

A Study of Employers' Satisfaction With Generation Z in Thai Workplaces

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Abstract

The newest generation of workers, Generation Z, differs in many ways from previous cohorts, and so its entry into job markets poses increasing management challenges for organizations. The objective of this qualitative phenomenology research study was to explore employers' challenges and satisfaction levels with Gen Z in the workplace. Conducted in Thailand, a total of 13 participants participated in in-depth structured interviews. The results showed that while there were challenges working with Gen Z, the majority of employers were satisfied with their performance in the workplace. Gen Z workers were described as being creative, fast, problem-solvers, self-learners, tech savvy, highly confident, flexible, adaptable to change, and bringing new and great ideas. Their challenges included low organizational commitment, reluctance to stay beyond normal working hours, impatience, lack of attention to detail, and lack of some social and basic office skills. This study provides a better understanding of Gen Z's mindset, and the input gained may help employers to respond more appropriately to changes in their current workforces. It may also be valuable in helping universities to better prepare students for the workplace.

Keywords: *Employers, Generation Z, satisfaction, workplace*

Introduction

Generation Z (Gen Z), now in their mid-twenties, is the most recent group of young professionals to enter the workforce, beginning in 2020 (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018). These employees of the future (McGregor, 2022) are "tech-savvy, purpose-driven, independent, entrepreneurial-spirited 'Zoomers'" (Ahmed, 2023, p. 59). Generation Z, who are also referred to by other names such as I Gen, eGen, iGeneration, Centennials, Gen Tech, Online Generation, and the Facebook generation, were born between 1997 and 2012 (Smeak, 2020). The lives of Gen Z have been greatly affected and shaped by major events such as times of economic recession, high unemployment, rapid Internet growth, and having access to mobile devices (Turner, 2015). They have turned out differently from other generations in their "expectations, education, work ethics, and behaviors due to cultural values and practices that changed over time" (Ngoc et al., 2022, p. 8). Thus, they need to be treated differently. With a unique perspective of the world, differences in their work behaviors, expectations, habits, abilities, values, and information processing skills are evident (Gerschenson et al., 2017). Gen Z presents both challenges and opportunities to organizations, but if they are "understood and leveraged, they have the potential to become some of the most productive professionals" (Ellwood, 2020, p. 160). Organizations that respond effectively will be able to attract them, retain talent, and remain competitive (Ngoc et al., 2022).

The aim of this study was to learn about both the challenges and satisfaction levels experienced by Gen Z employers in regard to their work performance. How Gen Z could improve their work habits was also investigated together with how universities could better prepare them for the workplace. The literature available on Gen Z is minimal, since they began to enter the workplace only four years ago. This study will hopefully add to the scant literature on Gen Z, particularly from employers' perspectives regarding their work performance. Employer recommendations about how organizations can help improve their workplace accomplishments, and how universities can better prepare them for workplaces will prove to be useful to Human Resource (HR) practitioners, academics, and organizations.

Literature Review

Most organizations are composed of multigenerational workforces, with each generation having its own distinct “attitudes, motivations, and priorities” (Smeak, 2020, p. 22). The five current generations include the: (a) Silent Generation (1925 to 1945), (b) Baby Boomers (1946 to 1964), (c) Generation X (1965 to 1980), (d) Generation Y/Millennials (1981 to 1996), and (e) Generation Z (1997 to 2012). An emerging theory has identified “micro-generations” or “small segments of the generational cohort that finds itself within a generation” (Smeak, 2020, p. 24). Simply said, there are many different personality types within each generation (Taylor, 2015) affected by various factors such as upbringing, life experiences, values, and personalities (Smeak, 2020). The addition of a very different generation (Gen Z) to the workplace has brought about many new challenges aside from coping with currently changing working environments (Botezat et al., 2020). Although Gen Z has been negatively stereotyped as being less engaged at work, they have to be highly success-oriented (Barna Group, 2018) and to have positive attitudes (Schroth, 2019).

