Workforce Expectations of the New Generation: A Case Study of Thai Social Science Pre-Graduates

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Abstract
In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding the expectations of the new generation workforce (also known as 'Generation Z') has become a major concern for companies, large or small. This is especially the case in Thailand, where, due to a persistent low fertility rate, companies are experiencing a shortage of labor and fiercely competing for graduates. Focusing on social science pre-graduates and using a phenomenological approach, this qualitative study aims to investigate their work expectations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 groups of pre-graduates, each one with a different major in social science. A thematic analysis was conducted, and a new conceptual framework developed. The findings indicate that the Thai new generation value an empathetic and fair work environment. They also anticipate receiving psychological and physical support during onboarding in the form of two-way communication and mentoring and are extremely keen on maintaining a work-life balance. Moreover, they expect fairness in terms of workload distribution and compensation. The results of this study have implications for onboarding and new generation employee development, and the recommendations made can benefit both SMEs and larger firms.

Keywords: New Generation, Onboarding, Social Science Pre-Graduates, Workforce Expectations.

1. Introduction

The population aged 60 and above is expected to double worldwide in the next decades (WHO, 2019), causing many countries, including Thailand – which is the focus of this study, to gradually become aging or super aging societies and face labor shortages among other issues, (Krajňáková & Vojtovič, 2017;). While robots are expected to fill the gap, technology alone will not suffice (Truxillo, Cadiz, & Hammer, 2015). This has led some governments to contemplate, among other solutions, retiree reemployment (Chen, 2020). This also makes the new generation now entering the workforce an even more valuable asset, one whose capabilities must be nurtured. What the term 'new generation' refers to here is the emerging cohort born after 2000, more commonly known as 'Generation Z' and characterized by different technological expectations and distinct post-COCIV-19 behaviors (Oyster, 2022). It follows Generation Y. Given the dwindling workforce in many parts of the world as a result of decelerated birthrates and the demographic shift under way, it is especially critical to retain the new generation hires. This may be a real challenge though (Koleda, Ciemleja, & Strakova, 2022). For one, the new generation has more options (Ellis et al., 2014), For another, research indicates that the separation rate of the new generation has increased ten times compared with the baby boomer generation (Newman & Gopalkrishnan, 2020). In this context of cut-throat competition for qualified labor, it is therefore imperative to understand the expectations of the new generation workforce, which is precisely what this study seeks to do in relation to the Thai new generation.

Studies on activities related to newcomers, such as employee selection, onboarding, and retention plan, have been conducted in the past (e.g. Raeder & Gurtner, 2014; Matei, Abrudan, & Roman, 2016). They have, among other outcomes, shown the effectiveness of onboarding as a new employee development tool and its key role in employee retention. Most of them, however, zero in generations X and Y, who, as we just saw, are no longer considered to be the new generation. In some cases, the data used was also collected from an experienced workforce (Ellis et al., 2014). This makes prior studies focusing on previous generations by and large irrelevant in terms of the new generation's current practices. There is also a lack of research on the needs of the emerging new generation workforce in the context of Thailand. This is especially the case with regard to the social science-educated cohort, who, unlike health science graduates who need professional certificates before they can be hired, can easily change their career paths after graduation (Ito, Mitsunaga, & Ibe, 2020). Yet, retaining the new generation of employees has become a pressing issue (Koleda et al., 2022). Hence the necessity to investigate their expectations and determine the activities that would support their development and daily work, which is precisely what this research aims to do. Specifically, it seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the expectations of the new generation workforce regarding the working environment?

RQ2: What development activities does the new generation workforce expect?

The findings will assist HR professionals regarding new generation employees' onboarding, development, and retention.

2. Literature Review
- *The New Generation*
There are various ways of categorizing generations, but one widely used method includes the following categories: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (also referred to as 'Generation Y"), and Generation Z.

- Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, are known for their idealism, dedication to their work, and loyalty to their employers (Strauss & Howe, 1991).
- Generation X, those born between 1965 and 1980, are characterized by their self-reliance, adaptability, and independence as they have grown up at a time of economic instability (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).
- Millennials, those born between 1981 and 1996, are often seen as diverse, optimistic, and tech-savvy as they are the first generation to have grown up with the internet and social media (Howe & Strauss, 2000).
- Finally, Generation Z, those born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s, is the first generation of digital natives, often recognized for their entrepreneurial spirit, familiarity with technology, and eagerness for social change (Seemiller & Grace, 2016).

