



## Attitude, Job Satisfaction, and Task Performance of Thai Millennial Employees toward Workplace Fun

Athapol Ruangkanjanases<sup>a\*</sup>, Chenin Chen<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a,b</sup> Chulalongkorn Business School, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand



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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to emphasize the term workplace fun that has been widely used in the western world but has had minimal impact in developing countries—such as Thailand. The research examines the relationships among variables such as the attitude of millennial employees towards workplace fun, experienced workplace fun, job satisfaction, and task performance in Thailand. According to the data of the National Statistical Office of Thailand, millennials will account for half of Thailand's workforce by 2030. The study relied upon survey data collected from 519 respondents representing millennials who are working in Thailand. By applying descriptive and inferential statistics, the study has found that millennial employees are true believers in the concept of workplace fun. Pearson's correlation coefficient indicates that higher exposure to experienced workplace fun leads to higher employee's job satisfaction and higher task performance. This paper serves to change the traditional management view of having fun in the workplace and to direct future work so that it may continue growing to improve Human Resource Management knowledge in Thailand.

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## Introduction

Imagine a work place where people love their work environment: a place where it is calm, stress-free and happy all-day long. People whose mental attitude produces increased oxygen, endorphins, and blood circulation in their brain, which enable them to think more creatively and clearly. This is a result of "Work Place Fun". A growing number of business consultants point out that fun at work is essential for enhancing employee motivation and productivity while reducing stress (Karl et al., 2005). Previous academic studies explained that the attitude and behavior of workplace fun has a beneficial impact for individuals and organizations, but some evidence has been mixed. However, in developing countries, there are firms that are still practicing the traditional view of work culture in which work and fun are mutually exclusive. In their view, fun is not a necessity in the workplace. In addition, managers think that it is inconsistent for employees to have fun and be productive at the same time. Two activities are often viewed as being at opposite ends of the same spectrum (Ford et al., 2005). The employees' perceived person-organization value congruence moderates the relationship between workplace fun and employees' job performance and this effect is mediated through experiencing fun in the study of high-tech organizations in mainland China and Taiwan (Tang et al., 2017).

This study aims at demonstrating how workplace fun can raise employee's satisfaction and task performance in Thailand. It is expected to prove the existence and reveal a positive relationship between attitude and behavior of workplace fun of Thai millennial employees. As a result, the researchers believe that organizations in Thailand will utilize these findings and create a great work

\* Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6766-5785

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environment for everyone and build up a specific treatment to gain a higher productivity rate in organizations for Thai millennial employees.

## **Literature Review**

### **Millennials**

In a global context, a millennial is referring to person who was born between year 1980 and 2000 (Schewe and Noble, 2000). They are very comfortable and adaptable towards technology, communication on the cloud as well as diversity. Numbers of published papers define millennials' characteristic as fun, flexible, and team oriented. (Howe and Strauss, 2000). In addition, they are often described as being very comfortable with change (Lub et al., 2012). Millennials have a high level of expectations and thrive for meaning in their workplace (Robbins and Judge, 2010). Eisner (2005) highlighted that millennials give a lot of importance to personal development; they tend to put their job primarily as a way to build a career resume and have weak long-term commitment to the organization. And because of that, millennials lack of long-term commitment towards organization can be one of the main challenges for the present workforce. To confirm the concept in Thailand, a study from Kengkarnchang (2013) gives evidence that job hopping of millennials in Thailand is very common and it is difficult to keep them from staying in the company more than 5 years since changing jobs to them is as easy as changing mobile phones. However, the unique characteristics of millennials have led the possibility of utilizing workplace fun as a means to motivate and improve commitment (Karl et al., 2008). Lamm and Meeks (2009) confirmed that the existence of a positive relationship between individual outcomes and workplace fun was much stronger in millennials than in any previous generation. In another words, in their eyes they look at fun in the workplace not as a want, but as a need.

### **Workplace fun**

Lamm and Meeks (2009) defined workplace fun as playful, social, interpersonal, recreational, or task activities intended to provide amusement or pleasure. According to Ford et al. (2003), workplace fun intentionally encourages, creates, and supports a variety of pleasurable and enjoyable events that positively influence the attitude of individuals and groups.

