

# Leadership Preferences of Generation Z Toward Performance and Retention in Electronic Manufacturing Company

Received: March 1, 2024

Revised: August 29, 2024

Accepted: September 3, 2024

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## Abstract

The purposes of this study were to investigate the leadership styles accepted and preferred by Generation Z employees of electrical manufacturing company, and the role of leadership styles on the performance and retention of Generation Z employees. By using the qualitative research methodology, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with a representative group of 10 Generation Z employees worked in an electronics manufacturing company in Thailand. The findings indicated that Generation Z employees working in an electronic manufacturing company expressed a desire and preference for engaging in a workplace that features a transformational leadership style, and suggested that effective communication was the important skills anticipated by the participants.

**Keywords:** Generation Z, Leadership Styles, Performance, Retention

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## Introduction

A new generation has arrived at the age of maturity and started to take part in the workforce. This new generation, commonly known as Generation Z has brought new perspectives and a wide variety of expectations as customers, employees, and citizens (Gaidhani et al., 2019). As for today's labour workforce, it consists of four generations cohorts: Baby boomers (born between 1946–1963), Generation X (born between 1964–1981), Generation Y (born between 1982–1996) (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021) and Generation Z (born between 1997–2012) (Dimock, 2019). By understanding Generation Z's expectations and personality traits, organizations will be able to get them involved and prepare them to be leaders in the future (Gaidhani et al., 2019).

Each generation has distinct communication preferences, job preferences, and even leadership preferences (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). It is expected that the leaders of the 21st century will find themselves in the position of having to rethink what it means to undertake successful leadership. This is because the generational diversity in the workforce is expected to continue to increase (Legas & Sims, 2011; Twenge et al., 2010). Every organization, regardless of its size, is grappling with the challenge of effectively managing a workforce that comprised of workers from a range of generations. Leaders of an organization must evaluate existing practices to see whether their multigenerational workforce is "successfully led, managed, and challenged" (Wiedmer, 2015).

The literature related to Generation Z outlines the overall features and professional aspirations of this generation (Turner, 2015). Organizations that lack effective alignment of generational preferences and leadership style can be at risk of undesirable consequences, such as a decline in employee productivity (Afshari et al., 2017). The fundamental management issue was that organization's leaders lack an understanding about which leadership style Generation Z employees see as the most successful (Goh & Lee, 2018).

The purpose of this research was to investigate the Thai Generation Z employees' performance and retention, by understanding the acceptance and preference towards the leadership style in the electronic manufacturing company in Thailand.

### Research Questions

1. What are the leadership styles accepted and preferred by Generation Z employees of electrical manufacturing company?
2. What is the role of leadership styles on the performance and retention of Generation Z employees?

### **Purpose of the Study**

1. To investigate the leadership styles accepted and preferred by Generation Z employees of electrical manufacturing company.
2. To investigate the role of leadership styles on the performance and retention of Generation Z employees.

## **Literature Review**

### **Generation Z**

Generation Z is now becoming the major workforce in businesses. Previous studies on Thai Generation Z have been conducted in various disciplines, contexts, and perspectives. Thai Generation Z in leadership perspective (Nicholson & Kongthaewtong, 2021), cross-cultural management (Farrell & Phungsoonthorn, 2020), digital connectivity, social skills and emotional intelligence (Imjai et al., 2024) were the main areas of focus in the literature.

In addition, Generation Z studies, particularly within the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic and their acceptance of online or digital technology (Chayomchai, 2020; Chayomchai et al., 2023), were found in the literature, aligning with the research findings of Farrell and Phungsoonthorn (2020) that Thai Generation Z valued technology. In the study by Wisucha and Taecharungroj (2022) on workplace locations, it was found that Generation Z preferred public workspaces and place appearance was deemed more important.

Iorgulescu (2016) addressed the generational differences between the managers and Generation Z employees, as part of the human resource management issues in organizations. Consequently, research opportunities have been increasing across various industries and organizational settings. Understanding this new generation will help enhancing organizational performance, and the research findings of Generation Z can contribute to the management level in terms of organizational planning and management, or marketing strategy development of the organization (Chayomchai, 2020). Therefore, this study will focus on the Human Resource Management perspective, employees' performance and retention, by understanding the acceptance and preference towards the leadership style by the Thai Generation Z working in the electronic manufacturing company in Thailand.

