

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Generation Y Employees in Thai Workplaces: What Make Them Stay or Leave

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Abstract: Retaining the talented employee in the workplace has become a human resources concern of countries around the globe. This study aims to investigate and compare factors underlying intent to stay and intent to leave the current employer by Generation Y (Gen Y) employees in Thailand. Data were obtained from a large-scale survey conducted in 2013. A total of 4,100 Gen Y employees aged 20–29 years old were included. The work-life balance factors were defined in the analysis framework, providing more insightful understandings about Gen Y's preferences and values towards their work-life. Binary logistic regression analysis revealed that perceived satisfaction on a job promotion, organizational support and (feeling of) ownership, and work/personal-life balance significantly increased the intent to stay and lowered the intent to leave the current employer. Compensation satisfaction did not influence the intent to stay but significantly reduced the intent to leave. Contrary to prior expectations, personal growth in career development and work/family-life balance were found not to be associated with the intent to stay but, instead, were accelerating factors of the intent to leave. Job involvement and organizational culture had no influence either on the intent to stay with or the intent to leave the current employer.

Keywords: Generation Y, employee retention, human resource, work-life balance, Thailand

Staff turnover implies a higher cost to the organization in various ways, for instance, in lost knowledge and work experience, human resource management costs of recruitment and investment for skill development and training for the newly-replaced workers, lowered productivity, and more workload for the remaining workers (Davis, 2015; Medina, 2012). Thus, maintaining a high rate of retention is currently one of the most challenging goals of human resource departments (Sanjeevkumar, 2012). Evidenced by

previous studies, intent to stay or to leave is a key predictor of actual staff turnover (Mxenge, Dywili, & Bazana, 2014). Thus, it is important to investigate the underlying reasons of the intent to leave the current employer to help control and minimize staff turnover. Such an investigation should also provide important clues to assist the organization take a proactive approach to strengthen the employees' intent to stay and promote engagement and commitment to their work (Pritchard, 2014; Kular, Gatenby, Rees, Soane, &

Truss, 2008). The employee's sense of engagement in the workplace implies intent to stay and commitment to work, and this has been found to have critical linkages to employee performance, customer loyalty, business growth, and profitability of the organization (Sorenson, 2013; Jagannathan, 2014; Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). Nevertheless, according to Cho, Johanson and Guchait (2009), determinants of leaving and staying with the organization might not be the same set of factors. In other words, the predictor that reduces intent to leave might not always increase the intent to stay, and vice versa.

Recent studies about factors behind worker turnover intention have focused on Generation Y (Gen Y) workers, that is, those who were born between 1981 and 2004, sometimes named the "Millennials" (PwC, 2013). Members of Gen Y are expected to represent a majority of employees globally in the near future. Due to different socio-economic context and rapid development of the Internet and communication technology during their formative years, Gen Y characteristics, values, attitudes, and preferred working styles are perceived to be significantly different from those of other generations, especially the "Baby Boomers" (BB) born during 1946–1964 (Jagannathan, 2014; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007; Yu & Miller, 2005; Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). In positive ways, the Gen Y workforce is perceived to be confident, moral, and multitasking workers, who are technologically smart, creative, flexible in terms of work time and place, and accepting of diversity (United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, n.d.; Deloitte, 2015; Mujtaba, Manyak, Edward F. Murphy, & Sungkhawan, 2010). On the other hand, some view Gen Y negatively (as compared to BB) as not hard-working, difficult to work with, not good team players and, importantly, having a low commitment to the organization, resulting in a high turnover ("Generations in the workplace," 2013; PwC, 2013).

In the case of Thailand, around 44% of the total labor force aged 15–59 years are currently in Gen Y. In the next 15 years, this proportion is projected to increase to nearly half of the total labor force (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2013). A survey on human resource trends and challenging issues for workplaces in general industries found that the highest turnover rates of Thai employees in 2012 and 2013 were 12.5% and 12.8%, respectively, and much higher compared to rates in the last four

years (mean turnover of 9.4% in 2008–2011). Data from the 2014 round of the same survey¹ found that retention of talent was ranked as the most important challenge facing human resource departments (Towers Watson, 2014). That survey was conducted among 93 companies across a range of industries including automotive, financial services, insurance, manufacturing, electronics, high technology, and the chemical sector. Thai perceptions toward the Gen Y workers are, in many aspects, similar to the global opinion (SCB Economic Intelligence Center, 2014). The talented Gen Ys are perceived as a long-term asset of the organization. Thus, organizations are developing strategies to retain Gen Y workers by improving job satisfaction, engagement, and commitment (Pritchard, 2014; Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010; Towers Watson, 2014). Up to the present, few studies have empirically investigated the factors associated with turnover intention among Thai employees, and those have been small-scale studies, not specifically focusing on the Gen Y workers (Pipitvej, 2014; Dhevabanchachai & Muangasame, 2013). Thus, this study aims to examine the factors related to the intent to leave and also the intent to stay with the organization among Gen Y workers by employing data from a large sample of Thais.

Literature Review

Intent to Stay and Intent to Leave

Intent to stay is defined as an employee's conscious and deliberate willingness to maintain their employment status with the current organization, while intent to leave is defined as the employee's subjective inclination to quit the present job and leave the organization (Cho et al., 2009; Vandenberg & Nelson, 1999). An employee's intent to stay or leave is regarded as an important proxy indicator of their feeling about their job and workplace. Often, the terms are used interchangeably, as two sides of the same coin. However, previous research has argued that the intent to stay and intent to leave, and also their determinants, are not necessarily identical, and they need to be distinguished (Cho et al., 2009; Lin, Chiang, & Chen, 2011). This implies that an employee who might not intend to stay with the organization need not be intending to leave. Factors that significantly increase the employee's intent to stay also need not always affect or reduce the intent to leave.