Aldag and Sherony (2001) defined attitudes towards workplace fun into three dimensions: appropriateness, salience, and perceived consequences of fun. Both researchers argue that each individual tends to have a different view towards workplace fun. Some may think of work place fun as something nice to have in the organization, some may think of fun as an inappropriate action during work hours, while some groups may even think of fun as one of the requirements in the work place. Hence, one's attitude towards the importance of salience of having fun at work can vary among different employees. Some groups of employees may define fun as a critical element of a job, while others may define fun as an extra, but not always necessarily required element. One question to test its salience is by asking respondents to rate a statement whether having fun is very important to them. To summarize, one's attitude towards workplace fun was assessed using 13-item scales developed by Aldag and Sherony (2001), which captured the 3 dimensions mentioned earlier—3 questions for appropriateness, 5 questions for salience, and 5 questions for perceived consequences.

Based on previous studies of Newstrom (2002) and Aldag and Sherony (2001), Appropriateness, Salience, and Perceived Consequences were positively related to the experience of workplace fun when tested with employees. The word "experienced workplace fun" itself is extended to which employees perceive the existence of fun in the organization. Therefore, the authors find the dimensions above useful to measure the attitude of workplace fun and explore the causal effect on experiencing workplace fun in Thailand.

### **Job satisfaction**

The study of Job Satisfaction has a long trace of history due to its popularity in a business context. Wright (2006) found that Job Satisfaction can be one of the potential causes for vital work related behaviors, such as task performance. Other research from Weiss (2002) says that Job Satisfaction is the combination of a positive attitude and a favorable effect on the job. Not until recently has new research emerged and proven that a positive relationship exists between workplace fun and job satisfaction. Those researchers point out that when workplace fun exists in an organization, job satisfaction of the employee tends to increase (Karl & Harland, 2007). To measure job satisfaction, there have been few cases trying to use alternative ways to test job satisfaction. One of the methods would be to ask a supervisor to measure the job satisfaction of their reporting subordinates; it turns out to be only 0.54 in correlation between incumbents and direct supervisors (Spector et al, 1988). The authors suggested the easiest way to measure job satisfaction is by using the existing scale that has been carefully developed and has been tested in many studies. The Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire satisfaction subscale suits the requirement on the research (Cammann et al, 1979).

### **Task performance**

Motowidlo et al. (1997) defined task performance as a behavior that converts raw materials into goods or services or any supporting behavior that helps such transformation task to become more effective and efficient. Avolio et al. (2009) confirms that there is a positive relationship between humor and performance in both field and laboratory studies. The authors believe that if workplace fun functions or acts similarly to humor, then it can play a positive role towards task performance. Previous organizational behavior research used 4 items developed by William and Anderson (1991) to capture task performance of the subject by scoring from the

completeness of the assigned duties and fulfillment of the specified responsibility according to the job description. The results from previous research showed a positive link in the findings.

### Hypotheses development and research model

With an attempt to consolidate all the findings of various variables from articles discussed in the literature review, the research model is now consistent to form solid reasons that offer the 4 hypotheses below:

Hypothesis 1: Attitude towards workplace fun is positively related to Experienced Workplace Fun

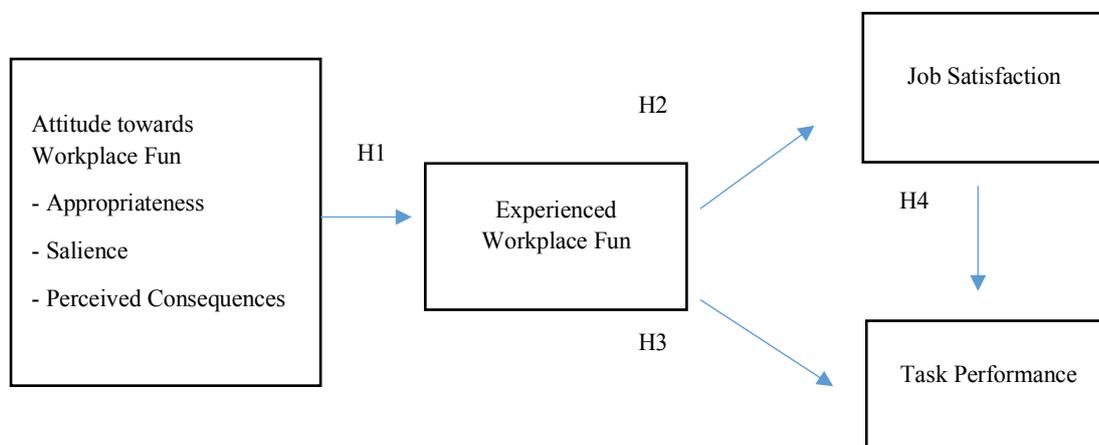
Hypothesis 2: Experienced workplace fun has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction

Hypothesis 3: Experienced workplace fun has a positive effect on Task Performance

Hypothesis 4: Job satisfaction has a positive effect on Task Performance

The conceptual model of this research is shown in Fig 1.