### **Electronic Manufacturing Industry in Thailand**

The Thai electrical and electronics manufacturing industry is one of the largest and most impactful industries in the ASEAN region, employing 750,000 labours, and generating over 34 billion U.S. dollars in 2022 through exported products (Errighi & Bodwell, 2017; Walderich, 2023). Additionally, the Thai government began to promote the electronics manufacturing in the

post-COVID 19 period, to recover the economy, as well as to reach the goal of the smart electronics industry which is part of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) development plan (Walderich, 2023).

As it is one of the largest industries, numerous studies can be found in the literature and previous research has addressed the importance of electrical and electronics manufacturing in Thailand. They were conducted from various disciplines, such as management, entrepreneurship, information system for productivity improvement, mental health, green supply chain management (Errighi & Bodwell, 2017; Roopsing & Artsri, 2019; Laoha & Sukto, 2015; Charoenpaitoon et al, 2012; Kamolkittiwong & Phruksaphanrat, 2011; Jonsson & Svingby, 2007; Jermsittiparsert, et al., 2019). However, there was an opportunity for research within the field of Human Resource Management, and as a result, this study is planned in the context of electronics manufacturing company in Thailand.

### **Generation Cohort Theory**

The generational theory was based on the idea that all individuals born in a certain time frame have similar traits (Gibson et al., 2009). Since these generations encountered such transitions and experiences, they usually established life-altering principles and values (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Just as generational variances and beliefs influenced an individual's personal life, it also influenced what persons need and desire from their jobs. Work values may be used to characterize an employee's attitude and expectations in the workplace; it is an individual's perception of right and wrong in an organizational context (Wey Smola & Sutton, 2002). Adapting to generational variances can contribute to the strategic benefit of organizations featuring multigenerational workforces and to enhance healthy work environment (Lanier, 2017).

### **Generation X Profile and Characteristics**

Generation X was comprised of individuals born between 1961 and 1980 (Gursoy et al., 2008). Generation X reckon in reality, entrepreneurship, and aversion to commitment (Abdul Malek & Jaguli, 2018). Their concentration on results and need for organization may contrast with the desire of younger generations for more job flexibility (Henry, 2020).

### **Generation X Work Preferences**

Generation X emphasized on work-life balance. They were open-minded and prefer working independently. Also, they were creative, with a desire for career success, preference for challenging work, and autonomy at work (Vanichaphan, 2014).

### **Generation X Perspective on Organization and Leadership**

Generation X was not particularly committed to a single organization or leader for lengthy periods of time (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). They were more dedicated to a goal that is valuable and important to them instead of just sole leader or organization (Deyoe & Fox, 2012). Generation X favored laissez-faire and transactional leadership styles because of their strong favoritism for autonomy and independence in the workplace. However, a counterargument can be that leaders may be more successful in reducing the skepticism of Generation X employees if they foster a connection and spend time to understand their reasons (Deal et al., 2001).

### **Generation Y Profile and Characteristics**

Generation Y was comprised of individuals born between 1981 and 2000 (Gursoy et al., 2008). They preferred independent thought to being compelled into conditions; dare to inquire about things that interest them. They were open to criticism and possess advanced technological skills due to having grown up with technology (Phukcharoen, 2015).

### **Generation Y Work Preferences**

Generation Y possessed strong communication skills and the ability to multitask. They demand clarity in their work and a high salary, but dislike working their way up from the bottom. In addition, they prefer to work in an environment that is flexible, independent, and not attached to an organization (Vanichaphan, 2014).

### **Generation Y Perspective on Organization and Leadership**

Generation Y expected to be recognized for their contribution and thrives when getting regular commendation and appreciation from their leaders (Ballard, 2010; Bourne, 2009). Thus, it stands to reason that Generation Y would favor exemplary leaders that give clear direction by inspiring a vision, create support by providing guidance, motivate them to question the process, and empower them to act (Tran, 2020).

### **Generation Z Profile and Characteristics**

It was typical to state that Generation Z was born between 1997 and 2012, although individuals born at the beginning and end of this period may feel closer to the generation before or succeeding them (Dimock, 2019). Lanier (2017) indicated that Generation Z loves autonomy and accomplishing success on their own. Ultimately, one of the most notable positive traits of Generation Z is their tendency to not only be transparent and truthful in their communication but also to want it in return, particularly in the context of performance feedback (Iorgulescu, 2016).

## Generation Z Perspective on Organization and Leadership

The workplace should be supportive of the growth of an employee's career, while also recognizing that a person must be motivated, adaptable, capable of handling the workload, well-informed, and enthusiastic, as well as ready to adapt to a constantly changing world (Fodor & Jaeckel, 2018). They will not hesitate to seek employment elsewhere if they do not feel satisfied in their current position (Fodor & Jaeckel, 2018).