Factors Determining Intent to Stay or to Leave

Conceptualized from reviews of previous studies, predictors of the employee's intent to stay with the organization—and also intent to leave—are identified to include perceived job satisfaction (of the employee), perceived organization satisfaction, the individual's socio-demographic characteristics, and other working conditions, for example, relationship with co-workers and supervisors (Ghosh, Satyawadi, Joshi, & Shadman, 2013; Cho et al., 2009; Hellman, 1997; Jagannathan, 2014).

In this study, job satisfaction is defined as a reflection of how well expectations or desired outcomes of a job by employees are being met (Johari, Yean, Adnan, Yahya, & Ahmad, 2012). High job satisfaction is postulated to be associated with high intent to stay and low intent to leave the organization (Mxenge et al., 2014; Medina, 2012; Hellman, 1997). Herzberg (1964) defined two sets of factors that influence employees' feelings toward their job. One set is motivational factors which influence job satisfaction, and the other is hygiene which does not affect job satisfaction positively but, if absent, will result in dissatisfaction. With regard to motivational factors, in general, employees feel satisfied with a job that fulfills their self-interest and expectations and provides career development as well as personal growth over time. Accurately classifying employees by job characteristics (i.e., nature of work and goal clarity, job-related stress, job challenges) is critical in determining how to motivate employees and generate job satisfaction. Worker involvement, playing an active role, and opinion-sharing are also identified by the literature as factors that increase employee job satisfaction (Llobet & Fito, 2013; Mxenge et al., 2014; Ghosh et al., 2013; Aladwan, Bhanugopan, & Fish, 2013; Davis, 2015; Herzberg, 1964). Employees exchange their time, intelligence, and energy on the job in return for a financial reward, compensation, job promotion, benefits, and having a sense of job security (Sanjeevkumar, 2012; Ghosh et al., 2013).

An employee's "organization satisfaction" is a significant determinant of employee engagement in the job, as well as the organizational commitment, which supports intent to stay and lowers the tendency to leave (Ghosh et al., 2013; Brooks & Wallace, 2006). Basically, the decision to stay or leave is determined by the human resource management practices and other work conditions and environment of the organization, as perceived by the employee (Johari et al., 2012).

Organization satisfaction can be driven or affected by the employee's perception toward organizational support, including perceived support from supervisors, colleagues, and team members (Cho et al., 2009; Neves & Eisenberger, 2014; Jagannathan, 2014). Employees are more likely to be satisfied with both the organization and their job where the workplace culture is harmonious and supportive. Intimacy and closeness at the workplace—horizontally and vertically—that enhances effective communication and idea sharing, as well as respectful treatment at work, are viewed as important components of job satisfaction (Brooks & Wallace, 2006; Freyens, 2010; Timms et al., 2015; Medina, 2012). Having a sense of ownership, recognition, as well as pride in being part of the organization are factors facilitating the employee's feeling that their status and contribution to the organization are valued and recognized (Johari et al., 2012; Brooks & Wallace, 2006; Jin, Chen, Fosh, & Chen, 2014).

Apart from the employee's satisfaction with their job and organization, other sets of predisposing factors are also found to be associated with the intent to stay or to leave. These include the type and sector of employment, length of tenure, and characteristics of co-workers (e.g., gender, education, and marital status; Boxall, Macky, & Rasmussen, 2003; Hellman, 1997; Yu & Miller, 2005; Ng et al., 2010).

Gen-Y and Work-Life Balance

A generation is a group of the population of similar age—born over the same span of time—who share a set of experiences, key historical events, and social trends at each phase of life which continue to shape the characteristics of the group in ways that make them unique among generations (Pilcher, 1994; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Generally, it is hard to specify a precise start and end year of each generation. Also, due to different contexts and occurrences of significant events, the moment in time when one generation ends and a new one starts might not be the same across countries and regions in the world (Codrington, 2011). However, members of the most recent generation are believed to be converging as a result of globalization and rapid development and accessibility to modern communication and information technology (Savage, Collins-Mayo, Mayo, & Cray, 2011).

How to deal with a multi-generational workforce has recently become one of the emerging challenges

for human resource managers around the globe. With different socio-economic contexts at their birth and throughout their period of aging, employees from different generations (e.g., BB, Gens X, and Y) are generally dissimilar in terms of lifestyles, work preferences, and values related to personal and work lives (United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, n.d.; PwC, 2013; Cahill & Sedrak, 2012; Macky, Gardner, & Forsyth, 2008).

The Gen Y population is the demographic cohort following Gen X who were born and came of age in the era of globalization. According to Howe and Strauss (2007), these Millennials are defined as the cohort of the population who were born from 1982 to 2005. However, there is no widespread agreement about the precise year for when Gen Y starts and ends but the range is generally referred to as being born between the early 1980s to early 2000s. According to the UN Population Prospects for 2015, the population aged 15–34 years old was estimated to comprise 32% of the world population (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2015). That cohort is expected to be the dominant group of the global workforce in the near future (PwC, 2013). The Gen Y members have grown up in a significantly different political, socio-economic, environmental, and technological context when compared to their parents and grandparents. Gen Y is perceived to be techno-savvy, socially-connected through mobile devices, multi-tasking (with the help of technology), confident, achievement-oriented, needing flexibility and choices, and accepting diversity, but lacking in social skills to deal with difficult people and situations (United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, n.d.; UNIVERSUM, n.d.; Regus, 2013; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008).

In the workplace, the Gen Y employees are also observed to possess preferences, values, and styles which are different from those of the preceding generations, especially the BB who are still the majority of the global workforce and occupy most of the powerful positions of the workplace. Members of Gen Y differ in terms of preferred work environment, career expectations and goals, learning styles, motivating factors, and also determinants of loyalty to the organization (Jagannathan, 2014; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007; Deloitte, 2015; United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, n.d.; Weyland, 2011). However, data from some empirical studies do not support the

existence of generational differences in the workplace. Some argued that the differences among the workers are mainly explained by age differences as distinct from the generational effects (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008).

