

Original Article

Burnout among Generation Z Employees: A Literature Review

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Abstract: *The productive age of Generation Z has begun to enter the workforce and is expected to dominate the entire workforce in the next few years. The phenomenon that often occurs in employees, especially Generation Z, due to prolonged stress caused by work is burnout. Burnout is one of the crucial issues and has been recognized as a significant problem in the world of work, which continues to experience a high increase and growth every year. Burnout is a condition of fatigue due to work characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment. This article reviews the literature on burnout among Generation Z employees to help readers better understand the condition. It aims to clarify the dynamics of burnout, including its causes, consequences, and prevention solutions.*

Keywords: Burnout, Generation Z Employees.

I. INTRODUCTION

Employees are valuable human resources because they are the ones who work to keep the company running. The phenomenon that often occurs in employees due to prolonged stress caused by work is work fatigue, often called burnout. Burnout has long been acknowledged as a job-related risk in professions focused on people, such as human services (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Psychiatrist Herbert Freudenberger and social psychologist Christina Maslach were the first to study burnout (Wulandari et al., 2023). Herbert Freudenberger first introduced the term burnout in the 1970s, which refers to the fatigue and gradual loss of motivation experienced by volunteers at aid organizations; his research outlined the connection between burnout symptoms and consequences, a study that Christina Maslach and her colleagues expanded upon to explore this phenomenon further (Demerouti et al., 2021; Gaur & Jindal, 2023). Burnout is a condition of fatigue that causes a person to have a cynical attitude towards the value of their work and doubt their capacity to work (Maslach et al., 1996). Burnout is caused by prolonged workplace stress that cannot be appropriately managed, causing symptoms of loss of energy or fatigue, cynical or pessimistic feelings toward work, and decreased professional effectiveness (World Health Organization, 2019). Burnout has gained media attention worldwide as public awareness of the phenomenon increases as a significant social issue that can potentially affect employees in various fields (Bocorean et al., 2019). A survey shows that employee burnout rates globally have increased significantly in 2020-2022 (Infinite Potential, 2023). Burnout has become a vital issue recognized as a significant problem in the world of work, which continues to increase significantly every year, so the World Health Organization officially states that burnout is included as an occupational phenomenon.

One of the generations considered the most vulnerable to burnout is Generation Z. Generation Z comprises about 30% of the world's population and is expected to dominate the workforce by 27% by 2025 (Sali, 2023). Generation Z is a valuable human resource because they can quickly adopt technological innovations in increasingly advanced digital developments. Generation Z is a generation of ambitious, career-oriented professionals with different expectations in the workplace, so they are considered individuals who deserve to be taken into account because they have high technical and language skills (Wijoyo et al., 2020). Although Generation Z can drive change, they are considered more vulnerable to burnout than previous generations. Generation Z employees may be more susceptible to psychological issues than those from other age groups (Chen et al., 2023). Burnout has long been a significant issue in the working world, and it is concerning that so many young people are already experiencing it early in their careers (BBC, 2022). Based on a survey conducted by Future Forum (2022), young employees with a percentage of 49% of 18-29 year olds experience burnout more often than 30 years and over, which is 30%. A survey conducted by Deloitte (2023) also shows that Generation Z experienced a burnout rate of 52% in 2023 and 46% in 2022, more significant than the millennial generation with percentages of 49% and 45%.

The burnout phenomenon must concern all companies worldwide so Generation Z employees can work physically and psychologically healthily. This can prevent a decline in employee performance and productivity that can later interfere with the company's sustainability. Furthermore, Generation Z, as the younger generation, must overcome and prevent the possibility of burnout so that it does not impact them and damage the company's future that will depend on them. Companies should implement effective strategies to support their well-being, such as promoting work-life balance, providing mental health resources, and creating a positive work environment. Companies can ensure their employee's and business operations' long-



term success and stability by taking proactive steps to address burnout.

