

Why Do Millennials Leave?

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Abstract

Millennials, also known as Gen Yers, are a unique generation, different from their predecessors in many ways, particularly in their short-term commitments and organizational stays. Reputed to be a generation with extremely high turnover rates as a result of job-hopping, this has proven to be extremely costly and frustrating to organizations. The purpose of this study was to have a closer look at the employment history of Millennials in Bangkok, Thailand. It also investigated the personal reasons behind job changes and, more importantly, the typical factors behind Millennial exits. A total of 30 working Millennials participated in a 30 to 45-minute structured, face-to-face in-depth interviews over a period of four months. The results of the study indicated that the top four most cited Personal Reasons for Changing Jobs and Factors behind Millennial Exits were the same: (1) The job itself, (2) the need for higher compensation, (3) no career growth and learning opportunities, and (4) an unfavorable organizational culture. The results also indicated that there were many similarities in the behavior of Millennial turnover behavior in Thailand with those reported elsewhere in Western-based literature.

Keywords: *Gen Y, jobs, leave, millennials, turnover*

Introduction

Labeled as the “largest disruptive force for the global economy in the next few years,” the entry of Millennials into the workplace has brought about transformations in organizations (Jalnawala, 2018). Millennials will gradually and eventually take over the workplace. The intensity of current interest in employee retention has reached high levels in order to develop this new talent pool (Siegfried Jr., 2008; Ware, 2014). Millennials possess currently needed skills that older cohorts do not (Schawbel & Bisharat, 2019). Forming the largest demographic group, organizations have found them to be extremely difficult to retain (“Dial back high turnover rates,” 2010; Greenwood, 2016). Amazingly, some organizational leaders do not see any significance in this costly turnover of talented young professionals (Frankel, 2016). Lowery (2004, as cited in Erwin, 2009), on the other hand, stated that “in coming years, new organizational models must be developed to incorporate the work styles of Millennial employees.” New approaches are needed to align with the needs of younger workers (Pyrillis, 2017).

The literature on Millennials has indicated that organizations have not been very successful in their retention efforts, hence the continual high Millennial turnover. The purpose of this study was to gain insights into the past employment history of Millennials working in Bangkok, Thailand: the personal reasons they had for moving to another job, and the perspectives they had on Millennial exit from organizations. With Millennials working in Thailand as the target participants, the results of this study would be a great add-on to the existing literature, particularly from the perspective of working in a developing country. Leaders and Human Resource Departments could put this information to good use as they “rethink their stereotypes and devise a plan to increase continuity of talent for more than just a few years” (Frankel, 2016). Academicians could use this new knowledge in their lectures and textbooks, particularly in the area of Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior.

Literature Review

Today's Workforce

The current composition of today's workforce is multigenerational with Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, Gen Y, and Gen Z working alongside each other in organizations (Fox, 2011). As Baby Boomers phase out, Millennials will outnumber Gen Xers, making two-thirds of the total workforce population by 2030 (Axten, 2015). Born between 1980 and 2000 (Axten, 2015; Frankel,

2016), Gen Yers, better known as Millennials, have introduced very different sets of work ethics, expectations, approaches, and needs (Jackson, 2015; Plew, 2013) without adhering to the normal status quo (Axten, 2015). Raised to believe that they were special, they have been indulged and pampered by their parents. Hence, the end-product is that Millennials possess exceedingly high levels of self-esteem and confidence, with a drive for rapid job advancement (Angel, 2011; Erwin, 2009; Fallon, 2009; Ware, 2014). Their priorities are very different from their parents, who represent an older work cohort (Axten, 2015). Even though they place greater emphasis on work-life balance (Angel, 2011; Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Axten, 2015; Fallon, 2009; "Millennials at Work," 2015), they also want progressive careers (Gagne, 2018; Greenwood, 2016; Gursoy, Maier & Chi, 2008; Jalnawala, 2018; "Millennials at Work", 2015; Nickell, 2014). This could be achieved with the aid of a mentor and/or coach (Greenwood, 2016; Schawbel & Bisharat, 2014), as they "want to learn and grow with their employers" (Nickell, 2014).

