

Working with Millennials: From the Perspective of Baby Boomers and Gen Xers

Rachaniphorn Ngotngamwong, Stamford International University, Thailand

Abstract

The workplace has never been as diverse as today, and the presence of Millennials has been very distinct. As a generation different in multiple ways, they have brought many challenges to today's current multigenerational workplace. The purpose of this study was to explore the Baby Boomers' and Gen Xers' experiences as they worked alongside with Millennials with the objective of employing the results of the study as future inputs in creating organizational synergy. Ten participants from a variety of industries in Thailand were involved in the qualitative study that was conducted through face-to-face interviews. The results of the study reported that Millennials were creative, assertive, have great and new ideas, and represented "new blood" in the organization. They also possessed Millennial market knowledge and were significant drivers of the organization through their technological expertise. Millennials have transformed the workplace by creating a better and livelier working atmosphere and have added a good balance in the organization. On a more unfavorable side, they were reported to have low levels of organizational loyalty and commitment, low work tolerance, a short working life span, were irresponsible, unreliable, stubborn, impatient, overly confident, frequently using their phones, and not listening to their superiors.

Keywords: Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, Generation Y, Millennials, workplace

Introduction

Millennials, also known as Generation Y or Gen Y, currently make up the second largest composite of the workforce, with Baby Boomers as the largest, and Gen Xers as the third largest (Blain, 2008; Jackson, 2015; O'Donovan, 2014). The entry of the Millennials in the past 15+ years, has brought about changes in the workplace (Torrado, 2015); positive and negative, wanted and unwanted. The degree of millennial-caused changes varies across organizations. Those who had adapted to the needs of Millennials have been more successful in increasing millennial job satisfaction and higher millennial retention rates. Despite the presence of millennials in the workplace that spans over a decade, organizations are still adapting to the challenges of working with them (Blain, 2008). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences that Baby Boomers and Gen Xers have with Millennials while working alongside with them with the objective of employing the results of the study as future inputs in creating organizational synergy. This study was accomplished through 10 structured interviews with Gen Xers and Baby Boomers in 10 different organizations across a variety of industries in Bangkok, Thailand. The new findings from this study could benefit HR departments, managers, organizations, and more specifically, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials, as they gain new knowledge from multiple perspectives as compiled through this study. The identification of experiences could enable the older generations to be more understanding and try to adapt to the Millennial way as Millennials will eventually be the largest generation representing the workforce (Johnson, 2015). Millennials on the other hand, could also benefit from this study, as they would gain an understanding as to how they are perceived by their older cohorts. They could try to cultivate a better working relationship with them. As this study was conducted in Thailand, it will contribute to the existing literature on Millennials from a Thai perspective.

Literature Review

Multigenerational Workforce

Our current workplaces have never been this interesting, as we see five different generations working together: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (or Generation Y), and Generation Z (Fox, 2011). Each generation has its own unique approach to work (Gabel, 2015) and as they all congregate together in organizations, they bring with them, their childhood values and varied

experiences to the workplace (Fox, 2011; Houlihan, 2016). Despite the diversity in the multigenerational workforce, productivity can be increased through the ability to understand and communicate across those generations (Blain, 2008; Rose, 2013; Simons, 2009). According to the research, the levels of conflict were higher with generational diversity than with gender and racial diversities. One way of battling and managing these conflicts is by being proactive in efforts aimed at understanding and discussing generational differences by older generations (Fox, 2011).

Millennials (Generation Y)

Millennials or Generation Y, also known as Gen Yers, currently rank as the second largest workforce and are making inroads into the organization (Thapa, 2014). Projections have indicated that they will comprise half of the workforce by 2020 (Nickell, 2014; Reuteman, 2015), or 75% by 2025 (Johnson, 2015; Sipek, 2015). In fact, they will outnumber baby boomers by 2030 (Nickell, 2014), and will eventually “become the largest generation in the workforce” (Johnson, 2015, p. 4).

Relationships are significant to Millennials (Jackson, 2015; Sipek, 2015) and “The No. 1 reason that young people will leave an employer is a lack of positive relationships at work” (Jackson, 2015, p. 32). Growing up with teamwork, Millennials thrive on collaboration, preferring to work in teams, and are great team players (Blain, 2008; Jackson, 2015; Reuteman, 2015; Simons, 2009; Sipek, 2015; Sujansky, 2009; Thapa, 2014).