With the constructed hypotheses, the conceptual model of this research is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Model

## Research Methodology

### Samples and data collection

The target population being sampled for this study is employees who were born between 1980 and 2000 in Thailand. Based on the National Statistical Office of Thailand (2015), there are approximately 19.26 Million people who are classified as millennials. By using a 95 percent confidence level with a sampling error of 5 percent according to Yamane (1967), an appropriate sample size of respondents calculated was 400. Questionnaires were distributed online from October 2017 to March 2018. A total of 519 completed questionnaires were returned.

### Research instrument and variable measurement

The questionnaire was developed through adopting items from available literature. The questionnaire started with a personal information section, followed by four analytical sections. One screening question was included in the personal information section, which mirrored the sampling criteria by asking for the respondent's year of birth. The remaining sections have altogether 22 questions in the form of 5-point Likert scales. For all the scales, participants were asked to rate their perception towards each statement based on their perception (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Attitude towards workplace fun was measured using 3 sub-items of Aldag and Sherony (2001) including appropriateness, salience, and perceived consequences—altogether 13 items. Experiencing workplace fun scale from Karl et al (2007) is borrowed and used to test and confirm a positive relationship between attitude towards workplace fun and another 2 variables, which are job satisfaction and task performance. His scale has 3 items, which was used to measure the level of fun in the office. Job satisfaction has 2 items and was taken from Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ) (Cammann et al, 1983). To measure it, respondents were asked whether they were satisfied with their job and liked working there. Task Performance is included with 4 items based on William and Anderson's scale (1991).

## Reliability

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach’s alpha. The reliability coefficients are shown in Table 1. All four variables in this research were broken down into 6 sub-variables for accuracy of the analysis. All six variables are considered to have a high level of internal consistency with Cronbach’s alpha values above 0.7.

**Table 1:** Reliability analysis

Variables	Cronbach’s Alpha
Attitude Towards Workplace Fun:	
-Appropriateness	0.870
-Salience	0.864
-Perceived Consequences	0.878
Experienced Workplace Fun	0.800
Job Satisfaction	0.780
Task Performance	0.840

**Source:** Authors

## Results and Discussion

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) is used to analyze primary data from questionnaires.

### Descriptive Statistics

According to Table 2, males contributed to 46% of the sample size followed by 54% of females. The majority of the collected respondents completed only a bachelor’s degree (73.8%) and 26.2% earned at least a Master’s degree or higher.

Among the 519 respondents, non-management level employees form the majority position that made up approximately 80% of the sample size, and the rest (20%) represent participants with management level positions. It may indicate that millennials are too young to be assigned to management positions in a company.

**Table 2:** Demographic profile

Demographic Profile	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	280	54.0
Male	239	46.0
<b>Education</b>		
Bachelor’s Degree	383	73.8
Master’s Degree	133	25.7
Doctorate Degree	3	0.5
<b>Level of Employment</b>		
Non-Management Employee	411	79.2
Junior Management/ TeamLead	70	13.5
Middle Management/ Supervisor	33	6.3
<b>Senior Management</b>	5	0.9

**Source:** Authors

Table 3 shows the mean score of statements on attitude towards workplace fun. The highest mean score is 4.76, which represents the statement that fun at work can help reduce stress and tension. Most of the respondents also strongly agree that having fun at work can enhance interpersonal relations and teamwork. In general, a mean score of 4.26 on attitudes towards workplace fun leads to an observation that the majority of millennials who are currently working in Thailand normally have a strong positive attitude towards the workplace fun concept— in other words, they respond positively to workplace fun. Attitude towards workplace fun is one of the core elements in their working environment.