As noted in the introduction, in this study, the label 'Generation Z' has been replaced by the label 'the new generation'. This is because the age range of the Generation Z cohort has been defined differently in various studies, leading to confusion (Dolot, 2018). To avoid any misunderstanding and ambiguity, this study followed Singh and Dangmei's (2016) definition of those born in the 1990s and raised in the 2000s when digital media. It should also be noted that most of this new generation started to enter the labor market after 2022. All that said, it is important to keep in mind that the year range for each generation is somewhat indeterminate and can differ, depending on the source and academic professionals' interpretation. Previous research has frequently discussed the work expectations of newcomers in the labor market, particularly among Generation Y (Raeder & Gurtner, 2014). As Generation Y became more established in the workforce, Generation Z began to replace them in entry-level positions and

subsequently received increased attention in the career and HR development field (Singh & Dangmei, 2016).

- Onboarding

The onboarding process aims to introduce the organization's goals, values, policies, regulations, and work processes to new employees to help them feel welcome and quickly adapt to the new environment for high-performance delivery (Watkins, 2016; Bauer, 2010). It has been identified as an initial tool for employee development and its implementation has been linked to creating a conducive working environment (Bauer, 2010). The process involves more than simply providing employees with manuals as HR professionals, supervisors, and mentors play key roles in the onboarding process (Caldwell & Peters, 2018). While HR professionals are involved in strategic planning (Oramana, Unakıtana, & Selen, 2011), supervisors and mentors helped execute the plan (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992; Oramana et al., 2011). Effective onboarding reduces turnover and enhances employee satisfaction (Caldwell & Peters, 2018). Although the onboarding process's design depends on organizational resources, Bauer (2010) proposed that an efficient onboarding process should adhere to the Four C's building blocks: Compliance, Clarification, Culture, and Connection. Table 1 briefly describes each block.

Table 1: The Four C's Building Blocks

Building Block	Description
Compliance	Teaching employees basic rules and policies, tax payment, e-mail registration.
Clarification	Explaining work details, work scope, and expectations in terms of work outcome in order to help employees efficiently achieve their goals.
Culture	Encouraging employees to get a good sense of organizational norms, including subcultures and the core corporate culture.
Connection	Inspiring employees to build a good relationship with colleague and exchange helpful information to achieve work goals.

Source: Bauer (2010)

Additional research on the Four C's building blocks determined that they are based on a psychological contract between an organization and its employees (Caldwell & Peters, 2018; Kumar & Pandey, 2017). Onboarding is thus involved in socialization, which, as argued by Raeder and Gurtner (2014), was a necessity for generation Y. Such socialization has been found to help reduce the anxiety and stress of new employees (Ellis et al., 2014). Moreover, building relationships and providing information encourage capable newcomers to strengthen their long-term relationships with other employees (Hillman, 2010; Maurer, 2019). Chen (2020) determined that communication and supportive relationships are necessary to complete the process. All these studies highlight the crucial role of psychological support in the onboarding process to reduce stress, build relationships, and improve employee satisfaction. Most of the previous research on employee expectations is based on data collected from newly recruited members of an organization. Only a handful of studies focus on the expectations of fresh graduates. Matei, Arbuden, and Roman (2016) concluded that the new generation had different expectations in the onboarding process, such as flexible time and salary expectations based on competency. Reader and Gurtner (2014) found that the new workforce equate satisfaction with self-development work, a feeling for ethics, and empathetic supervisors. In addition, according to Matei et al. (2016), training programs for newcomers are also required.

These findings and the recommendations made have been beneficial to employers, but they relate to generation Y. They may not be applicable to the new post-2022 workforce, especially to a social-science-educated workforce. While Dolot (2018) has described the needs of generation Z, they have not been conceptualized. The Covid-19 pandemic has modified to some extent expectations. As recent research suggests, this is for example the case with the Covid-19-induced practice of working from home (WFH); a major shift toward a work-from-anywhere (WHX) policy (Gibbs, Mengel, & Siemroth, 2021). WHX has been found to increase productivity by 4.4% in non-collaborating and non-coordinating IT jobs (Choudhury, Larson, & Yang, 2019). To date, there is, however, no conclusive report about its long-term efficiency in the social science career path.

3. Methodology

Given the aim of this research, a qualitative and phenomenological approach was deemed to be the most suitable approach to determine the Thai new generation work expectations (Creswell, 2007).