Millennials and Their Job Preferences

Millennials are highly resourceful, possess digital skills, are relationship oriented, desire and appreciate change, and are very opinionated, although they may be open to diversity (Jalnawala, 2018). They have high levels of self-efficacy in steering their careers in the desired direction ("Millennials at Work," 2015), but have been stereotyped as unstable and short-sighted (Jalnawala, 2018). Also dubbed as the "instant generation" with instant gratification needs, they are impatient (Gagne, 2018) and are prone to demands for immediate rewards and instant satisfaction (Aruna & Anitha, 2015). With a high sense of ethics and character (Bye, 2018), transparency is important to them (Gagne, 2018). They have an intense dislike of conflict (Chappell, 2012), recoil from high work pressures and competitiveness with their coworkers (Chappell, 2012), preferring instead to work collaboratively (Angel, 2011; Chappell, 2012), particularly in teams (Erwin, 2009; Gursoy et al., 2008; Jalnawala, 2018). The value Millennials place on money is very intriguing, as they differ from older generations ("Millennials at Work," 2015). Despite wanting higher salaries (Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Nickell, 2014; Reuteman, 2015), they have prioritized other things as more important, such as recognition (Chappell, 2012), personal advancement (Chappell, 2012), and personal development (Mihalca, 2018; "Millennials at Work," 2015).

Millennials prefer to choose a career where their interest and work align (Jalnawala, 2018). Up to 42 percent of 16,000 respondents in a research study stated that they would rather be unemployed than be in a job they hate ("Millennials at Work," 2015). According to Francis (2018), "this cohort finds being an entrepreneur financially rewarding, but they are most focused on being able to pursue their individual passion." Their tolerance for traditional and hierarchical management is low (Jalnawala, 2018), and they have job preferences that offer flexibility (Axten, 2015; Ellis, 2013), mobility (Ware, 2014), challenge (Jalnawala, 2018), the opportunity to telecommute (Ellis, 2013), and job autonomy (Gagne, 2018). Being more intrinsically motivated (Bye, 2018), they are goal oriented (Jauhar, Chan, & Abdul Rahim, 2017) and prefer meaningful work (Gagne, 2018; Ware, 2014) that gives them a sense of accomplishment (Greenwood, 2016; Ware, 2014). Millennials have a high need of recognition for work well-done (Chappell, 2012; Ellis, 2013; Gursoy et al., 2008), and want to be meaningfully rewarded for their efforts (Ellis, 2013; Jalnawala, 2018). Jobs that provide clear career paths (Chappell, 2012; Ellis, 2013) with continuous constructive feedback (Erwin, 2009; Jauhar et al., 2017), are appealing to them, and their ideal working environment is one includes the elements of fun, dynamics, and understanding supervisors (Fallon, 2009; Raines, 2002, as cited in Erwin, 2009). Honesty is highly valued, and they feel respected when their superiors keep their word (Angel, 2011).

Millennial Turnover

The results of a US study indicated that approximately 60% of employed Millennials were active job seekers (Ware, 2014), and although job satisfaction was a top priority for some Millennials (Jalnawala, 2018), they did not need to be dissatisfied at work to move on to a new job (Ware, 2014). As long as a new job offer was more attractive, there was a big tendency to move, no matter how long

they had worked with their current employer (Ware, 2014). In a survey conducted by Monster.com, a career site, a relatively high percentage of employees (71%) indicated that they were happy with their work, but then as high as 73% had thoughts of moving on to a different job (Fisher, 2015). In a New Zealand study conducted on Millennials, it was reported that there was wide acceptance amongst employers that their Millennials would leave in two years (Lawson Williams National Staff Turnover Survey, 2018). Therefore, it has been a business challenge to find and keep good and young talent (Fallon, 2009).

There is simply no debate on the disruptive and highly significant role that technology has played in aiding Millennials in seeking new employment. Millennials can easily search for a job with their mobile phones and apply for jobs 24/7. LinkedIn, a recruitment platform, has also brought about a revolution in the world of recruitment, whereby recruiters have access to potential candidates (Lawson Williams National Staff Turnover Survey, 2018).