**Table 3:** Mean of statement on attitude towards workplace fun

<i>Statement on Attitude Towards Workplace Fun</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<b>Appropriateness:</b>			
Joking, laughing, or having a “playful attitude” while on the job is immature and unprofessional (Reversed).	4.26	0.835	Agree
Having a good time and doing a good job is an incompatible achievement (Reversed).	4.40	0.712	Agree
If you are playing, you cannot be possibly working.	4.00	0.857	Agree
<b>Salience:</b>			
Having fun at work is very important to me.	4.35	0.684	Agree
If my job stopped being fun, I would look for another job.	3.82	0.799	Agree
I prefer to work with people who like to have fun.	4.34	0.750	Agree
I don’t expect work to be fun-that’s why they call it work. (Reversed)	4.12	0.888	Agree
Experienced joy or amusement while at work is not important to me. (Reversed)	4.41	0.675	Agree
<b>Perceived Consequences:</b>			
Having fun at work can enhance interpersonal relations and teamwork.	4.62	0.598	Strongly Agree
Fun at work can help reduce stress and tension.	4.67	0.555	Strongly Agree
When work is fun, employees work harder and longer.	4.15	0.806	Agree
When employees are having fun, they are typically goofing off and avoiding their work. (Reversed)	4.00	0.876	Agree
Employees with a healthy sense of humor tend to work well with others.	4.31	0.782	Agree
<i>Attitude Towards Workplace Fun</i>	4.26	0.457	Agree

**Source:** Authors

Table 4 shows statements and mean scores regarding Experienced Workplace Fun. Table 5 displays statements and mean scores on Job Satisfaction and Table 6 shows statements and mean scores on Task Performance.

**Table 4:** Mean of statement on experiencing workplace fun

<i>Statement on Experiencing Workplace Fun</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
At my workplace, we try to have fun whenever we can.	4.05	0.846	Agree
Managers encourage employees to have fun at work.	4.01	0.986	Agree
We laugh a lot at my workplace.	4.18	0.728	Agree
Experiencing Workplace Fun	4.08	0.727	Agree

**Source:** Authors

**Table 5:** Mean of statement on job satisfaction

<i>Statement on Job Satisfaction</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
All in all, I am satisfied with my job.	4.14	0.864	Agree
In general, I like working here.	4.07	0.747	Agree
Job Satisfaction	4.11	0.731	Agree

**Source:** Authors

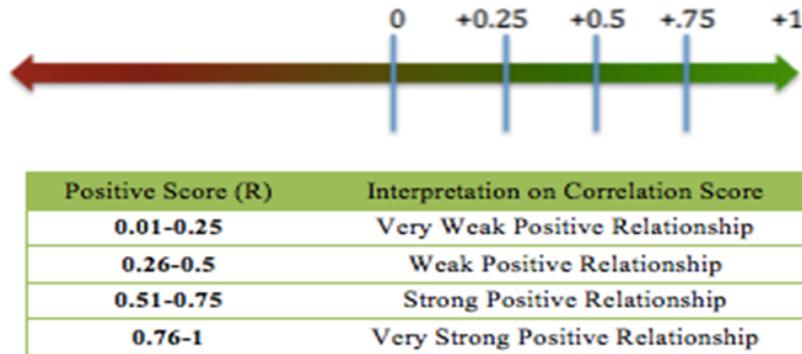
**Table 6:** Mean of statement on task performance

<i>Statement on Task Performance</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
I adequately complete assigned duties.	4.22	0.687	Agree
I fulfill responsibilities specified in job description.	4.23	0.628	Agree
I perform tasks that are expected of me.	4.34	0.672	Agree
I meet formal performance requirements of the job.	4.32	0.724	Agree
Task Performance	4.28	0.556	Agree

**Source:** Authors

**Hypotheses test results**

From the descriptive statistics above, the results show a high score of at least 4.00 on four main variables. However, they did not confirm any linear relationship or association among variables. Pearson’s correlation was conducted to test four hypotheses to confirm whether there is a relationship (either positive or negative) between “attitudes toward workplace fun and experienced workplace fun”, “experienced workplace fun and job satisfaction”, “experienced workplace fun and task performance”, and lastly “job satisfaction and task performance”. In Pearson’s correlation test, there are 2 opposite spectrum (-1 to +1). To test the positive relationship of stated four variables, any score with a positive result and p-value lower than .001 will be treated as a presence in relationship. The authors divided the positive relationship into four levels as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Interpretation on correlation scores

