

# Effectiveness of Meaningfulness in Work Development Program for Generation Z Employees: A Pilot Study

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## Abstract

Although work meaningfulness enhancement programs have been developed, a meaningfulness in work training program for Generation Z (Gen Z), who make considerable use of high-tech equipment and require a suitable learning approach, has not been found. This study aimed to validate the training program's effectiveness in developing meaningfulness in work for Gen Z employees. The study employed a one-group pretest-posttest design and the participants were 16 Gen Z employees in two companies in the media agency industry in Bangkok, Thailand. The research instruments included the meaningfulness in work program, the meaningfulness questionnaire, and the semi-structured interview questions. The findings from repeated measures ANOVA demonstrated that the meaningfulness in work level of the post-test and follow-up periods was significantly higher than that of the pretest period at the .05 level. The interview results supported the effectiveness of the program, as well as the utilization of the techniques trained in the program in their work. Further usage of the program is encouraged to enhance meaningfulness in work, together with other potential benefits for Gen Z employees.

**Keywords:** Meaningfulness in work, Generation Z, Training program, Thailand

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### บทคัดย่อ

แม้ว่าโปรแกรมการเพิ่มความหมายของงานจะได้รับการพัฒนาอย่างต่อเนื่อง แต่ยังไม่พบการศึกษาโปรแกรมการฝึกอบรมความหมายในการทำงานสำหรับคนเจนเนอเรชั่นซี (เจนซี) ซึ่งเป็นกลุ่มที่ใช้อุปกรณ์เทคโนโลยีระดับสูงและต้องการแนวทางการเรียนรู้ที่เหมาะสม การศึกษาครั้งนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อตรวจสอบประสิทธิผลของโปรแกรมการฝึกอบรมเพื่อพัฒนาความหมายในการทำงานสำหรับพนักงานเจนซี โดยใช้แผนการวิจัยแบบศึกษากลุ่มเดียวทดสอบครั้ง ผู้เข้าร่วมการศึกษาคือพนักงานเจนซีจากสองบริษัทในอุตสาหกรรมตัวแทนโฆษณาในกรุงเทพฯ ประเทศไทย รวม 16 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย ได้แก่ โปรแกรมความหมายในการทำงาน แบบสอบถามความหมายในการทำงาน และคำสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง ข้อค้นพบจากการวิเคราะห์ความแปรปรวนแบบวัดซ้ำ แสดงให้เห็นว่าระดับความหมายในการทำงานหลังเข้าร่วมโปรแกรมและช่วงติดตามผลสูงกว่าช่วงก่อนเข้าร่วมโปรแกรมอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 ผลการสัมภาษณ์สนับสนุนประสิทธิผลของโปรแกรมตลอดจนการใช้เทคนิคที่ได้เรียนรู้จากโปรแกรมในการปฏิบัติงาน ผู้วิจัยสนับสนุนให้มีการนำโปรแกรมไปใช้งานเพื่อเพิ่มความหมายในการทำงานของพนักงานเจนซี รวมถึงประโยชน์อื่นๆ ที่อาจได้รับ

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## Introduction

By 2025, Generation Z (Gen Z) employees will account for more than one-fourth of the office (Lashbrooke, 2022) and the emergence of Gen Z has shifted the management and human resource (HR) strategic policies since they are brand-new with unique demands (Racolta-Paina & Irini, 2021). Therefore, organizations and leaders must gather and gain insight into Gen Z's motivations; otherwise, organizations may encounter difficulties in recruiting, engaging, and retaining them (McCrindle & Fell, 2019).

Chala et al. (2022) found that Gen Z employees preferred intrinsic work motivations such as maintaining good health, balancing work and life, and promoting personal and professional growth. Also, work meaningfulness is one major intrinsic motivational factor for Gen Z (Bailey et al., 2019; Lysova et al., 2019) to work beyond financial gains (Chillakuri, 2020). The recent systematic review, based on the studies in Asia, found that the outcomes of meaningful work were, for instance, an increase in psychological capital, work engagement, intention to keep working after retirement, the acceptance of low salary, and task performance, as well as a decrease in turnover intention (Chaoletseree & Taephant, 2020). In addition, contemporary research supported that work meaningfulness increased a willingness to work (Goh & Baum, 2021), employee loyalty (Whab & Bakar, 2021), employee engagement (Fletcher & Schofield, 2021), work engagement (Filatrovi & Attiq, 2020), and skill training (Nikolova & Cnossen, 2020), as well as decreased retirement intention and absenteeism (Nikolova & Cnossen, 2020).

