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Beyond compensation: effect of employee benefits on job motivation, performance, and turnover intention

Jindarat Peemane^a , Ranitha Weerathna^b , Achariya Issarapaibool^a ,
Sutana Boonlua^a  and Nilmini Rathnayake^c 

^aMahasarakham Business School, Mahasarakham University, Kham Riang, Thailand; ^bSLIIT Business School, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology, Malabe, Sri Lanka; ^cTasmanian School of Business and Economics, University of Tasmania, Dynnryne, Australia

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of employee benefits on motivation, performance, and turnover intention within contemporary workplaces that increasingly emphasize employee well-being. Addressing a key gap in the literature, it employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and analyzes data from 387 Generation Y and Generation Z employees in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Thailand. The analysis examines how diverse benefit types influence employees' motivation, performance, and decisions to remain with their organizations. The findings reveal a direct and positive link between employee benefits, enhanced motivation, and improved performance, which together significantly reduce turnover intention. Specifically, attraction and retention strategies, organizational support mechanisms, and a growth-oriented, well-being-focused environment emerged as critical factors in motivating employees and elevating their performance. Overall, the study demonstrates that strategically designed employee benefit packages—aligned with employee needs and workplace realities—foster engagement, productivity, and loyalty. This study contributes valuable insights for organizational leaders seeking to refine benefit systems and extends the academic understanding of the strategic importance of non-monetary benefits in promoting employee satisfaction and retention.

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Human Resource Management; Organizational Studies; Business, Management and Accounting

1. Introduction

The modern workplace has shifted its focus from merely compensating employees to adopting a holistic approach that prioritizes employee well-being and satisfaction. Organizations now recognize the importance of addressing physical, mental, social, financial, and community well-being to create a well-rounded and productive workforce, reflecting the complex dynamics of contemporary work environments (Kozusznik et al., 2023). This approach acknowledges that well-being is not solely determined by individual factors but is also influenced by organizational structures and practices (Thompson, 2023).

This study explores the nuanced relationship between monetary and non-monetary benefits and their impact on the workforce, demonstrating how elements such as promotion opportunities, job stability, training, and a supportive working environment are integral to enhancing motivation (Mittal, 2023; Thapa, 2023). While financial incentives are essential for improving performance, non-monetary benefits—such as recognition, professional growth, and workplace culture—also play a crucial role in sustaining motivation (Setiawan et al., 2023).

Employee benefits play a pivotal role in shaping workplace outcomes, especially regarding talent retention. Understanding how employee benefits affect performance indicators has become increasingly important in today's competitive environment. Empirical evidence indicates that benefits strongly influence retention, engagement, commitment, motivation, and productivity (Li, 2023). In an era where talent

CONTACT Ranitha Weerathna  ranitha.w@slit.lk  SLIIT Business School, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology, Malabe 10115, Sri Lanka.
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retention is as critical as talent acquisition, understanding the role of employee benefits in shaping these outcomes is indispensable (Ranta & Ylinen, 2024). For instance, holiday bonuses such as those provided during the Lunar New Year have been shown to positively influence employee retention (Tuoi et al., 2023).

Previous research has demonstrated that employee benefits—extending beyond traditional salary packages—influence not only the tangible aspects of job performance but also the intangible dimensions of motivation and loyalty (Bindra et al., 2023; Sanjaya & Indrawati, 2023). Benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, flexible work arrangements, and professional development opportunities are often viewed as expressions of an organization's values and its commitment to employee well-being (Booth-LeDoux, 2022; Khattak, 2022). Employee well-being is not only a tool for attracting talent but also a mechanism for creating a supportive work environment that enhances motivation (Karsim et al., 2023). The central premise of this study is that when employees perceive their benefits as valuable and aligned with their needs, their intrinsic motivation is likely to increase (Yesuf et al., 2023). This, in turn, enhances employee engagement and productivity, illustrating a direct link between the quality of benefits and organizational performance outcomes.

Employee benefits form a crucial component of the employment relationship, contributing to job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Klonoski, 2016). Businesses, individuals, and governments collaborate to design benefit systems that improve living standards and promote economic stability (Riak & Bill, 2022; Hong et al., 2024). In the United States, the employee benefits system encompasses a broad spectrum of initiatives such as flexible work schedules, retirement plans, and healthcare coverage (Hubbard & Singh, 2009). Consequently, well-designed benefits programs boost total compensation packages and enable firms to gain a competitive edge in the labor market.

The exploration of the dynamic interplay between employee benefits and their effects on motivation, performance, and turnover intention has been advanced by recent seminal studies (Liaquat et al., 2024; Ranta & Ylinen, 2024), highlighting a crucial area for further investigation. Ranta and Ylinen (2024) analyzed the relationship between employee benefits and company performance through advanced analytics, revealing the need for a deeper understanding of how specific benefits directly influence motivation and turnover intention—an issue this study seeks to address.

Furthermore, Han et al. (2024) provide valuable insights into employee satisfaction in the context of airline industry; however, their findings are limited by the absence of causal analysis. Building on this gap, the present study extends the inquiry to other business sectors to explore additional factors that influence both job satisfaction and work performance. Similarly, Liaquat et al. (2024) examined sustainable HR practices within the banking industry, but their emphasis on financial and sustainability outcomes left unexplored the broader impact of traditional and sustainability-oriented rewards on turnover intention. This study addresses these gaps by investigating how different types of benefits collectively shape employee motivation, performance, and retention.