Organizational Commitment

Although Generation Y has an expressed devotion to their careers, it is completely separated from any commitment they have towards their organizations (Siegfried Jr., 2008). When it comes to commitment, they are committed to their work and team, but not to the organization (Angel, 2011). Company loyalty is no longer the norm. Money is a significant appealing driver to move. In search of new challenges and adventures, Millennials do not hesitate to move, and want continuously to learn new things (Fisher, 2015). They do not purposely job hop, but want to work in an organization where they feel they can contribute and make a difference (Greenwood, 2016). In some cases, Millennials are reportedly leaving managers, and not companies (Reuteman, 2015). "Working environment, peer pressure, rewards system and organizational culture are some of the reasons that may influence an employee intention to quit" (Jauhar et al., 2017). They want to be taken seriously and may feel hurt for being treated with disrespect, as insignificant, or for being left out as they were inexperienced or too young (Plew, 2013).

Objectives and Research Questions

The objectives of this study were to investigate the behavior of Millennials who were working in Bangkok, Thailand. Their employment history was investigated, including their personal reasons for changing jobs and, more importantly, the typical factors that motivated Millennials to quit their jobs. As the focus of literature review was based outside Thailand, the results of this research would shed new light on working Millennials in a developing country. Current employers, managers, and human resource managers could gain from this study, as they would better understand why Millennial employees leave companies, and what motivates them to leave. This information could also be used to cater to the preferred work styles of Millennial employees in future organizational models and retention plans.

This study was guided by the following three research questions:

1. How often did Millennials change their jobs over the course of their working careers, and what was the average time span for each job?
2. Why do Millennials leave their jobs, and what efforts did employers make to retain them?
3. What were the typical factors contributing to Millennials changing jobs?

Methodology

This study was exploratory and sought to obtain the perspectives of Millennials themselves on the research topic, "Why Do Millennials Leave?" A qualitative research approach was chosen to align with the nature of the study (Creswell, 2009), enabling the researcher to collect data in greater depth and detail (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2010). The data collection technique used in this qualitative study was structured, individual in-depth interviews. An interview protocol was used to guide each face-to-face in-depth interview, and a total of 30 Millennials who represented a wide array of working professionals in Bangkok, Thailand were queried. Purposeful sampling was used in the

selection of candidates with at least a bachelor’s degree to ensure a higher validity and reliability of the study. The interviews were usually conducted over a lunch or dinner business meal that lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. The interview protocol included three parts totaling 12 questions: Part 1: Demographics (four questions) that covered gender, age range, ethnic background, and educational degree; Part 2: Past Employment History (seven questions) that included total years of employment, number of job changes, reasons behind job changes, past employers’ retaining efforts, average work span, similar or different job and industry changes; and Part 3: Perspectives on Millennial Exiting Organizations (one question) that covered typical factors that could contribute to Millennial departures from organizations. The data analysis performed relied on grounded theory, where categories were developed through the clustering of similar codes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The results were reported under themes.

Results

Theme 1: Demographics

The 30 participants were working Millennials professionals with at least a Bachelor’s degree (76.7%), a minority held a Master’s degree (20.0%), and one person held a doctoral degree (3.3%). An equivalent number of males (50%) and females (50%) were chosen for this research, with 27 representing Thailand (90%), two from China (6.7%), and one from Brazil (3.3%). The Millennial age group was between 19–39 years as of 2019 and were born between 1980 and 2000 (Axten, 2015; Frankel, 2016). The grouping is shown in Table 1, with four ranges of equal intervals of five years.

Theme 2: Employment History

The total number of years of employment was grouped under four categories (Table 2). The majority (46.7%) were employed in different work positions, 33.3% moved to similar positions performing similar work, while 13.3% were promoted to higher positions while performing similar work, and 6.7% never changed their jobs. More than half the participants (58.2%) had moved to different industries, while approximately one-third (31.8%) stayed in the same industry, and 10% had never changed jobs.

Table 1. Participants’ Age Groups

| Age Range | <i>n</i> | Percent (%) |
|-----------|----------|-------------|
| 19–24 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 25–29 | 18 | 60.0 |
| 30–34 | 9 | 30.0 |
| 35–39 | 2 | 6.7 |

Table 2. Years of Employment and Job Changes

| Years of Employment | Mean Job Changes |
|---------------------|------------------|
| < 2 | 0.5 |
| 2–4 | 1.6 |
| 5–9 | 3.0 |
| 10–17 | 4.7 |