**Table 1**

	<b>Generation X (Born 1961 and 1980)</b>	<b>Generation Y (Born 1981 and 2000)</b>	<b>Generation Z (Born 1997 and 2012)</b>
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Realistic</li> <li>- Entrepreneurial</li> <li>- Aversion to commitment</li> <li>- Result-oriented</li> </ul> (Abdul Malek & Jaguli, 2018; Henry, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Independent thought</li> <li>- Open to criticism</li> <li>- Advanced tech skills</li> </ul> (Phukcharoen, 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Autonomy</li> <li>- Self-accomplishment</li> <li>- Non-transparent communication</li> <li>- Desire feedback</li> </ul> (Lanier, 2017; Iorgulescu, 2016)
Work Preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work-life balance</li> <li>- Independent</li> <li>- Career success</li> <li>- Challenges</li> </ul> (Vanichaphan, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multitasking</li> <li>- High salary</li> <li>- Recognition</li> <li>- Appreciation</li> </ul> (Vanichaphan, 2014; Ballard, 2010; Bourne, 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work-life balance</li> <li>- Team-oriented</li> <li>- Autonomy</li> </ul>
Organization Preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not committed to a single organization</li> </ul> (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not attached to an organization</li> </ul> (Ballard, 2010; Bourne, 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supportive</li> <li>- Seek for new employment if unsatisfied</li> </ul> (Fodor & Jaeckel, 2018).
Leadership Preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Laissez-faire</li> <li>- Transactional</li> </ul> (Deal et al., 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exemplary</li> <li>- Inspirational</li> </ul> (Tran, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motivational</li> </ul> (Fodor & Jaeckel, 2018).

## Leadership Styles

Leadership style was a compilation of leader behaviors, characteristics, and the connection between leaders and subordinates in the workplace (Gandolfi & Stone, 2016). Different generations were not as effectively motivated and retained by certain types of leaders

(Wiedmer, 2015). While Generation X favored leadership that does not micromanage, gives structure, and emphasizes work-life balance (Bejtkovský, 2016), employees of Generation Y favored leadership that promoted flexible work schedules and supervisors that displayed a personal interest in employee career development while giving continuous performance feedback (Wiedmer, 2015).

Avolio and Bass's (1991) full range leadership model, which comprised three types of leadership: 1) transformational leadership, 2) transactional leadership, and 3) laissez-faire leadership. It has been profoundly reviewed and cited extensively for the past years. Bass (1990) stated that an examination of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership would reveal a comprehensive spectrum of leadership traits. The purpose of utilizing this theory was to understand the acceptance and preference of Thai Generation Z towards leadership styles, and its association to performance and retention within an organizational setting.

### **1 Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership inspired followers to attain greater levels of performance and instructs them toward a mutual goal (Kendrick, 2011). They inspired subordinates to choose corporate values over their own self-interest (Dabke, 2016). They gave their followers with a cause in which they believe, while embracing charm, articulating a vision, and fostering growth (Antonakis & House, 2014). Transformational leaders inspired their people to achieve more than they believe by encouraging them to analyze issues and solutions from a new perspective (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006).

### **2 Transactional Leadership**

Transactional leaders established a clear understanding to followers what they will get in exchange for their efforts (Hamstra et al., 2014). It may be characterized as an exchange of resources. They emphasized on incentivizing their employees with rewards for performance (Bass, 1990) and punishments for not succeeding the predetermined goals (Singh, 2015). Employees were rewarded according to the number of work they perform (Epitropaki & Martin, 2013).

### **3 Laissez-faire Leadership**

This leadership style lacked leadership since the person in the leadership position distances themselves from a variety of professional scenarios (Kirkbride, 2006). Laissez-faire leadership was characterized by behaviors such as abdicating responsibilities, unwillingness to get involved in workplace practices, and averting relationship building with follower (Wong & Giessner, 2018). Laissez-faire leaders granted decision-making authority to subordinates and minimize interactions and communication (Fiaz et al., 2017).