Organizations can provide employees with meaningful work by encouraging employees' learning and development opportunities (Frémeaux & Pavageau, 2022). Also, one practical method to create work meaningfulness is a training intervention. In the past decade, few researchers have developed interventions to enhance work meaningfulness, for instance, the emotional intelligence intervention (Thory, 2016), the artistic interventions (Berthoin Anthel et al., 2018) the community intervention (Allan et al., 2018) and the meaningfulness intervention (Fletcher & Schofield, 2021). It is apparent that previous work has focused on innovative methods (e.g., artistic and community interventions) to enhance work meaningfulness but has been limited to addressing the distinct needs of the new generation, which relies heavily on using high-

tech equipment (Kohnova et al., 2021) and requires multiple learning techniques e.g., collaboration and problem-solving (Mosca et al., 2019) to learn and work, as well as to incorporating the approach to serve the needs into the enhancement program.

Consequently, the objective of the present study was to validate the effectiveness of the meaningfulness in work program explicitly developed for Gen Z employees. The employees of the media agency companies were ideal subjects for this study because the nature of their work is overly stressful due to inappropriate compensation, lack of tools, work overload, and other factors (Lertsudwichai, 2022). Additionally, Forbes reported that the average annual turnover rate in media agencies was 30% (Schimel, 2017). This aligns with recent information from Thailand, which indicates that digital marketing had the highest employee turnover rate among the top 5 careers in the digital field (Editorial Department of Thairath, 2023). The present findings suggest several courses of action to increase the meaningfulness in work of the employees, and it is hoped that our research could stimulate HR departments for further usage of the program and then they stand to gain potential benefits, for instance, an increase in meaningfulness in work and job satisfaction, or a decrease in turnover intention.

## **Literature Review**

### **Significance of meaningful work and training approaches for Gen Z**

Gen Z, the post-millennial generation or "True Gen", was born between 1995 and 2010 (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Because growing up and raised in the digital era, they are also called the "digital natives" (Dobrowolski et al., 2022). They are recently entering the labor market to become junior employees in organizations and bring new behavioral patterns that have not been observed from the preceding generations. McKinsey, a worldwide research company, described Gen Z as 'identity nomads' or do not possess a clear identity, which implies that it is hard to define them through only one stereotype (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). However, Gen Z shares one essential attribute, pursuing meaningful work. Gen Z is motivated by a career that enables them to pursue their values and serve a meaningful purpose (Bohdziewicz, 2016). Also, Gen Z prefers to be assigned meaningful work and would like to see their ideas implemented by their

supervisors (Schroth, 2019). Likewise, Gen Z prefers work that creates values, is change-driven, and impacts society (Lovell, 2017). Therefore, managers need to help Gen Z employees understand the value of their work and connect to the purpose of the organization so the work can energize them, and their contributions might surpass the financial gains (Chillakuri, 2020). These accentuate the significance of meaningful work for Gen Z.

Regarding training approaches for Gen Z, a trainer needs to create suitable learning spaces that foster a learner-centered environment (Mosca et al., 2019). Gen Z prefers logic-based learning styles such as a concise format with clear explanations and wide-ranging information (Seemiller et al., 2019). Moreover, Gen Z naturally adopts technology including online services and devices, and favors digital and technology usage (Kohnova et al., 2021). Living with the Internet of Things, Gen Z cannot endure work that processes slowly and prefers speed in life and work (Arar & Yuksel, 2015). Consequently, the training engaging Gen Z should be precise, tailor-made, and surrounded by digital methods and interactive activities (Cretu et al., 2020).

The current study employed the multiple inclusions of pedagogical approaches (MIOPA), which is the new and effective training method used to increase Gen Z students' engagement and learning (Mosca et al., 2019), as the main approach for the training. The MIOPA is composed of five learning techniques which are:

- Collaboration: Gen Z participants prefer thoroughly discussing issues in small group activities so training should divide participants into small discussion groups.
- Problem-solving: Training should provide Gen Z participants with questions and let them solve the problems.
- Inquiry: Training should give Gen Z participants a general topic to inquire about and explore.
- Creativity: Training should stimulate Gen Z participants to explore their ideas, share them with the class, and use them to find new solutions to deal with the issues.
- Visual media: Training should provide Gen Z participants with rich multimedia content, such as materials in VDO, graphic, and voice-over formats that match Gen Z digital preferences.

