasing response rates by using incentives or personalized outreach, conducting sensitivity analyses, and acknowledging and reporting on potential sources of bias. The study can also provide insights into individual employee behavior and how it affects their level of employee retention. By analyzing factors such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, and career development opportunities, the study can identify areas where the organization can improve to increase employee retention. Future research needs to use a longitudinal approach to allow the examination of how these factors change over time, providing a more comprehensive understanding of their impact on employee retention. The findings of this study can inform organizational policies and practices aimed at retaining talented employees and promoting long-term success.

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