- Data Collection

The participants in this study were selected from the Thai new generation workforce. All of them were in their last year of study and planned to enter the corporate world upon graduation. All of them had taken management courses. So, they understood the roles of HR. As indicated in Table 2, their major was either in management, accounting, marketing, linguistics, hotel, aviation, laws, digital art, or multimedia. Some had professional experience through part-time job or internships/apprenticeships or both, but some had none.

Table 2. Participants' Major

Major	Work Experience	Number
Tourism, Hospitality, and Aviation	No Experience	3
	Internship	4
International Business Management	No Experience	6
	Internship	4
Digital and Multimedia	No Experience	3
	Internship	2
Linguistics	No Experience	2
	Internship	1
Law	No Experience	2
	Internship	2
Accounting and Finance	No Experience	2
	Internship	1
Marketing	No Experience	6
	Internship	3
General Management and Logistics	No Experience	3
	Experience	3

All the students selected differed from workers in health care and wellness science in that no professional certificates were required from them to enter the workforce (Ito et al., 2020), which means they could easily change their career path after graduation. In short, they had choices. Data was collected in 2021, at which time the informants' average age was 21 years. Their social status and the name of the institutions they were about to graduate from was kept confidential. In addition, the data collected during the interviews was deleted after it was analyzed.

Information was collected using semi-structured interviews in Thai. Each group, one for every major in social science, was interviewed for approximately 40-45 minutes. The informants first had to prove at the beginning of the interviews that they understood the role of HR and organization systems. Once this requirement was satisfied, the interviews could continue. As shown in Table 2, there were 8 groups, corresponding to the 8 social science majors offered at the Bangkok-based university selected for this research study. After the interviews were transcribed into writing, the interviewees were asked to verify their answers, which were then translated into English by certified professionals.

The questions were separated into two distinct parts. The first part was meant to ensure that those interviewed had a clear understanding of HR and management team roles and included questions such as, for example, "What is the role of HRM in an organization, and how does it differ from the role of the management team?" and "How does the management team contribute to the onboarding process, and what are their key responsibilities?" The second part focused on their expectations regarding their future supervisors, HR, and the organization itself, and consisted of open-ending questions, such as for example, "As a new entrant, what do you expect from your future HR and the organization itself?" and "What do you expect from your future supervisors in terms of leadership style and management approach?"

- Data Analysis

The transcribed information was analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves iterative reading to understand the meaning of the context and identifying the word frequency. The information was later encoded, categorized in conceptualized relationships. Pinnegar and Daynes (2006) identified four items in qualitative research and narrative inquiry to be considered to prevent generalizing. They include: the relationships among participants, the move to words data, the focus on the particulars, and the recognition of blurred genres of knowing. The researcher used this bracketing method to mitigate bias and prevent generalizations during data collection and transcription. The narrative form enabled a new understanding. A thematic analysis was conducted subsequently to facilitate conceptualization.

4. Research Findings

Findings relating to the work environment are discussed first and those relating to onboarding discussed then.

- The Work Environment

The content of the interviews clearly indicate that the new generation workforce highly prioritizes empathy and a fair work environment. They expect the organizations and HR professionals to empathize with them and listed psychological support as one of their top concerns. The interviews show that they are apprehensive about the way they can assimilate into a new work environment. Unfamiliarity with the new work environment was identified as a major source of anxiety and prompted them to say that would ask to be given time to adjust. As one interviewee stated, *"All we need is empathy as we need time to learn."* Effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal, was also deemed to be crucial. The new generation graduates not only expect their mentors to treat them with respect, but as those majoring in multimedia explained, they also expect two-way communication: *"We are ready to share new generation fresh ideas and organizations should encourage and utilize our technological skills. On the other hand, we expect the organization to share knowledge with us as well."* Interviewees with a linguistics major emphasized the need *"to talk with the supervisors and colleagues and build a relationship {…} allowing us better learning,"* a view that echoed the general sentiment among interviewees that effective communication and positive relationships are critical in facilitating the adjustment of the new generation workforce to a novel work environment.