Both Generation Y (Gen Y; born 1981–1996) and Generation Z (Gen Z; born 1997–2012) make up the modern Thai workforce. Growing up amid rapid technological and economic change, Gen Y values autonomy, work-life balance, and less hierarchical organizational structures (Dreyer & Stojanová, 2023; Wolf et al., 2005). However, given the current global economic uncertainty, both generations express concerns about job stability, contributing to higher turnover rates. Gen Y employees are generally more likely to change jobs (Weerarathne et al., 2023), while Gen Z employees, shaped by a highly digital environment, are adaptive, technology-oriented, and selective about employers who align with their personal values (Zahlmar et al., 2023; Zilka, 2023). In addition to prioritizing job satisfaction and effectiveness, Gen Y and Gen Z seek flexible, inclusive, and equitable work environments (Nabahani & Riyanto, 2020). They also challenge conventional workplace norms and advocate for fair wages and conditions.

The purpose of this study is to examine how employee benefits influence performance and motivation among Gen Y and Gen Z workers in Thai Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Prior research, including Tafese (2024), Akpom and Ibegbulam (2023), and Siraj and Hågen (2023), suggest that comprehensive benefit programs sharply lower employee turnover. However, few studies have specifically focused on these generational cohorts within SMEs despite predictions that Gen Y and Gen Z will dominate the workforce in many industries (Xie et al., 2023). Accordingly, this study investigates how benefit structures impact motivation and performance in Thai SMEs, providing insights that can guide the design of benefit plans and strategies to enhance employee satisfaction and organizational sustainability.

This study contributes to the literature by focusing on Gen Y and Gen Z employees within Thai SMEs, an underrepresented context in Human Resource Management (HRM) research, contrasting with earlier work that primarily examined broader sectors such as aviation or finance (e.g. Han et al., 2024; Liaquat et al., 2024). The use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) enables a comprehensive understanding of how various benefit types—including organizational support, well-being programs, and employer attractiveness strategies—affect performance, motivation, and turnover intention. This study further identifies the benefit dimensions most effective in retaining and motivating younger employees.

Ultimately, this research offers practical insights for HR practitioners and policymakers, particularly in emerging economies. The findings provide actionable guidance for designing benefit systems and policies that align with generational expectations, enhance motivation, and reduce turnover intention.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: [Section 2](#) presents a detailed review of the relevant literature and theoretical foundations. [Section 3](#) outlines the research methodology, including sampling and measurement approaches. [Section 4](#) reports and discusses the results of the SEM analysis. Finally, [Section 5](#) presents the study's theoretical contributions, practical implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

In reviewing the literature, the researchers used journal databases such as Taylor & Francis Online, Emerald Insight, and Wiley Online Library. Key search terms include employee benefits, job motivation, job performance, turnover intention, and employee welfare. Researchers summarized the findings of similar major studies and presented them in [Online Appendix S1](#). This literature review establishes the study's theoretical background and clarifies the constructs, including the mediator and dependent variables—Employee Motivation (MOT), Performance (PER), and Turnover Intention (TURO). It also introduces three antecedent benefit dimensions—Employee Attraction and Retention Strategies (ATT), Organizational Structure Support Facilities (FAC), and Positive Growth and Well-being Environment (ENV)—that structure the conceptualization of employee benefits.

2.1. Foundational theories in employee motivation and HR practices

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory divides employee motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions. Extrinsic motivation stems from pay, rewards, and formal status, while intrinsic motivation arises from achievement, challenge, autonomy, and personal growth (Herzberg, 1959). Intrinsic drivers tend to be more enduring, whereas extrinsic drivers are contingent on external reinforcement. Money and corporate recognition are typical extrinsic motivators, whereas problem-solving and goal attainment are intrinsic motivators (DeShields et al., 2005). Well-structured incentives can support both forms of motivation, particularly when benefits are tailored to employee needs such as career progression and flexible work arrangements (Fischer et al., 2019).

The Resource-Based View (RBV) posits that valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources generate competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993; Wernerfelt, 1984). Within RBV, strategically designed benefits operate as human-capital resources that enhance satisfaction, performance, and reduce turnover propensity, thereby supporting Herzberg's view that well-crafted benefits can drive motivation and business success (Ployhart, 2021).

2.2. Theoretical underpinnings and evolution of employee benefits

The evolution of employee benefits in Human Resource Management (HRM) reveals a shift toward greater autonomy, choice, and flexibility in benefits design. Historically rooted in employer-provided benefits, this shift has been reinforced by contemporary research advocating alignment between benefit structures and the practical needs of today's workforce (Dulebohn et al., 2009; Fulmer & Li, 2022; Hubbard & Singh, 2009). Organizations that offer broader benefits portfolios tend to realize better organizational performance and lower turnover, underscoring the strategic value of comprehensive benefits (Decressin et al., 2009).

Research on benefit evolution highlights the role of customized incentives in strengthening engagement, satisfaction, and performance. For example, Kusumaningsih et al. (2015) distinguish between variable, performance-related pay and generic benefits, emphasizing the tactical importance of variable pay. Foundational benefits such as healthcare and retirement plans are important for employee attraction and retention, building a committed workforce (Bender et al., 2013). Industry-specific evidence—banking (Bindra et al., 2023) and manufacturing (Sastera & Mauludin, 2018)—demonstrates differential effects of benefits on morale and performance, supporting a balanced approach to intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.