Theme 3: Personal Reasons behind Job Changes

Participants were asked why they had changed jobs over the course of their employment. The rationale behind job changes were numerous (75 items), and were grouped under nine main categories (Table 3). Interestingly enough, the highest attributed reason for leaving was the *Job itself* (23.3%), because the job was routine, unchallenging, uninteresting, and did not align with previous expectations. There was no *fun factor*, working hours were inflexible, tasks were overly demanding, and did not offer work-life balance. They were also frustrated by inefficient operations, and they would not hesitate to change jobs when they had no passion for the work they were doing. The need for higher compensation (16.4%) was the second main reason for job changes. Up to 12.3% left because there was no career growth, learning, or mentoring opportunities. An unfavorable

organizational culture (11%) also pushed them to change jobs. Millennials mentioned bad experiences such as politics, backstabbing, and working alongside bad, disrespectful, and unsupportive coworkers and supervisors. A preference for working in a multicultural environment versus a very traditional Thai environment was also a reason why some Millennials had left their jobs. Some had left for family reasons (5.5%), others had better job offers (5.5%), while a few did not have person-organization-industry fit (5.5%). Managers also proved to be problematic in some instances (5.5%), as Millennials were reported to be working with managers who were unethical, close-minded, or just bad bosses. Other reasons (individual reasons cited once) (15.1%) included working night shifts, military service, furthering their studies, the workplace being too far away from home, the need to rest, misalignment of major interests and job, failure to pass the probationary period, end of a work contract, moving back home from abroad, and still trying to figure things out.

Table 3. Ranked Categorized Items: Personal Reasons behind Job Changes

| Job Change Reasons | n | Percent (%) |
|---|-----------|--------------------|
| Job itself | 17 | 23.3 |
| Need for higher compensation | 12 | 16.4 |
| Lack of learning, career growth, and mentorship opportunities | 9 | 12.3 |
| Bad organizational culture | 8 | 11.0 |
| Family reasons | 4 | 5.5 |
| Better job offers | 4 | 5.5 |
| No person-organization-industry fit | 4 | 5.5 |
| Management problems | 4 | 5.5 |
| Other reasons | 11 | 15.1 |
| Totals | 73 | 100.0 |

Theme 4: Efforts to Retain Participants Who Handed in Their Resignations

In response to the efforts made by past employers to induce them to stay, 28.6% stated that their employers’ efforts were merely verbal, while 20% indicated that there were no efforts made to retain them at all. Up to 20% of participants said that all kinds of retention efforts were unsuccessful, as their minds had been made up to leave the organization. A few employers (8.6%), on the other hand, had been very supportive of the Millennials’ departure to better employers. One male participant said that the manager tried to retain him by giving him the opportunity to transfer to a different department/branch, but he declined the offer. Another male participant stated that “the retention package was too late,” while another female respondent said that “they just asked me to stay, but my authoritative father's voice for me to quit was higher”.

Theme 5: Typical Factors Contributing to Millennial Exit

Participants were asked to reflect on five typical factors contributing to Millennial exits from an organization based on their circle of Millennial friends, coworkers, and from their own personal experiences. Not all participants were able to list five factors; thus, only 145 factors were collected instead of the targeted 150 (30 participants x 5 factors). These responses were grouped together into a total of 14 categorized items (Table 4).

The most cited factor that contributed to Millennial exit was attributed to the *Job itself* (27.6%). Millennials love a good challenge, and when that is absent, they start looking for new challenges and new experiences elsewhere. They have problems with work overload, need a job that is not routine but one that provides new experiences, work-life balance, flexibility, and low work pressure. Millennials would also not hesitate to leave a job that makes them unhappy, and for which they have no passion, interest in, or which they dislike.

The low and unattractive pay they were receiving was the second main reason why Millennials exited an organization (17.2%), as they desired higher compensation and good benefits. One participant mentioned that “pay raises are not fast enough,” hence, the need to “look for a job with more competitive pay.” Millennials also had a high need for growth in their careers, and a clear career path with room for advancement, training, and promotional opportunities. Dissatisfaction in these areas caused some to leave (8.3%). Working with bad, annoying, selfish, free-rider coworkers contributed to a bad working environment that could have caused some Millennials to move elsewhere (11.7%). Problems with leadership was another highly cited reason for leaving (6.9%), as some Millennials could not get along with their bosses. A participant mentioned “disliking supervisors who are egoistic who did not listen to the younger generation and have the ‘I’m always right’ attitude because I’m older than you.” Demanding and micromanaging managers, overlapping superiors, the lack of managerial support for personal projects, as well as doing their boss’s work were other management-Millennial issues.

