

**THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING MULTIGENERATIONAL
WORKPLACES IN IT ORGANIZATIONS IN THAILAND**



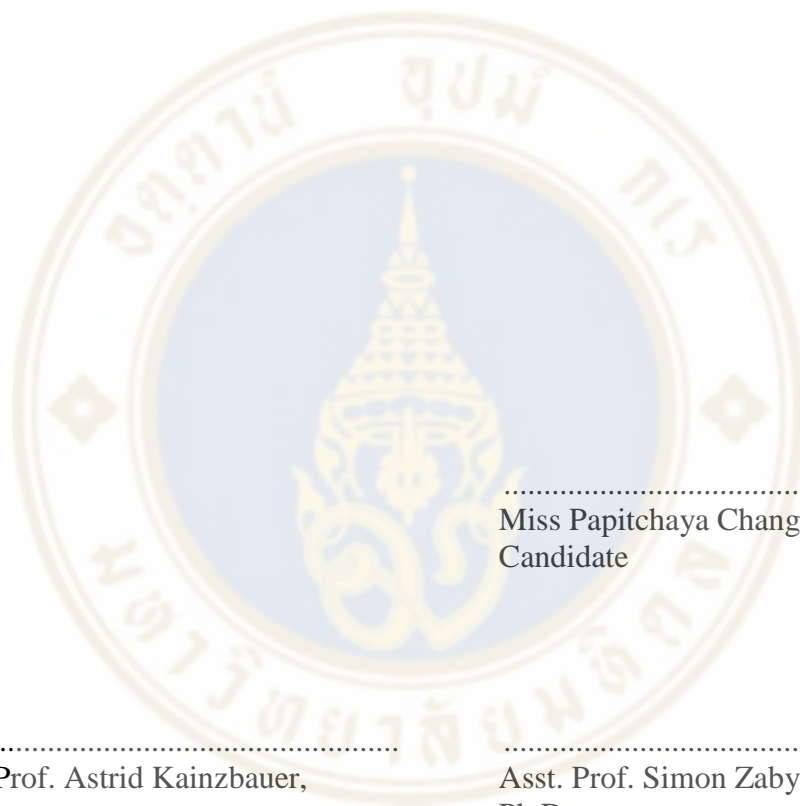
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entitled
**THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING MULTIGENERATIONAL
WORKPLACES IN IT ORGANIZATIONS IN THAILAND**

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THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKPLACES IN IT ORGANIZATIONS IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to study the challenge of multigenerational in IT workplace, together with manage practice to handle the challenges and provide recommendations to managing multigeneration in the workplace.

Qualitative research is used to collect the data through semi-structured interviews based on open-ended questions. The result can be concluded to four common challenges: different perspectives on work, negative mindset towards other generations, different expectations toward leaders, and rigid organizational structure. There are six practices to handle the challenges including effective communication, individual understanding, creating motivation, communicating clear goals, multigenerational working team and 2-way mentoring, and adjusted organization structure.

The recommendations that can help add value to management are effective communication can help the team overcome challenges, understand employees as individuals is important since each is different, managers should understand that motivation is shifted in generation and leverage it to inspire team, team goals can get everyone in the same direction, engage the team with multigeneration teams to allow team can learn from each other, and adjust the organizational structure to support employee need.

KEY WORDS: Multigenerational/ Management challenge/ Management practices/ IT workplace

40 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

We cannot deny that one of the keys to organization success is people management. People or the workforce is one of the most important and valuable resources for the organization since employees play a significant role in helping drive business. Many organizations have huge investing and looking for more effective ways to manage their employees, whether recruitment, development, or retaining their efficient employees. Without a proper and effective approach to managing people, the organization might fail to achieve its high level of business success. Thus, people management is essential and adds many benefits to the organization. One factor that has played an important role in human resource management increasingly in every organization is the diversity of humans. Human diversity is individually different. In the workplace, diversity includes gender, religion, ethnicity, language, and age. Working-age in Thailand is around 20-60 years old, which means organizations might have people who have an age gap of 40 years working together. So, age is the main factor that clearly shows the difference. We can group people who have been born and living at about the same time, regarded collectively in the same generation. The organization currently consists of four generations: Baby Boomer, Generation X, Generation Y or millennium, and Generation Z. The different generations have different characteristics, strengths, attitudes, preferences, and own values. Understanding the difference in each generation will help the organization plan the proper development in the job and assign matching work to employees.

The generation gap can benefit and opportunity to the organization if the organization understands and leverages diversity to generate creativity or innovation ideas from different aspects of each generation. On the other hand, organizations will be less efficient if they do not emphasize generational differences. Moreover, the generation gap can cause conflict due to differences in attitude, value, or characteristic.

So that, if the manager cannot handle and manage the conflict from a generation gap, the organization might fail in business operation.

The purpose of this research is to study the generational differences and their implications in the workplace specific in IT industry, together with study the solution or strategy to manage the generation gap in the workplace and provide recommendations for managers in managing multigeneration in the workplace. The industry and country have the potential to be the factor of difference in employee behavior, so this research focuses on only IT organizations in Thailand that tend to have similar work environments. In 2022, there are four generations of employees: Baby Boomer, Generation X, Generation Y or Millennials, and Generation Z in the workplace. The baby boomer is a small group of employees and is nearly to retire. Working-age majority groups are Generation X and Generation Y. Generation Z is the minority; however, they will be the next generation that becoming a majority in the future. The research question is “What is the challenge of people management with multigeneration in the workplace of IT organizations in Thailand?”.

In order to study the challenge of managing people in difference generation, the researcher selected 10 managers from IT organizations in Thailand to participate in the interview who has experience in people management more than one year and manage multigeneration team. The research analyzes the potential challenge and the effect that might be occur by generation difference in workplace. And what would be recommendations to help managers and organization to achieve their goals and be able to manage the people within the organization to live happily and create loyalty to the organization.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Defining the Generation

The structure of society has been changed throughout the ages. It depends on the political, social, and economic situation at that time that was the driving force for change. People in each period have different behaviors, thoughts, attitudes, lifestyles, knowledge, abilities, and values because any change happens in the period they grow up.

Many researchers and authors study the generations and have defined the meaning of generation differently depending on their perspective.

Karl Mannheim (1952) published his essay, *The Problem of Generations*, proposing and studying that people in society are influenced by economic, political, or war events. They tend to have some conceptual characteristics that are close to each other, and that characteristic will determine the future of society itself.

William Strauss and Neil Howe (1991) defines the social generation as a whole of all people born over the length of one life stage (childhood, young adulthood, middle age, and old age). Generations are identified from the first to the last year of birth by searching for a cohort group that shares criteria of a place of age in history. While at the same stage of life, they encounter important historical events and social tendencies. From this perspective, members of the generation are deeply shaped by the times they encounter as children and young adults and share certain common beliefs and behaviors. In addition, members of a generation are aware of the experiences and characteristics they share with their peers and share the common sense of belonging to that generation.