H1 proposed that attitude workplace fun in a millennial who is currently working in Thailand would show a positive association on experienced workplace fun. As shown is Table 7, three subscales that explained attitude towards workplace fun were tested separately one-by-one with experienced workplace fun to discover the strongest association among 3 variables. All sub scale variables were statistically significantly confirmed to be related with experienced workplace fun (p = .000). Appropriateness of Workplace Fun has a weak positive relationship towards experienced workplace fun (r = 0.44). Perceived consequences proved to have a weak positive relationship towards experienced workplace fun (r= 0.45). Salience was found to have a strongest positive relationship towards experienced workplace fun (r=0.52). When combining all three variables into a mean of attitude towards workplace fun, a correlation level of 0.55 indicates a strong positive linear relationship towards experienced workplace fun. In general, when employees have a positive attitude towards workplace fun, they tend to have better experienced workplace fun inside their workplace while employees who believe that fun is important and noticeable (salience) will usually experience more fun in their workplace than the other two sub scales.

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between attitude towards workplace fun and experienced workplace fun. (Accepted).

**Table 7:** Pearson’s correlation conducted to test the relationship between attitude towards workplace fun and experienced workplace fun

Pearson's Correlation	Experienced Workplace Fun	
<b>Attitude towards Workplace Fun</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.55**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	519
<b>Appropriateness</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.44**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	519
<b>Salience</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.52**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	519
<b>Perceived Consequences</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.45**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	519

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors

The second hypothesis proposed that a positive relationship exists between experienced workplace fun and job satisfaction. A Pearson's correlation was run to determine the relationship between 519 employees' experienced workplace fun and their job satisfaction values. Table 8 shows that there was a strong, positive correlation between experienced workplace fun and job satisfaction ( $r=0.70$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between experienced workplace fun and job satisfaction. (Accepted).

**Table 8:** Pearson's Correlation conducted to test relationship between experienced workplace fun and job satisfaction

Pearson's Correlation		Job Satisfaction
Experienced Workplace Fun	Pearson Correlation	0.70**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	519

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors

The third hypothesis suggested that employees exposed to excessive amounts of fun in the workplace should have better task performance than those who experienced lower levels of fun in the workplace. A Pearson's correlation test was conducted to confirm the association between experienced workplace fun and task performance value. According to Table 9, the result was indicated ( $p = 0.43$ ,  $p <.001$ ) that two variables had a statistically significant association. However, " $r=0.43$ " only provided solid reasoning to indicate a weak positive relationship between experienced workplace fun and task performance.

H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between experienced workplace fun and task performance. (Accepted).

**Table 9:** Pearson's Correlation conducted to test the relationship between experienced workplace fun and task performance

Pearson's Correlation		Task Performance
Experienced Workplace Fun	Pearson Correlation	0.43**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	519

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors

The fourth hypothesis, which specified a relationship between job satisfaction and task performance, was also confirmed ( $p = .000$ ). Job satisfaction and task performance's relationship were assessed by Pearson's correlation test, as shown in Table 10. Results indicated a strong positive relationship between two variables ( $r = 0.55$ ). When employee's job satisfaction increased, task performance for each particular employee improved in the same direction.

H4: There is a statistically significant relationship between job satisfaction and task performance. (Accepted).

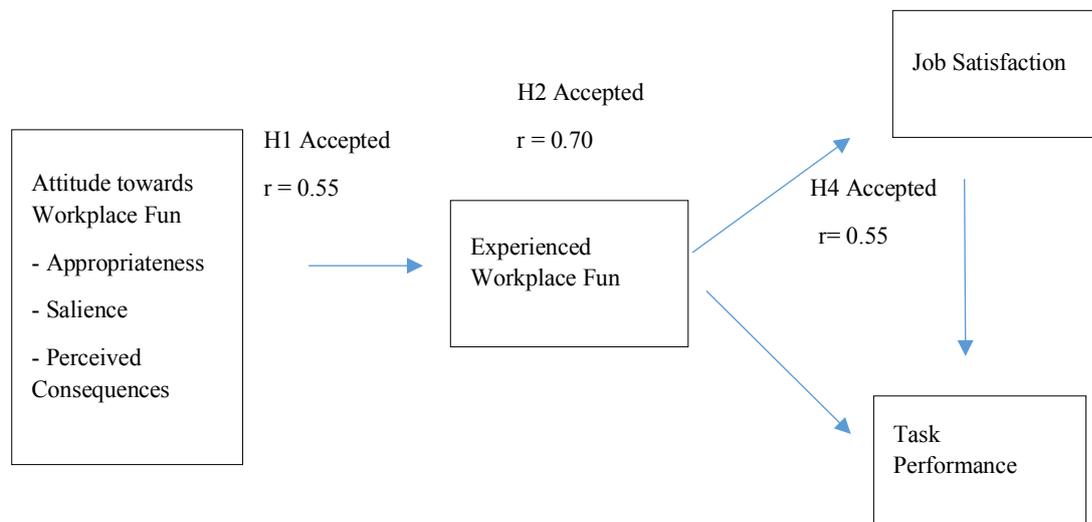
**Table 10:** Pearson's Correlation conducted to test the relationship between job satisfaction and task performance