II. DEFINING BURNOUT

Burnout is conceptualized as a syndrome stemming from unmanaged chronic workplace stress, which can adversely impact mental health and potentially lead to depression if professional assistance is not sought (Ismail & Owaida, 2023). Burnout is a psychological syndrome resulting from prolonged job stress, characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and a sense of ineffectiveness, frequently affecting individuals in people-oriented jobs, with emotional exhaustion being a key aspect (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Fatigue and burnout are distinct; burnout manifests when there is a discrepancy in an individual's professional role, like in human services, where expressing emotions contradictory to one's feelings is required (Kumareswaran, 2023). Exhaustion is the most frequently reported among the three facets of burnout and is extensively scrutinized (Maslach et al., 2001). Exhaustion is the primary feature of burnout, commonly cited when individuals or others discuss experiencing the syndrome (Chowdhury, 2018). Feelings of stress are highly correlated with exhaustion or chronic fatigue resulting from high workload demands (Wulandari et al., 2023). Work performance was not only impacted by this self-perceived exhaustion but also negatively affected other areas of their lives (Bravo et al., 2021). The exhaustion dimension evaluates the depletion of emotional and physical resources caused by workplace stress without specifying if this exhaustion is mainly associated with interpersonal relationships and gauges the individual's sense of being overwhelmed and lacking in emotional and physical capacities to perform their job (Bocerean et al., 2019).

The second dimension is depersonalization, also known as cynicism, which occurs when employees detach themselves from their jobs and colleagues, treating people as objects and minimizing their efforts to conserve emotional and psychological resources (Gaur & Jindal, 2023). Depersonalization, or cynicism, is a lack of interest in or alienation from one's job and coworkers, characterized by a distanced attitude toward the job (Wulandari et al., 2023; Ismail & Owaida, 2023). The cynicism dimension measures a person's indifference, detachment, and ultimate disengagement from their work (Bocerean et al., 2019). Greater emotional exhaustion leads to higher cynicism, resulting in negative attitudes, reduced capacity to handle job demands, reluctance to assist without emotional ties, and increased distancing from colleagues (Kumareswaran, 2023). Emotional exhaustion results in different levels of cynicism in individuals; if fatigue continues, resources will be increasingly depleted, triggering feelings of frustration that reinforce cynicism (Mirza, 2022; Rambe & Pareke, 2024). Depersonalization, the act of distancing service recipients by ignoring their uniqueness, is a direct reaction to exhaustion and is consistently linked to cynicism in burnout research across various settings (Maslach et al., 2001; Chowdhury, 2018).

The last dimension is inefficacy or reduced personal accomplishment, which encompasses self-assessment of professional competence and gauges the extent to which an individual has lost confidence in their ability to contribute effectively to meaningful work (Bocerean et al., 2019). Reduced personal accomplishment is characterized by reduced productivity, withdrawal, capability, and an inability to cope (Maslach et al., 1996). This occurs when employees negatively evaluate their achievements, feeling incompetent and unproductive at work (Gaur & Jindal, 2023). A deficiency in professional effectiveness leads to reduced effectiveness, achievement, and fulfillment in the workplace and within organizations (Wulandari et al., 2023). A demanding work environment can lead to fatigue and self-doubt, causing inefficacy and reduced confidence (Kumareswaran, 2023). The sense of effectiveness is likely to be diminished by a chronic and overwhelming workload that results in exhaustion or cynicism, with efficacy issues primarily stemming from resource inadequacy, while cynicism and exhaustion arise from social conflict and work overload (Chowdhury, 2018). Inability and lack of competence in doing the job and achieving the desired results make employees apathetic, so they care less about the company and have low involvement in contributing to it (Rashad & Rosari, 2020).

III. CAUSES OF BURNOUT

Many factors can cause burnout in employees, especially Generation Z. Burnout is a complex psychological syndrome caused by various factors, including personality, organizational, and demographic factors (Gaur & Jindal, 2023).