## Psychological Theories of Work Meaningfulness

Recent scholars posited that meaningfulness is a source of the intrinsic motivation of employees (Bailey et al., 2019; Lysova et al., 2019). Intrinsic motivation refers to the reactions or behaviors of employees to engage in activities that derive from their inherent satisfaction (e.g., pleasure in the activity itself or a genuine interest in a subject) rather than any external benefits e.g., money (Ryan & Vansteenkiste, 2023). According to Pratt and Ashford (2003), and Fletcher and Schofield (2021), work meaningfulness refers to the perception of significance and value attached to work which can be separated into two groups. Firstly, meaningfulness in work refers to the individual judgment of the values of tasks (e.g., task goals or task purposes) based on his/her standard (Fletcher & Schofield, 2021). To reach meaningfulness in work is to address the question “What am I doing?” (Pratt & Ashford, 2003). Secondly, meaningfulness at work refers to the individual judgment of the quality of connection with others as a member of an organization (Fletcher & Schofield, 2021). To attain meaningfulness at work is to resolve the query “Where do I belong?” (Pratt & Ashford, 2003).

Within this decade, few studies have developed interventions to enhance work meaningfulness. A qualitative study in the U.K. showed that emotional intelligence training could enhance the perception of meaningful work among managers from various industries, such as banking and manufacturing (Thory, 2016). The artistic interventions in organizations helped employees from small and medium-sized organizations in Europe to experience meaningful work (Berthoin Antal et al., 2018). Community intervention, discovering different new ways to help someone else several times on a single day, could increase the work meaningfulness of American public university employees (Allan et al., 2018). Moreover, the meaningfulness intervention could increase meaningfulness in/at work, employee/organizational engagement, and personal initiative of UK employees from three different organizations (Fletcher & Schofield, 2021). Nevertheless, as far as we know, the meaningfulness in work intervention particularly for Gen Z, which requires a unique style of training, remains unstudied.

This research focused on the validation of the effectiveness of the meaningfulness in work of Gen Z employees and the training program was built upon the principles to develop the attribute of Fletcher and Schofield (2021) since their intervention was clearly designed for the enhancement of meaningfulness in work. According to the study, three means to develop meaningfulness in work are as follows.

### **1) To foster work values and goals**

Based on the study of Fletcher and Schofield (2021), shaping employees' values and goals can create a sense of meaningfulness in work. Work values, developing through experience, are the judgments at the individual level about the importance of actions and outcomes that affect work success (Furnham et al., 2021). Work values can fundamentally be separated into two groups which are extrinsic and intrinsic values. Extrinsic values are composed of security (e.g., effortlessness and clarity), compensation (e.g., pay and benefits), and conditions (e.g., safety and location). In addition, intrinsic values include autonomy (e.g., self-expression and personal growth), recognition (e.g., visibility and status), and affiliation (e.g., social interaction and teamwork) (Furnham et al., 2021). Value can be used as motivation for goal orientation (Levontin & Bardi, 2019).

Goals also play an essential role in motivating employees to attain their achievements because they relate to meaningful behavior (Van Tilburg & Igou, 2013). Therefore, implementing a goal-setting process can improve employee work meaningfulness (Devarajan et al., 2018). Based on goal-setting theory, specific, difficult, and attainable goals influence task performance (Locke & Latham, 2013) but the alignment of individual and organizational goals should be ensured (Gagné, 2018). Grounded on the review, the current program was designed to encourage Gen Z participants to identify their work values and goals, as well as create a values-based goal.

### **2) To foster job crafting and autonomy**

Job crafting can influence the experienced meaningfulness of the work (Simonet & Castille, 2020). Job crafting is the process of employees redesigning their jobs in desiring ways, such as the alteration in work boundaries (e.g., conditions of tasks) or the improvement of the relationships in the workplace (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). It allows employees to modify their work to be more closely coordinated with their work

motivations, preferences, and skills (Slemp et al., 2015). Job crafting can be done with three techniques (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), which are cognitive crafting (i.e., the process by which employees change the way they perceive their job), task crafting (the process by which employees change their job description, such as adding or dropping tasks, or changing the effort and time put on each job), and relationship crafting (i.e., the process by which employees change the number or nature of interaction with other members at work, such as building, reframing, or adapting relationships with colleagues).