Pearson's Correlation		Task Performance
Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	0.55**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	519

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors

In summary, the results of the hypotheses testing are shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Summary of Hypotheses Testing

## Discussion

The purpose of this research is to explain the attitude and behavior of work place fun captured in a company in Thailand where the researcher believes there are plenty of fun activities that exist and enough to conduct a test. Workplace Fun in U.S. was proved to yield positive results about employee's behavior. Workplace fun environment was widely accepted and used as a tool by U.S. managers and various global companies to help create positive behavior in employees. However, as a developing country, Thailand might not believe in this new vocabulary yet. To raise the confidence level for companies located in Thailand to be more familiar with workplace fun, the researcher collected samples in Thailand.

As a result, millennials who are working in Thailand on a gross average respond positively to the concept of workplace fun. They generally do have positive mindset towards work place fun and are exposed to a lot of workplace fun experiences. Millennials believe that fun is an essential concept and important in the workplace. They agreed that having fun in the workplace and doing a good job could be both achievable at the same time. The majority of millennial employees truly believe that workplace fun can really reduce their stress, tension, and improve interpersonal relationship among peers.

This research pointed out that employees believe that having fun in the office is appropriate, salient, and brings positive experience outcomes that result in more fun in the workplace. In other words, employee's positive attitude towards workplace fun leads them to experience more fun in the workplace. Based on collected data, there is solid evidence to conclude that an employee who experiences more fun in the office often has a higher job satisfaction level. On the other hand, employees with little exposure to work place fun were found to have a lower level of job satisfaction. However, only small positive correlations ( $r=0.43$ ) were found on experienced workplace fun and task performance. To illustrate, when millennials experience more fun in the work place, there are some chances that they can perform assigned tasks better than those who experience less fun activities in the work place. Even little implication can be done to improve the task performance by using fun activities in the office as a mean; the good news is that job satisfaction was found to have a strong positive correlation with task performance. Hence, job satisfaction can be used as a mediation factor for enhancing task performance by utilizing workplace fun activities. Workplace fun activities may be planned ahead with the hope that they will motivate employees to have more satisfaction at an organization level.

## Conclusions

This study provided some insights on millennials employees who are currently working in Thailand. First, millennial employees have a positive attitude towards workplace fun. Therefore, they tend to view a fun work environment as a good thing rather than a traditional serious work environment. Second, across 3 dimensions, they truly agree that workplace fun is important and serves as a critical element of job (saliency). The findings could relieve management from such fear to have fun in the workplace at certain points.

The relationship between the 3 main variables, namely workplace fun, job satisfaction, and task performance, was explored. The term workplace fun was then conceptualized into attitude (independent factor) and experience (dependent factor). As expected in

literature review, employees with a positive attitude towards workplace fun were found to have higher exposure to workplace fun activities than those who did not value workplace fun. Intuitively, the experienced workplace fun level for each employee was found to influence the satisfaction level of his or her job. In another words, humor or a fun mood occurring in an employee can stimulate an affectionate feeling towards an employee's job. It appears that higher job satisfaction for employees positively improve their task performance. However, an employee who experiences a lot of workplace fun activities does not play a huge impact on his or her task performance due to weak positive correlations found between experienced workplace fun and task performance variables. By linking all variables together, this research collected evidence to say that employees who experience more fun were found to have a good state of affection towards their job, which leads to favorable task results.

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