Sujansky (2009) stated that their presence contributes to the “fresh, more dynamic workplace culture that promises higher levels of productivity and profitability” (p. 10). The power distance is very small for millennials as they treat their superiors as equals, as demonstrated through their direct communication with superiors (Thapa, 2014; Plew, 2013). Baby Boomers and Gen Xers consider this attitude as arrogant and disrespectful. However, for organizations to do well, the older generations need to adapt to this new openness and be open to changes in the workplace (Plew, 2013), remembering that Millennials want to work in a comfortable and positive workplace (Rose, 2013).

Organizations that Millennials Want to Work For

Millennials “want to work in an organization that has a strong and meaningful workplace culture, opportunities for career growth, and a sense that the employer will support and invest in them for the long term” (Jackson, 2015, p. 32). Empowerment and involvement are important to them (Rose, 2013), and they are attracted to employers who provide career progression opportunities (Nickell, 2014; Reuteman, 2015).

The smaller Gen X population has opened up doors for Gen Yers with earlier succession prospects that come with challenges that would motivate them (Jackson, 2015). Unlike their predecessors, they are firm believers in performance and skill, and not longevity (Bye, 2018; Jackson, 2015). They have expectations in “trying new things, developing additional skills, and enjoying fresh experiences on a regular basis” (Jackson, 2015, p. 32) and possess high confidence levels (Sujansky, 2009). Although most millennials place a higher value on fairness and transparency (Fitzpatrick, 2016; Rose, 2013; Torrado, 2015), they also “want a constant stream of review and recognition” (O’Donnell, 2014; Reuteman, 2015, p. 48). This fact is supported by Reuteman (2015) that the “No. 1 reason Millennials leave companies is that they don’t feel valued or respected” (p. 48).

Although Millennials cherish high salaries (Nickell, 2014; Reuteman, 2015), having flexible working hours and maintaining a work-life balance are much more important to them (Gabel, 2015; Jackson, 2015; Murray, 2015; O’Donovan, 2014; Rose, 2013; “How Company Culture Impacts Millennials,” 2017). Despite this ‘ridiculous’ request, Baby Boomers and Gen Xers have caved in to this request because there are so many of them, and they would eventually take over the workforce when the older generations retire (O’Donovan, 2014). Being able to telecommute is also very important to one third of Millennials as they consider this as a significant criterion when accepting a job (Nickell, 2014; Torrado, 2015), while another research study indicated that up to 41% of Millennials preferred working at the office (Beaubien, 2016).

Technology and Millennials

Technology plays a tremendous role in the lives of Millennials, thus earning their name, *Digital Natives* (G., 2016; Milligan, 2014; Torrado, 2015). Also cited as “the technology generation” (Plew, 2013, p. 82), and known for their “technological prowess” (Jackson, 2015, p. 32), they live very differently from past generations (Jackson, 2015; Murray, 2015). As the “mobile” generation, they expect a mobile career (Jackson, 2015). Therefore, being able to use social media and having access to multiple devices in the workplace had been cited as one of the most significant factors that is considered by one third of Millennials when considering a job offer (Murray, 2015; Nickell, 2014). Technology has created a borderless line between their work and personal life, but Millennials prefer that connection, thus displaying a sense of passion for their jobs (Hodges, 2016; Johnson, 2015; Plew, 2013).

Being in the technology era, where speed is of essence, Millennials “value speed, service, skills, and are a competitive advantage” (Jackson, 2015, p. 32). Technology has enabled them to be constant learners and collaborators (Jackson, 2015) and they enjoy feedback, open, and direct communication (Bye, 2018; Fitzpatrick, 2016; Fox, 2011; Hodges, 2016; O’Donnell, 2014; Rose, 2013; Sujansky, 2009). Interestingly, research shows that up to 39% of Gen Yers, prefer face-to-face conversations over technology such as video conference calls, emails, and social networking platforms (Beaubien, 2016; Fitzpatrick, 2016).

Millennial Characteristics

“Different” could be the term to describe Millennials as they represent a distinct generation that is different from previous generations with different expectations (Jackson, 2015; Torrado, 2015) and differing values (Beaubien, 2016). Gen Yers have been also been known as the “newest generation of workers with a unique set of needs, desires, and expectations for their careers” (Plew, 2013, p. 82).