Based on basic psychological needs theory, autonomy, one of the three basic needs, refers to having a sense of volition and self-direction, as well as the actions and behaviors that are approved and supported by oneself (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Autonomy has a positive relationship with psychological meaningfulness (Sung et al., 2022). Martela et al. (2018, 2021) also stated that autonomy is an antecedent of meaningful life and meaningful work. Without autonomy, employees feel under pressure, dissatisfied, and instability (Ilyash et al., 2019), which reduces work meaningfulness (Martela & Riekki, 2018). The perceived opportunity to conduct job crafting stimulates the sense of autonomy to create changes in one's job. Slemp et al. (2015) found that when given autonomy from supervisors to do job crafting, employees experienced more passion at work and had less burnout. In addition, autonomy and perceived opportunities to craft were significant factors leading to meaningful work (Pimenta de Devotto et al., 2022). Consequently, the current program was designed to encourage Gen Z participants to conduct cognitive, task, and relationship crafting, and to discuss the crafting plans with their supervisors to experience autonomy at work.

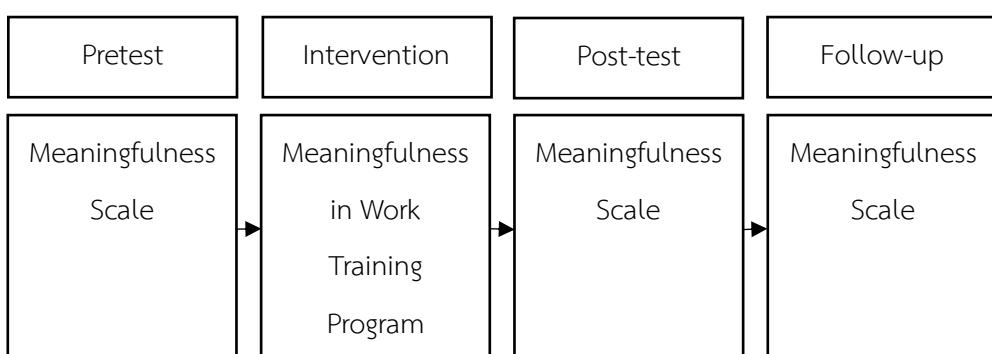
### **3) To foster learning and personal growth**

Personal growth refers to personality development in a personally meaningful way (Vitterso & Straume, 2020). Recently, Jain et al. (2020) defined self-growth as the individual deliberate attempt to engage in activities that help oneself become a better person through planned formal and informal approaches. It is a lifelong process to develop competencies to increase one's performance. The steps to develop self-growth include defining the meaning of life, creating a life plan, identifying key performance areas, carrying out risk analysis, conducting weekly monitoring and evaluation, and carrying out annual reflection (Jain et al., 2020). Based on the study,

the current program was designed to encourage Gen Z participants to conduct individual development plans that assist them in accelerating learning and personal growth.

The meaningfulness in work training program of this study refers to a set of activities created by the researchers to develop the level of meaningfulness in work of employees which includes three major subsets of activities which are fostering work values and goals, fostering job crafting and autonomy, and fostering learning and personal growth and employs MIOPA as a training method. The training program was developed based on the literature review as recently described. The study hypothesized that the level of meaningfulness in work after the training (post-test) is significantly higher than that before the training (pretest). The conceptual framework of this study can be identified in Figure 1

**Figure 1** Conceptual model



## Research Methodology

This study employed the one-group pretest-posttest design, a pre-experimental design that collected data across three-time points (i.e., pretest, posttest, and two-week follow-up assessments).

## Participants

In this study, participants were Gen Z employees who were working in the media agency industry in Bangkok, Thailand. Two media agency companies facing high turnover rates (36% and 32%, respectively, in 2021) were selected for the study. To recruit participants, the researchers sent formal invitation letters to the HR departments of these two companies in Bangkok, inviting Gen Z employees to participate in the

program. The inclusion criteria were that the participants were within the Gen Z age range (born between 1995 and 2010) and had the willingness and availability to fully participate in the entire program. Finally, the HR departments provided a list of all Gen Z employees who met the criteria, totaling 16 employees. The details of the participants are presented in Table 1. Among 16 participants, 88% were female. The participants were between the ages of 23 and 24 ( $M = 23.38$ ). The work experience ranged between two months and one year and seven months. All participants remained anonymous and volunteered to take part in the study.