Various studies have found that maintaining one's personal life through an optimal balance of work and personal life is a key factor which motivates Gen Y workers on the job. This is unlike the BB and Gen X workers who attach greater weight to financial compensation and job security, respectively (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Skinner, Elton, Auer, & Pocock, 2014; Bresman, 2015).

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to optimizing the time and effort spent working in relation to time spent away from work for leisure and other personal activities (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007; Samad, Reaburn, & Milia, 2015). Compared to other generations, Gen Y appears more likely to desire a balance that maintains a high level of productivity in the workplace while providing flexibility to pursue their life interests outside of work hours (Treuren & Anderson, 2010; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Russo & Buonocore, 2012; Timms et al., 2015). "Life" in the WLB equation includes the dimensions of personal life (self-interests), family life, and social life. According to a global survey of Gen Y members in 2014, the predominant criteria for a good WLB of the respondents from 43 countries were enough leisure time for private life and flexible work hours. When asked about the priorities in their life, members of Gen Y in every region selected "to spend time with the family" as the first choice. The survey also found that, compared to Gen Y in the West, Asian Gen Y appeared to give more significance to social ties (i.e., and relationships with and support from friends and family; UNIVERSUM, n.d.).

Methods

As defined earlier, this study aims to investigate determining factors that affect the intent to leave and the intent to stay with the current employer/organization of the Gen Y workers in Thailand. To do this, a secondary dataset from a large-scale survey conducted by the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University in 2013 was employed in the analysis. The survey used a data collection tool named "HAPPINOMETER." The tool is a self-

administered questionnaire containing a set of personal information questions, and 56 Likert-scale questions on various dimensions of the workers' work-life happiness and satisfaction (Kittisuksathit et al., 2012).

The survey's target population was employed workers, excluding the self-employed, business owners, and non-contractual employed workers (e.g., agricultural sector workers). A two-stage sampling with semi-probabilistic technique was used in the sample selection process. At the first stage, 80 organizations were purposively selected. These organizations are from every region of Thailand and all are part of the network of Happy Workplace Project supported by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation during 2011–2014. Participation in the survey was voluntary. The non-probabilistic selection of the organization may limit the representativeness of the data. At the second stage of sampling, in each organization, individual workers were randomly selected. The minimum sample size and selection process were considered and conducted internally by the human resources department of each organization. The data collection was conducted during 2013. A total of 11,930 questionnaires were filled out by respondents aged 15 years old or over. There is no universally accepted year for when the Gen Y in Thailand starts and ends. Most of the existing studies, which are limited in number, usually assume/refer to a similar period as used in the United States—born during the early 1980s to 2000s (SCB Economic Intelligence Center, 2014; Samutachak & Darawuttimaprakorn, 2014). Applying the US classification to Thailand is justified given the pervasive effects of global communications and the high level of accessibility to modern technology for Gen Y Thais. In this study, Gen Y is defined to include those who were born from 1984–1993 (age 20–29 years old in 2013), which includes the period during which the number of births in Thailand peaked and then started to decline, and the economy grew rapidly before the economic crisis in 1997. After cleaning the dataset and excluding incomplete questionnaires, the final sample consisted of 4,100 cases.

The analytical framework for this study is presented in Figure 1. There are two models: Analysis of factors of intent to stay and intent to leave of the current employer. The independent variables (a set of factors expected to affect the intent to stay and intent to leave) include socio-demographic factors, employment factors, perceived job satisfaction,

perceived organization satisfaction, and the WLB factors.

The socio-demographic factors cover gender (male, female), education (secondary school or lower, undergraduate degree, graduate degree), and marital status (single, ever-married). The employment factors consist of job type (administrative, manufacturing, servicing, executive), tenure (0–2 years, 3–5 years, 6–9 years, 10 years or more), and employment sector (public sector; private sector).

Perceived job satisfaction was measured by 11 questions (with Likert scale of 1 to 5) consisting of three questions on satisfaction about job challenges and opportunity of career development (Personal growth); three questions on satisfaction about job involvement, team communication, and teamwork (Involvement), three questions on perceived fairness, correctness, and timeliness of the compensation (Compensation), and two questions on perceived appropriateness of job promotion and feeling of job security.

Perceived organization satisfaction is classified into three components including the satisfaction toward organization support, organizational culture, and feeling of organization ownership. Organization support was measured by two questions assessing the employee's perceived satisfaction with health and other benefits provided by the organization. Organizational culture was measured by two questions assessing the satisfaction of intimacy and experience-sharing of peers in the workplace. Organization ownership was measured by two questions on the feeling of pride of being a member and ownership of the current organization.

The WLB factor is classified into three sub-dimensions including personal life, family life, and social life. Personal life was measured by eight questions concerning perceived health and financial status, level of stress, sufficient rest, and relaxation. Family and social life were measured by questions which assessed the employees' satisfaction toward relationships and sufficiency of time spent with the family, friends, and neighbors.

For perceived job satisfaction, organizational support, organizational culture, organization ownership, personal life, family, and social life, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine internal consistency and reliability within the set of questions for each variable. Then, given the acceptable level of alpha of more than