Millennials are a distinct generation with special personalities different from other generations that sometimes cause them to leave the organization (5.5%). Growing up with technology and the comforts of life, they have a “low tolerance for work” and, as one participant mentioned, they think “work is hard”. Another stated that “Millennials leave when they are too embarrassed or shameful when confronted with mistakes made.” It also was mentioned that they were “highly individualistic and overconfident, unable to accept other people’s opinions.” They are intolerant of dealing with the older generation of workers, and would be willing to go abroad to learn a new language to be more marketable and improve their profile.

Two categorized items of equal importance (4.1% each) included leaving for new and better job offers, and when there was no person-organization fit. A few Millennials possessed the entrepreneurial spirit (3.4%) that filled them with the desire to go freelance, start a business, or quit to embark on a sideline job that proved successful. They would also leave an organization when they did not feel valued (2.8%), and looked for a job closer to home or to a workplace that was more accessible by public transportation (2.8%). Other factors responsible for Millennial exit were easier job changes with technology-assisted recruitment platforms such as LinkedIn (2.1%), and for family reasons. The last factor was job hopping because their friends were leaving their positions (1.4%).

Discussion

The discussion portion of this paper will be considered according to the five themes outlined.

Theme 1: Demographics

Most qualitative studies employ a much smaller sample size of participants, while one distinct feature of this qualitative study was the large sample of 30 participants. This study was based in Thailand, where there are employment laws that reserve most professions for Thais. Hence, the majority of the participants were Thai citizens (90%). The majority were between 25–34 years old, and the results of this study lean more towards this age range. Caution must be made to avoid any stereotyping, as not all Millennials are the same, and should not be categorized as one homogenous group (Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010).

Table 4. Ranked Categorized Items: Factors Contributing to Millennial Exits

| Job Change Reasons | <i>n</i> | Percent (%) |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|
| Job itself | 40 | 27.6 |
| Higher compensation & better benefits | 25 | 17.2 |
| Lack of career path, advancement opportunities, and training | 12 | 8.3 |
| Bad organizational culture and environment, inclusive of bad coworkers | 17 | 11.7 |
| Management problems | 10 | 6.9 |
| Individual characteristics | 8 | 5.5 |
| Better job offers | 6 | 4.1 |
| No person-organization fit | 6 | 4.1 |
| Start a new business | 5 | 3.4 |
| Not feeling valued | 4 | 2.8 |
| Move closer to home or more train accessible | 4 | 2.8 |
| Easier job changes | 3 | 2.1 |
| Family reasons | 3 | 2.1 |
| Everyone else is job hopping and follow friends who leave the company | 2 | 1.4 |
| Totals | 145 | 100.0 |

Themes 2 and 4: Employment History and Efforts to Retain Participants Who Resigned

Although the number of job changes varied from one individual to another, the figures in Table 2 indicated that a positive relationship between the number of years and job changes; the higher the number of years worked, the higher the mean of job changes. The frequent job changes indicated the practice of job hopping by 28 participants, and the low commitment they had towards staying at their respective places of employment. This is a clear indication that the majority of Millennials residing in Thailand are similar to Millennials in other parts of the world when it comes to job hopping, thus creating high Millennial turnover rates (Fisher, 2015). More than half (58.2%) venturing into different industries was a clear indication that these Millennials were willing to explore outside their comfort zones and move into something different, particularly if the new job was meaningful to them (Fisher, 2015; Gagne, 2018; Ware, 2014). This was further supported by the fact that 46.7% of the participants had moved to completely new work positions, while the rest resumed the same type of work.

It was disheartening to learn that past employers did not make much effort to retain them, and efforts to do so were just verbal ones. When offered a better compensation package by a few employers, they were declined by Millennials (20%) who had made up their minds to leave for good. Employers might wish to consider offering earlier retention packages once they sense a “departure syndrome”, before Millennials hand in their job resignations. Not offering an attractive compensation package, according to Fisher (2015), was a failure on the organization’s part in retaining their employees. However, companies might not be realistically capable of offering higher salaries or promotions to every employee who wants to leave. In fact, a participant mentioned that it was against company policy to offer a better compensation package for retention purposes. Managerial support for Millennial’s departure to another better organization is truly commendable, and should be practiced more often, to show a good spirit on the part of an organization when an employee decides to leave.