**Table 1** Details of participants

| Participation Code | Gender | Age (Years) | Years of Work Experience (Year/Months) |
|--------------------|--------|-------------|--|
| A                  | Female | 23          | 1 year                                 |
| B                  | Female | 23          | 1 year                                 |
| C                  | Male   | 23          | 1 year                                 |
| D                  | Female | 23          | 1 year                                 |
| E                  | Female | 24          | 1 year 5 months                        |
| F                  | Female | 23          | 1 year                                 |
| G                  | Female | 24          | 1 year                                 |
| H                  | Female | 24          | 1 year 7 months                        |
| I                  | Female | 23          | 1 year 5 months                        |
| J                  | Female | 24          | 1 year                                 |
| K                  | Female | 23          | 4 months                               |
| L                  | Female | 23          | 5 months                               |
| M                  | Female | 24          | 1 year                                 |
| N                  | Female | 24          | 2 months                               |
| O                  | Female | 24          | 1 year                                 |
| P                  | Male   | 23          | 5 months                               |

## Instruments

The instruments of this study are as follows.

1) The online meaningfulness in work training program is developed based on the approaches to the enhancement of meaningfulness in work by Fletcher and Schofield (2021), several relevant theories (e.g., work values) that can support the approaches, and the recent training approach for Gen Z (i.e., MIOPA). To facilitate the utilization of the techniques trained in the program in participant's work, the researchers incorporated real-world media agency task settings into the program. For instance, in the three-box technique activity, participants were asked to create their personal development plans by specifying their dream positions within the media agency company. The training content is summarized in Table 2. It is a one-day 7-hour online training program.

**Table 2** Summary of the training program

| Topics & Related Theories            | MIOPA (Examples)  |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>The values-based goal-setting</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lecture: Values and goals, their relationship with meaningfulness in work, and how to map values and goals together (Visual media: VDO clips and slides).</li> <li>- Exercise: Know your values and discover your “why” (Visual media: Scan the QR code to select your values; select 10 values from the list of personal values, and then identify the top 3 core values).</li> <li>- Problem-solving &amp; Creativity: How to solve conflicts between values and goals.</li> <li>- Collaboration: Brainstorm ideas to write value and goals and bridge them with the company’s goals.</li> <li>- Game: “Pretending you’re a CEO”.</li> <li>- Inquiry: Raise ideas on how to map values and goals.</li> <li>- Exercise: Practice writing values and goals.</li> <li>- Interactive Q&amp;A session.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Job crafting plan</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lecture: Job crafting (Visual media: VDO clips and slides).</li> </ul>   |

| Topics & Related Theories  | MIOPA (Examples)   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct job crafting and learn how to communicate the crafting plan with their supervisors.</li> <li>- Job crafting (Wrzesniewski &amp; Dutton, 2001)</li> <li>- Autonomy (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exercise: “Knowing the key performance indicator (KPI)”. </li> <li>- Exercise: “Crafting your job”; list 10 daily media agency tasks based on the time vs. energy grid, and then proceed to redesign their jobs.</li> <li>- Problem-solving &amp; Creativity: How to convince your supervisor to allow you to follow your craft plan (Visual media: VDO clips).</li> <li>- Collaboration game: “Building a tower”.</li> <li>- Interactive Q&amp;A session.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Individual development plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct individual development plans that reflect future personal growth.</li> <li>- Self-growth theory (Jain et al., 2020)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lecture: Develop a personal growth plan (Visual media: VDO clips and slides).</li> <li>- Collaboration &amp; Creativity: Write a personal development diagram and an action plan and share it with the class using the three-box technique (e.g., write down three future positions they want to achieve in the media agency company and plan how to achieve them).</li> <li>- Interactive Q&amp;A session.</li> </ul>  |

2) Meaningfulness in work was measured using the 6-item meaningfulness scale of May et al. (2004). The response format ranged from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). An example of items is “The work I do on this job is very important to me”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the scale in the study of Fletcher and Schofield (2021) was .92. The instrument was validated by two experts in the field of industrial and organizational psychology before its use.

3) The semi-structured interview questions after the training are 1) “Have you taken any action to achieve the values-based goal that you established in the training?”; 2) “Have you taken any actions according to your job crafting plan?”; 3) “Have you taken any actions according to your individual development plan?”, and 4) “How does

(not) this training improve your meaning in life?" The interview questions were validated by two experts in the field of industrial and organizational psychology before its use.

