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BURNOUT ACROSS GENERATIONS: EXAMINING ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS THROUGH THE LENS OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT. Employees of different generations have different perceptions of the ongoing changes in the labor market initiated by technological progress. This article attempts to combine organizational factors with the current phenomenon of burnout observed in the labor market. Mastering technological solutions would reduce the likelihood of burnout, while reducing generational differences. A quantitative survey was conducted in Lithuania with 454 employees representing Generations X, Y, and Z. The results suggest that burnout in contemporary workplaces may be influenced more strongly by individual values, personal resources, and life contexts than by structural conditions alone. Promoting individuality, it is important to develop employees' digital competencies, which will enable them to create higher added value. Organizational structure factors, although important in a large part of cases, do not play a significant role in the prevention of burnout.

Keywords: different generations, burnout, organizational factors, social sustainability.

Introduction

The phenomenon of employee burnout is becoming increasingly relevant in modern society. Although burnout is a complex phenomenon whose causes, manifestations, and consequences have been studied by researchers for a long time, this does not diminish its relevance. However, despite the extensive body of research on burnout, there is still limited understanding of how generational differences interact with organizational factors in shaping burnout dynamics. Moreover, little is known about how these relationships are embedded within the broader framework of social sustainability, especially in post-transition economies such as Lithuania. To the best of our knowledge, this is among the first studies to empirically examine generational burnout through the perspective of social sustainability in a post-transition economy. A fast-paced lifestyle, increasing workload, the dynamics of technological progress, and changing employee expectations create complex situations that directly affect

people's psychical well-being (Murthy, 2022), while also creating dilemmas of organizational responsibility that fall within the discourse of social sustainability.

Although generational differences in relation to burnout have been examined in prior research, existing findings remain inconsistent across contexts. Studies indicate that younger generations, particularly Y and Z, report higher levels of burnout than their older counterparts. For instance, large-scale surveys show that 59 % of Generation Y and 47 % of Generation Z employees report experiencing burnout, compared to 34 % among Generation X and 21 % among Baby Boomers (Human Leaders, 2023). Similarly, American Psychological Association (2021) revealed that more than 70% of employees across all age groups are at risk of burnout, with younger employees demonstrating greater vulnerability due to heavy workloads, high expectations, and less experience in coping with stress. Generational perspectives on work also differ, as previous research highlights that Generation X values stability and autonomy, Generation Y prioritizes flexibility and meaningful work, while Generation Z, born into a digital environment, seeks rapid results and efficiency (Schroth, 2019; Leelamanothum et al., 2018). Despite these insights, there is still a limited understanding of how these generational patterns manifest in post-transition economies such as Lithuania. Addressing this gap, the present study contributes novelty by linking generational burnout dynamics with the broader discourse of social sustainability, thereby integrating individual well-being with organizational and societal responsibilities.

On the one hand, technological development has provided greater flexibility in the workplace; on the other hand, it has also created conditions for constant connection to work, making it increasingly difficult to separate professional and personal life (Wood et al., 2020, Kleina-Šnipke & Krēsliņš, 2025). This technologically driven strain is corroborated by structural-equation evidence from Hungarian professionals, where loss of leisure time due to techno-overload and techno-invasion, together with techno-uncertainty stemming from insufficient ICT competence, were identified as the strongest threats to work–life balance and, in turn, to workplace well-being and job security – mirroring the present study's concern that technological progress simultaneously enables flexibility and intensifies always-on work pressure (Bencsik & Juhász, 2023). This, in turn, is closely associated with employee burnout, making it relevant to deepen research on this phenomenon.