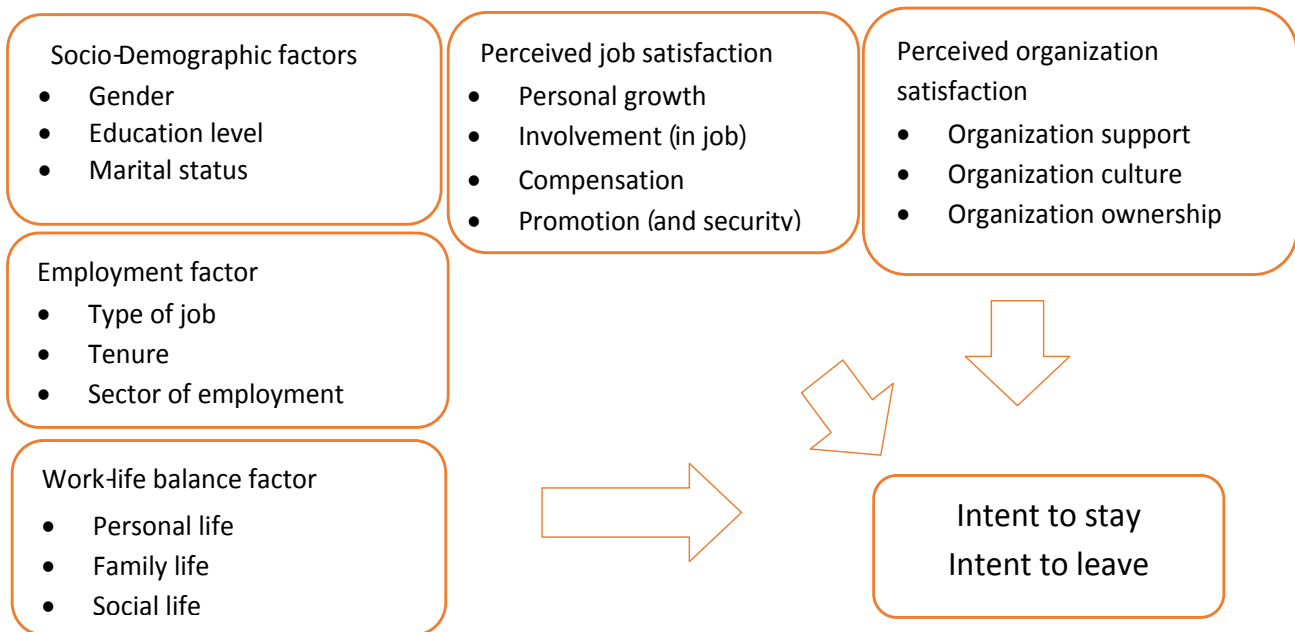


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

0.70, the variable was constructed by the identified set of questions using the mean score measurement.

The dependent variables—intent to leave and intent to stay—are derived from the following question: “If you had an opportunity to work for another organization, would you stay or leave your current employer?” Respondents were asked to rate intent from 1 (definitely leave) to 5 (definitely stay). For “intent to stay,” the employee’s status is defined as “to stay” and “not to stay” if the score is 4 or 5 and 1, 2, or 3, respectively. For “intent to leave,” the status “to leave” and “not to leave” are assigned to scores of 1 or 2 and 3, 4, or 5, respectively. As the dependent variables are dichotomous, the binary logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine factors which underlie intention to stay and to leave of the Gen Y employees.

In terms of statistical analysis, socio-demographic and employment characteristics of the Gen Y workers were described by using frequencies and percentage. The bivariate relationship between each characteristic intent to stay and intent to leave was then explored and statistically tested by using cross-tabulation and chi-square test or interquartile range statistics and independent samples Mann-Whitney u-test. Binary

logistic regression analyses with odds ratio were conducted to examine the association and identify the underlying factors of intent to stay and intent to leave of the Gen Y workers.

Results

As described, this study employs data collected by a tool named “HAPPINOMETER.” The total Gen Y sample (aged 20–29 years old) was 4,100 cases. According to the Cronbach’s alpha statistic, all constructs in the model (including Personal growth, Involvement, Compensation, Promotion, Organization Support, Organization Culture, Organization Ownership, Personal Life, Family Life, and Social Life) were found internally consistent with values of alpha higher than 0.70.

Regarding the findings on the Gen Y’s intent to stay and intent to leave, somewhat less than one-fifth of the Gen Y employees (17.4%) expressed intent to stay with the current organization, while a higher proportion (25.6%) expressed an intent to leave. The phi-coefficient or mean square contingency coefficient which measures the association between intent to stay and intent to leave of the Gen Y employee was - 0.27.

Out of 4,100 Gen Y employees (Table 1), 46.5% are male and more than half (60.6%) are still single, or never-married. More than 60% attained the highest education at the secondary school level or lower and, of these, around 2% attained only primary school education or lower. The rest, at 30.7%, obtained undergraduate or higher degrees. For employment characteristics, the majority of the Gen Y employees were working in the private sector (93.1%), with manufacturing and servicing types of jobs accounting for 50.3% and 31.4%, respectively. Regarding job tenure, about two-thirds of the employees had been working for the current organization for 0 to 2 years (30.5% less than 1 year and 33.9% from 1 to 2 years).

For the employee's intent to stay, bivariate analysis revealed that Gen Y employees who had ever married were more likely to stay with the current organization (OR, 1.28; 95% CI, 1.08-1.50; $P=0.003$) compared to those who were single. Employees who worked in manufacturing or services jobs were 1.5 times more likely to have the intent to stay (OR, 1.55 and 1.52; 95% CI, 1.22-1.97 and 1.18-1.97; $P=0.000$ and 0.001 , respectively) compared to those who worked in an administrative job. Gen Y employees who were female (OR, 0.76; 95% CI, 0.65-0.89; $P=0.001$), with undergraduate or higher degrees (OR, 0.57; 95% CI, 0.47-0.69; $P=0.000$), and who worked for a private-sector organization (OR, 0.64; 95% CI, 0.48-0.85; $P=0.002$) had lower intent to stay with the current organization. Respondents who had worked for the current organization for 1 to 2 years had lower intent to stay (OR, 0.72; 95% CI, 0.59-0.88; $P=0.001$) compared to those who worked for the organization less than 1 year.