A) Personality Factors

Individual strengths and weaknesses influence burnout, with research showing that few personality traits directly impact its development as protective or risk factors (Bocerean et al., 2019). Individuals with traits like perfectionism or a strong desire for control, as well as those with pre-existing mental health issues, are more susceptible to burnout (Channawar, 2023). Differences in individuals' internal structures result in varying levels of burnout despite similar external factors, with emotionally stable individuals embracing challenging tasks while those less so may prefer steadier work (Pick & Leiter, 1991; Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Alarcon et al., 2009). Personality type strongly influences burnout, particularly in social environments, with introverts more likely to experience burnout due to their negative response to prolonged stress and work pressure (Ismail & Owaida, 2023). Researchers observe that introverts, pessimists, and those with low self-esteem are more prone to emotional exhaustion and depression (Gudzinskiene et al., 2022). Individuals with low hardiness levels and an external locus of control, along with those identified as "feeling types" according to Jungian analysis, are more prone to

burnout, particularly in terms of exhaustion and cynicism (Maslach et al., 2001). Personal factors influence an individual's work environment and vulnerability to stress, impacting their coping ability (Kumareswaran, 2023).

B) Organizational Factors

More considerable societal, cultural, and economic influences impact organizational contexts, leading to changes like downsizing and mergers, affecting employees' lives, particularly evident in psychological contract breaches linked to burnout via the erosion of reciprocity crucial for well-being (Maslach et al., 2001). Two decades of burnout research have revealed numerous organizational risk factors across diverse occupations globally, encompassing six main areas: workload, reward, control, values, community, and fairness (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Burnout primarily stems from overwhelming workloads, where employees strive to meet tight deadlines while balancing work and personal life, affecting their sense of control and job satisfaction (Ismail & Owaida, 2023). A sense of limited control over tasks and responsibilities and a lack of recognition or appreciation for one's efforts can contribute to burnout, highlighting the importance of autonomy and acknowledgment in maintaining well-being (Channawar, 2023). Employees' perception of fairness and equity in the workplace significantly influences burnout, as feelings of inequality typically result in conflicts, emotional exhaustion, diminished self-efficacy, reduced effort, and decreased job satisfaction (Gaur & Jindal, 2023). Poor relationships marked by a lack of support, trust, and unresolved conflicts increase burnout risk within the workplace community, while conflicts in values between individual and organizational goals can also lead to more significant burnout as employees navigate conflicting job expectations (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Burnout also occurs due to a disparity between workplace demands and an individual's resources, with vital structural factors including role conflict, role ambiguity, stressful events, workload, and performance pressure (Bocerean et al., 2019; Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

C) Demographic Factors

Significant variations in burnout levels are associated with demographic factors such as age, gender, and marital status (Soomro et al., 2021). Among demographic variables examined, age consistently emerges as the most significant factor linked to burnout, with younger employees reporting higher levels than those over 30-40 (Maslach et al., 2001). The statement suggests that younger employees, particularly those of Generation Z, are more prone to experiencing burnout compared to older counterparts, highlighting the challenges faced by this demographic in the workplace. Gender is a significant predictor of burnout, with studies showing varying results, though men often score higher on depersonalization or cynicism and women slightly higher on exhaustion (Maslach et al., 2001; Haque & Aslam, 2011). Marital status affects burnout risk, with unmarried individuals, particularly men, being more susceptible than married or divorced employees (Gaur & Jindal, 2023; Maslach et al., 2001). Research also shows that burnout is inversely related to experience, with early-career employees having higher emotional exhaustion (Gaur & Jindal, 2023). Those who experience early-career burnout are likely to quit their jobs, mirroring Generation Z's tendency to resign when under significant pressure. Successful reconciliation of these contradictions would enable human resource professionals to more effectively target employees needing burnout prevention programs (Kumareswaran, 2023), particularly Generation Z employees who are highly susceptible to workplace stress and burnout.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF BURNOUT

