

The Stress Effect of Covid-19 Pandemic on Changing Gen Z Behavior in Thailand

[¹] Yuraporn Sudharatna, [²] Sirayapha Sudharatna

[¹][²] Kasetsart Business School, Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand
Email: fbusyps@ku.ac.th

Abstract— This paper aimed to understand the effect of stress level while covid-19 pandemic on changing behavior of Gen Z in Thailand. Since this group of people were adolescent who faced with physical modification and psychological adaptation. Quantitative research was conducted. The questionnaire survey designed by researchers was distributed via paper and google form. Descriptive analysis was used for data analysis. The research study found that the level of total stress was at 'moderate' and of behavior change was at 'high'. Additionally, the total stress factors could predict behavior change at 20.3%. Although the caused of stress – learning factor showed at high level, this sample group could be able to adjust themselves with online learning and social network platform. Additionally, another implication of recommendation of this research might be a future financial planning for this group of people could be easily promoted since they face direct experience during the crisis.

Index Terms— Stress, Changing Behavior, Generation Z, Covid-19 Pandemic

I. INTRODUCTION

The widespread of Coronavirus for the last few years has long been affected the human population in many aspects. Every human being receives various impacts such as some were unemployed, some had a decreased salary, some had to shut the business down or eventually terminated. Moreover, their lifestyle has been rapidly changing, for example online shopping, e-Money or e-Payment etc. Furthermore, the spread of the disease has driven numerous technologies. These caused people to start adapting themselves to survive and received the least negative effect as little as possible. Nevertheless, because of the immediate adaptation, the people in some groups were probably had stress problems.

This research study focused on stress problems that were caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that happened in Generation Z, whose ages were 15 to 20. People who belong to this age group were mostly learners. Most of them were not employed yet and still in need of parents to take care of them. Moreover, they were a group of technological generations. Nevertheless, a little doubt occurred on what anxieties were that these young people did concern. This research paper, therefore; interested in what extent that the 'stress' occurring from COVID-19 pandemic influenced behavioral change of this age group.

II. LITERATURE REVIEWED

Stress was a state in which a person faces various problems and causes a feeling of being pressured. The cause of stress comes from both external and internal factors: the external factors included conflicts in various relationships, while; internal factors included overthinking, anxiety, or chemical imbalances in the brain [9]. Gligorovski, V. and Odzaklieska, D. (2021) claimed that stress was not a disease. It was an uncomfortable feeling, discomfort arising from work anxiety

or lack of motivation and further suggested that there were good stress or desired stress (Eustress) and bad stress (Distress). The good or desired stress was such as maximizing output or enabling employees to be creative while the bad stress was inability to control the situations, declining in productivity, no new ideas or creative ideas for work.

Factors affecting stress suggested by Brown and Moberg (1980) cited in [11] that work stress was caused by the following factors.

- 1) Job characteristics: stress causing by the job itself, such as ambiguity, urgent, take a lot of effort, difficult with high volume, required high concentration of work, used specific knowledge and skill in decision making.
- 2) Role in the organization: stress caused by the role in an organization, such as receiving unclear information, ambiguous scope of responsibility, unclear role assignment. These could have results in dissatisfaction at work, depression, and inability to perform.
- 3) Relationship in the organization: stress from relationship factors could be from relationship with supervisors and colleagues. Negative relationships could lead to low trust and less support, friendship insincerity, and low mutual acceptance.
- 4) Operation environment of the organization: stress caused by this factor was such as supervisors' consultation, communication, and expression as well as physical atmosphere.

This research paper concluded that the causes of stress of Gen Z were:

- 1) Learning factors: such as work/homework assignments are not clear, have a wide scope. There was a lot of volume and time limitation to finish the work, required great effort; moreover, good relationships with work group mates, receiving support help form teacher regulations- these factors were claimed as learning

factors that cause stress for Gen Z.

- 2) Environmental factors: such as online classes were noisy, improper temperature, light, noise, smell, pollution, and lack of privacy. More than that, some students are affected by the economy (financial), the development of using various technologies, etc.
- 3) Relationship with other factors: such as teachers/instructors and peers. This factor included acceptance and sincerity with others, quarrels with others, and relationships with family members.
- 4) Personal factors: such as individuality, aggressiveness, impatience/rushed, competitiveness, lack of patience, doing more than one thing at the same time. Moreover, negative experience and perception of the individual was included in this factor, e.g., illness, rapid growth among adolescents, nutritional status, exercise, sleep, family economic conditions etc.