On the intent to leave, respondents who had an undergraduate or higher degree (OR, 1.49; 95% CI, 1.28-1.73; $P=0.000$) and those in the private sector (OR, 1.35; 95% CI, 1.00-1.82; $P=0.000$) were more likely to express their intent to leave the current organization. Job tenure appears inversely correlated with intent to leave of Gen Y employees. Those who had been working at the workplace for six years or longer, 3 to 5 years, or 1 to 2 years had higher odds of intent to leave (OR, 1.84, 1.43 and 1.38; 95% CI, 1.41-2.40, 1.18-1.73 and 1.15-1.66; $P=0.000$, 0.000 and 0.000 , respectively) compared to those who had been with the workplace less than a year. Gen Y employees who were ever-married (OR, 0.83; 95% CI, 0.72-0.96; $P=0.014$), and those working in

manufacturing or a services job (OR, 0.70 and 0.81; 95% CI, 0.58-0.84 and 0.67-0.99; $P=0.000$ and 0.040 , respectively) were less likely to express intent to leave.

On the Likert scale (1 the lowest, 5 the highest), the median scores of perceived job satisfaction of Gen Y employees on Personal Growth, Involvement, Compensation, and Promotion are 3.33, 3.67, 3.67, and 3.00, respectively (Table 2). The median score of employees' satisfaction on Organizational Culture (3.50) is higher than the other two components of the perceived organization satisfaction: Organization Support (3.00) and Organization Ownership (3.00). For WLB, social life had the highest median score (3.25), followed by personal life (2.86) and family life (2.50).

Based on the independent samples Mann-Whitney *u*-test, almost all constructs of perceived job satisfaction, organization satisfaction, and WLB factors were found to be significantly associated with intent to stay and intent to leave of the Gen Y employees. Compared to the rest, those who expressed intent to stay with the current organization appeared to have a higher level of satisfaction with their job, organization, and also WLB, while those who expressed intent to leave appeared to score less. The only exception is Personal Growth which was not significantly associated with intent to leave ($p=0.200$).

To identify the underlying factors of intent to stay and intent to leave, binary logistic regression analysis was conducted (Table 3). On intent to stay, the multivariable analysis (Model 2) revealed that Gender, Education, Marital Status, Job Type, Job Tenure, Employment Sector, Satisfaction on Job Promotion, Organization Support, Feeling of Ownership, and Personal Life remained significant. Being ever-married (OR, 1.30; 95% CI, 1.06-1.91; $P=0.011$) was associated with higher odds of intent to stay. Employees in manufacturing and services jobs were more likely to express their intent to stay (OR, 1.42, 1.36; 95% CI, 1.06-1.91, 1.01-1.82; $P=0.021$, 0.043 , respectively) compared to those in administrative jobs. There was a trend for Gen Y who were female (OR, 0.79; 95% CI, 0.66-0.96; $P=0.015$), attained an undergraduate or higher degree (OR, 0.56; 95% CI, 0.43-0.72; $P=0.000$), and had job tenure of 1 to 2 years (OR, 0.79; 95% CI, 0.63-0.96; $P=0.045$) to be less likely to stay with the organization compared to those who were male, attained secondary or lower education, and had a job

Table 1
Socio-demographic and Employment Characteristics and Bivariate Associations with Intent to Stay and Intent to Leave
 (n=4,100)

Socio-demographic and Employment factors n (%)	Total n (%)	Intent to stay			Crude OR (95% CI)	P value ^a	Intent to leave		Crude OR (95% Ci)	P value ^a
		Not to stay n (%)	To stay n (%)	Not to leave n (%)			To leave n (%)			
Gender										
Male	1,905 (46.5)	1,534 (45.3)	371 (52.1)	1.00		1,403 (46.0)	502 (47.8)			
Female	2,195 (53.3)	1,854 (54.7)	341 (47.9)	0.76 (0.65-0.89)	0.001	1,646 (54.0)	549 (52.2)	0.93 (0.81-1.07)	0.327	
Education level										
Secondary school or lower	2,841 (69.3)	2,283 (67.4)	558 (78.4)	1.00		2,181 (71.5)	660 (62.8)			
Undergraduate degree or higher	1,259 (30.7)	1,105 (32.6)	154 (21.6)	0.57 (0.47-0.69)	0.000	868 (28.5)	391 (37.2)	1.49 (1.28-1.73)	0.00	
Marital status										
Single	2,486 (60.6)	2,089 (61.7)	397 (55.8)	1.00		1,815 (59.5)	671 (63.8)			
Ever-married	1,614 (39.4)	1,299 (38.3)	315 (44.2)	1.28 (1.08-1.50)	0.003	1,234 (40.5)	380 (36.2)	0.83 (0.72-0.96)	0.014	
Job type										
Administrative	751 (18.3)	655 (19.3)	96 (13.5)	1.00		522 (17.1)	229 (21.8)			
Manufacturing	2,062 (50.3)	1,681 (49.6)	381 (53.5)	1.55 (1.22-1.97)	0.000	1,578 (51.8)	484 (46.1)	0.70 (0.58-0.84)	0.000	
Services	1,287 (31.4)	1,052 (31.1)	235 (33.0)	1.52 (1.18-1.97)	0.001	949 (31.1)	338 (32.2)	0.81 (0.67-0.99)	0.040	
Tenure										
Less than 1 year	1,249 (30.5)	1,000 (29.5)	249 (35.0)	1.00		988 (32.4)	261 (24.8)			
1 to 2 years	1,388 (33.9)	1,178 (34.8)	210 (29.5)	0.72 (0.59-0.88)	0.001	1,017 (33.4)	371 (35.3)	1.38 (1.15-1.66)	0.000	
3 to 5 years	1,124 (27.4)	933 (27.5)	191 (26.8)	0.82 (0.67-1.01)	0.065	816 (26.8)	308 (29.3)	1.43 (1.18-1.73)	0.000	
6 years or longer	339 (8.3)	277 (8.2)	62 (8.7)	0.90 (0.66-1.22)	0.498	228 (7.5)	111 (10.6)	1.84 (1.41-2.40)	0.000	
Employment sector										
Public sector	281 (6.9)	213 (6.3)	68 (9.6)	1.00		223 (7.3)	58 (5.5)			
Private sector	3,819 (93.1)	3,175 (93.7)	644 (90.4)	0.64 (0.48-0.85)	0.002	2,826 (92.7)	993 (94.5)	1.35 (1.00-1.82)	0.047	
Total	4,100 (100)	3,388 (100)	712 (100)			3,049 (100)	1,051 (100)			