## Research Methodology

This qualitative study was conducted as a case study by employing in-depth face to face interviews as the purpose of the study was to investigate and understand the Generation Z employees' acceptability and preference towards the leadership styles, employee performance and retention, and challenges of developing effective leaders in the context of electronic manufacturing company in Thailand. Semi-structured interview questions were the main data collection instrument with a preliminary question frame emphasizing on the key components of the research such as Generation Z, leadership preferences and acceptability, etc. It comprised of pre-scripted questions developed by the researchers (Newcomer et al., 2015), the use of open-ended questions allowed the participants to demonstrate their experiences and perspectives of their own rather than choosing a preformulated answer. Interviewing was

This research utilized an in-depth interview and purposive sampling method was used to collect data from the people who are likely to have the knowledge and experiences required to provide relevant data. This method is ideal for optimizing the usefulness of the collected data while minimizing the amount of time and resources spent on its acquisition (Yin, 2018). According to Francis et al. (2010) interviewing with 12 to 17 participants were typically required to reach the data saturation, however, the researchers considered adequate information will be gained from 10 participants. Hence, ten Generation Z employees of Thai nationality, born between 1997 and 2001, with at least one year of employment in the electrical manufacturing company across various departments, were recruited as participants in the study. This participant selection method was chosen to gain a rich and in-depth understanding from the perspective of Generation Z employees with shared characteristics (e.g. same age group, working in the same organization).

**Table 2**

No.	Coding	Gender	Age (Years)	Work experiences (Years)	Department	Job function
1	S1	Female	25	4	Accounting	Support
2	S2	Female	26	5	Finance	Support
3	S3	Female	26	5	Logistics	Support
4	S4	Female	25	4	Procurement	Support
5	S5	Female	24	3	Administrative	Support
6	S6	Female	22	1	Operator	Production



No.	Coding	Gender	Age (Years)	Work experiences (Years)	Department	Job function
7	S7	Female	22	1	Operator	Production
8	S8	Male	23	2	Technician	Production
9	S9	Female	24	3	Planner	Production
10	S10	Female	23	1	Operator	Production

Based on Table 2, it was found that majority of the participants, nine out of ten were female, and only one male participant. Positions of the participants can be divided into two: support unit (accounting, finance, logistics, procurement, administrative department staff), and production unit (operators and planners). There were 5 participants working in each group. Age of the participants ranged from 22 to 26 years and their tenure with the company ranged from minimum 1 up to 5 years. Age range can be divided into 2 groups: 1) Five support unit employees (24 to 26 years), and 2) Five production unit employees (22 to 24 years) is slightly bigger than operation staff. Tenure of the employees can also be divided into 2 groups: 1) Five support unit employees (3 to 5 years), and 2) Five production unit staff (1 to 3 years). A pseudonym was utilized when presenting the participant's information.

### Data Analysis

A thematic analysis process was applied to identify patterns of meaning in the data. After conducting an interview, the researcher accumulated and organized data by reviewing interview recordings and transcripts. The data were then organized into categories in order to filter the information obtained from the interviews that reflected the leadership preferences of Generation Z employees and its role on performance and retention. To summarize the qualitative research results, the researcher used the corresponding data to encode the data and extract the key elements from the corresponding categorization of information.

The researchers emphasized on credibility (member checking), dependability (peer debriefing), and transferability (thick descriptions) in accordance with Lincoln and Guba (1985) to maintain the trustworthiness of the study. Data will be carefully and systematically handled and interpreted in details by the researchers in the data analysis process, and the results will be presented to the participants, and the peer researcher to ensure that interpretation and findings by the researchers are accurate and clear, through member checking and peer briefing. For transferability, the researchers will explain and elaborate the analysis and findings in details ensuring for comprehensiveness. Rich and in-depth information will help the readers well-comprehend the topic and evaluate the relevance of the current research findings to another context.

## Findings

Nine out of ten participants were female, indicating that the research findings primarily reflect the experiences of Thai female Generation Z employees, aged 22 to 26 years, who have been working in the electronic manufacturing company for 1 to 5 years. Both male and female participants shared a similar perspective that supervisors with good communication skills could persuade their employees through convincing.

The researchers identified three themes corresponding for the three research questions, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

Research Question	Theme	Sub-themes
RQ 1 What are the leadership styles accepted and preferred by Generation Z employees of electrical manufacturing company?	1. Supervisor characteristics, skills and working style shape Generation Z accepted and preferred leadership	1. Preference (Approachability, Flexibility, and Communication) 2. Aversion (Social exclusion, and Emotional over Rational)
RQ 2 What is the role of leadership styles on the performance and retention of Generation Z employees?)	1. Supervisor characteristics, skills and working style shape Generation Z performance and retention	1. Preference (Empathy and Work autonomy) 2. Aversion (Neglected supervision and giving compensation)

Emergед themes and sub-themes will be elaborated to provide the experiences of the Generation Z participants working with their supervisors in the electronic manufacturing company in Thailand.