Millennials have different work ethics and approach to things (Jackson, 2015; Sujansky, 2009) and are said to have high ethical values and good characters (Bye, 2018). Gen Yers get bored easily, and so, they desire more interesting, fun, challenging, and meaningful tasks that would allow them to think outside the box, rather than the routine norm (Hodges, 2016; Nickell, 2014; Plew, 2013; Reuteman, 2015). A high value is placed on a sense of accomplishment (Nickell, 2014), and they are also more health conscious as displayed in their devotion to physical fitness and eating healthy food (Sipek, 2015).

“Creative” and “innovative” are two more adjectives that describe Millennials (Blain, 2018; Reuteman, 2015; Thapa, 2014). Organizations that promote this innovativeness are moving in the right direction as they allow Millennials to work in a productive environment that allows them to “break boundaries and lead innovation” (Thapa, 2014, p. 61). When choosing companies to work for, they choose a company culture that promotes a positive work environment that is engaged in corporate social responsibility (“How Company Culture Impacts Millennials,” 2017; Reuteman, 2015). Special preference also goes to companies that are “more open and less hierarchical” (Torrado, 2015, p. 40), and one in which “their values are respected” (Reuteman, 2015, p. 44).

On a more negative note, they have earned a reputation for “being lazy, entitled, narcissistic, and restless” (O’Donovan, 2014; Thapa, 2014, p. 61). They have also been labeled as an “extremely pampered, protected, and child-centered generation” (Blain, 2008, p. 12), and are “overgrown, impatient children whose outlandish demands are outnumbered” (Richheim, 2011, p. 76). Their upbringing is considered the main reason behind their high reliance and expectations to be mentored by their managers (Blain, 2008; Hodges, 2016; O’Donnell, 2014; Reuteman, 2015; Sujansky, 2009). This has created the need to equip managers with mentoring skills for Millennial mentorship (Blain, 2008). Organizations also are experiencing reverse mentorship that is going on between Millennials and the other generations, where Millennials mentor older managers in technology usage (Reuteman, 2015; Sujansky, 2009).

Generational Cohort Responses to Millennials and Millennial Retention

Not everyone embraces the Millennial way and there is a “culture clash between some managers and young employees ... 90 percent of the Gen X managers I work with are exasperated by Millennials ... who need hand-guiding” (Reuteman, 2015, p. 44). According to Sujansky (2009), Millennials “continually show up late for work, ask to leave early, always turn down overtime request and wonder why they haven’t been promoted after just one year on the job” (p. 8). Millennials are also too confident and demanding (Fox, 2011).

Millennials differ from their predecessors in their stay in the organization. With the love for autonomy, new challenges, appealing promotions, and higher paid-jobs, they hop from one job to another, within a span of a few years (Jackson, 2015; Murray, 2015; Plew, 2013; Reuteman, 2015; Rose, 2013). Despite job changes every few years, Millennials value job security and will only stay in a job that they enjoy (Milligan, 2014; Murray, 2015). They are not patient enough to wait for older colleagues to vacate their positions, thus resulting in job hopping (Jackson, 2015; Milligan, 2014; Sujansky, 2009). According to Jackson (2015), the Millennials’ turnover rate is double that of the older generations.

A Millennial’s ideal workplace is one that allows flexibility (Gabel, 2015; Torrado, 2015). The ability for organizations to incorporate this flexibility into work schedules and telecommuting, provide volunteering opportunities, and give employees more time off for families, would be a step forward in the right direction not only in Millennial retention, but also in attracting talent (Jackson, 2015; Sipek, 2015; “How Company Culture Impacts Millennials,” 2017).

Objective and Research Questions

The objectives of this study were to explore the experiences that Baby Boomers and Gen Xers had while working with Millennials. The results of the study could be used to create organizational synergy by enabling:

- (1) Baby Boomers and Gen Xers to better understand how Millennials function and then apply this knowledge to enable a more emotional intelligent approach while working with them.
- (2) Millennials to gain a better understanding as to how they are being perceived by the older generations and hence allowing them to be more understanding of their older cohorts in the workplace and try to work more productivity together.

Five research questions were used to guide this study.

1. To investigate the Millennial personality and working preferences.
2. To find out the challenges older workers had experienced while working with Millennials.
3. To investigate the pros and cons of having Millennials in the workplace.
4. To investigate the Millennial work ethic as observed by the older generations.
5. To find out how productive Millennials are and how Millennial productivity can be improved.