Behavioral Modification

Human behavior was different and was constantly changing. Additionally, every behavior must have a cause that was a stimulus which affected the behavior responded. However, this behavior can be modified. Prochaska, James O. (1997) applied psychological theories in conjunction with behavioral change theories including behaviors related to stress management. From the review of literature, this research study considered behavioral change in three aspects which were health change, learning change, and economic change.

Generation Z or Gen Z is the people born between 1997 – 2012. This group of people will become a relatively large population in the ASEAN region. Currently, this population accounts roughly for 24% of the population, which will continue to become the main consumers. Therefore, people in the Gen Z group were an important generation and had a great influence on the country’s society and economy.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was basic research aimed to study the effect of stress on behavior modification of Gen Z during the Covid-19 outbreak. The quantitative research was conducted during August 2021- September2022. Data was collected from both primary and secondary data. The secondary data collected from academic articles from E-Journal, thesis, related research, etc., while the primary data was gathered from questionnaire survey.

The questionnaire designed by researchers was a tool applied to this research. The independent variable was ‘stress’ which composed of 1) learning factor, 2) environmental factor, 3) relationship with other people factor, and 4) personal factor; while dependent variable was ‘behavior modification’ consisting of 1) health change, 2) learning change, and 3) economic change. The population used in this study was a sample group in Gen Z by setting the boundary between 15-20 years of age, the calculation was 385 sample

collected from both paper and google form. The return rate was 40.3%. The data were analyzed by descriptive statistic such as mean, standard deviation, percentage, and simple regression.

IV. RESEARCH REULTS

Most of the respondents were female, 83.4%, aged 15-16 years, 19.2%, study in grade year 11 at 32.0%, study at government schools 83.4%, having family members of 3-4 people,59.2%, and living in Bangkok and its vicinity, 52.2%. Figure 1 showed personal information of the sample.

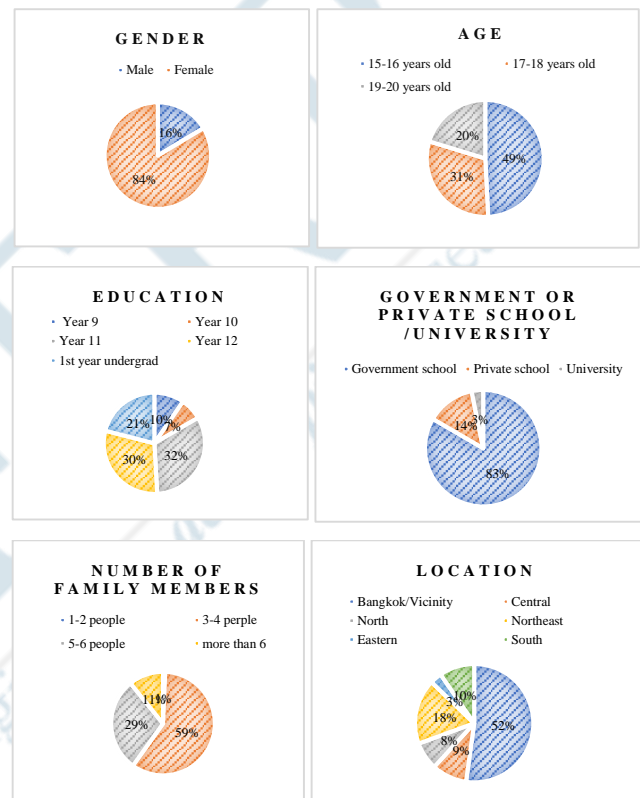


Figure 1 Personal information of the sample

This study found that the overall stress of the sample group was at a moderate level, that is, the total mean was 3.24. The greatest cause of stress comes from the high level of learning factor, with an average of 3.64. The second cause was at a medium level, namely the relationship with other people factor, with an average of 3.41. Additionally, the mean of environmental factors and personal factors showed an average of 3.10 and 2.80 respectively. (Table 1)

Table 1 Mean, Standard Deviation, and the Opinion level of Generation Z about the source of stress resulting from Covid-19

Cause of stress	Mean (\bar{x})	S.D.	Opinion level
Learning factor	3.64	0.915	High
Environmental factor	3.10	1.196	Moderate
Relationship with other people factor	3.41	0.928	Moderate

Personal factor	2.80	1.129	Moderate
Total	3.24	1.042	Moderate

In each aspect of the cause of stress, it was found that:

Learning factor was ranking as a first caused of stress of the sample group by stating that having tons of homework together with doing this homework competed with time limitation, at the mean of 4.10. Moreover, this homework was difficult and required effort, skill, and concentration, at the mean of 3.88. Although the sample group had a high level of stress caused by studying during Covid-19, but it was also found that the sample group felt that they were supported by teachers at the high level with an average of 3.57. Additionally, they mentioned that they had a group of colleagues who have a good relationship with each other at an average of 3.99.