Note: OR, odds ratio; CI, confidence interval; ^aP values based on chi-square test of proportions

Table 2
Perceived Job Satisfaction, Organization Satisfaction and WLB, and Bivariate Associations with Intent to Stay and Intent to Leave (n=4,100)

Socio-demographic and Employment Factor Median (IQR)	Total	Intent to stay			Intent to leave		
		Not to stay	To stay	P value ^a	Not to leave	To leave	P value ^a
		Median (IQR)	Median (IQR)		Median (IQR)	Median (IQR)	
Perceived Job satisfaction							
Personal growth (score 1-5)	3.33 (1.00)	3.33 (0.67)	3.67 (1.00)	0.000	3.33 (1.00)	3.33 (1.00)	0.200
Involvement (score 1-5)	3.67 (1.00)	3.67 (1.00)	3.67 (0.67)	0.000	3.67 (0.67)	3.33 (0.67)	0.013
Compensation (score 1-5)	3.67 (1.00)	3.67 (1.00)	4.00 (1.00)	0.000	3.67 (0.67)	3.33 (1.00)	0.000
Promotion (and security) (score 1-5)	3.00 (1.00)	3.00 (0.67)	3.33 (1.00)	0.000	3.00 (0.67)	2.67 (1.00)	0.000
Organization satisfaction							
Support (score 1-5)	3.00 (1.00)	3.00 (0.50)	3.50 (1.00)	0.000	3.00 (0.50)	2.50 (1.00)	0.000
Culture (score 1-5)	3.50 (1.00)	3.50 (1.00)	4.00 (1.00)	0.000	4.00 (1.00)	3.50 (1.00)	0.000
Ownership (score 1-5)	3.00 (1.00)	3.00 (1.00)	3.50 (1.00)	0.000	3.00 (1.00)	3.00 (1.00)	0.000
WLB factor							
Personal life (score 1-5)	2.86 (0.57)	2.86 (0.71)	3.14 (0.57)	0.000	3.00 (0.71)	2.71 (0.71)	0.000
Family life (score 1-5)	2.50 (1.00)	2.50 (1.00)	3.00 (1.50)	0.000	3.00 (1.50)	2.50 (1.00)	0.000
Social life (score 1-5)	3.25 (0.75)	3.00 (0.75)	3.50 (0.75)	0.000	3.25 (0.50)	3.00 (0.75)	0.000

Note: IQR, Interquartile Range; ^aP values based on the Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U-test

tenure of less than 1 year. Perceived satisfaction of current job and organization in terms of job promotion (OR, 1.85; 95% CI, 1.49-2.29; P=0.000), receiving of support (OR, 1.44; 95% CI, 1.21-1.70; P=0.000), and feeling of ownership (OR, 1.96; 95% CI, 1.68-2.30; P=0.000) were significantly associated with increased likelihood of intent to stay with the current employer.

Additionally, Gen Y workers who felt satisfied with their personal WLB (OR, 1.50; 95% CI, 1.20-1.90; P=0.001) were also more likely to stay with the organization.

For intent to leave (Model 4), being ever-married (OR, 0.84; 95% CI, 0.70-1.00; P=0.047) and working in manufacturing or a services job (compared to an

Table 3

Results of the Binary Logistic Regression Analysis on Intent to Stay and Intent to Leave of the Gen Y Employees (n=4,100)

Independent variable	Intent to Stay Model (Reference: Not to stay)		Intent to Leave Model (Reference: Not to leave)	
	Model (Odds ratio) 95% CI		Model (Odds ratio) 95% CI	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Gender				
Male (ref.)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Female	0.80 (0.67-0.95)**	0.79 (0.66-0.96)**	0.86 (0.74-0.99)**	0.92 (0.78-1.08)
Education level				
Secondary school or lower	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Undergraduate degree or higher	0.55 (0.43-0.69)***	0.56 (0.43-0.72)***	1.57 (1.30-1.89)***	1.50 (1.22-1.86)***
Marital status				
Single	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Ever-married	1.23 (1.02-1.47)**	1.30 (1.06-1.91)**	0.88 (0.75-1.03)	0.84 (0.70-1.00)**
Job type				
Administrative	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Manufacturing	1.20 (0.91-1.59)	1.42 (1.06-1.91)**	0.81 (0.65-1.00)	0.69 (0.54-0.88)**
Services	1.32 (1.00-1.73)**	1.36 (1.01-1.82)**	0.83 (0.67-1.02)	0.74 (0.59-0.93)**
Tenure				
Less than 1 year	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
1 to 2 years	0.69 (0.56-0.84)***	0.79 (0.63-0.99)**	1.44 (1.20-1.73)***	1.27 (1.03-1.56)**
3 to 5 years	0.77 (0.61-0.96)**	0.99 (0.77-1.26)	1.57 (1.29-1.92)***	1.32 (1.06-1.65)**
6 years or longer	0.76 (0.54-1.05)	1.02 (0.71-1.47)	2.19 (1.65-2.90)***	1.81 (1.32-2.50)***
Employment sector				
Public sector	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Private sector	0.40 (0.29-0.55)***	0.55 (0.39-0.78)***	1.87 (1.37-2.56)***	1.32 (0.93-1.87)
Job satisfaction				
Personal growth		0.91 (0.77-1.08)		1.22 (1.06-1.40)**
Involvement		1.09 (0.88-1.35)		0.88 (0.73-1.05)
Compensation		1.16 (0.98-1.37)		0.85 (0.74-0.96)**
Promotion (and security)		1.85 (1.49-2.29)***		0.50 (0.42-0.60)**
Organization satisfaction				
Support		1.44 (1.21-1.70)***		0.66 (0.57-0.76)***
Culture		0.94 (0.81-1.10)		1.05 (0.92-1.19)
Ownership		1.96 (1.68-2.30)***		0.65 (0.57-0.74)***
Work life balance				
Personal life		1.50 (1.20-1.90)***		0.65 (0.53-0.80)***
Family life		0.95 (0.85-1.06)		1.15 (1.04-1.26)**
Social life		1.00 (0.83-1.22)		1.13 (0.96-1.33)
-2 log likelihood	3696.792	3094.366	4581.982	3858.224
Nagelkerke R2	0.035	0.257	0.030	0.264
Omnibus Tests p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Hosmer and Lameshow Test p-value	0.856	0.096	0.053	0.018