Generation Z

Gen Z have been highly impacted by their upbringing, thus creating a new generation of workers with “a specific set of behaviors at work and unique expectations, aspirations, and motivations from their jobs” (Botezat et al., 2020, p. 71). They work very differently from other previous generations (McGregor, 2022) as they have some unique characteristics that—though radically different—should not be ignored. Gen Z is said to be the most racially and ethnically diverse generation (Ellwood, 2020; Turner, 2015), and they are accepting of the diversity of others (Ellwood, 2020). They grew up with cellular technology and the Internet, spend their lives with smartphones (McGregor, 2022; Priporas et al., 2017; Smeak, 2020), and mainly communicate and connect with others through text messaging and social media rather than direct contact. However, they still value face-to-face communication (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018), which helps to reduce their loneliness (Ellwood, 2020).

Their immense exposure to technology has earned them the nickname “digital natives,” but extensive smart device usage has decreased their social interaction, which creates a need for social skills improvement (Priporas et al., 2017). Being tech savvy does not guarantee being capable of using software and technologies at work. Therefore, employers need to provide training and guidance so that they can be “digitally literate and professional in the workplace” (Ellwood, 2020, p. 18). As the real corporate world is not as digital or advanced as Gen Z may think, they need to be informed that their “peers may not be as tech savvy as they are” (Ellwood, 2020, p. 18). As independent self-learners, they prefer to Google for answers, watch Youtube videos, or learn from the Internet. They also prefer shorter online training courses, as they have the shortest attention span amongst the generations (Ellwood, 2020). Although they are self-learners, they still need company provided on-the-job training (Schroth, 2019) and professional development (Chillakuri, 2020; Nabahani & Riyanto, 2020). This enables them to apply newly acquired skills to assigned tasks (Cho et al., 2018), while increasing their skills and competencies, as well as making their jobs more meaningful (Nabahani & Riyanto, 2020).

Ahmed (2023, p. 59) warns that there are five discredited Gen Z stereotypes, and by understanding their passions and purposes, employers would be “one step ahead in creating the next generation's motivational workplace culture.” These five corrected stereotypes include:

1. Gen Z is not selfish; their values act as a compass. If requests do not align with their values, they have no problem saying “no,” and vice versa.
2. Gen Z is not lazy; many of them are actually “some of the hardest working, driven, and engaged workers” Ahmed (2023, p. 59); they give their 100% when the requests and their values align.
3. Gen Z does not believe that they know everything.
4. Gen Z does not take orders well; they want to be provided with directions, solicit feedback for alignment, and be given space to be curious and creative in their approach, as there is no one definite approach in reaching a goal.
5. Gen Z won't achieve success; they have redefined success differently, and they want to “live a fulfilled life in harmony with their values and energetic impact” (Ahmed, 2023, pp. 59–61).

Unfortunately, Gen Z has been reported as the generation with the worst mental health, being lonely and depressed as a result of suffering from stress caused by “gun violence, political issues that affect their future, work, health concerns, finances and rising suicides” (Ellwood, 2020, p. 18). Gen Z focuses more on materiality than other generations (Niemczynowicz et al., 2023), with money as their motivating factor and also one of their greatest stressors. Placing a high value on education, they feel that it is the pathway that will lead them to good paying jobs, promotions, and job security (Botezat et al., 2020; Ellwood, 2020; Nabahani & Riyanto, 2020; Turner, 2015). They may be more financially responsible than their parents (Turner, 2015), but many lack work experience because they grew up in families with higher incomes than other generations. They were focused on their studies rather than having to work and support their families while they were still young (Schroth, 2019).

There are three distinct subgroups within Gen Z:

1. *Social Investors* who “value a work-life balance” and need flexibility, but still have expectations of their jobs, coworkers and superiors.
2. *Chill Worker Bees* who “desire a comfortable workplace environment” and want their basic needs to be met.
3. *Go Getters* who “prioritize advancing their career.” This group are high energy achievers with a commanding presence who are passionate about their work (Leslie et al., 2021, p. 171).

One big concern is their mental health, with one out of three members of Gen Z suffering from anxiety, stress, and/or depression; they have been reported to encounter greater mental challenges than other generations. Moreover, they have rejected the concept of lifelong job commitment, with approximately 77% expressing a desire to someday leave their current jobs (Abdi, 2023).