The importance of burnout, for both individuals and organizations, resides in its connections to significant outcomes (Maslach et al., 2001). Burnout causes a range of negative consequences for both affected individuals and their organizations (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). To be more specific, regarding the three dimensions of burnout, the outcomes are as follows: exhaustion is identifiable as a disorder, cynicism is seen in disengagement and isolation, and perceptions of professional efficacy result in lower self-esteem, reduced productivity, job dissatisfaction, and increased desire to leave the job (Bocerean et al., 2019). If left unaddressed, burnout can negatively impact employees' physical and mental well-being, potentially harming both the individuals and the organization (Gaur & Jindal, 2023).

A) Individual Consequences

The associates of the burned-out individual are likely to face both personal and societal consequences (Kumareswaran, 2023). Individually, burnout results in physiological, psychological, behavioral, and social consequences, including headaches, gastrointestinal issues, anxiety, absenteeism, and strained relationships (Bocerean et al., 2019). The psychological changes resulting from workplace burnout affect cognitive and emotional aspects (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Burnout was a strong predictor of several physical and psychological health problems, such as high cholesterol levels, musculoskeletal pain, insomnia, depressive symptoms, and hospitalization due to mental health disorders (Salvagioni et al., 2017). Physiologists have identified a range of physical and mental effects associated with burnout, such as cardiovascular diseases, allergies, gastrointestinal disorders, and weakened immune function, along with symptoms like difficulty focusing, exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and insomnia (Kumareswaran et al., 2022). Burnout can cause physical health problems like fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances, and weakened immunity, as well as mental health issues such as depression, emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment (Channawar, 2023). The exhaustion aspect of burnout is a stronger predictor

of stress-related health issues compared to the other components, while its connection to mental health is perceived as causing harmful effects such as anxiety and reduced self-esteem (Maslach et al., 2001).

Therefore, burnout undermines employees' physical and mental well-being, resulting in poor performance, failure to meet professional standards, increased errors, reduced attentiveness, and decreased creativity in problem-solving (Wulandari et al., 2023).

B) Organizational Consequences

Burnout can harm an organization's success by negatively impacting individual performance and organizational outcomes (Kumareswaran, 2023). Burnout's effects on an organization include higher absenteeism, reduced work commitment, higher turnover rates, and a greater likelihood of unsafe working conditions and workplace accidents (Ridzuan et al., 2018). Burnout among employees can create a hostile work environment by causing conflicts, disrupting tasks, and reducing productivity, as suggested by the emotional contagion theory (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000). Burnout can result in adverse outcomes, including withdrawal behaviors like absenteeism and reduced productivity in employees who persist in working without long-term sick leave, leading to job dissatisfaction and decreased commitment (Bocerean et al., 2019). Burnout is linked to job withdrawal, decreased productivity, and job effectiveness, causing reduced satisfaction and commitment and negatively impacting colleagues through personal conflicts and disrupted tasks (Maslach et al., 2001). Burned-out employees can lead to organizational problems such as decreased motivation, high turnover, increased absenteeism, more workplace accidents, lowered productivity, and diminished work performance (Kumareswaran et al., 2022). Burnout limits positive experiences in the organization, leading to lower job satisfaction and diminished commitment to both the job and the organization (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Burnout can cause employees to disengage and lose commitment to their organizations, potentially leading to higher turnover rates and significant costs for organizations, such as reduced productivity, higher healthcare expenses, and the necessity of recruiting and training new employees (Channawar, 2023).

V. PREVENTION SOLUTIONS

Implementing burnout prevention strategies for employees, especially Generation Z, is crucial because it can protect them from negative impacts on their well-being and avoid adverse consequences for the organization. Proposals for intervention strategies prompted by burnout's personal and organizational costs vary from treating it post-occurrence to preventive measures targeting individuals, workgroups, or entire organizations (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Prioritizing the implementation of such strategies not only benefits employees by promoting their overall wellness but also contributes to the long-term success and stability of the organization.