Further support for well-designed reward systems improving efficiency and productivity originate from Hearn (1999), Siddiqui (2015), and Akhter et al. (2016). Muse et al. (2008) show that prioritizing well-being through benefits positively affects productivity and prosocial organizational behavior. Collectively, these studies underscore that carefully designed benefit and reward systems foster motivation, engagement, and long-term success, setting the stage for continued innovation in compensation and benefits.

2.2.1. Employee Attraction and retention strategies (ATT)

ATT denotes a comprehensive set of practices and policies to attract qualified candidates and minimize turnover by maintaining a satisfied, committed workforce (Hutchings et al., 2011; Sinta et al., 2023). This dimension foregrounds extrinsic rewards—competitive pay, welfare benefits, and bonuses—in attracting and retaining talent (Farrington et al., 2014; Setyowati & Syaputra, 2023). Grounded in incentive theories and equity principles, ATT emphasizes fair and appealing remuneration to meet basic needs and reinforce commitment (Dai, 2022). Based on the above discussion, it is reasonable to expect that employee attraction and retention strategies positively influence both motivation and performance. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Employee attraction will have a positive influence on employee motivation

H2: Employee attraction will have a positive influence on performance

2.2.2. Organizational structure support facilities (FAC)

FAC refers to the physical and technological assets organizations provide to optimize operations, improve communication, and support daily tasks (Joyce et al., 2022). Examples include well-designed workspaces, robust information systems, and tailored resources such as meeting rooms and specialized tools—all intended to enhance productivity and collaboration (Groen et al., 2019). Investments in FAC help create environments conducive to efficiency, development, goal achievement, strengthening team cohesion and role performance (Naktiyok, 2019). Building on prior evidence, it is anticipated that organizational support facilities enhance both employee motivation and performance. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3: Organizational structure support facilities will have a positive influence on employee motivation

H4: Organizational structure support facilities will have a positive influence on performance

2.2.3. Positive growth and well-being environment (ENV)

ENV captures organizational strategies that prioritize employee development and well-being through supportive management, career advancement opportunities, recognition, and work-life balance (Yusnita et al., 2022). ENV is expected to increase satisfaction, motivation, and commitment, which, in turn, elevate productivity and reduce turnover. It underscores alignment between professional goals and holistic well-being to achieve sustainable success (Rabwana & Yanuar, 2023; Weerarathna et al., 2022). Given the literature highlighting the importance of positive work environments for motivation and productivity, the following hypotheses are developed:

H5: Positive growth and well-being environment will have a positive influence on employee motivation

H6: Positive growth and well-being environment will have a positive influence on performance

2.3. Motivation and employee performance

Extensive research in organizational behavior links motivation to performance, emphasizing its transformative role at work. Classic frameworks—Maslow’s hierarchy and Herzberg’s two-factor theory—remain central to explaining performance drivers (Mansaray, 2019). Amid competitive pressures, motivation and job satisfaction are critical for organizational success, highlighting HRM’s strategic role in cultivating a motivated workforce (Jalloh & Jalloh, 2016; Mehmeti, 2020).

Intrinsic motivation (inherent satisfaction and purpose) and extrinsic motivation (rewards and recognition) both enhance productivity and goal alignment (Basu, 2023; Fahriana & Sopiah, 2022; Wartana, 2022). Complementary elements—competitive compensation and positive interpersonal dynamics—also strengthen motivation, improving performance (Simamora et al., 2023). Integrating work discipline with motivational strategies further elevates performance, reinforcing motivation theory’s centrality in organizational development.

Empirical studies confirm a robust positive relationship between motivation and performance: higher autonomous and controlled motivation correlate with superior task performance, improved behavior, and fewer counterproductive acts (Fiorini & Sammut, 2024). Across the motivational spectrum, intrinsic and extrinsic drivers together create conditions for performance to thrive while lowering negative behaviors (Ariani, 2023). Motivation often mediates the link between financial incentives and performance, underscoring its indispensable role in organizational excellence (Akerle, 2023; Kurniawan et al., 2023). Direct and indirect effects via competence and job characteristics further demonstrate motivation’s comprehensive impact (Apriyani & Dirganthara, 2023). Strategically leveraging motivation theories is therefore essential to sustaining high performance. Drawing on the established link between motivation and key work outcomes, the next hypotheses examine the effects of employee motivation on performance and turnover intention:

H7: Employee motivation will have a positive influence on performance

H9: Employee motivation will have a positive influence on turnover intention

2.4. Employee benefits as a motivational tool

The role of employee benefits as a core motivational lever is widely documented, with strong effects on motivation, engagement, and satisfaction (Mittal, 2023). Benefits—healthcare, retirement plans, flexibility, and educational support—shape perceptions of organizational support, thereby elevating job satisfaction (Marumpe et al., 2023). Both financial and non-financial rewards have substantial motivational value, creating contexts that support satisfaction and productivity (Muneeb & Ahmad, 2020).