### **Data Collection**

The quantitative data was collected online using the questionnaire at three time points, which were before the training or pretest (T1), right after the training or post-test (T2), and two weeks after the training or follow-up (T3). The follow-up phase, which varies in duration and ranges from two weeks to over four weeks, is considered appropriate (see Kosasih et al., 2022; Michel et al., 2014). Qualitative data, the supplementary data of the research, was collected through online semi-structured interviews with five purposively selected participants. The inclusion criteria were that the key informants were program attendees with high score differences between the pretest and post-test, as well as a willingness to participate in the interview. The objective of the interview was to explore whether the training program had motivated the key informants to take any actions to enhance their meaningfulness in work and to identify the effective components of the training program. To align with this objective, the interviews were conducted one week after the training which ensured that key informants' memories of the program were still fresh and that they still had an opportunity to apply the acquired knowledge to their actual job situations. All procedures performed in this research that involved human participants were consistent with ethical standards.

### **Data analysis**

Descriptive statistical techniques, including percentages, means, and standard deviations, were conducted to provide descriptive information on the participants. The repeated-measures ANOVA, the inferential statistical analysis, was conducted to test the research hypothesis. The qualitative data analysis framework developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which involves categorizing, and coding interview data, followed by concluding, interpreting, and verifying the findings, and finally presenting them in a structured format, was adapted for use in this study.

## Findings

The Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to test whether the variables of each time point followed a normal distribution. The results did not show evidence of non-normality, T1:  $W = .98$ ,  $p = .93$ , T2:  $W = .93$ ,  $p = .20$ , T3:  $W = .89$ ,  $p = .06$ . According to these results, as well as the consideration of the Q-Q plots, the repeated-measures ANOVA, a parametric test, would be further conducted.

A repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to assess the effect of the meaningfulness in work program on the level of meaningfulness in work. The means and standard deviations are demonstrated in Table 3. Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had not been violated ( $\chi^2(2) = 5.59$ ,  $p = .06$ ). A repeated-measures ANOVA determined that at least two means (meaningfulness in work scores across three time points) significantly differed at the .05 level,  $F(2,30) = 39.89$ ,  $p < .01$ .

**Table 3** Descriptive Statistics and *F*-test for Meaningfulness in Work

| Time points    | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>F</i> -test | <i>p</i> -value |
|----------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|
| Sphericity     |          |          |           |                |                 |
| Pretest (T1)   | 16       | 22.25    | 3.82      | 39.89          | .00             |
| Post-test (T2) | 16       | 26.31    | 2.89      |                |                 |
| Follow-up (T3) | 16       | 26.69    | 2.85      |                |                 |

A post hoc pairwise comparison using the Bonferroni adjustment showed a significantly increased score between the pretest assessment and post-test assessment ( $p < .01$ ), and pretest assessment and follow-up assessment ( $p < .01$ ). However, there was no significant difference between the meaningfulness in work at post-test assessment and follow-up assessment ( $p = .96$ ). The pairwise comparison was presented in Table 4.

**Table 4** Pairwise comparison of the mean scores among three time points

| Time points | T1 | T2     | T3     |
|-------------|----|--------|--------|
| T1          | -  | -4.06* | -4.44* |
|             |    | (.00)  | (.00)  |
| T2          |    | -      | -.38   |
|             |    |        | (.96)  |
| T3          |    |        | -      |

*Note.* \* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

The semi-structured interviews were carried out one week after the training. Overall, all five participants followed the plan outlined during the training program to some extent. The summary of the interview data is illustrated in Table 5.

**Table 5** Summary of the interview

| Questions   | Answers  |
|---|--|
| 1. Have you taken any action to achieve the values-based goal that you established in the training? | "The goal I wrote [in the training] was to reflect frankly to the team. Now I speak directly to my boss and immediately ask further questions about unclear information. So, he explained it once again more clearly. I think it shortens the work process" (Participant L).   |
| 2. Have you taken any actions according to your job crafting plan?                                  | "I followed the relationship crafting tool by asking the buyer team to send the document one day in advance of the deadline. The buyer did that, and I feel much relieved" (Participant F).  |
| 3. Have you taken any actions according to your individual development plan?                        | "I want to be promoted to a senior strategist, so I just enrolled to join the FB [Facebook] blueprint course [based on the three-box technique]. I want to improve my knowledge in this area" (Participant M).   |
| 4. How does (not) this training improve your meaning in life?                                       | "The training inspired me. It seems this was the first time I realized the work I have been doing had a meaning. Also, this was the first time that I recognized the values I hold" (Participant B).<br><br>"When I was stressed out, I tried to adjust my mindset by reminding myself that this too shall pass, and the weekend was coming! What I learned from the training [the value setting] was self-respect. I wanted to give my body a weekend retreat" (Participant L). |