Gen Z Workplace Preferences

Gen Z has placed a significantly higher focus on maintaining a good cultural fit with their jobs compared to previous generations. Being more ethical than other generations, they place a high priority on choosing to work for organizations that have high moral and ethical standards (Leslie et al., 2021; Mintel Group, 2019). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is important to them, both as consumers and employees. As consumers, they are attracted to and purchase products if the quality and price meet their expectations, and they are attracted to employers who implement CSR programs (Ariker & Toksoy, 2017).

Gen Z can work both onsite or remotely (Barhate & Dirani, 2021; Dolot, 2018), with a preference for working remotely at times (McGregor, 2022; Ngoc et al., 2022). They also want to be given flextime and autonomy to accommodate their personal needs such as going to the gym, meeting a friend, or running errands (Mintel Group, 2019; Ngoc et al., 2022), all of which contribute to maintaining the work-life balance that they desire (Ariker & Toksoy, 2017; Chillakuri, 2020). Highly cherishing teamwork (Ngoc et al., 2022), they value collaboration over competition, personal relationships, sincerity, and workplace ethics (Ngoc et al., 2022). Meaningful work (Chillakuri, 2020) should not be routine, repetitive, or boring; they also want to be given clear goals and instructions (Schroth, 2019).

They have high expectations of their managers when it comes to providing “guidance, support, work independence, work meaningfulness, and personality utility value” (Botezat et al., 2020, p. 86). Clear expectations and frequent supervisory feedback (Ariker & Toksoy, 2017; Chillakuri, 2020) are highly valued, as they help Gen Z to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and know how they may contribute to the firm’s overall performance (Kulkarni & Rai, 2023). Gen Z values internal talent mobility, a career path where they can grow, intellectual challenges, and opportunities to learn new skills and abilities as they mature in an organization (McGregor, 2022). Their ideal workplace should be a “friendly, fun, happy social environment” in an “open, clean office space” (Ngoc et al., 2022, pp. 5-6). Nevertheless, they are a forgetful generation, and employers need to communicate with them through social networks rather than by just speaking to them (Sharma & Pandit, 2021).

Challenges of Working With Gen Z in the Workplace

Demonstrating a low degree of organizational commitment from the start of their careers, they do not hesitate to switch jobs several times prior to settling down in an organization. They value new

job opportunities more highly than stability at work (Barhate & Dirani, 2021; Dolot, 2018). The rationale behind this is because they do not want to be trapped, spending their entire career in a single organization until they retire, when there are many organizations and opportunities waiting for them (Ngoc et al., 2022). Gen Zers prefer not to perform tasks for which they were not hired (Chillakuri, 2020), and start looking for a new workplace when their needs are not met (Racolța-Paina & Irini, 2021). Managers are especially concerned about stemming turnover rates in light of this situation (Nabahani & Riyanto, 2020).

Soft competency deficiencies are the most frequently mentioned weakness associated with Generation Z. They frequently have poor listening skills, and are unable to understand body language or discern others' intentions. They are referred to as the "New Silent Generation," since they converse online more easily than in person. They do not show much empathy or self-control, do not cooperate well in groups, and are often unwilling to share ideas or thoughts with others. If a disagreement emerges, they may either start a fight or sidestep the problem (Mazurek, 2019). If they are unable to discover enjoyment at work, they may consider leaving a position without hesitation. Gen Z do not relate well to any one age group, since they value their individuality and dislike authority (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015). Human Resource directors should be ready to respond to queries from Gen Z, who typically do not hold back, are not afraid to ask difficult questions, and expect to receive prompt responses. They typically have doubts about the legitimacy of the rules to which an organization adheres, what they are trying to accomplish, why they decided to do it, and what the results will be (Karthikeyan, 2022).