Methodology

The study was qualitative and exploratory in nature with narrative analysis as the chosen qualitative data analysis methodology. In order to conduct a study that focuses on the experiences of participants, conducting interviews was the most ideal research methodology, hence, the selection of the qualitative research method. The tool for the study was a structured individual in-depth interview with 10 participating Baby Boomers and Gen Xers across multiple industries and professions in Bangkok, Thailand. Each interview lasted between 30 to 40 minutes over a period of four months, and they were conducted either onsite during office hours or offsite over lunch breaks.

The interview protocol was divided into five parts totaling 15 questions.

Part 1: Personal Profile consisted of four questions addressing gender, age, ethnic background, and educational background.

Part 2: Millennial Workforce Composite (three questions), covered the percentage of Millennial composite, normal range of working years, and the common millennial positions.

Part 3: The Uniqueness of the Millennial Generation of Employees (two questions) examined personality differences of Millennials and their working preferences.

Part 4: The Challenges of Working with Millennials (three questions) covered the gaps of millennials and their older generations, challenges of working with millennials, and the pros and cons of working with Millennials.

Part 5: Millennial Productivity (three questions) focused on the Millennial work ethic, their productiveness, and tools utilized in increasing millennial productivity.

Results

Personal Profile

A total of 10 individuals participated in the study and they were equally represented by five males and five females, and five Gen Xers and five Baby Boomers. Eight of the participants were Thais, one was Indian, and one represented Australia. One participant had a doctorate degree, four with graduate degrees, and five with undergraduate degrees.

Table 1. Data of Millennials in Participating Organizations

Industry	Millennials		Common Positions
	Workforce	Normal Years at Company	
Bedding	5%	1 year	Clerks
CCTV Cameras	100%	10 years	Manager
Computer Network Integration	95%	3-4 years	Network engineers
Digital Radiography	60%	4 years	Specialists & Supervisors
Higher Education	60%	1-3 years	Lecturers and Office Staff
K-12	70%	Thai - 5 years; Foreign - 2 years	Office staff and teachers
K-12	60%	5-10 years	Teachers and Assistant Teachers
Office Automation	6%	Usually stay long-term	Technician and Call center
Pharmaceutical	40%	2-3 years	Sales Representatives
Real Estate	43%	5.5 years	Secretary, mechanic, finance staff

Personality Differences between Millennials and Older Generations

The first research question was to investigate the Millennial workplace personality and working preferences. A huge difference was reported in the differences between Millennials and the older generations, particularly in their sense of loyalty and commitment to the organization. Millennials were said to have extremely low or non-existing levels of loyalty. This was clearly illustrated in frequent job changes, triggered by attractive job offers or currently uninteresting jobs. Labeled as "short-term focused," Gen Yers have no desire to develop a sense of longevity and corporate identity. Their older generations, on the other hand, were more focused on the long-term, and displayed greater signs of commitment and loyalty by staying lengthy years with the company.

Most participants were consistent in stating that the millennials' tolerance to work was low; one participant mentioned that they had no interest in coping with problems and had low problem-solving skills. On a more positive note, millennials were complimented for being fast workers with good working attitudes, but they were – unfortunately – less thorough, had narrow visions, and not as experienced.

Personality wise, millennials are often extroverts, very expressive, and some do not have good manners. They are less patient, tend to use their phones more frequently, and do not contribute much.

Millennials are open to new ideas, willing to take some risks, and adapt to change unlike the older generations. Although they are drivers in the organization, their concentration span is at minimal levels unless they have a huge interest in their work assignments. One participant mentioned that they have high social needs, which seems to be their ultimate concern in the workplace – personal but not work-related. In a company where the percentage of Gen Yers was minimal, differences across the organization were almost non-existent, as they had to blend into the organizational culture to survive.

Working Preferences of Millennials

A high preference was placed on the need for work-life balance and flexible working hours to accommodate family or personal needs. Compensation wise, different terms have been used to describe their needs: “Performance-based,” “high remuneration,” and “easy, chill, simple, comfortable working preferences that pays well.” Working overseas is an opportunity that Millennials look forward to, and they do not like complications. One participant stated, “it seems like they need to be micromanaged as they wait to be told what needs to be done, they have to be constantly guided and instructed, and few can follow rules without coaching.” Another participant said the exact opposite— “they do not want much supervision or too many rules and policies.” It was interesting that one participant mentioned, “Millennials prefer to work alone rather than in a group.” They are not workaholics, and would rather do other things aside from work (non-job-related tasks) during working hours.