Themes 3 and 5: Personal Reasons behind Job Changes and Factors Contributing to Millennial Exit

As mentioned earlier in the results section of this study, *Theme 3: Personal Reasons behind Job Changes*, was based on the question “Why did you leave your job?” Each participant shared the reasons for making each job change, and the answers were, therefore, very personalized. The discussion for *Theme 5: Typical Factors Contributing to Millennial Exit*, centered around the main focus of this study “Why Do Millennials Leave Their Jobs?” When interviewing the participants, they usually spent some time thinking prior to answering this question, as they tried to recollect their thoughts regarding why Millennial friends would normally leave their jobs. Therefore, most factors were more generalized and not as personal compared to the answers under Theme 3.

Upon closer examination of these two themes, a comparative analysis was made to find the similarities between the answers given by each participant (*Personal reasons behind job changes* and *Factors contributing to Millennial exit*). Out of the 30 participants, 12 participants had similar answers for some, but the overall number of similar answers for both questions amongst the 30 participants was relatively low at 11.7%, or 17 out of 145 items. In the comparison between the categorized items of the two themes, eight categorized items were identified as being similar. There was a total of nine categorized items in Theme 3, and 14 categorized items in Theme 5. Eight out of nine items in Theme 3 were similar to Theme 4, or a total of 88%, while only eight out of 14 items were similar from Theme 4 when compared to Theme 3, or a total of 57%. This shows that that the categorized items in Theme 3 were very similar to Theme 4, while Theme 4 had up to 43% different categorized items.

In ranking the most frequently categorized items (Table 3 and Table 4), the two themes varied, with the exception of the four highest ranked categorized items, the seventh and eighth items. The first main reason for Millennials exit was the *Job itself*. These Millennials would leave their jobs due to the absence of challenges (Jalnawala, 2018), as they placed high importance on challenging, interesting, and non-routine jobs that incorporated flexibility (Axten, 2015; Ellis, 2013). When those elements are missing in their jobs, they would not hesitate to leave in order to find an ideal organization to work for. Their need for work-life balance (Angel, 2011; Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Axten, 2015) was apparent, as some had left because of work pressures (Chappell, 2012), excessive workloads, and burnout. Passion, an interest in the field of work or job, was likewise meaningfully important to Millennials (Greenwood, 2016; Jalnawala, 2018), and its absence was another factor that motivated them to leave an organization (“Millennials at Work,” 2015).

The second reason behind the changes or departures were identical—low compensation/pay. The topic of compensation was something the majority cared about greatly, and this coincides with the characteristic of other Millennials working outside of Thailand (Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Nickell, 2014; Reuteman, 2015). Some participants mentioned that job hopping had helped them increase their salaries at a faster rate. In fact, one participant reported three big salary jumps by moving thrice.

A participant said that Millennials would leave when there is a “pitch dark career path,” thus indicating that the Millennials in Thailand are no different from those outside the country who are looking for a progressive career (Chappell, 2012; Ellis, 2013; Gagne, 2018; Greenwood, 2016; Gursoy et al., 2008; Jalnawala, 2018; “Millennials at Work,” 2015; Nickell, 2014). The lack of a career path could be a driving force leading to the hunt for better job offers. Their job hopping was an indication that they were active job seekers (Ware, 2014), and this had been facilitated by the availability and ease of job applications through mobile recruitment platforms such as LinkedIn (Lawson Williams National Staff Turnover Survey, 2018). They had received success in obtaining better job offers with higher compensation (Ware, 2014), and job promotions or advancement opportunities (Chappell, 2012). This was the third highest similarity ranked item. A few had stated that they were still exploring and looking for that person-organization or person-job fit. The question of fit represents a great challenge to organizations, particularly the Human Resources Department in its recruitment and selection efforts.