From the Organization's Side

Organizations need to adapt to the unique characteristics of this large wave of new Gen Z employees as they join workforces (Ngoc et al., 2022), since they will make up about one-third of the global population, and most of them reside in emerging countries (Thach et al., 2020). Employers who seek to understand them will be better equipped to manage a more challenging and diverse workforce (Leslie et al., 2021; McGregor, 2022). Moreover, by empowering Gen Z and embracing change, they can become attractive employers. It is important for them to teach, educate, and mentor Gen Z employees so that they grow as individuals (McGregor, 2022). Helping them learn to appreciate experienced workers who have different skills and capabilities at the onset can help reduce and prevent conflicts in the workplace. Introducing reverse mentoring benefits organizations, as it helps to "leverage each generation's skills and capabilities" (Ellwood, 2020, p. 18). Giving Gen Z credit for a job well done increases their commitment, and including them in decision-making, committees, and projects provides them with a sense of control over their career pathways (Kulkarni & Rai, 2023).

Organizations have embraced a digital culture that requires not only new ideas, but also new approaches, which Gen Z understands very well. According to McGregor (2022, p. 12), the younger generation are "more altruistic" than previous generations who "see the potential in technology and want to use it to solve problems and make the world a better place." Since they have very different expectations from their predecessors, employers could benefit from gaining a good knowledge of their job seeking expectations and job pursuit intentions as a way of making their organizations more attractive places to work (Ngoc et al., 2022).

Objectives and Research Questions

The objectives of this study were to find out how satisfied selected employers were with the work performance of Gen Z employees, and the challenges of having them in the workplace. Recommendations were also sought from employers as to how universities and organizations could better prepare Gen Z for the workplace. Four main research questions guided this study:

1. What are the challenges of working with Gen Z employees?
2. How satisfied are employers with Gen Z's work performance?
3. What recommendations can be given to organizations to improve Gen Z workplaces?
4. What recommendations can be given to universities to better prepare Gen Z for workplaces?

Methodology

A qualitative phenomenological research method was selected for this study, as Gen Z have just entered the workplace in recent years, and learning how they have impacted workplaces in recent years is a new topic that is worth exploring. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted either through online platforms such as LINE or Messenger, or face-to-face for 30- to 45-minute sessions. Convenience sampling was used, with both researchers relying on their professional networks to invite participants who were working with Gen Z employees to participate in the study. A total of 13 participants were interviewed; each participant's profile (gender, nationality, age range, industry, and position) is shown in Table 1. Data were collected through a Google Form link sent to prospective participants, and by completing this form, they consented to participate in the study. The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of four questions: (a) challenges of working with Gen Z compared to other generations, (b) Gen Z's performance in the workplace, (c) suggestions for improving the workplace performance of Gen Z, and (d) recommendations for universities to better prepare them for the workplace.

Table 1 *Participant Profiles*

Participant	Gender	Nationality	Age Range	% Time with Gen Z	Industry	Position
P1	Female	Thai	41–50	> 70	Education	Financial Controller
P2	Male	Thai	31–40	> 70	Agritech	Senior QA Tester
P3	Female	Vietnamese	28–30	> 70	Printing	Operation Manager
P4	Female	Lao	41–50	30–70	Church Organization	Department Director
P5	Male	Thai	51–60	< 30	IT	Operation Director
P6	Male	Thai	41–50	> 70	IT	Vice-President
P7	Female	Thai	51–60	> 70	Transportation	HRM Director
P8	Male	Thai	41–50	30–70	Education	Assistant Chairman
P9	Female	Thai	28–30	30–70	Audit	Audit Manager
P10	Female	Thai	41–50	30–70	Shipping	General Manager
P11	Female	Thai	51–60	30–70	Education	School Director
P12	Male	Malaysian	41–50	> 70	Media	Manager
P13	Male	Thai	28–30	30 - 70	Fitness	Business Owner

Results

The data was coded and analyzed on Excel spreadsheets, and the clusters formed by similar codes were then organized into broader categories, and finally grouped into four main themes as found in Table 2. The results are then further analyzed in the Discussion section.