There is also generational overlap, and some individuals may find that they have more in common with their previous or following generations. However, much evidence shows that the formation of an individual is influenced by the historical, cultural, economic, and social events of that era (Strauss & Howe, 1991). These events

influence how generations perceive the world and live within it (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Martin & Tulgan, 2002; Raines, 2003; Zemke et al., 2000.).

2.2 Generation background

Baby Boomer

Baby Boomer is the group of people born between 1946-1964 or post World War II. The term baby boomer refers to the birth rate that increased worldwide after the end of the war. Baby Boomers grew up in a period of rapid societal change and economic expansion. The significant events that impacted Baby Boomers as they grew up included Civil Rights Movement, Cold War, the space race, and Vietnam War (Gibson et al., 2009; JasonDorsey, n.d.). In 2022, Baby Boomer has an age range between 76-58 years old. Most of them are already retired or still in the workplace, but they are a small cohort and nearly retire.

Generation background: Gen X

Generation X is the group of people born between 1965-1980. They grew up in dual worker families or the new trend of both parents working. Generation Xers experienced the introduction of personal computing and personal technology devices, such as the Commodore64, Atari, and Walkman. As the Information Age developed, they evolved a technology that made them comfortable (Gibson, Greenwood, & Murphy, 2009). The Significant events that have impacted them include the beginning of the energy crisis, the Iran hostages, the Challenger disaster, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the beginning of the AIDS epidemic (JasonDorsey, n.d.). In 2022, Generation X has an age range between 42-57 years old. They are one of the largest cohorts currently in the workplace and with high numbers in leadership positions.

Generation background: Gen Y

Generation Y or Millennials is the group of people born between 1981-1996. This group of people grew up with rapid change. They have different values and aspects from theirgrandparent's and parents' generations. They grew up in a time of technological emergence, for example, mobile phones, the internet age, e-mail, digital photos, and MTV generation. We also call this generation as a digital native. Unlike the previous generation, Generation Y accepts and seeks diversity and difference (Gibson

et al., 2009; JasonDorsey, n.d.). In 2022, Generation Y has an age range between 26-41 years old. They are another largest group of people in the workplace together with Generation X.

Generation background: Gen Z

Generation Z is the group of people born between 1997-2015. They grew up in the age of numerous technologies and events shaping their perception, such as YouTube, Amazon online marketplace, smartphone, Uber, social media, the first African American President of the United States, and Climate change. They were born and raised in the digital world, and the difference from the other generations by their presence is more closely related to the electronics and digital worlds (Singh & Dangmei, 2016; JasonDorsey, n.d.). In 2022, Generation Z has an age range between 25-7 years old. Most people in this group are children and of studying age. However, some of them are new graduation and have started entering to the organization. They are small cohorts in the workplace.

Table 2.1 Generation characteristic

Baby boomer	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
Loyalty	Self-reliant	Self-centered	Individual
Workaholic	Work/life balance	Civic minded	Informal
Tech conservatives	Computer savvy	Multitasking	Social networking
Security oriented	Fun-loving	Tech expert	Do-It-Yourself
Traditional family	Entrepreneurial	Easily bored	Entrepreneurial
Optimistic	Creative	Crave feedback	Trustworthy
Independent	Want fulfilling work	Distance learning	Tech sophisticated
Competitive	autonomous	Seeking challenge	Self-directed
Wary of authority	Latchkey kid	Collaborative	Diversity
Process oriented	Not overly loyalty	Flexibility	Pragmatic
Goal oriented	Continuous learning	Value training	Communicative

Source: Adapted from (Gibson et al., 2009; Gordon and Steele, 2005; Singh & Dangmei, 2016)

2.3 Generation diversity in the workplace

Multigeneration in the workplace consists of several generation workers working in the same location and having interaction. The age diversity in the current workplace is wide, and now organizations have employees working side-by-side who represent around four generations commonly. The majority group is Generation X and Generation Y, aged between 42-57 and 26-41. Other generations are baby boomers who are nearly to retire and the new workforce generation the start enter to the industry like generation Z. Multigeneration in the workplace creates multiple perspectives that different generations have different behavior, value, and attitude toward work. However, the difference in perspective of viewing job can cause conflict and impact productivity, work efficiency, and relationships between employees. Therefore, organizations and managers need to understand the difference in age diversity of employees to manage people, increase efficiency, and help drive the organization's success to achieve the goal.

Many works of literature study and propose the possible generation difference and similar factors that might impact and challenge people management in terms of aged diversity and multiple generations in the workplace. This study considers four categories: attitudes towards work, respect and authority, attitudes towards supervision, and communication.

2.3.1 Attitudes towards work

Work attitude is the feeling that employees have toward the working environment in various aspects. Each generation has their value and attitude with their work, and this difference perhaps makes multigeneration employee has multiple perspective and perception. Baby Boomer is workaholic since they tend to work extremely and sacrifice personal life for work. They are process-oriented, which means they focus on the process or procedure rather than the result of the root cause. Loyalty is a common characteristic of Baby Boomer. They are highly loyal to their employer and believe in job security, so they tend to spend their entire careers working with one organization. Difference from the previous generation, Xers or generation X tend to be less loyal to one organization and work as hard as needed. They are supposed to learn that loyalty is not lead to job security. They do not think that work is an important part

of their life or working hard will make one person better. So, the more value to work-life balance where their time for both work and other aspects of life is equal. Generation X works to achieve the outcome rather than the process. Like generation X, generation Y focuses more on results and values work-life balance. Difference from previous generations, Generation Y employees are the multitasker who can work on two or more tasks and get things done simultaneously. Generation Y tends to be committed and loyal to the organization when they are dedicated to meaningful work. The youngest generation in the workplace is generation Z. They are starting to enter the workforce after graduating from school and college. This generation is motivated by job security and stability. Unlike generation Y, they focus on their job and work harder but also need to achieve a healthy work-life balance. They tend to be loyal to the organization if offered the opportunity to grow, develop themselves, and provide financial stability with flexible working hours. As they are tech-savvy and completely grew up with digital natives, they hyper-connectivity to mobile devices and can do superb multitasking. In addition, many people in generation Z tend to be interested in entrepreneurship as they saw many people lose their job in the great recession, so their characteristic is seeking financial stability and safety (Tolbiz, 2008; Iorgulescu, 2016).