According to Relationship with other people factor the findings showed that the sample had a good relationship with family members, teachers, and high level of acceptance among peers with average of 4.08, 4.03 and 3.71 respectively. In addition, the controversy with others was low at an average of 1.77.

For the environmental factors, finding that the sample can always develop technology which was at a high level with an average of 3.70. The sample also commented that the place for their online study had inappropriate lighting at high level with an average of 3.57. While other environmental factors such as noise, privacy, and temperature are at the moderate level with the average of 3.05, 3.00 and 2.99 respectively. In addition, this study found that the sample group said that their family was affected by the economy from the outbreak of covid at a high level with the average of 3.53.

For personal factor, the study showed that the sample group received a high level of nutrition during the covid-19 outbreak at the average level of 3.71, Low level of morbidity at an average of 1.62. Additionally, they evaluated themselves at the medium level of being hasty and impatient, doing more than one thing at the same time, competitive, and no patience at an average of 3.41, 3.36, 2.73, and 2.63 respectively.

In each aspect of behavior modification, this research found that: the sample group had a high overall change at a mean of 3.56. It was found that the learning change was at a high level with the mean average of 3.88. The next factor is health change, also shown at the high level with the mean average of 3.70. The economic change was shown at moderate level with the mean average of 3.11. (Table 2)

Table 2 Mean, Standard Deviation, and the Opinion level of Generation Z about change in health, learning, and economics resulting from Covid-19

Level of change	Mean (\bar{x})	S.D.	Opinion level
Health change	3.70	1.01	high
Learning change	3.88	0.99	high
Economic change	3.11	1.16	Moderate
Total	3.56	1.05	high

This research found that changes in health factors compared to pre-pandemic periods showed at a high level. It was found that the sample group washed their hands more often, wearing a hygienic mask when they were in public to prevent infection at the mean average of 4.49. Additionally, the sample group also pay more attention to eating matter such as choosing healthy food, self-catering, eating hot food, and using a serving spoon when eating with others at the mean average of 3.69.

For learning factors, compared to the time before the pandemic were at a high level. The sample group spent more time on social network platforms; online classes were less effective (compared to going to school before the outbreak); getting more workload or homework assignments at the mean average of 4.26, 4.02 and 3.95 respectively.

For economic factors, compared to the time before the pandemic were at a moderate level. The sample group can access the internet system and learning utensils that facilitate online learning at the mean average of 4.09. While the sample group though that they had more thinking and planning about spending money such as cutting unnecessary expenses, cancel travel plan, saving more money at the mean average of 3.71.

The analysis of stress effect of Covid-19 Pandemic on Changing Gen Z Behavior by simple regression analysis by analyzing total stress on total behavior change. The analysis results were shown in Table 3

Table 3 Results of regression analysis on the effects of total stress on total behavior change in Gen Z

Total Stress factors	b	SE	t	Sig.	VIF
constant	47.748	4.991	9.567	.000	
Total Change factors	.464	.072	6.418	.000*	1.000

$R = .462$ $R^2 = .213$ $Adjusted R^2 = .203$ $F = 41.195$ $sig = .000*$

The relationship between total stress factors and total behavior change factors were at moderate level ($r = .464$). While the results of regression analysis of total stress factors had a significant effect on behavior change of Gen Z at the 0.05 level. Total stress factors can predict the dependent variable of total change factors at 20.3%

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The research results showed that the sample group of this study were 155 people of Generation Z whose age was 15–20-year-old – over 80%. This group of people, more than 49.2% were female; about 32.5% studying in year 11; approximately 83.4% studied at government school; nearly 59.2% having 3-4 family members; and living in Bangkok and its vicinity 52.2%

Additionally, the sample of Gen Z got stress from the outbreak of Covid-19 at moderate level. It was found that the sample group had the highest stress caused by ‘learning’ factors, followed by ‘relationship with other people factors,

‘environmental’ factors, and ‘personal’ factors, respectively.

This study also found that the pandemic of Covid-19 caused the sample group of gen Z in terms of behavior modification at a high level. The ‘learning change’ and ‘health change’ factor were mentioned at a high level, while the ‘economic change’ factor was declared at moderate level.

Therefore, the stress of Gen Z from covid-19 pandemic influenced on changing Gen Z behavior. In term of ‘health change’, the positive opinion group declared that they were more concerned in health consciousness as well as paying more attention to exercise. Though, the negative opinion group said that they lacked exercise resulted in weight gain as well as sitting in front of a screen all day long for studying or spending time on smart phone for study. Moreover, they complained that their both physical and mental health are not as good as the period before pandemic.