Both Themes 3 and 5 were aligned in ranking as the fourth highest category an unfavorable organizational culture and environment, which was inclusive of bad coworkers. Despite the fact that only one person had worked in a “bad working environment caused by unfriendly, disrespectful, and

supportive peers,” others had mentioned that working alongside bad coworkers was another important factor for leaving. Many participants were upset with their coworkers and managers (Reuteman, 2015), citing the “bad working environment” and “bad culture” that probably contributed to the “unhappiness” they were experiencing at work. These issues probably caused a lowering of their job satisfaction, and one participant mentioned “I am ready to leave once I get a new job.” Being honest, transparent, and ethical are significant to Millennials (Angel, 2011; Bye, 2018; Gagne, 2018) and the manager’s or organization’s failure in these areas, either through exploitation by overworking them and underpaying them, or through their unethical actions, had driven ethical-minded Millennials elsewhere. As a pampered generation (Fallon, 2009) their need to be recognized and valued (Chappell, 2012; Ellis, 2013; Gursoy et al., 2008; Plew, 2013) are valuable to them, and feelings of embarrassment as a result of mistakes made or their intolerance of hard work, as well as their impatience (Gagne, 2018) for past track promotions and salary increases (Aruna & Anitha, 2015), contribute to their departure. Leadership issues had also driven them out, and this supports Reuteman’s (2015) research. He mentioned that Millennials were leaving managers, and not companies. Although management-employee issues have been prevalent throughout history, the gap between current Millennials and their older managers are much wider as a result of different Millennial mindsets (Jackson, 2015; Plew, 2013). It is of utmost importance that managers and organizational leaders make a greater effort to close this gap (Lowery, 2004, as cited in Erwin, 2009), as they would unknowingly be the ones contributing to this exit.

Technology has made it much easier for the Millennial generation to start their own businesses, and leaving to start one’s own business is truly commendable. Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, is infamous for its traffic; thus the expressed need to relocate nearer to home is understandable. One can take up to 1½ to 2 hours to commute one way due to distance and traffic. This fact is probably a new addition to existing literature as a reason or factor leading to Millennials leaving a workplace. One male participant said that his father would disinherit him if he did not resign from his job, while another female participant was forced to resign from her previous job as it did not pay well. The prevalence of parental authority in Thailand is relatively high, though not always the case, even when the children are working adults, as it is part of the culture. A male participant mentioned that he had to resign to fulfill his military service requirements, which is a legal requirement for Thai male nationals, and employers require evidence of this completion prior to hiring them. Those who did not go through the military training programs while in high school have the option of fulfilling this obligation through conscription, where eligible recruits participate in a lottery to see if they need to join the military service (2 years), or whether they have been opted out (Larkin, 2019).

As most participants were educated in an international school and university in Thailand (American curriculum), a few wanted to work in a more multicultural and international environment. Their previous international education exposure had shaped their mindset towards a more international one, and it had been a challenge to work in a totally Thai working environment. This concept could also be true in the case of students who had been educated abroad in international schools, as they might prefer to work in a multicultural work-setting. Thais who had attended Thai schools usually fit in well in a Thai working environment, and may not seek to work in a multicultural workplace when compared to those who had an international school experience.

Two participants had mentioned that they had left their jobs due to the lack of or need for supervision or mentorship (Greenwood, 2016; Schawbel & Bisharat, 2014). Changing jobs when it has an impact on a person’s life because of working in shifts, particularly the night shift, as in the case of one participant, is understandable and a justifiable reason for departing.

This study clearly indicated that there were many similarities in the reasons for Millennial turnover among Thai Millennials and Millennials outside of Thailand.

Conclusions

With a focus on Millennials in Bangkok, Thailand, this study was able to identify personal reasons for job changes and typical factors that could contribute to Millennial departures from their workplaces. Many reasons and factors were identical to those found in previous research studies, thus supporting existing literature on the topic. With this being the case, it can be concluded that Millennials in Thailand are, in many ways, similar to those in Western countries. There were other reasons or factors that were new and contributed to departures, such as travel time, family pressures, and military service commitment. A distinct contribution is ranking each categorical grouping in order to outline the importance of each reason/factor.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

The main limitation of this study was the lack of literature available on Thai Millennials in general and, more specifically, on Thai Millennials in the workplace, and the impact of Thai culture on their behavior and turnover decisions. An interesting topic for further research would be a comparative study of Gen Yers and Gen Zers, to find out the similarities and differences between these two generations on turnover, or perhaps, just on Gen Zers.

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