Table 2.2 Attitudes towards work

	Baby Boomer	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Work ethic	Workaholic	Work as hard as needed	Seeking the challenge	Entrepreneurial initiative
Loyalty	Extremely loyal toward their employers	Less loyal to companies than previous generations but loyal to people	Committed and loyal when dedicated to meaningful work	Loyal if organization offer them the opportunity to grow and stability
Task approach	Process-oriented	Results-focused	Results-focused Multitasking	Greater Multitasking
Work life balance	Sacrificed personal life for work	Value work/life balance	Value work/life balance	Prioritize a healthy work-life balance

Source: Adapted from (Tolbiz, 2008; Iorgulescu, 2016; Bourne, 2016; Zemke et al., 2013)

2.3.2 Attitudes regarding respect and authority

Authority is power, right, or permission to take any action. In the workplace, authority gives someone the power to change something in the organization and connect directly to job hierarchy and leadership. The different generation has a different attitude toward authority and respect in the workplace. Baby Boomer is supposed to prefer top-down management, and Some may still be uncomfortable interacting with authority figures while generation X, Y, and Z are more comfortable with authority figures, and they are not impressed with intimidating by managers. These three generations value equal respect and want to be respected (Tolbiz, 2008; Iorgulescu, 2016).

Table 2.3 Attitudes regarding respect and authority

	Baby Boomer	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Attitudes towards authority	- Uncomfortable interacting with authority figures	- Comfortable with authorities - Not impressed with titles or intimidated	- They believe that respect must be earned	- They do not resist authority relationship
Expectations regarding respect	- Deference - Top-down approach	- They want to be held in esteem - They want to be listened to - They do not expect deference	- They want to be held in esteem - They want to be listened to - They do not expect deference	- They want to be held in esteem - They want to be listened to - They do not expect deference

Source: Adapted from (Tolbiz, 2008; Iorgulescu, 2016)

2.3.3 Attitudes towards supervision

People in each generation supposed to differ in supervision aspects and require a different approach. The younger generation tends to dislike micromanagement. Supervision Baby boomer generation is a more directive leadership style, and people in this generation may be insulted by continuous feedback. Generation X and Y have a similar style; they need the freedom to work and support leadership. Both of them are

willing to receive immediate and continuous feedback. Generation Z is supposed to be mentored as they seek development opportunities, and this is why they like frequent and transparent feedback (Tolbiz, 2008; Iorgulescu, 2016; Rayani, 2015; Meijer, 2011).

Table 2.4 Attitudes towards supervision

	Baby Boomer	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Preferred leadership attributes	- Directive leadership	- Autonomy - Supportive leadership	- Autonomy - Supportive leadership	- Mentoring - Strong working relationship
Feedback and supervision	- May be insulted by continuous feedback	- Immediate and Continuous feedback	- Immediate and Continuous feedback	- Require Frequent and constant feedback

Source: Adapted from (Tolbiz, 2008; Iorgulescu, 2016; Rayani, 2015; Meijer, 2011)

2.3.4 Communication

While Baby boomers prefer face-to-face communication and value formal and direct communication, younger generations prefer virtual communication. Generation X appreciates flexible and more informal communication. Emailing, Phone calls, and text are appropriate tools for them. Most Generation Y prefer to use instant messages, chatting, or emailing as a communication tool. They also value collaboration and teamwork. Generation Z grew up with technology. They prefer video and voice communication and do it on a mobile device. Therefore, communicating with generation Z should be transparent (Tolbiz, 2008; Iorgulescu, 2016; Bojic, 2022).

Table 2.5 Communication

	Baby Boomer	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Preferred way of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face communication - Formality - Directly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virtual communication (email/phone call/ text) - Informal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virtual communication (instant message/chatting /emailing) - Facilitates team collaboration and teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be transparent - Technology - Video and voice communication - Mobile devices

Source: Adapted from (Tolbiz, 2008; Iorgulescu, 2016; Bojic, 2022)

2.4 Generation Gap Management

Nowadays, employee structure in an organization consists of cohorts of diverse ages, especially in big organizations that have done business for a long time. Organization possible to have four generations of the employee in workplace Age diversity of employee in an organization can cause differences in behavior, perspective, and characteristic. Organizations can get the benefits and business opportunities from diversity and difference by integrating employees' diverse perspectives or attitudes from each generation and generating creative and innovative ideas. These opportunities can help the organization increase its competitive advantages. On the other hand, an organization that does not understand and manage the difference might have conflicts in the generation gap and lead to business failure. So, employers and managers have to consider the generation gap as an important factor in people management and find the strategy to manage this.

Many researchers study generation gap management and illustrate the challenge of managing multigeneration in workplace. They propose the solution and strategy to manage generation diversity in the organization as follows.

2.4.1 Challenges

2.4.1.1 Different working style

Different work style is one of the challenges that implicated to multigeneration workforce. Each generation has their own values, work ethics, communication styles and approaches to problem solving. When team members with different work styles need to collaborate on a project, the difference may be led to conflict, disharmony, or an unproductive workforce. This difference working style is significant and critical to businesses in people management, since they can lead to higher absenteeism, interpersonal conflict, less efficient worker and decrease employee motivation (Ulrich 2001, Calhoun & Strasser, 2005; Weingarten, 2009; Stanley, 2010; Tolbize, 2008).

2.4.1.2 Communication differences between generations

Every workplace has always had communication barriers. Most organizations with a multigenerational staff discover that different generations communicate in different ways and styles. It is important to figure out what each generation values in order to understand better how they communicate. Each generation's communication style reflects the cultural events that shaped their views and beliefs. This significantly divergent approach to communication might make it difficult for everyone to work together and communicate effectively in the workplace. Miscommunication frequently cause generational conflicts due to misunderstanding of attribution and difference perception (Ruane, 2019; Bojic, 2022).

2.4.1.3 Leadership style

Leadership is described as a superior's capability to motivate subordinates to perform in an appropriate way. It also refers to instructing personnel on how to do a task. It is necessary for the leaders to understand the work characteristics that various generations possess. Different generations prefer different styles of leadership. Manager should understand the difference and choose the appropriate leadership or management style for each generation (Tolbize, 2008; Rajput, Bhatia & Malhotra, 2019).

2.4.2 Proposed solutions

2.4.1.1 Study employees

Understanding the differences in each generation and learning about their unique needs is the first step that organizations and managers should address to be more efficient people management. One example of a tool to help understand employees is a survey. Organizations can conduct an annual survey asking about employee vision, value, or their planned career path to understand more about the employee. Then, use the collected information to formulate a people management strategy (Subrmanian, 2017; Wiriyapipat, 2016).

2.4.2.2 Understand Employees' Motivation

The manager should understand that each generation has differences that motivate them and shape their behaviors—recognizing the validity of each generation's value and determining what each employee wants as a motivator. Then the manager should incorporate multiple motivational tactics into managerial styles and adapt appropriate styles to match each generation's motivation differences (Tolbize, 2008; Wiriyapipat, 2016; Subrmanian, 2017; Choong and Yazdanifard, 2013).