Full consideration of all these factors was particularly critical since some of the informants reported struggling with symptoms of depression. These results align with Caldwell and Peters (2018). study, in which it was determined that psychological support, most notably, the expectation of being valued as a person, was the type of environment desired by new employees. Another significant concern for the new generation workforce is fairness in the workplace. Fairness here is to be understood as referring to an equitable workload distribution and fair entry-level salary. The perception of one interviewee with work experience in a service-related field captures the essence of their general concerns: *"We have heard that newcomers must inarguably take responsibilities that no one else in the organization wants to handle. If I had to face such a situation, I would feel miserable."* While they recognize that their salary will be low at first, they expect a reasonable workload; one that enables them to keep learning and pursue personal interests. Most informants indicated they would leave the organization within a year if they were subjected to an unfair workload.

Only a few said they would stay until they secure a new job. The interview outcomes reflect the new generation's perceptions of contemporary work practices. The COVID-19 pandemic and the drastic measures that accompanied the need for social distance caused a shift in their behavior. They are familiar with remote communication. In summary, the new generation anticipates a workplace that fosters psychological well-being and personal support, emphasizes empathy, facilitates adjustment to a new work environment, and provides learning prospects. The future workforce also prioritizes mental health. In addition, they expect an equitable and reasonable workload. This is their definition of a fair work environment.

- *Activities Promoting the Workplace: Onboarding*

As new entrants, the new generation expect organizations to (i) empower creativity, (ii) train and mentor them, (iii) ensure two-way communication, (iv) provide work-life balance, and (v) offer fair compensation and benefits. Fulfilling these expectations would contribute to their perception of an attractive work environment.

(i) Empowering Creativity

The information provided in the interviews show that the new generation workforce is confident in its creativity and technological abilities. As one interviewee stated: "*While we as the new generation may not be very experienced, this makes us think outside the box. Our creativity can make up for our lack of experience."* All the participants with an art major, all of them with experience with part-time jobs, provided the same insights regarding the empowerment of creativity, indicating that *"giving the new generation opportunities will encourage them to work, make them feel relaxed, and make them want to go to work."* Even though some of those interviewed did not directly mention creativity, they nevertheless pointed out their ability to handle new technologies, stating that they would be happy to *"exchange information and provide directions on how to use new technologies if supervisors gave them the opportunity and space to do so and share their opinions."* Some of them also mentioned that they have skills in operating online businesses, which may benefit the organization. The new generation workforce understands that their creativity would be further enhanced with the help, support, and understanding of their future supervisors and HR professionals. A group majoring in multimedia and cinematic art with internship experience reported that they *"Were left working [on their own], tried and made some mistakes, but were nevertheless harshly criticized,"* adding in the same breath that *"the working environment was terrible."* Similarly, some management majors acknowledged that they *"were told to stop because [they] were thinking outside the box."* The new generation aspires to receive encouragement and be shown empathy and support, not be admonished for their creativity.

(ii) Training and Mentoring

During the interviews, it was observed that the new generation workforce appears quite confident about their creativity but at the same time concerned about not being accepted. This is in line with the preceding comments. They want to be treated fairly and "*are afraid of not being accepted.*" This is why, according to them, they "*want to share [their] opinions and show their confidence in [their] skills.*" Almost all of them expect to receive training and mentoring, stating that their first supervisor is like their first teacher in the real world. As the new generation workforce in the management field stated, *"We need mentoring about working with others and reacting toward seniors."* This sentiment was echoed by interviewees with other majors, who believe that the sink-or-swim method is not a suitable onboarding method. As one of them put it, *"if we were abandoned, we would feel lost as we lack experience."* The new generation workforce also expressed their need for help understanding the benefits and compensation system, which they said takes time to learn. In summary, the new generation workforce is rather confident about their creativity and skills but fears that these will not be truly valued and respected. They nonetheless also expect to be trained and mentored, especially in working with others and reacting toward seniors. They believe organizations must provide guidance and support during onboarding to prevent them from feeling abandoned and lost.

(iii) Ensuring Two-Way Communication

The new generation workforce expressed concerns about the lack of communication and guidance which they believe they may experience as they seek to acclimate themselves to their new workplace. Specifically, they "*want to feel welcome and encouraged to ask questions and be treated based on rational judgment rather than emotions or cliches.*" They would like to have mentors, either supervisors or HR professionals, who can offer guidance and provide personal consultations on issues such as mental health. The law and business administration's future workforce acknowledged the stress from learning in a new environment and emphasized the need for friendly companions or mentors. In their opinion, effective two-way communication and respectful onboarding are critical elements of an employee development plans as they would substantially help to alleviate the stress associated with adjusting to a new environment and provide psychological support. One informant noted, "*Communication would relieve tension.*" In summary, the new generation workforce requires effective communication and guidance, as well as mentors and personal consultations to help them adjust to their new environment.