For ‘learning change’, the positive opinion group said that they learned new technology on distance learning as well as doing a lot of work on social network platforms. However, some of them had limitations on access to the internet and technology. The sample group also commented that the outbreak of covid-19 had affected their timetable changing, living differently for example they didn’t feel like going out and meeting with others, more individualism, getting difficulty in socialization, as well as familiar with the online world.

For ‘economic change’, the sample group felt that they have reduced or lack of income, thus, they are mindful of spending money and spending less on non-essentials. Furthermore, they also paid more attention on cleanliness and life in public.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

This research study suggested that Gen Z is a group of teenagers who faced with a lot of adaptation either physical change or unsafe environment due to the pandemic crisis. They were at their last year of high school – tons of homework. According to an American Parent Association of teen provide information that they do at least three hours of homework per night some of them do their homework up to seven hours a day. (<http://happinet.club/2020/11/01-12-cause-of-stress-in-Thai>) Moreover, other problems which were sources of stress for e.g. illness of family’s members, death of loved one or pet, house move or school move, family financial problems, etc. this study supported the fact that Gen Z sample group who were teenager had high level of stress caused by learning as a resulted changing in learning behavior impacted by covid-19 pandemic. Although this sample group said that they were able to be adjusted themselves with online learning and social network platform, those involved – instructor, should pay more attention on reviewing a large amount of homework that made them feel racing against time and should considered more on the difficulty of work in appropriate with students’ grade. Some of the sample group said that it required a lot of effort, and this was one of the

reasons why they sample gave a high score as a source of stress.

Others implication recommendation were such as future financial planning for this group of people such as saving and spending plan could be easily promoted because of direct experience in facing the crises, focusing on relationships with different groups of people both family members and others.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research study was well collaborated by all respondents. Researchers would deeply thank you very much for your support. The highly thanks also give to Kasetsart Business School, Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand for supporting this research funding.

REFERENCES

- [1] Angkana Poolthong and Daungjai Duangrithi, “Predictors of Stress from Online Learning among Pharmacy Students”. *Srinagarind Medical Journal*. 37(1). 2022.
- [2] Demartini, John. “Dealing With Stress During Covid-19 and Prioritizing Your Highest Values”. *Personal Excellence*. January 2021 pp11-12. 2021
- [3] Happiness Club. (2020). “12 factors caused chronic stress in childhood and adolescent”. <https://happinet.club/2020/11/03/12-%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B2%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%AB%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%B8%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%B5%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%81%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A1%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B5%E0%B8%A2/> Access on May 28, 2022.
- [4] Hussain W. Mirza, Mirza, Tabasum and Hussain M. Malik. “Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Human Behavior”. *IJ. Education and Management Engineering*. 5.(35-61). 2020.
- [5] Jadsaka Kukhammak and Phachitchanut Siripanit. “Work Stress of Instructor in State Universities”. *NIDA Development Journal*, Vol.54 No.1 (2014) (in Thai)
- [6] Klinik Community Health Centre. (2010). “Stress and Stress Management”. Canada: Winnipeg MB.
- [7] NGOC Cindy Pham and Juehui Richard Shi. “A Qualitative Study on Mental Distress of Vietnamese Students in the U.S.A. in the COVID-19 Era”. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health Management*. Pp. 45-57. 2021.
- [8] Prochaska, J.O.; Redding, C.A.; Evers, K.E. “The Transtheoretical Model and Stage of Change”. *Health Behavior and Health Education*. Book Chapter. Pp.97-121. 1997.
- [9] Reshma R. and Sini V. Pillai (2021). Upshot of COVID-19 on Employee Work Stress. *Journal of Strategic Human Resource Management*. 10(2) 2021. Pp. 13-18.
- [10] Robbins, S.P., and Judge, T. 2013. “Organization Behavior”. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.
- [11] Ruknirun Songsang (2015), *The Employees’ Stress and Quality Life Model of ABC Bank*. Kasetsart University. Bangkok. (in Thai)
- [12] Siliruk Lodton, (2022). *Stress*. <https://www.doctorraksa.com/th-TH/blog/stress.html> Access on May 20, 2022.
- [13] Wantana Nuowan and R-rom Auimprasert. “Stress Management and Related Factors of Work Life Quality Management”. *Management Science Review* Vol. 22 No. 1 (January – June 2563). 2020. (in Thai)
- [14] Wichient Katsing. “Mean and Interpretation: Simple Things can Sometimes be Missed”. *Journal of Educational Research*. 1(4):13. 1995. (in Thai)
- [15] Yurawadee Nungnoraj. 2015. “Fundamental of Psychology” Bangkok, Odeon Publisher. (in Thai)