In contemporary workplaces, benefits extend beyond pay to encompass a portfolio of incentives—from insurance and retirement to flexible schedules and development opportunities (Akerle, 2023). Well-implemented programs increase commitment and positive work behaviors, improving productivity and performance (Agubata et al., 2022; Khattak, 2022). Aligning offerings with employee needs is thus strategically important for motivation and organizational success. These benefits are not mere perks but deliberate tools to address diverse preferences (Cross, 2019). Recognizing both intrinsic and extrinsic drivers, organizations leverage benefits to build supportive climates, enhance satisfaction, and stimulate higher performance (Bucăța et al., 2022; Nisar et al., 2016). Grounded in motivational psychology, benefits signal care and support, which strengthen commitment and motivation (Siraj & Hågen, 2023). Well-structured packages therefore help attract and retain talent and cultivate positive cultures, reducing turnover and aligning the workforce with organizational objectives (Weerarathna et al., 2022).

2.5. Benefits, performance, and turnover intention

The relationship between benefits, performance, and turnover intention highlights the strategic role of organizational design in shaping employee perceptions and behavior (Khairina, 2022). Perceived organizational support lowers turnover intention by reinforcing commitment. Job satisfaction and effective

training further strengthen employee retention, emphasizing the need for targeted support and engagement strategies (Bai et al., 2022). Comprehensive benefits, treated as strategic investments, align with employee needs and are associated with higher satisfaction, engagement, performance, and loyalty (Li, 2023; Sreenath et al., 2019).

From the lens of RBV and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, tailored benefits function as unique organizational resources that meet motivational needs and foster a high-performing, dedicated workforce (Chachar et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2022). Hygiene factors (e.g. conditions) and motivators (e.g. recognition, achievement) together shape satisfaction (Ebenso et al., 2020). RBV further emphasizes developing unique and hard-to-imitate resources to sustain advantage (Samsudin & Ismail, 2019). Thus, aligning benefit portfolios with motivational needs enhances satisfaction, motivation, and organizational performance.

Social exchange and equity theories add that reciprocity and fairness in valued benefits reduce turnover intention (Aliedan et al., 2022). Overall, strategically designed benefits are critical for improving performance and retention, building organizational resilience (Widyasari & Fachrunnisa, 2022). For Gen Y and Gen Z, work-life balance, supportive supervisors, and career opportunities are salient performance enablers, and they value remote-work options, annual leave, and schedule flexibility (Waworuntu et al., 2022). Based on previous empirical evidence suggesting that enhanced performance can influence employees' intention to stay or leave, the final hypothesis is proposed:

H8: Performance will have a positive influence on turnover intention

Collectively, these hypotheses form the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1, which depicts the interrelationships among employee benefits, motivation, performance, and turnover intention.

In summary, three theoretical frameworks guide this study's model. First, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory explains how motivators (e.g. recognition, growth) and hygiene factors (e.g. stability, pay) jointly contribute to higher motivation and lower employee turnover, informing H1–H7 and H9. Second, the RBV (Barney, 1991; Ployhart, 2021) positions benefits as strategic resources that, when unique and valuable, enhance performance, informing H1–H8. Third, Psychological Contract Theory (Rousseau, 1995) explains how benefits aligned with implicit expectations strengthen motivation and retention, informing H5–H6 and H9.

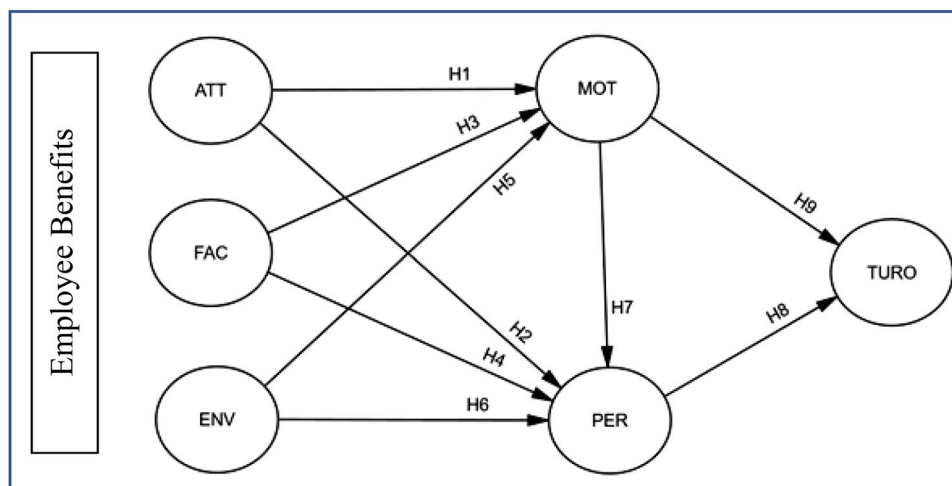


Figure 1. Employee benefits and their effects on motivation, performance, and turnover intention: a research model.

Where:
 ATTis Attraction and Retention Strategies.
 FACis Organizational Structure Support Facilities.
 ENVis Positive Growth and Well-being Environment.
 MOTis Employee Motivation.
 PERis Performance.
 TUROis Turnover Intention.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and data collection

Gen Y and Gen Z employees are central to Thailand's digital transformation, innovation, and growth (Farrell & Phungsoonthorn, 2020; Weerasombat et al., 2022), including international competitiveness and investment attraction (Hendriana et al., 2023; Yui et al., 2019). As Thailand advances its sustainable development agenda, leveraging these cohorts is critical (Chanyawudhiwan & Mingsiritham, 2022; Noonpakdee et al., 2018). Therefore, this study focuses on Gen Y and Gen Z employees working in Thai SMEs.