2.4.2.3 Create opportunities for cross-generational mentoring

The cross-generational mentoring program is pairing younger employees and senior employees to work on the specific objective. This program will allow employees from different generations to share their perspectives and get to know each other better. Senior employees can share their experience and knowledge, and younger employees can also share their thoughts and new technology that they are supposed to be more expert than the older person. Another way to promote cross-generational is a mixed-age work team that develops more naturally. The senior and younger employee can easily share their experience or attitude more than the informal approach (Tolbize, 2008; Subrmanian, 2017).

2.4.2.4 Training and learning

Since different generation has different training needs, managers should match the appropriate training to meet the needs of each employee. There are multiple teaching styles: job learning, discussion group, peer interaction, coaching, or mentoring. The mode of learning should be considerable and address the proper style to match the preference of each generation. For example, the younger

generation might not prefer to learn soft skills in classroom instruction, but they favor learning through assessment or feedback (Tolbize, 2008; Choong and Yazdanifard, 2013;).

2.4.2.5 Communication

Communication is the most important factor in understanding and managing the generation gap. In order to communicate effectively between the generations, being open-minded is key to achieving this. It would be better not to assume anyone but to understand and respect each other—communication help to minimize misunderstanding and conflict from the generation gap (Tolbize, 2008; Choong and Yazdanifard, 2013).



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analysis the literature review in chapter two demonstrates the data of management challenges in multigeneration mainly related to the general workplace, which is not specific to any industry. Thus, this research uses qualitative research methodology in order to understand and answer the research question that this research focuses on multigeneration in the workplace of IT organizations in Thailand. Qualitative research emphasizes words than statistical data, and depth than broad. It uses exploratory approaches to get to the underlying of respondents' opinions, thoughts, and feelings. Qualitative research is conducted by semi-structured in-depth interviews based on open-ended questions and allows participants to be themselves while participating in the interview. The individual in-depth interview enables the interviewer to explore extensively into sociological and personal aspects. So that researchers are able to discover information with more depth to understand attitudes, insights, and including individual's experience. By using this method, the researcher understands the experience and perspective of the manager and could analyze the critical challenge of managing multigeneration in the workplace (Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

Interview Method

In order to answer the research question, the main data finding will be collected from in-depth interviews technique that involves interactive question and answer session. The in-depth interview was conducted with open, direct, verbal questions in order to obtain experience and detailed narratives with personal and intimate encounter (Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). The interview method will be as follows:

Sample selection: The sample of interviewees should be share critical similarities related to the research question. Participants include 11 managers in IT organization who directly lead the multigeneration work team. The interviewees are familiar with their works and company culture for giving their insight answers. The

interviewees willing to participate in this research and sharing their experience (Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). The list of interviewees is shown in the following table.

Table 3.1 List of interviewees

Interviewee code	Work experience	Service year with current company	Experience in manager role	Age	Generation	Gender	Company
A	28	28	19	49	Generation X	Female	Multinational Company
B	17	17	8	38	Generation Y	Male	Multinational Company
C	21	19	17	44	Generation X	Male	Multinational Company
D	17	17	6	44	Generation X	Male	Multinational Company
E	20	18	15	43	Generation X	Female	Multinational Company
F	5	2	1	27	Generation Y	Male	Thai Company
G	22	2	13	45	Generation X	Male	Multinational Company
H	32	22	15	55	Generation X	Male	Thai Company
I	35	15	20	58	Baby Boomer	Male	Thai Company
J	30	30	10	50	Generation X	Female	Multinational Company
K	20	20	14	42	Generation X	Female	Multinational Company

Open-ended questions: To find out management challenges in multigenerational workplaces in IT organizations in Thailand from the real-life experience, open-ended questions are developed and addressed to the interviewees to allow them to be themselves and have flexibility to answer the question according to their experience. A list of open-ended questions is created as shown in table 3.2:

Table 3.2 List of questions

Finding Factor	Question
Demographic Questions	How long have you been working? How many years have you been a in current company? How many years have you been a manager/leadership role?
Interview Question	What generational differences have you encountered in managing multigenerational staffs? What are the major differences you have experienced regarding attitudes and perceptions between the generations you manage? How do the generational differences present management challenges for you? Do you have any experience with generation difference conflict between your subordinates? What strategies have you implemented to overcome these challenges? How do you to manage a multigenerational staff and what are the critical skills or strategies that you use?

Develop probing techniques: The probing technique is used to validate and clarify the data. This technique delves further into a matter and issue by extending the interviewee's responses by asking follow-up questions when we want to obtain more specific or in-depth information, for example, asking the result or reason for the given answers (Program Development and Evaluation, 2006).

Conduct the Interview: The most effective way for interview is to have proper interactive conversation. The interviews will be conducted by having a virtual one-on-one interview with the interviewees. The communication channel that selected to conduct interview is Video conferencing software that allow the interview take place remotely and flexibility. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour to complete including introduction, open-ended and probing questions (Program Development and Evaluation, 2006).

Research Framework: This research collects primary data from in-depth interviews to find out the challenges in managing a multigenerational team, and management practices to handle multigenerational workplaces. The relationship of the finding of the management challenges of multigenerational workplace of IT organizations in Thailand as shown in the research framework in figure 3.1

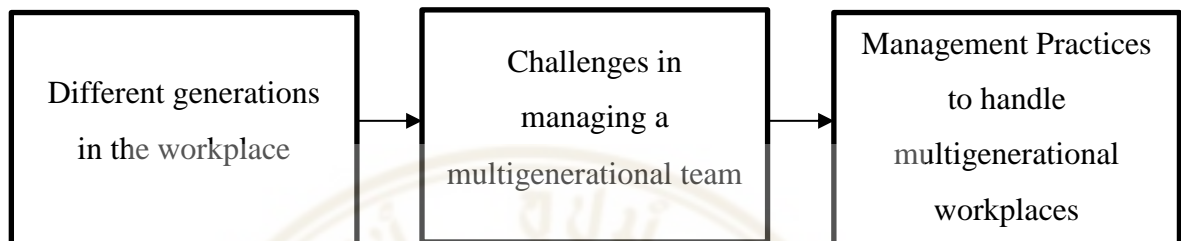


Figure 3.1 Research Framework

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

After conducting the qualitative research by interviews, the obtained data is analyzed and summarized in this chapter by grouped into two main topics: challenges in managing a multigenerational team, and Management Practices.

4.1 Challenges in managing a multigenerational team

The first topic is to find the challenges that interviewees encounter when managing a multigenerational team. Managers who were selected to interview revealed their experience, which is summarized into four challenges as follows:

4.1.1 Different perspectives on work

The different generations have grown up in different environments that shape them to have unique characteristics and perspectives on the world. Six interviewees mentioned the different perspectives of each generation, and sometimes it causes a challenge that team members did not understand other thoughts and may lead to the conflict in the team.

The main differences were: dependent versus independent, risk averse versus risk taking, and task oriented and result oriented.