(iv) Providing Work-Life Balance

It is quite clear from the interviews and observations that the new generation workforce highly values a work-life balance in their lives. They are determined to weigh the job description, their compensation, and personal time they can have before deciding to join an organization. They expressed their dissatisfaction with situations where the organizations would force them to take on an extra workload that may disrupt the balance they had in mind. A multimedia and art major summarized the issues involved as follows: "*Many of us took some part-time jobs and many firms expect us to do more than we had initially agreed upon. It made us feel unimpressed and unwilling to work.*"

The new generations also stressed the need for a prior mutual agreement in the event they are expected to work more than the normal workload. Many expressed concerns about unwanted workloads pushed onto newcomers, which often end up creating a toxic work environment. As one participant expressed, *"We were anxious about an organizational culture that involves assigning unwanted jobs away from the original person responsible for it to the newcomers. It would make us feel discouraged and the working experience toxic."* Clearly, across all majors, the new generation workforce a work-life balance and expects organizations to respect agreed-upon workloads and avoid assigning extra work or unwanted tasks to

newcomers, emphasizing the need for mutual agreement and a fair and empathetic approach from supervisors and HR professionals.

(v) Offering Fair Compensation and Benefits

The new generation workforce is willing to accept entry-level salaries but expect that the specific benefits they bring to the company would be compensated for. As one patcipant, a marketing major, explained, *"we are unfamiliar with calculating the compensation rate and bonus in the labor market. We knew that not many organizations were willing to select inexperienced individuals. However, we expected the organization to compensate us for our mastery of online and technologies and other related skills."* The main point emphasized was the expectation of a fair compensation scheme.

In addition, the new generation workforce expressed concerns about the mismatch between compensation and workload. This was especially the case with those majoring in digital media, all of whom had part-time work experience. As one of them explained, *"the nature of digital media work usually requires a significant amount of time. However, some organizations prioritize the outcome and expand the scope of work beyond our capacity. Suppose an experience continues when we work as full-time employees. In that case, we might consider leaving the organization."* The feedback from other majors was consistent with this sentiment and summarized as follows: *"Having to handle irrelevant work will create pressure and lead to a loss of motivation to continue working."* This may well become a real controversial issue for HR as the new generation clearly expects appropriate compensation and benefits that align with their agreed-upon job responsibilities and contribution.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Research on workplace environments has been a study subject for several decades. Findings generally fall into two categories: physical support and psychological support (Amin & Chakraborty, 2021; Briner, 2000). This is also the case in this study. The new generation workplace expectations can be conceptualized into the same two categories. Psychological support for the purpose of this study includes creativity empowerment, training and mentoring, two-way communication, and work-life balance. The latter is an element of the physical support category as well, which also includes compensation and benefits. The way psychological support is to be understood in this study aligns with the meaning ascribed to it in previous literature. The emphasis is on empathy, which generates trust and helps to develop a better learning experience with other people (Rahman, 2016). This process, however, needs to be supported by two-way communication (Singh, 2014) and a work environment promoting creativity (Hassi, Rohlfer, & Jebsen, 2021). For the new generation workforce, the notion of a good work environment is also synonymous with an efficient training program and the presence of a mentor with whom they can openly discuss in a two-way communication and one who can assist them ungrudgingly.

This is in keeping with past research and the determination that such work conditions lead to a greater learning curve (Bauer, 2010). In addition, the new generation of pre-graduates soon to enter the workforce expect a fair delegation of work. If they were assigned an extra workload beyond what was agreed upon when they were hired, they would feel like people in the organization are taking advantage of them, clearly not the best way to create an environment of strong psychological support. Such expectations are in keeping with the findings of some previous research on equality in the workplace. As Hassan (2013) has argued, equality plays a key role in building satisfaction and motivation to work. According to McCrindle (2006), though, the main difference with previous generations is that work-life balance has now become a top priority as has mental health.