Table 2 *Summary of Themes*

Themes	Description of Sub-Themes
Theme 1: Challenges of Working with Gen Z	1. Understanding Gen Z and Their Work Ethic 2. Difficulties Working with Gen Z
Theme 2: Gen Z's General Performance in the Workplace	1. Neutral or Mild Dissatisfaction with Gen Z's Work 2. Satisfaction/High Satisfaction with Gen Z's Work
Theme 3: Suggestions for Organizations in Improving the Workplace for Gen Z	1. Playing the Part 2. What Organizations Can Do 3. Adhering to Gen Z's Work Preferences

Challenges of Working with Gen Z

Understanding Gen Z and Their Work Ethic

Working with Gen Z does not have to be challenging, and understanding them and their work ethic a little better would be helpful to employers and superiors. A very understanding participant (P2) said that they “don’t have much experience because they just graduated.” Participant P3 found that they are “brave and speak out,” and dislike “being forced to do their work and strict rules.” To them, respect is something that needs to be earned (P3). They are “good and fast problem solvers, knowing where to gain access to information, as they are tech savvy” (P4), and are flexible when it comes to “adapting to change” (P3). Not only do they “like to share and help, they do not skimp on knowledge like the older generations” (P5); they are very quick (P6) and “work about two to three times faster than other generations” (P3). Being given clear instructions is important to them, and organizations can reap immense benefits by enhancing their job satisfaction since Gen Z can exceed expectations when they are motivated (P3). Active and quick, they can adapt well to fast changes (P5). Interviewee P6 recommended that “their massive energy needs to be channeled properly to achieve greater impacts.”

They “like new, non-repetitive, and challenging work, unlike their older colleagues who prefer routine work” (P4) and dislike change (P4 & P5). According to P1, Gen Z follows the current trend of changing jobs frequently, looking for work that pays better rather than focusing on a stable job. This notion was supported by both P7 and P9, who called Gen Z “short-term thinkers” who are ready to move to “a new workplace with a better job offers instead of thinking to grow with the company” (P9). They “lack the patience of waiting for a promotion after working for two years” (P7). High Gen Z turnover has, according to P7, led to them having a “lower impact compared to the older generations, as they are in lower positions, and are therefore easier to replace than their superiors” (P7). Gen Z “have their own slang and interests which are very different from other generations, resulting in relationship challenges/barriers, which have a significant impact on work” (P10). They have their own mindsets and ways of doing things which cannot be generalized.

Interviewee P12 strongly believed in empowerment as a significant tool in “reaching the same organizational goals through their own way of getting there, as they dislike being told what to do, unlike older generations who are used to and expected to be told what to do, and their loyalties cannot be bought.” Moreover, they like flexible working hours because they sleep late in the evening (P4). This finding is aligned with literature that mentioned that their different upbringing impacted the way they have turned out, with “a specific set of behaviors at work and unique expectations, aspirations, and motivations from their jobs” (Botezat et al., 2020, p. 71).

Difficulties Working with Gen Z

A true challenge is the “ability to catch up with Gen Z, who have new ideas, perspectives, and come up with new trends of working.” Therefore, P8 had to do some research before talking with them. One big challenge is that “Gen Z prefers to use their own ways of accomplishing tasks, and they never hesitate to ask when in doubt.” However, getting things done using their own ways meant “having multiple adjustments and revisions prior to getting the task done,” but that was acceptable to P8. Although Gen Z have boundaries in terms of working hours and finish work by 5:30 pm, as agreed in their employment contracts, they are “unwilling to go beyond that time when asked to work overtime as they already had other scheduled plans.” Older workers, on the other hand, “do not seem to want to go home” (P8). It’s a challenge to work with Gen Z, who are “not resilient to pressure, and become all worked-up, and give up saying they can’t do it, when they cannot take the pressures,” contrary to other generations, who “would fight to the end” (P9).

Leaving organizations is a trend, as stated by three participants. Participant P11 noted that “retention is definitely a huge challenge in the auditing field, as Gen Z have a tendency to stay for just one to two years, or a maximum of three, and they leave as they see many other new channels for faster success.” Interviewee P1, who spends about 70–80% of working time with Gen Z, had a lot to say about them: “They don’t have a clear understanding about their job assignments as they don’t

pay attention.” They also hardly adapt to the work, do not demonstrate a spirit of self-sacrifice for the work when it needs to be done by a specific date and time. They are not satisfied with working overtime to finish their jobs, but have a mindset that “the salary and the quantity of work should go together” (P1). Although they have been described as “being quick and active, their lack of patience sometimes leads to missing out on details” (P5). Participant P4 described them as having “no motivation, with an attention-deficit issue,” and “sometimes it looks like they aren’t serious about the tasks they have been given” (P13). As McGregor (2022) mentioned, they work very differently from other previous generations, and have some radically unique characteristics that should not be ignored, as they are valuable to future organizations.