Note: * significant at 0.10, ** at 0.05, *** at 0.01 levels

administrative job; OR, 0.69, 0.74; 95% CI, 0.54-0.88, 0.59-0.93; $P=0.014$, 0.000 , respectively) were significantly associated with lower odds of intent to leave. On the other hand, higher education level and more years of job tenure appeared to increase the likelihood of leaving. Employees with an undergraduate or higher degree (OR, 1.50; 95% CI, 1.22-1.86; $P=0.011$) were more likely to express their intent to leave the organization compared to those with secondary or lower education level. Those who had been with the organization for 1 to 2 years, 3 to 5 years, and 6 years or more (OR, 1.27, 1.32, 1.81; 95% CI, 1.03-1.56, 1.06-1.65, 1.32-2.50; $P=0.023$, 0.014 , 0.000 , respectively) were also more likely to express their intent to leave than those who had just started working within the prior 12 months. Gender and employment sector were not significantly associated with intent to leave. Increase in perceived satisfaction of current job and organization in terms of compensation (OR, 0.85; 95% CI, 0.74-0.96; $P=0.010$), job promotion (OR, 0.50; 95% CI, 0.42-0.60; $P=0.000$), receiving of support (OR, 0.66; 95% CI, 0.57-0.76; $P=0.047$), feeling of ownership (OR, 0.65; 95% CI, 0.57-0.74; $P=0.000$), and personal WLB (OR, 0.65; 95% CI, 0.53-0.80; $P=0.000$) were significantly associated with lower odds of intent to leave. Surprisingly, perceived satisfaction of personal growth (OR, 1.22; 95% CI, 1.06-1.40; $P=0.005$) and family WLB (OR, 1.15; 95% CI, 1.04-1.26; $P=0.005$) were found to result in a higher likelihood of intent to leave.

Table 4 presents a summary of the results of the binary logistic regression analysis to determine factors that influence Gen Y employees' intent to stay and to leave.

Discussion

This study's key objective is to examine the factors that determine the intent to leave and intent to stay with the current employer/organization of the Gen Y workers in Thailand. A secondary dataset from a large-scale survey conducted in 2013 was employed in the analysis, covering totally 4,100 samples of Thai Gen Y who were born from 1984–1993 (age 20–29 years old in 2013). Analytical framework include analyses of factors of intent to stay and intent to leave of the employer. The independent variables include socio-demographic factors, employment factors, perceived job satisfaction, perceived organization satisfaction,

and the work-life balance (WLB) factors.

Based on the findings, being female was found to be associated with lower intent to stay with the current workplace, but not to affect intent to leave. This finding is opposite of the Gallup US Research study (Gallup, 2013) which found that female employees tended to find fulfillment in their jobs and were more engaged with the organization than their male counterparts. In any case, Rothbard (2001) proposed that, for males, work was a means to enrich the family whereas women might see employment outside the home as distracting from family life. This could explain why Gen Y females expressed lower intent to stay with their current employer compared with males. The ages of 20 to 29 are the peak family formation and child-bearing years, especially for women. Thai social values also encourage women to settle down during those years whereas men are encouraged to focus on their career and land a steady job before considering marriage. Nevertheless, this gender differential only applies to the intent to stay, not the intent to leave.

Higher educational attainment is associated with lower odds of intent to stay, and higher odds of intent to leave the current employer. This finding is consistent with other studies that found that education is also associated with employee engagement in the workplace (Gallup, 2013). As the level of education increases to graduate and post-graduate degrees, the employee has greater freedom and leverage in selecting a career and employer.

Being ever-married significantly increases the likelihood to stay and lower the likelihood to leave the current employer. The 2004 study of Gallup (Johnson, 2004, as cited in Kular et al., 2008) found that the marital status of the employee was associated with employee engagement in the workplace. The ever-married were more likely to be engaged in the work than their single counterparts. Being married is likely to make one feel that their life has settled down somewhat, and job security becomes more important, especially if there are children to provide for.

Gen Y members in administrative positions were more likely to express their intent to leave and less likely to stay with the current organization, compared to those in manufacturing or services jobs. This may reflect the Gen Y preference for challenging assignments which could strengthen and exploit their skill sets and creative thinking. In contrast, administrative work would seem dull, repetitive, and routine.

Table 4
Summary of Determinants of Intent to Stay and Intent to Leave of Gen Y Employees

Factors	Intent to stay	Intent to leave
Gender (Female)	Neg.	Pos.
Education level	Neg.	Pos.
Marital status (ever married)	Pos.	Neg.
Job type (ref.: administrative job)		
– Manufacturing	Pos.	Neg.
– Services	Pos.	Neg.
Tenure (ref.: less than 1 year)		
– 1 to 2 years	Neg.	Pos.
– 3 to 5 years	0	Pos.
– 6 years or more	0	Pos.
Employment sector (private sector)	Neg.	0
Job satisfaction		
– Personal growth	0	Pos.
– Involvement	0	0
– Compensation	0	Neg.
– Promotion (and security)	Pos.	Neg.
Organization satisfaction		
– Support	Pos.	Neg.
– Culture	0	0
– Ownership	Pos.	Neg.
Work life balance		
– Personal life	Pos.	Neg.
– Family life	0	Pos.
– Social life	0	0

Note: 0 = Not significant determinant; Pos. = positive determinant; Neg. = negative determinant

In general, the longer the tenure of employment, the greater the sense of commitment and belonging to the organization, thus reducing intent to leave (Sanjeevkumar, 2012). However, in this study, every additional year of job tenure increased the intent to

leave of the Gen Y sample. This association could be related more to the desire for exploration and adventure during the eventful ages of 20 to 29 years than job tenure per se. Changing jobs is a way for Gen Y members to gain new experience and skills

while discovering what kind of career to pursue. Thus, job tenure during that decade of life is positively associated with intent to leave. In contrast, this study did not find an association between job tenure and intent to stay, except for those with the least tenure (1 to 2 years).