The Challenges of Working with Millennials

This section addressed the second research question: To find out the challenges older workers had experienced while working with Millennials. According to older workers, Millennials have the tendency to think out of the box, which is not very conventional and therefore, that is a tremendous challenge to understand them. A participant stated, “The old timers have to adapt to the new generation’s way of working and thinking, thus making it a big challenge to understand how they think and their attitudes.” Efforts exerted to understand them will facilitate more effective communication within organizations. Another big challenge is Millennial retention and gaining their loyal commitment to the firm. Retaining and managing them comes at a high maintenance cost and Gen Yers need to be treated well or else they would quit. One participant expressed his frustration that “despite their tech savviness, Millennials are not living up to their fullest potential as they use technology mainly for personal purposes rather than work.” Other downsides included the less emphasis placed on work schedules and commitments and their inability to tolerate long working hours. One participant also stated, “they have the tendency to be rude and arrogant because of the way they think despite the fact that they are lacking in their life experiences.” One mention was also made that “It is indeed a challenge to keep millennials engaged and productive as they are in constant pursuit of excitement.”

Some challenges involved differences between the younger and older generations. The air of overconfidence and thinking that their ideas were far more superior has resulted in ignoring comments or ideas made by Baby Boomers. Older coworkers were described as more conscientious while Millennials “usually wanted to do the bare minimum without any desire to work overtime or come in on Sundays.” The levels of responsibility possessed by the older generational workers, as quoted by one participant, “ranked much higher compared to the Gen Yers, who were not very responsible or showed lower levels of responsibility, and that they were not thorough, requiring supervisors to run after them all the time.” According to one participant, “Millennials place a higher value on their interests over the firm’s, and their individual identity has taken over corporate identity as they are there to market themselves while the baby boomers market the organization, not themselves.” They also place a very low degree of significance on seniority, which contradicts the older generations’ norms that place a higher value on seniority respect and authority. While the older generation was more patient and went by the book, “Millennials want instantaneous replies to everything and bypass protocol to get to the top, which is sometimes unnecessary as they do not have

to go to the top of get their problems solved. Eventually, the problems get passed down from the top to the bottom," as commented by a participant.

The Pros and Cons of Working with Millennials

The third research question aimed to investigate pros and cons of Millennials in the workplace. There is no perfect interaction model that applies to any generation; each generation has its pros and cons. By creating an awareness of advantages and disadvantages of working with Millennials, it equips older generations with knowledge to manage and work with them more productively through better understanding. Table 2 outlines comments made by participants of these advantages and disadvantages.

Table 2. The Pros and Cons of Working with Millennials

The Pros of Working with Millennials

1. They have their own way of doing things that are more productive.
2. By employing their ideas, the organization is progressing.
3. Millennials are creative.
4. They know things we do not know.
5. They bring in and share new technological knowledge.
6. They are a "new wave" and "new blood" of the organization.
7. Their contributions compliment their older generations' experiences.
8. They are responsible and reliable.
9. It is a good thing to have Millennials as they bring liveliness to the organization.
10. They contribute to the organization through their invaluable perspectives of the millennial customers that the Baby Boomers do not have.
11. They are tech savvy.
12. Being outspoken, they expose the flaws in the system, so that corrections can be made.
13. They are versatile and knowledgeable of many things because of technological influence.
14. They are technologically driven and technology drives an organization.
15. They possess a variety of new ideas.
16. They are very assertive and contribute a lot of critical thinking at the workplace, which is good.
17. Their liveliness enhances the work atmosphere.
18. They possess high levels of self-confidence, which leads to better success to the organization.
19. They bring balance into the organization to have a good mixture.
20. They bring energy.
21. There is strength in diversity as they can see things from the customer's perspective (younger generation).