Gen Z’s General Performance in the Workplace

The overall satisfaction of participants with Gen Z’s work performance was favorable with 77% who were satisfied or highly satisfied, and just 23% who felt neutral or expressed mild dissatisfaction.

Neutral or Mild Dissatisfaction With Gen Z’s Work Performance

Gen Z were “not detailed, careless, not service-minded, without a volunteer spirit, who would work only during the eight hours even though the job is incomplete” (P1). Interviewee P11 said that they were “not as focused as previous generations, with too many interests, have different ways of resolving problems, and did not do any research prior approaching managers, don’t care about money, and don’t mind changing to lower paid jobs.” As for P12, he said that “if one can take the time and effort to understand them, we can ‘bring the best out of them.’ They can perform better when they feel the trust and honesty in relationships.”

Satisfaction with Gen Z’s Work Performance

Participant P2 was impressed with Gen Z’s ability to be “independent and get things done on their own, even without training,” which was similar to P4, who noted that “you don’t have to give them instructions, as they can find their own way to get work done. Aside from working fast, they are creative, skilled in problem solving, and are not afraid to try new things and are brave.” A satisfied P6 shared that they are “highly skillful, well trained, very passionate with the willingness to learn more, are respectful, and comply with working policies” and are “cooperative” (P13). All the participants who were highly satisfied expressed that Gen Z was tech savvy as compared to their older colleagues. They are “good at AI, Internet, and technology” (P3), using a lot of technology in their work, and “working more efficiently as they have digitized everything” (P9). This new vitality in “thinking outside the box, being frank, bringing new and effective ideas, and exceeding expectations” impressed P5, while P7 said that they are “fast learners, with a great learning curve and a high sense of general learning.” “They understand and accept change as a normal part of their lives, while other generations have many questions about change and need answers” (P7). Participant 8 also made a similar comment about their great ideas; they are great learners, and are able to perform very well at work, as they could “finish their tasks very fast, faster than other generations.” They were also complimented as “being very constructive in their suggestions in resolving problems and playing an integral role in getting work done” (P9). The distinctive characteristics of Gen Z that differ from other generations are invaluable in today’s workplace, particularly as pertaining to their tech savviness, new ideas, and flexibility in adapting to change.

Suggestions for Organizations in Improving the Workplace for Gen Z

Playing the Part

Human Resource departments play a very significant role, as they can organize good orientation programs for Gen Z employees as they transition to new workplaces. Their first day and week have the most impact, so it is important for them to believe that they made the right decision to work at a company, and do not feel lost. Managerial mindsets need to accept that their workforces have changed, and so their behavior needs to change in order for firms to work together productively (P12).

What Organizations Can Do

Gen Z are “fast moving, fast learners with high confidence, but they need more learning and training in acquiring deep analytical skills that come with experience, training, and self-learning” (P7). Although organizations gain from their speed, Gen Z employees need to receive training and coaching to slow things down (P5), and be more detailed and thorough in their work to prevent mistakes (P1). Other training needs include planning, organizing, and prioritizing work (P1). Moreover, being a digital native does not guarantee ability to use organizational software and technologies; therefore they need training and guidance to be “digitally literate and professional in the workplace” (Ellwood, 2020, p. 18). They also need to be “more tolerant toward goals,” as they “have a low tolerance for patience and give up easily” (P13). Empowerment and involving Gen Z in planning, allowing them to express themselves freely (P6), share ideas, and providing clear guidelines and expectations (P3, P4, & P6) are also helpful. Using their ideas (P3) to fulfill their need to be part of decision-making processes is also useful, as they hate to be told what to do (P9). This allows them to “see the big picture,” which enables them to understand project objectives rather than just achieving outcomes (P10).