## Discussion and Recommendation

The present study attempts to address a research gap, the remaining need for developing and validating the effectiveness of the meaningfulness in work program designed particularly for Gen Z employees, making an important contribution. Our study

is among the first to combine MIOPA (Mosca et al., 2019) and includes several pertinent psychological and organizational theories, which are work values (Furnham et al., 2021), goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2013), job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), autonomy (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020), self-growth theory (Jain et al., 2020) into the meaningfulness in work program.

The post-test mean that was significantly higher than that of the pretest implies that the 1-day online newly developed training program could effectively enhance the level of meaningfulness in work of the participants. Our experimental findings are consistent with Fletcher and Schofield's (2021) study, which served as the foundation for our program's development. Their study validated the effectiveness of the program with participants from various generations ( $M = 44$  years), whereas our study specifically validated that with Gen Z. The significant results confirm the appropriateness of incorporating MIOPA into the Gen Z training program. In addition, our experimental results are in line with Berthoin Antal et al. (2018) and Allan et al. (2018) findings. Their research utilized artistic and community interventions, while our study employed an online training program. These significant findings underscore the effectiveness of employing a well-designed online training program supported by relevant theories to enhance meaningfulness in work levels.

In addition, no significant difference between the post-test mean and the follow-up mean was found, which indicates that the level of meaningfulness in work of participants is maintained at least two weeks after the training. These results are partly supported by the interview information of this study whose informants reported following the plan or applying the techniques they had created or trained in the program to some extent. The success of the program might be because the concept of meaningfulness is intriguing and inspiring, and the elements of meaningfulness in work enhancement, such as job crafting, are easy to adopt, as mentioned by the participants. In addition, they unofficially reported being satisfied more with their jobs, having better well-being, and being more aware of the meaningful work, which is in line with the outcomes of work meaningfulness as stated in the introduction See (Chaolertseree & Taephant, 2020).

In our view, these results constitute an excellent initial step toward the application of the meaningfulness in work program to enhance the level of meaningfulness in work of Gen Z employees in Thailand. While this research focused on participants in the private sector, its benefits extend beyond this realm. According to Perry (2020), perceived meaningfulness in work can be cultivated in organizations that provide social-supporting services, helping their employees find their work motivating and valuable. Therefore, the knowledge gained from this study can also be applied to the public sector (e.g., state organizations) serving citizens. HR departments in both public and private sectors, HR consultants, or performance coaches can further study meaningfulness in work, and its benefits, as well as the development of the attribute by commencing with this study. They can adjust the program using MIOPA or other recent techniques to align with the unique needs of Gen Z employees within each company. Then the organizations can reap the benefits of meaningfulness in work enhancement, such as an increase in job enjoyment, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or individual performance, as well as a decrease in depression and turnover intention (for detailed outcomes of meaningful work, see Chaolertseree & Taephant, 2020).

### **Limitation and Future Research**

This study is the first step towards developing and validating the meaningfulness in work program for Gen Z, so our work clearly has some limitations, such as a small number of participants, the pre-experimental design of the study, and a short period of the follow-up assessment and interview, which unavoidably affect the internal validity of the research. Consequently, future studies on the current topic are recommended to employ a randomized pretest-posttest control group design, one of the true experimental research designs, with a longer period of follow-up data collection, to validate the effectiveness of the program. Furthermore, the current research was limited to 16 Gen Z employees, with a majority being females. Future research should consider conducting a sample size analysis using the G\*Power statistical tool and ensure a proportionate gender mix. In addition, future work should study the program's outcomes beyond meaningfulness in work (e.g., work engagement, employee loyalty, task performance, or absenteeism) with Gen Z employees of other industries.

Moreover, further work should develop the program to enhance meaningfulness at work, the other component of work meaningfulness which focuses on healthy relationships with other staff members and with the organization, for Gen Z employees. Creating a sense of belonging (meaningfulness) at work could enhance job/organizational engagement and personal initiative for Gen Z employees (Fletcher & Schofield, 2021) who are newcomers to and are instrumental in developing organizations.

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