### 4.1 Theme 1 Supervisor Characteristics, Skills and Working Style Shape Generation Z Accepted and Preferred Leadership

First of all, participants’ responses were collected and categorized into two sub-themes: 1) Preference (Approachability, Flexibility, and Communication), and 2) Aversion (Lack of Trustworthiness, Emotional over Rational).

#### 4.1.1 Sub-theme 1 Preference (Approachability, Flexibility, and Communication)

Majority of the participants, eight out of ten claimed that supervisors being flexible and approachable as well as having a good communication skill were highly preferred and accepted. The responses of participant S1 and S5 will be shared below to support the theme.

S1 made a very favorable statement by recalling her supervisor's flexibility, connecting it to the view of equality of treatment towards herself.

*“My current supervisor has a high degree of flexibility and a willingness to consider my point of view. She/he? allows me to participate in various decisions-making events. Also, when I talk or consult with my supervisor, it will not look like . . . what they called . . . looks like a boss, but more like a partner on the same level.”*

S5 mentioned the supervisor's approachability which helped with her work.

*“When I get stuck, or want a consultation, I can always go to her. She gives good and discreet advice, and she is being neutral . . . as far as we have been working together.”*

More than half of the participants, six out of ten asserted that supervisors with potent communication skills motivate both the team and individuals. The responses of participant S8, the only one male participant of the study shared his experience working with a supervisor with good communication skill.

*“He is very good at persuading people for a maintenance job . . . in the sense that if the factory has a machine that is likely to break down and the executive does not want to buy a new one, we can repair it to get the machine to work well again . . . he can persuade executives to do that with his suggestion. . . And he can convince me too . . . like he knows what I have studied and see that if I keep on with the paperwork, I will lose what I had learned. So, he convinced me to join his department . . . I feel that way too.”*

#### **4.1.2 Sub-theme 2 Aversion (Social Exclusion, Emotional over Rational)**

A few participants discussed social exclusion and emotional over rational thinking in contrast to their acceptance and preference for leadership style.

Two participants, S1 and S9 shared their feelings of social exclusiveness.

S1 recalled her feeling of being excluded by her supervisor.

*“She rarely shared it with us when there were important things. But it is like she already talked with others then told us what we had to do . . . I felt that I am not very involved.”*

S9 also shared her experience with her supervisor.

*“Imagine that he let the staff stay on the raft alone and cut the rope without feeling like . . . well, I think I'm trusting that you can definitely do something. Therefore, along the way, you will get hit by water or whatever that falls on you, it's up to you to make decision. He treats us like a foreigner who says—let's take care of yourself. I like it, though.”*

Participant S2 shared her opinion on working with an emotional supervisor, viewing it as a barrier to approaching him/her.

*“Sometime when we talk to our supervisor or do something with her. . . she is like being emotional than rational. . . she is dissatisfied with what I ask. When asking, it be like . . . it turns out that we need to look at the mood as well . . . as when I was stuck with a problem and then I asked her . . . sometimes she did not care.”*

## **4.2 Theme 2 Supervisor Characteristics, Skills and Working Style Shape Generation Z Performance and Retention**

Participants’ responses were collected and categorized into two sub-themes: 1) Preference (Empathy and work autonomy), and 2) Aversion (Giving compensation and neglected supervision)

### **4.2.1 Sub-theme 1 Preference (Empathy and Work Autonomy)**

Participants’ performance and retention were found to have a linkage with supervisors’ empathy and autonomy at work. All participants appreciated their supervisors’ empathy that they had a sense of satisfaction in their job and showed a determination to stay with the organization while working with the supervisors who have empathy and work autonomy. Participant S6 described her supervisor’s empathy.

*“For me, I can work with anyone, just think that the only important thing that I want is to listen to me. You don't have to help fixing it, but it's just like at least listen to what I've done and how it turned out. She was willing to help and support, regardless of whether the task had already been completed or it had been wrong. She is still like . . . Let's find a solution or let's help each other to solve it so that the work can go on. It is essential to not hold on to the past which makes me feel like I want to stay and work in the organization.”*

Participant S4 also demonstrated an interesting example of supervisor’s empathy and willingness to stay with the organization.

*“Having empathy and willing to listen, I think that is the most important thing. It is like, when I felt that I was uncomfortable with the environment or with work, if the supervisor listens or understands what we are facing, this will help a lot. There was a time when it was up to the point I would resign, but when my supervisor was able to help solve the problem, it made me felt that I want to stay.”*

Eight out of ten participants reported that they loved to work with supervisor who grant them the autonomy within their job. The responses of participant S4 and S5 will be shared below to support the theme.