Adhering to Gen Z’s Work Preferences

Creating the right atmosphere for work and providing Gen Z employees with modern software and laptops so that they can work more efficiently is critical (P9). According to P8, “giving meaningful work assignments to Gen Z helps to improve their performance, as they have a preference for non-routine tasks, challenging assignments, and like working on projects.” Gen Z “do not like long meetings, and prefer 30–45 minutes, as they lose focus and find them boring” (P3). Moreover, participants recommended that meetings should not exceed preset time limits.

Granting them opportunities to use social media or modern communication channels to keep up with current trends was recommended, and a bonus scheme can be a valuable motivational and incentive tool (P3). Another recommendation was to foster close, respectful working relationships, and an atmosphere of fairness, as Gen Z place a high significance on these matters. Commendation and recognition are very important to Gen Z, so it is essential to “take the time to praise them, help them feel they are valuable and contributing to the organization, allowing them to express themselves to be understood, and to touch their hearts” (P12). As retention is a problem, efforts need to be made to help Gen Z see goals, a career path, job significance, and the benefits of working at an organization, while making jobs more meaningful by providing job enlargement (P11).

Recommendations for Universities to Better Prepare Them for the Workplace

Many participants shared that new employees entering the workplace have no basic working skills, lack the soft skills needed to communicate and work with others—particularly those from other generations—and need a lot of training to get settled. In fact, P12 said that he would rather “hire someone with a lower GPA (2.5 than 3.9) who has had prior working experience than someone who is studious without any practical general knowledge.” Participant P9 mentioned that “university curricula [sic] do not fit the workplace,” and he recommended that “each student should have at least one full year internship to truly understand how the workplace works.” Although P3 said that it was difficult to prepare students for the workplace, many recommendations to universities were made by the participants (Table 3).

Table 3 *Recommendations for Universities to Help Prepare Gen Z for the Workplace*

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1. Universities need to be current and flexible in adapting to current trends by updating curricula and teaching materials. Revised curricula should move away from theoretical knowledge and memorization to applying concepts in case studies, integrating working models, field trips, internships (suggest one year), and practical, hands-on learning.
 2. Students need to understand the significance and practice responsibility and accountability (assignment submissions by deadlines), as these attitudes are necessary at work.
 3. Provide career counseling and invite working alumni to share their working experiences, along with workplace demands and expectations, to furnish a clearer picture of real workplaces.
 4. As Gen Z has demonstrated less human interaction and participation in workplaces, students need to be taught the soft skills of socializing, collaborating, and talking with people within/outside of their generation.
 5. Students need to be taught to screen their thoughts prior to speaking, and the importance of learning how to remain calm, controlling their moods and emotions.
 6. Help students cultivate skills of working with other people, working as a team member, and not thinking only of themselves (opinions, responsibilities), but also being considerate and learning to accept other peoples' opinions, which may not be aligned with current trends. Since they have been labeled as a "selfish generation" (P10), they need to understand that the world does not revolve around them.
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Discussion

Generation Z is definitely a generation that stands out in many ways when compared to prior generations (McGregor, 2022). Efforts aimed at understanding their mindset and being more accepting of their ways of working can help bridge the gaps that occur in current workplaces (Leslie et al., 2021; McGregor, 2022). Human resource practitioners, managers, and employers will find it valuable to gain an understanding of Gen Z's values and characteristics instead of stereotyping them, but instead should evaluate them as individuals under the three subcategories of Social Investors, Chill Worker Bees, and Go Getters (Leslie et al., 2021). Moreover, being able to identify intergenerational overlaps in terms of values and desires is helpful in diversity management.

Many positive aspects of Gen Z were noted in the literature review. Studies indicate Gen Z as being tech savvy, flexible, adaptable, fast, and self-learners, which were reasons why participants enjoyed working with them and were satisfied with their workplace performance. An important finding emerging from this study involved their work speed. They work more rapidly than earlier generations, and they do not hoard—but willingly share—information. They are extremely flexible and can adapt very quickly to organizational and technological changes, which is difficult for other generations. Work assigned to them needs to be well-thought out as they want meaningful, challenging, and non-routine duties that benefit organizations in the long run. This helps to retain them, while routine or boring work finds them planning to leave. Since they normally sleep late, they desire flexible working hours so that they can come to work later than usual. Their creativeness and ability to think quickly about great and new ideas is commendable.