The Cons of Working with Millennials

1. They are overconfident and do not listen.
2. There are times when Millennials are difficult to understand and the older coworkers experience difficulties understanding their actions and thoughts.
3. Short stays in the organization result in more recruitment and training efforts.
4. They leave the organization after big investments have been made in providing training and knowledge.
5. Older workers do not listen to Millennial supervisors thus hindering the smooth flow of operations.
6. They are stubborn and come up with their own way of doing things instead of listening and following instructions.
7. They have short attention spans, do not listen to instruction during meetings, and are not focused.
8. They do not live up to their full potential.
9. They are outspoken and sometimes bring up unnecessary things.
10. They are too demanding in an unproductive manner; they do not get things done by talking and there is no productivity in talk but no action.
11. As there is no proper time management, productivity suffers.
12. Millennials need more training, guidance, and follow-up.
13. They are reactive rather than proactive; they need to be pushed.
14. They question authority that ignites arguments within the firm.

15. They do not tend to stay long in the organization.
16. They expect a lot in return in the form of good remunerations and fringe benefits.
17. There are no disadvantages; there are just challenges.

The Millennial Work Ethic

The fourth research question addressed investigating the Millennial work ethic as observed by the older generations. If the work is within the scope of interest, Millennials give their total dedication to it. On the other hand, they would do the bare minimum just to get by if they were uninterested or disagreed about the work assignment. They disliked routine tasks and preferred new and interesting work. One participant mentioned, “as some work is routine, the management had attempted to integrate other tasks in the job description to make the work more varied, interesting, and interactive.”

“Chill” is another word to describe their work ethic; they do not appreciate people attempting to manipulate or exert pressure on them. That being the case, they would rather approach a supervisor for assistance rather than have the supervisor approach them. They have the “WIFM: What’s In It For Me?” mentality. Despite the previously mentioned advantages of working with Millennials, a few participants found Millennials to be quite the opposite, labeling them as disloyal, not hardworking, non-committed to any one job, and are always looking for opportunities to improve their status. One participant’s experience was entirely different, describing Gen Yers as “responsible and reliable as they get the work done, are respectful of others, and have good ethical values.” They were also described by another participant as being “fast workers” and are “honest and very flexible rule observers.” Although they are smart, some participants stated that they generally do not work beyond the timeframe, as they are not work-alcoholics and are not that dedicated to the company. Despite their creativeness, they are monetary, function on an instantaneous mode that is very short-sighted, and do not care much about their long-term career path. A few participants also mentioned that Millennials needed mentors to guide them.

Millennial Productivity

The last research question was to find out how productive Millennials were and how Millennial productivity could be improved. Most of the participants felt that Millennials were productive, and one participant stated that they were in fact more productive than their older coworkers were. One Millennial supporter labeled them as being just as productive as were their older coworkers, and they contributed new and fresh ideas. Productivity levels were especially high when it came to working with technology to complete tasks, particularly in comparison to the less tech savvy Gen Xers and Baby Boomers. Some participants also stated that Gen Yers were “irresponsible and unproductive,” particularly when compared to Gen Xers. A participant also mentioned, “they think and feel that they are more productive by their own standards, but they are actually not,” while another stated that “although millennials are productive, they are not as productive as they should be.” Gen Yers also face many distractions that hinder their productivity. A participant observed that “the way millennials complete their tasks are different; older workers gradually work and complete it while millennials are more relaxed and casual in their work in the beginning and then work rapidly prior deadlines to complete the task.” Millennial productivity, as stated by another participant, was highly dependent on their supervisors; if supervisors are doing a good job, then, everyone should be productive.

As Millennials are unique, the motivational techniques that yielded effective results on the older generations, might not be as effective on Millennials. Table 3 outlines the tools that organizations could use to increase millennial productivity.

Table 3. Tools to Increase Millennial Productivity

1. Respond quickly to millennial feedback.
2. Match their expertise to work assignments of their interest.
3. Acknowledge and recognize their accomplishments
4. Understand their individual problems and contexts.
5. Provide them with the flexibility they need.
6. Add on to their existing compensation such as extra pay or allowances for extra work done.
7. Provide a higher salary.
8. Establish good employer branding.
9. Provide continuous training.
10. Provide good monetary compensations.
11. Reward good performance.
12. Introduce a profit-sharing program.
13. Treat them in nice restaurants.
14. Productivity can be improved through policies.
15. Active implementation on the control on device usage.
16. Conduct training sessions on software programs.
17. Change their value system; they do not have the motivation to move up as they are comfortable in their comfort zones.
18. Provide incentives for achievements prior to deadlines.
19. The management needs to be digital in every aspect to cope with millennials.
20. Provide training programs to create self-awareness.
21. Include team building activities to help them become better team players.