S4 described that autonomy within her job provided her with a sense of ownership.

*“Let us express our identity . . . comment on our work so that we can fix it . . . This is okay . . . maybe it doesn't have to be an incentive, but I love to see my work had a bit of me in it.”*

S5 also loved the autonomy at work and the support from her supervisor.

*“I prefer the support-from-behind type of leadership . . . like what do you want to do, what ideas do you have or want to do . . . I can freely suggest it. But if it gets stuck, she will suggest whether it's better to adjust to this point it gets better . . . I think it should make us move forward together in a better way.”*

#### **4.2.2 Sub-theme 2 Aversion (Neglected Supervision and Giving Compensation)**

Seven participants out of ten discussed how neglected supervision and giving compensation discourage their performance and retention.

S4 shared her experience with her neglected supervisor.

*“I don't like neglected supervisor. I like the way that she keeps following on the given work. I think that the work that has been supervised will be more efficient.”*

Three participants expressed a sense of discomfort when they received compensation in exchange for their work. S5 expressed the awkwardness when receiving something in return and it affected her performance.

*“I felt uncomfortable when received something in return too often because I think it was unnecessary to give me something for the work that I have done.”*

### **Discussion and Recommendation**

Based on the findings, it may be inferred that Generation Z employees preferred leaders that embody the transformational leadership style, as opposed to leaders who adhere to the transactional or Laissez-faire leadership styles. This was found to be consistent with Bornman (2019) research that Generation Z preferred working alongside with leaders that exemplify transformational styles. Since it fostered self-development, which in turn was associated with improved performance.

Furthermore, the retention of participants can be linked to empathy. Supervisors possess this particular trait had a significant influence on their willingness to stay with the organization. According to Agarwal and Vaghela (2018) research revealed that employees who receive sufficient encouragement from their supervisors had higher levels of engagement and exhibited a likelihood of staying in the organization.

Participants interconnected empathy, the most highly regarded attribute with increased employee satisfaction, performance improvement, employee commitment and a greater willingness to work with the organization. The results of Paakkanen et al. (2021) demonstrated that compassion has noteworthy impact on leadership, well-being, and workforce productivity, resonating with the findings of this study.

Moreover, participants also stated that a combination of trustworthiness and approachability in a supervisor is an advantage that enhance the self-learning and employee engagement. This finding can be compared to Ozkan and Solmaz's (2015) research, that highlighted that Generation Z showed a heightened desire on leaders who listen to and pay attention to their opinions.

Moreover, participants considered the communication skills of a supervisor play a significant role in motivating and inspiring, thereby enhancing employee performance. This finding can also be associated with the work of Kirchmayer and Fratričová (2018), which demonstrated that the establishment of trust and respect towards superiors needed an expression of professional excellence, such as displaying effective communication skills. Generation Z participants indicated that their work autonomy has a unique contribution to their performance, that can be associated with the findings of Lanier (2017), where Generation Z has a strong inclination towards autonomy and a desire to achieve success independently.

## **Recommendation for Practice**

Various interventions may be used to facilitate the growth and advancement of an organization. These interventions include the following:

1. To develop comprehensive training programs tailored for supervisors and individuals with the potential to be promoted to supervisor level.
2. To enhance employee communication skills at the supervisor level to build healthy relationships with Generation Z employees, hence increasing individual performance and improving retention rates within the organization.
3. To cultivate empathy as one of the organizational values and culture by empowering employees through several organizational interventions and effective communication.

## Limitation and Future Research

In order to facilitate future investigations, it is recommended that researchers use a more extensive sample size and expand their research to other industrial sectors. Additionally, it is recommended that future investigations use a mixed-method techniques approach rather than relying just on qualitative research. Furthermore, it is recommended by the researcher that future studies should include a broader range of samples, specifically including employers and supervisors, in order to get more relevant data and use of thematic analysis was employed to ascertain common themes among the participants.

## Conclusion

The research findings indicated that Thai Generation Z employees preferred to work with the leaders who were approachable, flexible, and well-communicated. Their performance and retention appeared to be closely related their supervisors' empathy and the level of work autonomy. They disliked being excluded by the leaders or working with those who were more emotional rather than rational. In contrast, they preferred working with approachable and flexible supervisors, highly valuing good communication in social interactions. Moreover, they also preferred leaders who demonstrated empathy and provided a work environment with autonomy.

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