Their shortcomings are many, but quite different from those of prior cohorts. New to organizations (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018), they make mistakes because they are inexperienced, impatient, lack attention to detail, do not ask for help when in doubt, and try to do things in their own way. This means that time is lost correcting their mistakes, and revisions must be made, but this is part of the learning process. Their commitment to organizations is relatively low; they do not like to "go the second mile" by staying longer to complete their work, and cannot take pressure. Lacking in patience, they are often ready to quit and thus are labeled "short-time thinkers," and have high turnover rates. This low level of organizational commitment was also mentioned by Ngoc et al., (2022), where Gen Z participants with little or no work experience would job hop several times before settling down. It was also supported by Barhate and Dirani (2021), who found that Gen Z looked for new job opportunities rather than stability at work. This is a headache for organizations, as it creates a constant need to recruit and train, only to see employees leave again in a short time, as

“organizational loyalty” does not seem to be part of their vocabulary. The fortunate thing is that Gen Z employees who leave are usually at entry level positions (McGregor, 2022), so their departure does not create a major problem.

The challenges of working with Gen Z are numerous, but the majority of participants were satisfied with and enjoyed their performance. By carefully managing their considerable energy, passion, and empowering them with challenging work, they have proved to be a huge asset to their organizations. Older supervisors and peers have found it challenging to keep up with Gen Z’s new ideas, perspectives, and work trends, but it is important that they try. Gen Z’s tech savviness as digital natives is a crucial element that previous generations lacked, but is definitely significant to today’s organizations as the world continues to advance in its use of AI and technology in operations (McGregor, 2022). The digital era has greatly impacted the entire world, and technological changes will continue at a rapid speed. So Generation Z is a great asset in many ways for organizations, as they are equipped with the necessary technological skills to cope with current and future digital trends.

Organizations can better prepare new employees through orientation and training sessions as they transition from the university into the workplace. As P12 mentioned, “organizational managers’ and leaders’ mindsets need to adapt to the fact that the workforce has changed, with changed behaviors, in order to be productive in working together.” This finding was also mentioned by Botezat et al. (2020). In the same manner, it is important for HR departments to educate new employees concerning an organization’s culture, mindset, and gaps that may occur between generations. Human Resources should include diversity training so as to reduce generational gaps and create an awareness of Gen Z’s mindset amongst older employees, so that they will understand them a little better. Employers who seek to understand them will thus be better equipped to manage a challenging and diverse workforce (Leslie et al., 2021).

A skill set that is greatly lacking amongst Gen Z is *“soft skills,”* and universities are encouraged to incorporate these into their curricular programs. This need for improved social skills was also mentioned by Priporas et al. (2017). Participants recommended that revisions be made to university curricula to make them more practical and better prepare students for workplace realities. This is easier said than done, as curricular revision is a major task that takes a lot of time and effort, with approval from Higher Education authorities required that sometimes takes years to obtain. Moreover, it is challenging for universities to teach soft skills to students if instructors are out of touch with the current work world.

One-year internships were recommended by one participant, as some new employees not only lack soft skills, but also basic office skills. The three-month internship required by some universities is too short, and useless when organizations do not teach their interns, but assign random tasks because of their short-term stays. This study was conducted in Thailand, where students usually start work after graduating from university, and so most new employees have no prior work experience as compared to teens in other countries, who start working in high school. According to Schroth (2019), this lack of work experience is because Gen Z grew up at a time when family incomes were higher, and parents encouraged their children to focus on their studies rather than on working.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research

This study sheds light on Thai employers’ views of the work performance of their Gen Z employees, and is based on first-hand work experience with them. The information about Gen Z helps readers gain a better understanding of how to work with them. Their invaluable suggestions as to how organizations and universities can better prepare Gen Z for the workplace should be considered carefully. Most Thai students do not work prior to graduation from university, and hence lack prior workplace experience, along with soft and basic office skills. It is recommended that further research be conducted in other countries where teens start working in high school, and that the findings be compared with those from this study to generate additional insights into these issues.

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