Using the most recent statistics from the Digital Government Development Agency (2021), we applied a quota sampling strategy by region and targeted four major urban centers—Bangkok (Central), Chiang Mai (North), Khon Kaen (Northeast), and Phuket (South). We mailed 400 questionnaires to HR managers in wholesale, retail, and food service SMEs (100 per province). Data collection ran from 1 August 2024 to 28 August 2024. We received 391 returns; 387 were complete and usable (96.75% usable return), comfortably exceeding the typical 20% benchmark for mail surveys (Aaker et al., 2007).

The target of ~400 respondents is consistent with established rules of thumb for SEM. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table suggests $n \approx 384$ at 95% confidence ($\pm 5\%$ error); for CB-SEM models with ≤ 7 latent constructs, ~350–400 is commonly recommended (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2016).

The respondents were SME employees working in wholesale, retail, and food service sectors across Thailand. To ensure geographical representation, the sample was divided into four regional subgroups using a simple random sampling method: 100 participants from Bangkok (Central), 100 from Chiang Mai (North), 100 from Khon Kaen (Northeast), and 100 from Phuket (South). According to the National Statistical Office (2022), the proportion of Gen Y and Gen Z employees in these provinces was broadly similar, allowing for balanced representation across age cohorts. A total of 400 questionnaires were mailed to HR managers for distribution to employees, yielding 391 responses, of which 387 were valid and complete. Data collection took place between 1 August and 28 August 2024, achieving a 96.75% usable response rate, which is substantially higher than the 20% minimum threshold typically considered acceptable for mail surveys (Aaker et al., 2007). All participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, and informed consent was obtained electronically prior to completing the questionnaire.

To assess potential nonresponse bias, early and late respondents were compared on key demographic variables (e.g. gender, work experience) and self-reported constructs using independent-samples t-tests, following Armstrong and Overton (1977) procedure. No significant differences were observed, indicating that nonresponse bias was not a concern for this dataset.

3.2. Measures

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design and a quantitative research approach to examine how employee benefits influence the motivation, performance, and turnover intention of Generation Y and Z employees working in Thai SMEs. The research framework was grounded in the RBV and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which guided the identification of constructs and hypothesized linkages. To analyze the data and assess the proposed model, the study applied SEM due to its suitability for testing complex causal relationships among latent variables.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed specifically for this study. The questionnaire comprised three main sections. The first section captured demographic and employment information, including gender, birth year, current employment status, length of work experience, and average monthly income. The second section focused on employee benefits, measured using a five-item scale adapted from Li (2023) and Agusioma et al. (2019). This section was divided into three dimensions: Employee Attraction and Retention Strategies (ATT), Organizational Structure Support Facilities (FAC), and Positive Growth and Well-being Environment (ENV)—each represented by five items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The third section assessed the dependent variables, including Employee Motivation (MOT) with items adapted from Mgamal and

AI-Matari (2021), Performance (PER) with items adapted from Chen et al. (2022), and Turnover Intention (TURO) with items adapted from Lu et al. (2016).

3.3. Statistic analysis

The analytical framework presented in Figure 1 was tested using SEM to examine the hypothesized relationships among the study variables. The analysis followed a two-step approach as recommended by Hair et al. (2013) and Rigdon et al. (2010). In the first phase, the measurement model was assessed to establish reliability and validity by examining factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability for each construct. These results are presented in Table 1. In the second phase, the structural model was evaluated to determine the strength and significance of the hypothesized paths and the overall model fit. Model fit indices were interpreted according to established thresholds, ensuring that the proposed model adequately represented the data and theoretical framework.

3.4. Ethical approval and pilot testing

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Mahasarakham University Internal Ethical Review Board (MSU-IRB-444-471/2567). All participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, and informed consent was obtained electronically prior to completing the questionnaire. Participants indicated their consent by clicking the agreement statement before proceeding to the survey.

All items in the questionnaire were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). A pilot study involving 50 SME employees was conducted from 25–30 July 2024 to ensure clarity, reliability, and contextual relevance of the questions. Based on the pilot feedback and expert review, minor wording adjustments were made to enhance content validity and ensure cultural appropriateness for the Thai context. The final version of the questionnaire was then approved for data collection.

4. Analyses and results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Among the 387 respondents, 47.5% were female. Generation Y (born 1981–1996) and Generation Z (born 1997–2002) accounted for 50.6% and 49.4%, respectively, representing a balanced generational

Table 1. Variables and measurement items.

| Variables | Items | Factor loading | S.D. | CR | Alpha | AVE |
|-----------|-------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ATT | B1 | 0.64 | 0.711 | 0.823 | 0.821 | 0.539 |
| | B2 | 0.76 | 0.702 | | | |
| | B3 | 0.77 | 0.765 | | | |
| | B4 | 0.76 | 0.689 | | | |
| FAC | D1 | 0.68 | 0.708 | 0.820 | 0.739 | 0.486 |
| | D2 | 0.70 | 0.647 | | | |
| | D3 | 0.71 | 0.713 | | | |
| ENV | E1 | 0.77 | 0.751 | 0.846 | 0.808 | 0.578 |
| | E2 | 0.76 | 0.769 | | | |
| | E3 | 0.72 | 0.773 | | | |
| | E4 | 0.79 | 0.723 | | | |
| MOT | H1 | 0.68 | 0.722 | 0.773 | 0.814 | 0.460 |
| | H2 | 0.63 | 0.761 | | | |
| | H3 | 0.69 | 0.687 | | | |
| | H4 | 0.71 | 0.688 | | | |
| PER | I1 | 0.73 | 0.723 | 0.842 | 0.822 | 0.571 |
| | I2 | 0.76 | 0.741 | | | |
| | I3 | 0.79 | 0.736 | | | |
| | I4 | 0.74 | 0.742 | | | |
| TURO | K1 | 0.79 | 0.712 | 0.815 | 0.831 | 0.525 |
| | K2 | 0.74 | 0.733 | | | |
| | K3 | 0.72 | 0.689 | | | |
| | K4 | 0.64 | 0.675 | | | |