4.1.1.1 Dependent versus Independent

Interviewee K mentioned that each generation's environment shaped them to have a different perspective and led to a different action in the workplace.

“Senior generation like Baby Boomer and generation X grew up with the dependent environment. When they were a child, they did not have internet yet, so they needed to ask others when they wanted to know something. When they work, they have the perspective that we are dependent on each other and have to work

together. There needs to be a connection with other people. Therefore, when working, we will feel the need to compromise. In comparison, the younger generation grew up with technology. They are independent. If they want to know something, they just search on the internet. They believe they can do it by themselves. Therefore, when many generations come together, the younger generation dares to voice out when they feel suspicious or dissatisfied with something. On the other hand, the senior generation sometimes decides to be silent because they feel that we have to compromise with everyone. We still have to work together, so they avoid conflicts. Sometimes, it is not they have different thoughts, but they have different ways to react with the thing.”

Interviewee K

4.1.1.2 Risk averse versus risk taking

Interviewee E mentioned the different perspectives on risk concerning in work of each generation.

“When they work in the same project, Baby Boomer or Generation X tend to see on the process, find any potential risk or impact that can happen to cross-functional. While younger generations like lately generation Y or generation Z focus on how we can work or deliver work faster. They did not focus on risk. They have the same value, which is wanting to deliver work, but they have different execution processes and concerns. Juniors want to work faster, but seniors try to slow down the process because they see the risk and want to mitigate risk before going to the next step.”

Interviewee E

4.1.1.3 Task oriented and Result oriented

Interviewees E, J, and A mentioned the different perspectives on risk concerning in work of each generation.

“Senior generation focus on process more than the result. They believe that if the process is good, the result will be good. In contrast, the younger generation focuses on results without caring much about the process. If they get the result that they want, it means success. For example, when we want to solve an IT issue, seniors think about what we have to do to solve the issue? Is there anything impact on other processes if we do like this? However, if junior tries to solve this, they debug, find

the root cause, and fix it immediately. So sometimes senior decide that junior is not cautious while junior thinks senior is a too complicated and slow process.”

“It is not about whose way is right or wrong. The perspective of each generation is different, and we do not talk to each other to achieve the same understanding.”

Interviewee J

“Junior did not understand why we have to do this process. What is the business value that we will get from doing this? The senior who has more experience understand the value but does not communicate or explain it to the junior. Sometimes they see a different perspective. For example, senior has a perspective that they need to deliver work as a commitment, but if juniors do not see the value in the work they have to do, they will question the value of work and why they need to do this if it does not give any value. They did not clarify the point of their view, and sometimes it causes misunderstanding with each other when they work together.”

Interviewee A

4.1.2 Negative Mindset towards other generations

The mindset of an individual toward the other team member of a different generation is one challenge that two interviewees mentioned about this. For example, the senior generation has a mindset that juniors should pay respect to them as they are older.

“Some seniors want to be respected by juniors because they are older and have the mindset that junior should listen and respect to him or her.”

Interviewee B

“Sometimes seniors do not listen to younger people. They said I worked for more than twenty years; you must listen to me.”

Interviewee H

One interviewee talked about a closed mindset in a team member that he did not open his mind to understand others who have different thoughts.

“Team members are not open mind trying to understand each other. They did not accept the difference.”

Interviewee A

4.1.3 Different Expectations towards Leaders

From the interview, three interviewees mentioned that they have to use a different approach or different style to manage people of a different generation. It is clear that the younger generation did not like how they forced or framed them to do work by command. They want autonomy to do the work and have freedom in work. While the older generation is fine when managers or leaders ask them to do as a follow or tell them directly how to do the work.

“For Senior staff like people in generation X, I usually coach or guide them closely. They do not want to face the problem and fail at work. They will feel bad when they fail. So, I have to work and guide them closely. While the new generation, like late generation Y and Z, does not like to feel controlled. I just give them a problem or tell them what the issue is, and they will try to come up with a solution by themselves. They are more courageous to fail. They do not like anyone to tell them: You have to do this in steps one, two, and three. They like more freedom and space for their creativity. I found that if we told them to do like this or that, they would resist us. My approach has told them what my thought is and asked them questions like, can you try to look into this part, or did you try this way? Do not tell them everything or limit their thought.”

Interviewee A

“We have to let the junior staffs work and learn by themselves. We should give authority for them to do work and create a good environment for them. Keep watching them from afar and give them a hand when they need it. On the other hand, senior staffs are comfortable and find it natural when leader follow their work or instruct them to do the work.”

Interviewee H

“Managing senior staff in generation X and Baby Boomer, we can directly tell them what we want. What can they do? We can tell them a step, process, or what they need to do. Compared to the newer generation like generation Y and Z, they do not like a command. We cannot tell them, “You have to do these. They are highly independent. If we want something from them, we just give them the problem and observe. How do they do it? How to think and get the solution. If what they have done did not critically impact the work, let them do it and see the real problem. They will learn a lot from their mistake.”

Interviewee I

4.1.4 Rigid organization structure

Four interviewees shared that the existing organization structure is a challenge for people management. Opportunity to grow up in career path for the new generation is limited due to organizational structure that has a hierarchy to level up to the higher position—growing up in a higher position like management or leader needed time was shared with interviewers. They point out that the new generation does not want to wait many years to grow up in their career if they have enough capability and potential to grow in a few years.

“Baby boomer and generation X were taught that career is a long journey or long term. Success in work life, getting a very high salary, or being high-level position needs time. Whereas new generations, like generation Y and Z, do not want to wait for ten years to be managers or supervisors. Why do I need to wait 8-10 years to get a salary of 100K baht? I have potential and can do whatever makes me succeed in those things, but I have to wait and tolerate.”

Interviewee B

“New generation want to get success quickly. People had to be older and work for a while to become a leader in the past. However, now the new generation who has the ability enough want to grow up in their career, and they have the potential to be a leader. The organization has to change its structure, give these new generations an opportunity, and provide them with a clear career path and opportunity to become leaders or managers. The new generation has thought that if they are good enough to be a leader or can go further in their career, but the company does not allow them to grow up and wait many years to reach that state, they will not put up with it until that day. He does not want to wait since he is capable enough. Why do they have to wait until they are old enough? He chose not to stay at this company. It is better to go somewhere else that gives him more opportunities.”

Interviewee H

“New generation feel that organization has too much and slow process to get one work done. They think there are many unnecessary processes that they have to do to make one work complete, like the approval process. They already know what they

have to do to solve the problem, but why do they have to raise this for approval before starting work, and those processes take too long.”

Interviewee J

“When they were assigned routine or repetitive task, the new generation they feel like they do not have a career path in their job, and this can cause reducing their motivation in work.”