A) Internal-Causes Solutions

Internal solutions refer to the steps or strategies taken by the individuals themselves to overcome the problem. Individual-focused prevention solutions, initiated and led by employees, aim to enhance their emotional and physical well-being outside the workplace through attitude adjustments and improved coping resources, including physical exercise, self-assessment, mindfulness training, and psychotherapy (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Research on reducing burnout focuses primarily on educational approaches to help individuals manage workplace stress, employing strategies such as stress inoculation, effective time management, relaxation techniques, assertiveness training, rational emotive therapy, interpersonal skills development, team building, and meditation (Maslach et al., 2001). Several of these individual strategies, derived from research on stress, coping, and health, often involve modifying work routines, enhancing coping abilities, seeking social support, and enhancing self-awareness through self-reflection, counseling, or therapy (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). Managing and preventing burnout requires self-care through proper sleep, nutrition, exercise, relaxation, and hobbies, while treatment for existing burnout may involve professional help, lifestyle changes, and adjustments to work or career (Channawar, 2023). Reducing work pressure by ensuring employees have adequate rest can alleviate burnout, as it helps them avoid the constant tension and fatigue caused by work (Ge et al., 2022).

B) External-Causes Solutions

External prevention solutions from an organization entail implementing strategies and programs to reduce burnout among employees. This solution primarily seeks to enhance employees' resources for handling work-related stressors, thereby lowering levels of burnout (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Effective organizational structuring of job descriptions, departments, and competencies is crucial for mitigating high burnout rates and preventing excessive workloads, thereby reducing work stress and burnout, emphasizing the importance of effective workload management by the company (Ismail & Owaida, 2023). Based on research literature, interventions to address burnout should prioritize creating a work environment conducive to fostering employees' energy, dedication, and effectiveness, as this is crucial for promoting their well-being and productivity (Maslach et al., 2001). Enhancing the workplace environment not only boosts psychological security and productivity but also reduces burnout risk by reshaping employee attitudes, while flexible working mechanisms alleviate negative emotions, providing more freedom and effectively tackling burnout (Ge et al., 2022). Organizations are vital in preventing burnout by promoting work-

life balance, offering assistance programs, providing stress management training, and fostering workplace positivity (Channawar, 2023). Strong interpersonal bonds and supportive colleague relationships are vital for a positive work environment; unresolved tensions can lead to a hostile atmosphere, impacting teamwork, thus emphasizing the importance of regular face-to-face communication (Kumareswaran, 2023; Chen et al., 2022).

VI. CONCLUSION

The discussion on burnout among employees, particularly Generation Z, highlights the critical importance of addressing this phenomenon to ensure individual well-being and organizational success. Burnout results from chronic workplace stress, manifesting through exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment. It has significant individual consequences, ranging from physiological issues like headaches and gastrointestinal problems to psychological impacts such as anxiety and depression. Burnout negatively affects organizations, leading to higher absenteeism, reduced productivity, increased turnover rates, and unsafe working practices.

The causes of burnout are multifaceted, encompassing personality, organizational, and demographic factors. Personality factors like perfectionism and a strong desire for control, coupled with organizational stressors such as overwhelming workloads and lack of recognition, contribute to burnout. Demographic factors like age and marital status also play a role, with younger employees, particularly Generation Z, being more susceptible to burnout.

To address burnout effectively, both internal and external prevention solutions are essential. Internal solutions focus on individual coping mechanisms and self-care practices, including stress management techniques, mindfulness training, and lifestyle adjustments. External solutions include organizational strategies such as managing workload, encouraging work-life balance, offering support programs, and cultivating a positive work environment with strong interpersonal relationships. When organizations implement these strategies, they create healthier work environments that support employee well-being and prevent burnout, ultimately leading to long-term success and sustainability.

VII. REFERENCES

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