The findings from this study are consistent with the data from the US which found that government agencies have higher staff retention rates than private sector companies (Hellman, 1997). In Thailand, government civil service is considered a high-status occupation, and employees have a considerable sense of pride in this work despite the lower average salaries compared to comparable positions in the private sector. Thus, Gen Y members who are government workers tended to express higher intent to stay with their current employer than their private sector counterparts. However, there was no statistically significant association by sector of employment and intent to leave of the Gen Y sample.

Regarding job satisfaction, the worksite hygiene factors (based on the concept of being “dissatisfied” with one’s work according to Herzberg (1964) as part of the variables on compensation and job promotion) was a significant determinant of intent to stay and leave for the Gen Y employees, more than motivational factors (or being “satisfied” with the work as part of the variables on personal growth and involvement). In other words, for Gen Y, being dissatisfied with aspects of the work is a more important determinant of intent to stay or leave, than being satisfied.

Satisfaction with compensation and promotion is associated with reduced intent to leave for the Gen Y sample, and this is consistent with other studies (Johari et al., 2012; Chew & Chan, 2008; Srinivasan, 2012). Gen Y members are more lifestyle centered than other generations, and this requires ample financial compensation from their employer so that they can fulfill their basic and instant needs. Effective compensation and promotion can reduce the intent to leave among Gen Y employees, but only advancement opportunity is a significant determinant of increased intent to stay. In other words, intent to leave for Gen Y is influenced by both short-term forces (current level of compensation) and longer-term forces (prospects for promotion and pay raises). However, the intent to stay is more sensitive to the longer-term prospects for improvement.

Contrary to expectations, this study found that satisfaction with personal growth and involvement in the workplace were not significant determinants of intent to stay with the current employer. However, satisfaction with personal growth was positively associated with intent to leave of the Gen Y sample, and this is inconsistent with the findings of other recent studies (Sanjeevkumar, 2012; Boxall et al., 2003; Ghosh et al., 2013). In those studies, career development, goal clarity, and involvement in decision-making and planning of the work were positive determinants of intent to stay. Nevertheless, the findings of this study are consistent with some studies (Johari et al., 2012; Jin et al., 2014) which found no influence on intent to stay, and negative association with intent to leave. It has been noted that older generations tend to view Gen Y workers as hit-and-run job holders because they seek professional growth, development, and diversity of experience and challenges in their career. However, attention to career development by the organization does not always translate into intent to stay among the Gen Y group. Indeed, Gen Y members will go when and where they need to in order to attain higher skills. Thus, organizations need a range of strategies to retain Gen Y talent.

Regarding organization satisfaction, organization support and feeling of ownership were the factors which significantly increased the intent to stay and at the same time reduced the intent to leave of Gen Y employees. This finding is consistent with other recent studies (Sanjeevkumar, 2012; Hellman, 1997; Jagannathan, 2014) which found that support from the organization and one’s superiors, effective supervision, and advice on rights and benefits in addition to salary are important for staff retention and reduction of intent to leave. In this study, satisfaction with the organizational culture was not a significant determinant of intent to stay or leave the current employer. This could reflect the life stage of Gen Y employees (i.e., in their 20’s). Skinner et al. (2014) suggested that the influence of organizational culture on staff turnover intention differs by life stage of the employee.

The findings of this study related to WLB are consistent with other recent studies (Sanjeevkumar, 2012; Bresman, 2015) in that personal life was the most important dimension of WLB that could increase the intent to stay and lower intent to leave. Some studies (Bresman, 2015; Skinner et al., 2014) make the case

that WLB does not mean the same thing to all groups. The Millennials (or Gen Y) interpret WLB as “work-me balance” more than “work-family balance” when compared to Gen X and BB groups. This may explain the very slight influence of family WLB and social WLB on intent to stay and leave compared to personal work life on Gen Y members. An unexpected finding and one contrary to another study (Russo & Buonocore, 2012) is that family WLB is a significant and positive determinant of Gen Y employee intention to leave the organization, and this could be attributable to family and work conflict (Timms et al., 2015; Samad et al., 2015). It bears repeating that Gen Y members give higher priority to family life than working life. They are sensitive to the trade-off between sacrificing for work versus spending quality time with friends and loved ones.

According to the findings, in order to stimulate the intent to stay and lessen the intent to leave of the Gen Y employees, retention strategies by employers in Thailand should focus on improving job and organization satisfaction. More attention should be paid on how to fulfill Gen Y expectations for compensation rate, job promotion, and job security. It will be crucial to provide sufficient employee benefits and support and strengthen the feeling of pride and ownership of the organization in order to encourage a higher level of organization satisfaction among Gen Y employees. The WLB is also an important consideration for Gen Y workers. Human resource managers need to implement interventions to ensure that employees have sufficient rest and relaxation, stress reduction (both from work and non-work matters), and the ability to perform activities that fulfill their personal interests. Family life is also critical for retention of Gen Y employees. Employers need to find creative ways to help Gen Y talent maintain positive family relationships. Other predisposing factors—such as gender, education level, marital status, job type, job tenure, or employment sector—had some influence on the intent to stay or leave. While these factors are not subject to external control, the employer should keep these factors in mind, and understand how they interact with Gen Y employee affects their intent to stay or leave the organization.

Conflict of interest:

None.

Ethical clearance:

The study was approved by the institution.

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