The new generation are all too aware of the increasingly more competitive work environment awaiting them and the real risks of depression and insomnia they pause to them, threats that were perceived as far less acute by past generations. Moreover, according to Ellis et al. (2014), the new generation also favors socialization. As Oyster (2022) reported, even though during the COVID-19 pandemic employees understandably preferred remote work, surprisingly, the new generation workforce in Thailand does not have such work-form-home expectations. They are more concerned, instead, with relationships and mentoring within the organization they will join. The enduring impact of the pandemic, however, is far more visible in terms of physical support. The findings in this study show that the new generation workforce in Thailand is quite concerned about workplace cleanliness, mostly as a remnant of the COVID-19 pandemic and the then quasi-obsession with hygiene and social distancing. As Amin and Chakraborty (2021) determined in their research on the effects of physical factors such as furniture, equipment, air quality, temperature, lighting, and noise on the quality of the workplace environment, they found little evidence of physical support. Cleanliness, however, was of paramount importance.

Psychological support remains the most critical factor influencing the work environment and one's work-life balance. which in terms of physical support is defined as the balance between benefits and costs. As Farkiya, Mogre, and Patni (2017) have pointed out in their study on India's new generation, work-life balance is not just a concern in Thailand but rather a more widespread generational demand.

- General Recommendations
Based on the analysis of the findings and discussions, this study recommends specific activities to improve the working environment for the new generation workforce, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Expectations and Activities for the New Generation Workforce Development

Psychological support	**Empowering creativity:** Facilitate opportunities for employees to exercise and leverage creativity for future self-development and innovative solutions, including implementing technologies.
	Training and mentoring: Designate a mentor who can quickly assist in adapting to the new work environment and provide training to acquire the necessary skills. Provide education or training to learn about bonus, salary, leaves, and other benefits, as well as the income tax and health insurance system.
	Two-way communication: Provide opportunities for employees to gain a deeper understanding of the organization and encourage them to ask questions. If possible, provide mental health care professionals in the organization.
	Work-life balance: Ensure equitable work delegation, as the new generation workforce expects fair work responsibility and may reject assignment of unwanted work from colleagues.
Physical support	**Work-life balance:** Ensure that the new generation workforce has sufficient time for their self-care, as they plan to balance work responsibilities, personal time, and compensation.
	Compensation and benefits: Provide additional benefits to offset the low entry-level salary and address concerns about cleanliness due to the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Recommendations for SMEs

Since SMEs generally have more limited resources than larger companies, they are more likely to face greater challenges retaining the new generation workforce, who prioritize a work-life balance. It is therefore recommended that they implement flexible working hours and create a work-life balance culture in their organizations. The sink-or-swim method, whereby new employees struggle alone, is counter-productive, no longer relevant, and bound to lead to high turnover rates during the first years of employment (Bauer, 2013; Tull, 2006). Since SMEs are the biggest employers in most countries, it is essential that they seek to retain new-generation employees with very valuable skills (Bose and Uddin, 2014). Because they are smaller organizations and typically have few employees, they should leverage their small workforce to develop close relationships offer effective psychological support to new employees and build an organizational culture of empathy and mutual support (Bauer, 2010; Park et al., 2019). Such practices are likely to attract the new generation workforce, all the more as simply focusing on compensation schemes that may compete with larger organizations may be a costly and uncertain strategy. Empowering new employees would also help to foster a supportive work environment and promote trust, leading to a perception of a good workplace environment (Hassi et al. 2021; Rahman, 2016; Singh, 2014). Finally, SMEs should also ensure that work delegation is fair, as unequal workloads could lead to dissatisfaction and demotivation (Hassan, 2013). Clearly, by prioritizing the psychological support and work-life balance that new generation employees seek, SMEs can improve their retention rates and foster a productive workforce.

- Recommendations for HR Managers

Based on these research findings, it is recommended that HR managers include policies in their onboarding guidelines that are designed to improve employee support at three levels: individual, team, and organization. At the individual level, organizations should ensure that opportunities are provided for new employees to utilize their skills. At the team level, they should ensure that on-the-job training makes it possible for new employees to build trustful relationships. Finally, at the organizational level, policies that support work-life balance and fair compensation to new employees who demonstrate real potential for growth should be adopted.

- Recommendations for Future Research

The findings in this study suggest that strong psychological and physical support could effectively meet the new generation's workforce expectations. Action research could therefore be used in future studies to assess onboarding processes and how successful employee development programs have been. This research solely focused on the new generation of Thai social science pre-graduates, who can easily switch careers after they graduate, unlike medical and science professionals who are constrained by licenses or certifications (e.g., nurses, midwives, dentists, pharmacists, and doctors). Thus, future studies should explore the workforce's expectations of this new generation of pre-graduates about to pursue a career in these specific fields.

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