Note: AVE = Average Variance Extraction) CR = Composite Reliability. All factor loadings, AVE, and CR values were significant at $p < 0.001$. Source: Authors calculations based (2025).

distribution. Most participants reported 4–7 years of work experience (41.3%), followed by those with less than 3 years (27.4%). In terms of income, 39.3% earned between US \$408 and US \$544 (15,000–20,000 THB), followed by 23.0% who earned US \$545 to US \$680 (20,001–25,000 THB).

4.2. Measurement model results

The measurement model was evaluated using three key criteria: (1) reliability, (2) average variance extracted (AVE), and (3) discriminant validity. These tests assess internal consistency, convergent validity, and construct distinctiveness, confirming the adequacy of the measures for subsequent structural model analysis.

4.2.1. Reliability statistics

As shown in Table 1, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.773 to 0.846, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70 suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (1988) and Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). These results confirm strong internal consistency and reliability of the constructs used in the analysis.

4.2.2. Average variance extracted (AVE)

The AVE values ranged from 0.460 to 0.578, with most constructs exceeding the recommended 0.50 cutoff (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This demonstrates that each construct explains a satisfactory portion of variance in its observed indicators, indicating good convergent validity.

4.2.3. Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was assessed by examining the correlations among constructs (Table 2). Correlation coefficients ranged from 0.313 to 0.532, with no pair exceeding the 0.90 threshold (Hair et al., 2013). The square roots of the AVE values (bold diagonals) were greater than the inter-construct correlations, confirming adequate discriminant validity (Peemaneet et al., 2025).

4.3. Structural model results

The SEM investigation was prepared to test the effect of innovation disruption on organizational performance via organizational innovation capability. By using the criteria of Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000), the final result in Table 3 shows that the model is consistent with the observed data: Chi-square = 782.312, DF = 11, CMIN/DF = 2.412, GFI = 0.923, CFI = 0.912, SRMR = 0.061 and RMSEA = 0.051, RMR = 0.057. It can be determined that the structural equation model in the relationship is reliable with the observed data.

According to the Table 4; the structural path analysis confirmed that all hypothesized relationships were statistically significant and positive. Specifically, Employee Attraction and Retention Strategies (ATT) positively influenced both Motivation (H1: $\beta=0.25$, $p<0.001$) and Performance (H2: $\beta=0.22$, $p<0.001$). Organizational Structure Support Facilities (FAC) significantly affected Motivation (H3: $\beta=0.33$, $p<0.001$) and Performance (H4: $\beta=0.20$, $p<0.001$). Similarly, Positive Growth and Well-being Environment (ENV) emerged as the strongest predictor of Motivation (H5: $\beta=0.34$, $p<0.001$) and also positively influenced Performance (H6: $\beta=0.22$, $p<0.001$).

Table 2. The correlation of constructs.

| | ATT | FAC | ENV | MOT | TURO | Per |
|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| ATT | 0.531 | | | | | |
| FAC | 0.532* | 0.341 | | | | |
| ENV | 0.422* | 0.325 | 0.452 | | | |
| MOT | 0.458* | 0.367* | 0.436* | 0.434 | | |
| TURO | 0.412* | 0.410* | 0.443* | 0.313* | 0.461 | |
| PER | 0.367* | 0.353* | 0.422* | 0.524* | 0.411* | 0.387 |

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$.

Source: Authors.

Table 3. The result of the model fit of the structural equation model.

| Goodness of fit measure | Recommended value | Structural model result | Description |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------|
| CMIN/DF | 2.0-5.0 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000) | 2.412 | Good fit |
| GFI | > 0.900 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000) | 0.923 | Good fit |
| CFI | >0.900 (Kelloway, 2015) | 0.912 | Acceptable |
| RMSEA | <0.060 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010) | 0.051 | Good fit |
| SRMR | <0.080 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000) | 0.061 | Good fit |

Source: various sources (see inside the Table).

Table 4. Results of estimation structural model.

| Path from | Path to | Hypothesis | Structural coefficients (β) | t-statistic (p -value) |
|-----------|---------|------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ATT | MOT | H1 | 0.25 | 6.27** |
| ATT | PER | H2 | 0.22 | 6.35** |
| FAC | MOT | H3 | 0.33 | 5.33** |
| FAC | PER | H4 | 0.20 | 6.28** |
| ENV | MOT | H5 | 0.34 | 7.23** |
| ENV | PER | H6 | 0.22 | 6.83** |
| MOT | PER | H7 | 0.26 | 7.19** |
| PER | TURO | H8 | 0.53 | 6.07** |
| MOT | TURO | H9 | 0.44 | 5.69** |

Notes: * $p < 0.01$; and ** $p < 0.001$.

Source: Authors calculations based (2025).