Interviewee G

“Organization structure and hierarchy affect the way the new generation works. It does not align with their work attitude and ethics. They think there are many intricate and unnecessary processes to get things done. they know how to do or solve it; why they need to wait for somebody to approve of doing that.”

Interviewee K

4.2 Management Practices to handle multigenerational workplaces

The second topic is finding the management practice that interviewees use to handle the multigeneration team's challenge. Interviewees were asked what strategy, skills, or practices they used to overcome the challenges. The results are summarized into six solution practices below.

4.2.1 Effective Communication

All interviewees shared that effective communication is a good practice to overcome the challenge. According to the challenge encountered in people management in the multigenerational team, all interviewees mentioned that having effective communication can solve the problem. Effective communication is more than just exchanging information. It is about understanding the other person on their emotion and intentions behind. There are many skills and practices that interviewees mention to be more effective in communication, such as active listening, empathic communication, being positive, communication method, and organize team building.

4.2.1.1 Active Listening

Interviewee A mentioned active listening, effective communication is not just about talking only. Instead, we should listen more and try to understand the speaker's real intention in conveying the message.

"Active listening is a very helpful skill when communicating with all generations. First, we have to clear that they really need our help or just want someone to listen to their problem. When they ask for help, senior people need real help or some action to help them solve the problem. While junior people just want someone to listen to them and sometimes give them a suggestion."

Interviewee A

4.2.1.2 Empathic communication

Good communication integrates many elements and practices. One important thing that implies in the answer derived from nine interviewees is empathic communication. Being empathetic in communication means accepting differing perspectives of others, understanding their real intention on what they convey, and sharing it with them to provide help and support. Including encouraging everyone to have a voice to communicate freely through building trust and a safe place for team members and helping eliminate any misunderstandings, ambiguities, and questions that happen when work.

"When they have a conflict, I will listen to their opinion from both sides separately. Moreover, try to clarify the reason or thought of another side to each other."

Interviewee A

"In a team with high diversity, we will find each member's perspective difference. Generation is one factor that impacts the difference, but it also has other factors included. We have to make teams understand each other and work together. For example, the senior said something, but the junior did not understand. What is the reason behind this? Why did senior employees speak out about this? Sometimes juniors gave an opinion, but seniors did not understand and questioned why didn't they think carefully? It is not about deciding which side's ideas are right or wrong. But now, we do not understand others' thoughts. What the leader has to do is understand both sides and explain them to each other."

Interviewee B

“When there are conflicts in the team, I try to link or be a connector for both sides. I will talk to both of them and try to understand their point of view or the reason behind it. We have to listen with empathy and not judge any side who is right or wrong. Then explain to the other party and make them understand each other. The main purpose of the discussion is not to make an agreement on the same thing, but I want to make them empathize and understand what the other person thinks. It may end up with both of them still seeing a different way, but both of them will understand why the other things like that, and there are no difficult feelings when they work together in the future.”

Interviewee B

“We have to make a conversation and clarify the problem from every party’s aspect. Then, as a manager, I have to consider and assess what are the real needs or reasons that people in each generation convey?”

Interviewee D

“As a leader, we have to be a middleman to connect people in the team when they have a conflict. First, we have to have the ability to consider the situation and identify the different view or thought that team would lead to conflict. Then we have to clarify and help them align their thought by helping ask the question to both of them. Help them express their thought, opinion, and their reason. Finally, help them get to the point that makes the team understand each other’s view.”

“I will build trust with everyone in the team as I believe that when team members trust me, they are open-mind and willing to share their thought. I will build trust with a team member by sincerely sharing my thoughts first, listening to them with empathy, and not judging anything.”

“I focus on increasing communication in the team. Let everyone share their experiences and make them know and more understand each other.”

Interviewee E

“I try to talk a lot with everyone on the team. When there is a problem, we have to talk to each other. Also, I try to encourage everyone on the team to talk together. I arranged a weekly meeting for everyone to communicate and share experiences or problems that they have encountered. I create a work environment where

everyone feels comfortable and does not feel that the age difference created a gap in work collaboration."

Interviewee F

"I will listen to everyone in the team and try to understand and support them all."

Interviewee G

"I have a conversation with them. Listen to their problem and try to understand their reason. Then communicate to them about the organization's culture. There is a different culture for each company. Our company has this culture or this practice and clarify the reason behind that culture."

Interviewee I

"One problem that I found is junior come to the meeting late. Our team has daily meetings at 9.00 AM, but most junior team members cannot join the meeting in time, and seniors have to wait. Juniors think that we do not use the whole 1 hr. for the meeting and sometimes late for 10-15 minutes, I still can do my work. But the seniors think we are working as a team, so we should respect everyone and should not come late. I think there is no one wrong. From the junior perspective, they think they come late a little bit, the result is not changed or has no impact. The way that I solve this is open-mind and talk to both sides. Asking their thought and opinion. And find the agreement together which time is suitable for everyone. If we postpone the meeting time, can junior join the meeting in time? I have to tell them the reason why we want them to be in the meeting in time to make them understand the senior side and the value of this meeting. So finally, we agree that 10.30 and everyone should be ready for the meeting in time."

Interviewee J

"Younger generation like to ask many questions if they curious in something. When we assign work to them, they often question and challenge back. For example, why do we have to do this? Can we do this and eliminate this process because I see it is unnecessary to do this. We have to listen to them carefully and answer them to clarify what they are curious about."

Interviewee H

4.2.1.3 Being Positive

One of the effective communication skills that three interviewees mentioned is being positive. They talk about a positive mindset on difference or conflict. The difference is not always bad things, and conflict can generate a new idea. The different perspectives of team members may generate conflict in the team. The unmanaged or unresolved conflict has the potential to impact an organization. On the other hand, proper conflict management can help solve the problem and advance team productivity.

“I will tell everyone in the team that team’s success is not just we can deliver the product, but everyone in the team should be happy in working.”

Interviewee A

“I will communicate clearly that difference is not always mean we have conflict. We may agree with the same thing, but how we determine to agree may drive from a different perspective. For example, a senior may make a decision by this reason behind and agree with this choice. At the same time, junior may see from a different perspective but agree with the same choice. When they use a different perspective and see indifference, I have to clarify their thought as leaders—talking with both sides. What do juniors think, and why do they think like that? What about seniors? What they are thinking. What is the reason behind the thinking process? Moreover, help them understand each other thoughts.

Interviewee B

“I told my team to change perspective on the conflict. When they perceive those conflicts are starting to happen, some people immediately feel stressed and think negatively. So, we have to change our perspective on the conflict. This is not a bad thing, but conflicts or differences will generate new value or new ideas.”

Interviewee E

4.2.1.4 Using Right Communication Method

To communicate well, knowing and using the proper communication method is also important for effective communication. Two interviewees mentioned the right communication method that proper for each generation and help engage them more.