Discussion

The participants involved in the study were well-represented with a proportionate balance of males and females, as well as an equal number of Baby Boomer and Gen X representatives. As this study was conducted in an Asian country, the results are more from an Asian perspective than that from a Western one. The fact that they came from multiple industries provided broader perspectives of Millennials in the workplace. As for the levels of millennial workforce composite, they were varied with the technological and education industries containing higher Millennial representations. Even though Millennials were known for their short longevity in the workplace (Bye, 2018; Jackson, 2015), this study indicated that approximately 50% of the Millennials stayed longer than four years while others followed the trend of moving on to another workplace after one to three years.

A big Millennial challenge for Baby Boomers and Gen Xers was trying to understand their unconventional ways of thinking and doing things (Fox, 2011). Millennials look at things from different perspectives, think out of the box, do things their own way but productively. This is in line with the literature that defined Millennials as having different values and were uniquely different from past generations (Beaubien, 2016; Jackson, 2015; Plew, 2013). In fact, Reuteman (2015) mentioned that there was a “culture clash between some managers and young employees” (p. 44). Although research had mentioned that the older generations needed to make the attempt to understand Millennials (Fox, 2011), the effort should be mutual as it takes both sides to make things work, and this in turn increases organizational productivity (Blain, 2008; Rose, 2013; Simons, 2009).

Participants commented on their short-sightedness, and the constant moves to more appealing, rewarding, interesting, and challenging jobs. This reaffirms the fact that Thai Millennials are no different from other Millennials who move for similar reasons (Murray, 2015). Other weakness included their impatience, low organizational commitment, and loyalty characteristics. Self-interests were on the top of their priorities, and the participants were dissatisfied with their low levels of tolerance to hard work and long hours. All of these are detrimental to the organization as they result in lower retention rates and act as obstacles in achieving high levels of productivity (Chappell, 2012). Millennial job hopping (Jackson, 2015; Milligan, 2014; Sujansky, 2009) contributes to high turnover rates and is very costly in terms of time, effort, and money in recruiting and training (Mondy & Mondy,

2014). Moreover, the tremendous investments made during their stay at the organization, come at an enormous expense as they move on to work for a competitor. The pursuit of the job-hopping trend has been named “*protean career*” which is typical of today’s employees. According to Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright (2018), a protean career is a career “that frequently changes based on changes in the person’s interest, abilities, and values in the work environment” (p. 230). Some advantages of a protean career include greater exposure to different workplaces, increased networks, knowledge sharing, and the ease of adapting to new workplaces. On the contrary, research findings have indicated that they received lower leadership ratings (Briscoe, Hoobler, & Byle, 2010). By making the decision to engage in a protean career, they potentially could be robbed of being a more productive and effective leader.

Millennials have brought about a revolution in the way organizations function. By lightening up the work atmosphere with their liveliness and high energy levels, they have brought about a workplace transformation from a traditional to a more informal one with open work spaces that fosters more collaboration and knowledge sharing. They are productive in their own way, particularly when they have technological tools to get their work accomplished (Hodges, 2016; Johnson, 2015; Plew, 2013). Millennials prefer meaningful, challenging, and interesting work that provide work-life balance with flexible working hours. All these are in line with the literature review (Gabel, 2015; Jackson, 2015; Murray, 2015; O’Donovan, 2014; Rose, 2013). Millennials are different from the older generations (Jackson, 2015; Murray, 2015), who adhere to the traditional work culture of hard work and maintaining normal office working hours. By designing or redesigning jobs around Millennial characteristics and work preferences, organizations can be engaged in a “win-win” scenario that keeps all of them satisfied and productive (Jauhar, Chan, & Abdul Rahim, 2017). Rickheim (2011) supports this by stating, “rethinking workplace practices, is a necessity, not a choice” (p. 76).

This distinctive generation of creative and innovative Millennials had introduced new norms into organizations nationwide, creating an undeniable impact on organizational culture. This reaffirms Sujansky’s (2009) statement that they have created a “fresh and more dynamic workplace culture” (p. 10). Their presence have transformed organizations into a new working era that embraces collaboration, openness, positive work environments, CSR, lower power distance (Thapa, 2014; Plew, 2013), and flatter structures. It was also interesting to note that the ratio of different generations in an organization has an impact on organizational culture. The higher the Millennial percentage, the greater the influx of the Millennial culture in the organization.