Furthermore, Employee Motivation (MOT) was found to enhance both Performance (H7: $\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$) and Turnover Intention (H9: $\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, Performance (PER) was significantly related to Turnover Intention (TURO) (H8: $\beta = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$). Overall, the results strongly support all nine hypotheses, confirming the interrelated nature of employee benefits, motivation, performance, and turnover intention.

5. General discussion

This study examined how employee benefits influence motivation, performance, and turnover intention among Generation Y and Generation Z employees in Thai SMEs. Specifically, it explored three benefit dimensions—Attraction and Retention Strategies (ATT), Organizational Structure Support Facilities (FAC), and a Positive Growth and Well-being Environment (ENV)—and their influence on motivation (MOT) and performance (PER), as well as their indirect impact on turnover intention (TURO). The findings offer a nuanced understanding of how employee benefits, extending beyond financial compensation, shape workplace outcomes in modern organizational contexts.

The results show that all three types of benefits positively affect employee performance. FAC emerged as a particularly strong predictor ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring that technological resources, supportive work systems, and infrastructure contribute to efficient operations and improved outcomes. Likewise, ATT and ENV positively influenced performance ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that fair rewards, recognition, and work-life balance collectively enhance motivation and job satisfaction. These results align with Weerarathna et al. (2022) and Groen et al. (2019), who emphasize supportive environments as vital to performance, and support Setyowati and Syaputra (2023), who link comprehensive benefit structures with enhanced engagement. Our findings diverge from Siregar (2020), who emphasized monetary incentives as the dominant driver of performance. This contrast may stem from contextual differences, SMEs in emerging economies often prioritize holistic well-being over purely financial rewards. By demonstrating that non-financial benefits such as career development, autonomy, and psychological well-being significantly sustain performance, this study challenges traditional compensation-centric models and underscores the need for integrated HR strategies that align with generational expectations.

Interestingly, motivation showed a positive relationship with turnover intention (e.g. Allen & Shanock, 2013; Rousseau, 1995; Zheng et al., 2021). This paradox may reflect generational shifts in work values. Gen Y and Gen Z employees often seek flexibility, independence, and personal growth, prioritizing self-development over long-term organizational loyalty. In Thailand's SME sector—characterized by instability and limited advancement opportunities (Kasikorn Research Center, 2025)—motivated young

employees may interpret high engagement as a stepping stone to new roles rather than sustained commitment. This generational dynamic is supported by Dreyer and Stojanová (2023) and Weerathne et al. (2023), who note that younger workers often equate motivation with employability and mobility rather than tenure.

Similarly, the finding that performance positively correlates with turnover intention ($\beta=0.53, p<0.001$) suggests that high performers may feel confident about their external opportunities and thus more likely to leave for better prospects. This observation aligns with Liu et al. (2024) but contrasts with Suprianto et al. (2023) and Arowolo and Akinbo (2022), who report that strong performance increases organizational commitment. The divergence indicates that in competitive and fluid labor markets, performance can foster a sense of self-efficacy and external mobility. Together, these findings underscore that benefit enhance performance and motivation, but retaining younger, high-performing employees requires adaptive and flexible HR strategies tailored to generational expectations.

6. Theoretical contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions to the understanding of employee benefits, motivation, and retention in contemporary organizations. Grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and the Resource-Based View (RBV), it provides new evidence that the role of employee benefits extends beyond financial compensation to encompass psychological, developmental, and structural dimensions that collectively shape motivation and performance. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the study empirically validates that Attraction and Retention Strategies (ATT), Organizational Structure Support Facilities (FAC), and a Positive Growth and Well-Being Environment (ENV) are critical determinants of employee motivation (MOT) and performance (PER). All three benefit dimensions significantly enhance performance, with FAC exerting the strongest effect ($\beta=0.20, t=6.28, p<0.001$). Similarly, ENV and ATT produced significant positive effects ($p<0.001$), confirming that well-structured, non-financial benefits—such as career development opportunities, supportive infrastructure, and work-life balance—serve as strategic organizational resources that foster productivity and engagement.

The findings extend Herzberg's (1959) framework by demonstrating that intrinsic and extrinsic benefits are not dichotomous but mutually reinforcing when embedded in cohesive HR systems. They also enrich the RBV (Barney, 1991; Ployhart, 2021; Wernerfelt, 1984) by positioning employee benefit systems as valuable, rare, and inimitable organizational assets capable of sustaining competitive advantage. Moreover, the results advance Psychological Contract Theory (Rousseau, 1995) by showing that when employees perceive benefits as fair and aligned with expectations, their motivation and performance increase—even in resource-constrained SME settings.

An important theoretical insight arises from the unexpected positive relationship between motivation and turnover intention ($\beta=0.44, p<0.001$). This finding diverges from prior research that typically associates motivation with higher commitment and retention (Allen & Shanock, 2013; Zheng et al., 2021). It suggests a generational boundary condition: among younger Gen Y and Gen Z employees in Thai SMEs, motivation is closely linked to employability, autonomy, and future opportunity rather than long-term loyalty. These generations increasingly value independence, flexibility, and work-life balance, especially in SME environments characterized by limited career stability and high turnover (Dreyer & Stojanová, 2023; Kasikorn Research Center, 2025; Weerathne et al., 2023). Thus, motivation can simultaneously enhance performance while heightening mobility aspirations—a duality rarely captured in traditional motivation models.