“One thing that I observe and see is very important is a communication channel. The different generations prefer different ways to receive the message. One example that I see about communication of change in the organization. Top managers communicate the change via email. The senior people find with this board communication and react that they will follow that communication. While junior people do not understand and question why they have to do that to that communication. Finally, top management has to create a meeting forum to communicate this again and have an open session for Q&A. The feedback from those meetings from junior is good. They find with the change when they can ask for the reason and get the satisfying answer.”

Interviewee K

“I found that younger staff prefer to chat while senior people prefer to talk via mobile phone or face-to-face. I see that some of my junior team members will be more talkative when we have a conversation in chatting application even though she will be talking less when we have a conversation in face to face.”

Interviewee E

4.2.1.5 Organizing Team Building

Team building has a significant influence on the team's productivity and creates good collaboration. In addition, it can help all team members interact more effectively, have a good relationship, and have positive connections. One interviewee mentioned that her organization has a culture that encourages the team to have team building to connect everyone in the team, and it helps to improve their communication in the team.

“Organization culture encourages to have team building and conversation in the team to let everyone share perspective and opinion. Everyone can get to know each other in other aspects apart from work-related.”

Interviewee C

4.2.2 Individual understanding

Five interviewees mentioned that One-on-one interaction is important to have with every individual in team to make sure that they understand the individual team members' needs and concerns. Even generation can propose potential and tendency of

common characteristics of each generation, but there also have other factors that influence the behavior or perspective of the individual. So, it is better for people management if the leader does not stereotype one person from only one factor but tries to understand them as an individual.

“We have to understand the motivation or passion of the people in their certain age is. What is their challenge or problem, and how can we give him a hand as a leader? I will make them feel empowered and can decide on their own.”

Interviewee A

“As a leader, we have to understand every generation's principle of their thought. I will consider in the deep level of each my staff whom I take care. What is their personal concern? What is the underlying of their action or behavior? I will have a conversation one by one with everyone. Somebody needs to have one on one session with me monthly. Someone needs bi-weekly. While someone needs weekly, I manage it depending on individual needs. I have to have conversations with each person to understand each person's needs and concern. We need to understand that not everyone is the same, even though they are in the same generation. The generation stereotype is just a big picture or tendency for people in a certain generation to be. We have to delve into the individual level when we have to manage someone.”

Interviewee B

“I will learn the personal background. What is their value? What are they looking for? Understand their individual need, problem, or concern.”

Interviewee C

“I will approach and validate each team member through their individual background.”

Interviewee D

“Understand in individual perspective. Why do they like this? What is their point of view? Why does another see an indifferent view? What is their concern and why?”

Interviewee E

4.2.3 Create Motivation

From three of the interviewees' answers, the manager's actions effectively encourage employee motivation. In addition, they consider the different needs of each generation and figure out how to generate motivation to accomplish work goals.

“Sometimes I give them a little special reward in order to create passion in work. Junior people like some immediate gift such as a small treat, snack, dessert, or praise. Whereas senior people like the recognition, some interesting assignment, or some company direction they will feel that their job opportunity is fulfilled.”

Interviewee A

“We have to create ownership in order to make them engage and challenge their work. Furthermore, if they can achieve, we should give them some reward or recognition for their success to create value and motivation in their work.”

Interviewee E

“Younger generation motivation is immediate and tangible things such as increase salary or reward. While senior generation aims to have good job assignments, some recognition with words or actions that appreciate their achievement.”

Interviewee K

4.2.4 Communicate clear goals

Setting the goals is key for driving performance and moving the team in the same direction. Team goals allow individuals to see how their own work fits into the overall picture of the team. It also gives a clear direction and plan of action for team members. Even if they have different perspectives or work styles, team goals will help all team members achieve the same achievement. Seven interviewees mentioned setting the goal practice in their strategy to overcome the management challenge in the multigeneration team.

“I have to clearly communicate the vision, mission, and goal. Why do we have to do this thing? What is the value if we can deliver this work to our customers? How the thing that we are going to do reflect to the outcome and business value.”

Interviewee A

“Firstly, team goal needs to be clear and then how each team member can use their capability, attitude, or value to contribute something and help the team reach the goal.”

“Create a common goal or another way; create a common threat. How we can help each other to survive this threat.”

Interviewee B

“Create the same alignment in order to make everyone understand on the same page or the same picture.”

Interviewee D

“Set the goal and communicate to everyone to understand that we will go together to reach this goal. Make sure that everyone aligns and sees the same thing. When we started working, some people wanted to go this way. Some people want to go another way. If we have a clear goal, it is easy to get everyone back in the direction and focus on the same goal.”

Interviewee E

“Team goal is very important because at the end all of us have to achieve the same thing.”

Interviewee F

“We have to set the goal. May be no need to specify or force them to do in the same way but let everyone keep in mind what we want to achieve.”

Interviewee H

“We have to look at the same goal. Each person may use a different process, but we have to focus on the same thing.”

Interviewee J

4.2.5 Multigenerational working team and 2-way mentoring

Three interviewees answered that managing team by collaborating work team can help increase understanding of other generations' perspectives, create a positive relationship, and decrease the generation gap. Two of the interviewees stated that they encourage seniors and juniors to work together on the same task and let them share their experiences and perspective in order to understand each other more and learn from different generations. One of the interviewees mentioned that she perceived the

good result and feedback from the two-ways mentoring program that allows two generations to learn from each other.

“Encourage more work collaboration by making a group of people from diverse generations. Each generation has its own strength and weakness. We have to understand that point and use it to make good collaboration, fulfill team capacity, and solve the problem. Moreover, I encourage them to share and exchange work experiences with each other. Then they will have or trust and decrease generation gap or barrier.”

Interviewee G

“Different generations have different strengths and weaknesses. We have to engage them to work together. I sent seniors and juniors from a different generation to work together and meet the customer. Let the new generation learn from the senior. But it does not limit their thought that what you see from seniors is the best. If what seniors have done and you think there is something better or can be improved, let us talk together and find the better solution.”

Interviewee I

“I think revert or two-way mentoring is a good approach. Sometimes, seniors learn many new things that are very beneficial from junior. Furthermore, junior can learn many works experience from senior.”

Interviewee K

4.2.6 Adjust organization structure

Three interviewees shared their opinion that the organization structure is not suitable for the younger generation's work style and attitude toward work goals. It shows that organizational structure impacts younger generation employee motivation and leads to resignation. Interviewees mentioned that organizations should adjust themselves to be appropriate for the new generation who will be the majority group in the workplace in the near future.

“Organization has to change itself to allow the new generation to play a significant role in the organization. If they have to wait for ten years to become leader or manager, they cannot put up with this, and they will resign from the company.”

Interviewee H

“The organization has to accept and adjust itself. We have to understand that the older people will retire one day, and the new generation will be the majority in the organization instead. So we have to create an effective environment and change organization structure to make new generation feel comfortable to work.”