Most of the participants described Millennials as being irresponsible, rude, arrogant, overconfident, and engaged in self instead of organizational interests. These attitudes add on to existing literature that Thai Millennials also have the same attitudes as outlined in the literature review (Plew, 2013). It would be virtually impossible to change these attitudes but organizations can provide training that emphasize soft skills and undertake the big challenge of being patient and trying to understand them (Plew, 2013).

One respondent clearly stated, “Millennials are more technologically driven, and technology drives an organization.” With that being said, Millennials are significant components for the current and future success of organizations and represent any organization’s “competitive advantage” (Jackson, 2015, p. 32). The significance of tech savvy Millennials is increasing with the passing of time, compared to Baby Boomers and Gen Xers, who are not as technologically advanced. Millennial technological expertise could also be put into good use by mentoring the older generation in the digital arena. This reverse mentorship (Reuteman, 2015; Sujansky, 2009) could foster better relationships, improve communication, and hopefully reduce gaps and conflicts between them.

Millennial productivity levels were for the most part, not as high as they should be. This contradicts the statement made by Sujansky (2009) that they are contributors to higher productivity. Gen Yers are a generation full of potential, particularly in the technological aspect (Jackson, 2015). By mentoring them in the right direction, their productivity levels could skyrocket. To recap what one participant had mentioned during the interview session, he stated that everyone should be productive if the supervisors are doing their jobs right. Therefore, Baby Boomers and Gen Xers play significant

roles as effective managers and leaders in boosting Millennial productivity levels. In fact, Reuteman (2015) stated that “savvy leaders are shaking up the long-stagnant management level” (p. 48) and willingly fire mediocre managers. The participants also recommended many interesting tools to increase Millennial productivity. If successfully implemented, they could result in favorable outcomes. Examples include greater longevity, greater organizational commitment and loyalty, and higher retention rates (Jauhar et al., 2017). By doing so, it also contributes to better employer branding, which is productive in attracting talent (Mondy & Monday, 2014).

As there are pros and cons to everything, this also holds true in this study. By emphasizing and building on the strengths of Millennials, and creatively managing the cons into opportunities, Millennials can develop into powerful organizational assets. Being a Millennial has its benefits too; they are entitled to possessing special insights in reaching out into the current Millennial market. This serves as any organization’s invaluable asset as they understand the consumer’s behavior (Nickell, 2014). They have something that Baby Boomers and Gen Xers have limited access to, thus increasing the significant presence of Millennials in the workplace.

Millennials are indispensable and beneficial to any organization as potential contributors to the future success of organizations, particularly so when the older generations gradually phase out (O’Donovan, 2014). Despite the extra care and efforts organizations have been investing in this Millennial group, it continues to be an organizational challenge to retain them (Ware, 2014). The current Millennial generation might embrace the protean career (Noe et al., 2018), but it would be unfair to stereotype all Gen Yers as devout followers of this trend. Some Millennials show organizational commitment, loyalty, high levels of responsibility, are diligent, and continue with organizations that place high priorities in keeping their talent satisfied as much as they can.

Limitation and Implication

The main limitation of the study was the inability to interview participants from all 10 different industries as originally intended by the researcher. Three out of the 10 participants represented the education section with two of them being K-12 schools and one representing higher education. A recommendation for future study is to replicate this study with Gen Zers as subjects of the study. This study could also be improved by narrowing it down to one industry instead of a few different industries to gain more comparative results. The results from the study support the existing literature and add to current literature on Millennials in the workplace.

Conclusion

This study identified the challenges faced by Baby Boomers and Gen Xers in their working encounters with Gen Yers. Some of the challenges in the findings confirmed what had already been stated in the literature review, while other challenges were new and eye-opening. This also applies to the outcome on the study of Millennial productivity in the workplace. Although there were a few contradictions amongst the participants, that is typical in any study. Many new insights were gained from the recommended tools to enhance Millennial productivity and are therefore, good additions to existing research in increasing Millennial productivity in the workplace. Millennials comprise a special and unique generation. By trying to learn more about them, coupled with high levels of emotional intelligence, organizations can reap bountiful benefits.

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