Similarly, the positive relationship between performance and turnover intention ($\beta=0.53, p<0.001$) challenges classical retention theories that assume high performance automatically strengthens organizational attachment. Consistent with Liu et al. (2024), this study indicates that strong performers may develop greater confidence in their marketability and thus be more inclined to pursue external opportunities. This finding calls for a reconceptualization of benefit systems, emphasizing adaptive, individualized participation plans that recognize generational diversity and the fluidity of modern career trajectories. Overall, these results extend the theoretical boundaries of motivation and retention research by integrating generational context, SME dynamics, and non-financial benefit structures. The study contributes a refined understanding of how well-designed employee benefits function not only as motivational levers

but also as strategic, context-dependent resources that influence both performance and mobility in today's evolving workplace.

7. Practical implications

The study provides several practical insights for organizations, particularly SMEs. First, organizational leaders should adopt an integrated approach to employee benefits that combines financial incentives with developmental, psychological, and social rewards. Investments in infrastructure (FAC), fair and transparent compensation (ATT), and supportive work climates (ENV) can significantly enhance performance and job satisfaction.

Second, since motivated employees may still pursue external opportunities, retention efforts should focus on career development pathways, mentoring programs, and skill-based progression opportunities. By offering clear progression avenues and meaningful internal mobility, organizations transform motivation into long-term commitment. Furthermore, policies that encourage work-life balance, such as flexible scheduling and hybrid work arrangements, are especially attractive to Gen Y and Z employees and can strengthen engagement.

From a policy standpoint, the findings have implications for labor governance in emerging economies. Governments should encourage SMEs to adopt non-monetary welfare programs by introducing tax incentives, training subsidies, and public-private partnerships for workforce development. Initiatives that emphasize employee well-being and continuous learning can mitigate turnover and enhance national labor productivity. Although this study focuses on Thailand, the recommendations are relevant to other emerging economies in Southeast and South Asia—including Vietnam, Indonesia, and India—where SMEs dominate employment but face high attrition among younger workers. Well-designed welfare frameworks and capacity-building incentives can therefore enhance employee retention and foster sustainable economic growth across similar contexts.

8. Limitations

Although this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, focusing exclusively on Gen Y and Gen Z employees within Thai SMEs limits the generalizability of the findings across age groups, industries, and cultural contexts. Future studies should include diverse sectors and international comparisons to examine the universality of these patterns. Second, the study's cross-sectional design restricts causal inference. Longitudinal or panel-based research would better capture how employee benefits influence motivation and turnover over time.

Third, reliance on self-reported survey data may introduce bias. Future research could triangulate findings with objective performance indicators or supervisor evaluations. Fourth, important variables such as organizational commitment, leadership style, and perceived employability were not included but could provide richer explanatory power. Lastly, as the research was conducted in a post-COVID-19 context, ongoing technological and rapid economic changes may have altered perceptions of work and benefits. Future research could explore how shifts in digitalization, economic cycles, and labor policy reforms moderate the relationship between employee benefits and workplace outcomes.

Further studies could also explore interactions between financial and non-financial benefits, identifying optimal configurations for different employee segments. A mixed-methods design, combining surveys with interviews, could provide deeper insights into employee motivations and the psychological mechanisms underpinning benefit satisfaction. Comparative research between developed and developing economies would further reveal how institutional differences shape benefit effectiveness.

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Authors' contributions

CRedit: **Jindarat Peemane**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Software, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Ranitha Weerathna**: Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Achariya Issarapaibool**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Methodology, Software, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Sutana Boonlua**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Methodology, Software, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Nilmini Rathnayake**: Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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About the authors

Jindarat Peemane, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor at the Mahasarakham Business School, Mahasarakham University, Thailand. She received her doctoral degree in Applied Behavioral Science Research from Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand. Her research focuses on strategic human resource management and organizational behavior in the context of digital transformation, with particular emphasis on artificial intelligence adoption, human–AI collaboration, and the behavioral implications of emerging digital and marketing technologies in organizations.

Ranitha Weerathna completed Bachelor of Business management (Human resources) special degree from the university of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. He is a Senior Lecturer attached to SLIIT Business School, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT). currently, he is reading for PhD at Swinburne University of Technology.

Achariya Issarapaibool Ph.D., is a lecturer at the Mahasarakham Business School, Mahasarakham University, Thailand. She received her doctoral degree in Management from Mahasarakham University, Thailand. Her research focuses on management, organizational development, and small business development.

Sutana Boonlua, Ph. D., is an Assistant Professor at the Mahasarakham Business School, Mahasarakham University, Thailand. She was completed the doctoral degree in Economics from Lincoln University, New Zealand. Her interesting research topics are strategic management, FDI, urban economy, sustainable economy, and resource sustainability development.

Nilmini Rathnayake is a PhD student in management at the Tasmanian school of Business and economics, University of Tasmania and holds an MPhil in Business and economics from university of Sri Jayewardenepura. she was a lecturer at the Business School, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology. Her research interests include Work-life balance, Decent and Digital work, sustainable Development, and Higher education.

ORCID

Jindarat Peemane  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5813-5598>

Ranitha Weerathna  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3871-1241>

Achariya Issarapaibool  <http://orcid.org/0009-0004-9801-7413>

Sutana Boonlua  <http://orcid.org/0009-0000-3750-7903>

Nilmini Rathnayake  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2507-5634>

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, Ranitha Weerathna, upon reasonable request.

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