Interviewee I

“Organization structure and hierarchy affect the way the new generation works. IT is not aligned with their work attitude and ethics. They think there are many intricate and unnecessary processes to get things done. I know how to do or solve it; why do I need to wait for somebody to approve of doing that.”

Interviewee K



CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

According to the research questions, the challenge of managing multigenerational workplace in IT organization in Thailand is investigated and analyzed include finding on encountered generation difference, common challenges, and management practices to handle multigenerational workplaces. The sample was including eleven managers who has experience in people management in IT organization more than one year.

The results are summarized on the research framework of the study as shown in Figure-5.1 below

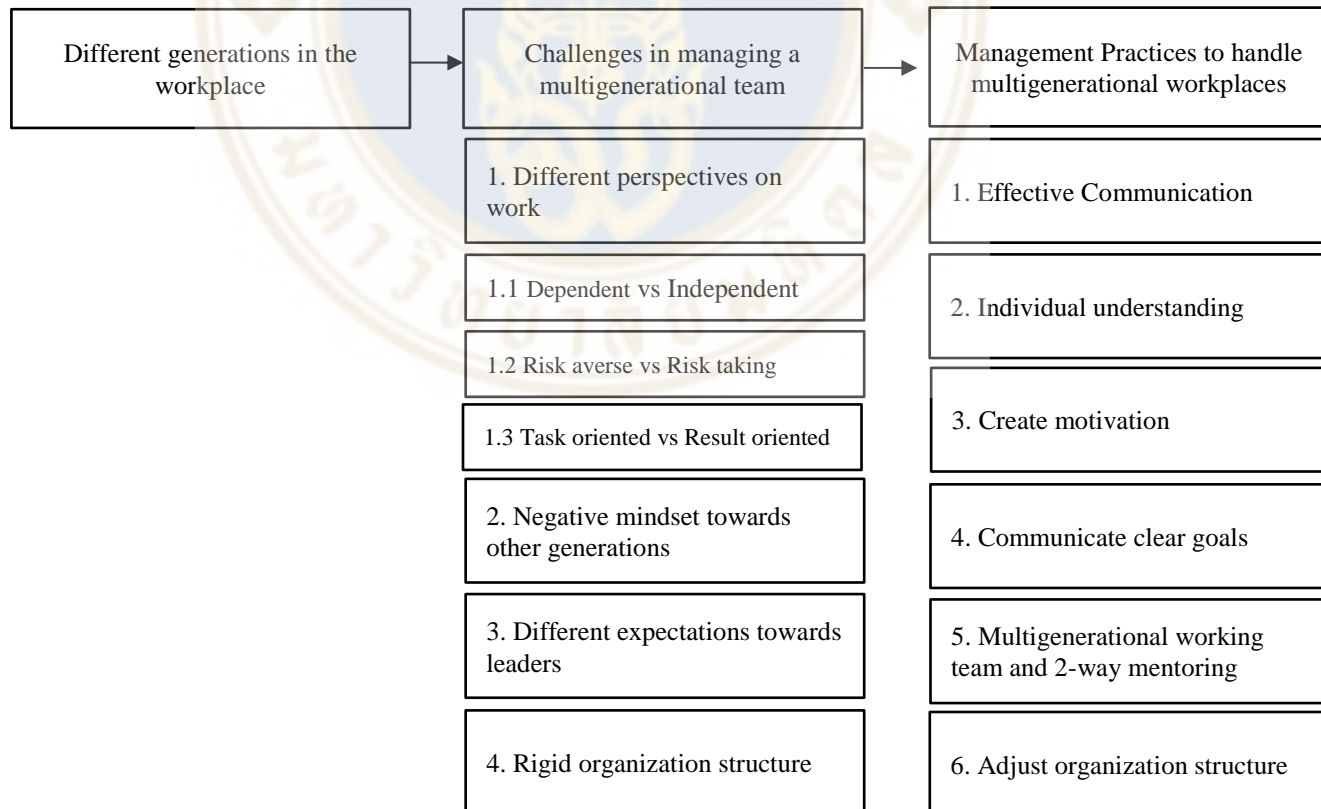


Figure 5.1 Challenges and Management Practices to handle multigenerational team

It can be concluded that there are four common challenges in managing a multigenerational team. The first challenge is different perspectives on work, including dependent versus independent, risk-averse versus risk-taking, and task-oriented versus Result-oriented. The second challenge is the negative mindset towards other generations. The third challenge is that each generation has different expectations toward leaders. Finally, the last challenge that is found in this study is the rigid organizational structure that causes limitations in the career path of the younger generation.

Further to the above challenges, management practices to handle the challenges were shared and summarized into six approaches. The first practice is communicating effectively. There are five aspects or skills to create effective communication in the workplace: active listening, empathic communication, being positive, using the suitable communication method, and organizing team building. The second practice is individual understanding which managers should study their employee and adapting your management style to fit everyone on your team's characteristics, interests, and goals. The third practice is creating motivation to lead and inspire employee to achieve in their career. The fourth practice is to communicate clear goals to team and lead them to the same direction. The fifth practice is making the multigenerational working team and 2-way mentoring. The last practice is adjusted organization structure to match with the work style of employee that may change time to time.

5.2 Recommendation

From the key findings that were found in this study, we can conclude that generation is one of the factors in people management that organizations should pay attention to get successful in running a business. The recommendation in this paper can help to add value to the manager of IT organizations in Thailand by applying the management practices to handle the challenge of managing a multigenerational workplace as follow:

- For leading teams, effective management communication is required for leaders or managers to guide their team to overcome any challenges.

- Even though generation can imply some common characteristics, perspectives, and needs of the people in the same generation, it is also important to understand employees as individuals. Each employee has differences, and there are other factors that shape individuals, not only generations.
- Managers should leverage motivation in the workplace to lead the team, engage their employees, and inspire productivity and satisfaction.
- Team goals can allow managers to get everyone in the same direction, work together for the same objective, and focus on the same outcomes.
- Engage with multigeneration teams and reverse mentorship programs, which allow more senior employees to connect with and learn from younger workers.
- Organization structure has an impact on how employees are satisfied with their work henceforward. Therefore, the organization should adjust itself to build a good and suitable organizational structure for the employee.

5.3 Limitation

Even though the result of this study is in line with the literature findings, the limitation of this study is the small sample size of the interviewees. The interviews were conducted with eleven managers, and thereby the sample size may be insufficient to derive general conclusions. It would be better if research could be done with bigger sample size. Another limitation is the diversity of interviewees' backgrounds. Most of the interviewees work in a multinational company, and only three of them work in a Thai company. In addition, most of the interviewees are generation X and aged around 40 to 50. The diversity of participants could affect the result of the people management experience and perspective; it would be better if the future studies consider interviewing a group of managers who more diverse profiles.

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