In recent years, increasing attention has also been paid to the dimension of social sustainability, which encompasses employee health, safety, work–life balance, and the long-term ability to work productively (Colantonio, 2011; Krajnc and Glavič, 2005). Panel-data evidence across 21 European countries similarly demonstrates that health-related labour losses carry measurable economic weight: a 1% increase in absenteeism and a rise in disease burden among older workers each reduce GDP per person employed, whereas a higher share of stable, wage-based employment significantly increases it – reinforcing that burnout-related productivity erosion is not merely an individual welfare concern but an aggregate social-sustainability outcome with quantifiable macroeconomic consequences (Lyeonov et al., 2025). In organizations where employees experience burnout, social sustainability is compromised because the ability to ensure the long-term well-being and engagement of human resources is lost, directly contradicting the goals of sustainable development (Lee et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the analysis of studies related to this topic has shown that existing burnout research most often focuses on universal organizational factors, but pays less attention to generational specificity and its relationship with a socially sustainable and technologically oriented work environment (Malta et al., 2024; Meechan & Wonglorsaichon, 2024).

The aim of this article is to investigate whether organizational factors traditionally associated with employee well-being predict burnout across Generations X, Y, and Z, and to discuss these findings through the lens of social sustainability.

1. Literature review

1.1. Different generations of employees and their characteristics

An increasing number of human resource management specialists observe pronounced generational differences in organizations, which pose challenges for managers when addressing work and organizational issues. Due to dynamic changes in the socio-economic and technological environment, a distinct context has emerged – different generations –which requires organizations to develop new leadership tools (Šakytė-Statnickė et al., 2020).

In academic literature, there are no universally accepted criteria for distinguishing one generation from another. Therefore, researchers analyzing generational typology assign different periods to each generation. This study analyzes three generations – X, Y, and Z – since they are currently the most active in the labor market. (Table 1).

Table 1. Generational division by period

Author	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Howe and Strauss (1991)	1961–1981	1982–2002	2003–
Berkup (2014)	1965–1979	1980–1994	1995–
Bako (2018)	1965–1980	1981–1994	1995–2002

Source: *own compilation*

Representatives of each generation view work differently, so it is important for managers not only to understand the problem of burnout itself, but also to have knowledge about different generations and recognize their differences (Climek et al., 2024; Hajduova et al., 2025; Schmitt and Lancaster, 2019). Scientists who study generations and their theories distinguish traits and characteristics characteristic of different generations, emphasizing certain factors that shape their behavior and worldview. These traits enable us to understand better how generations adapt to technological change and the impact it has on organizations (Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of the characteristics of generations X, Y, Z

Characteristics	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Attitude towards work	Believes in hard work as the basis of a good life. Values the authority of the leader.	Work must have meaning. Expects ongoing mentorship.	Work-life balance and social responsibility are important.
Positive qualities	Responsible, loyal to the employer.	Adapts quickly, technologically advanced.	Technologically savvy, innovative, globally minded.
Negative qualities	Less open to change, skeptical of technology.	Has high expectations and gets disappointed quickly.	Volatile, want quick results.
Motivational tools	Material reward, recognition, respect, stability.	Recognition, opportunities for development, and a good atmosphere at work.	Learning opportunities, mobility, and a lower salary.
Loyalty	Values stability.	Loyal, if working conditions are satisfactory.	Less attached to organizations.

Source: *Šakytė-Statnickė, 2020*

In examining generational differences, this work is based on the generational classification by Howe and Strauss (1991), which is considered one of the most suitable in the Lithuanian context.

Understanding these differences is not only important for leadership and human resources practices but also for achieving social sustainability in organizations. A socially sustainable work environment requires practices that recognize the diverse needs, values, and life stages of employees across generations, ensuring inclusion and long-term well-being.

Increasingly, generational differences are being examined in the context of social sustainability, as employees' expectations regarding working conditions, well-being, and inclusion are integral to creating a sustainable work environment (McGuire and Lozano, 2022). Social sustainability encompasses a safe, healthy, inclusive work environment that ensures people's long-term ability to work productively (Colantonio, 2011; Lee et al., 2016).

In summary, the attitudes of employees from different generations towards work, motivational measures, and loyalty differ. Generation X values stability, the authority of the manager, and material rewards, which are related to the element of social sustainability to ensure dignified and reliable working conditions. Generation Y seeks meaning in work, expects support from mentors. Meanwhile, for Generation Z, learning and innovation opportunities are the most important, and financial rewards are secondary, which aligns with the goal of social sustainability to create inclusive, modern, and long-term engagement-friendly work environments (Rahman, 2025). It is evident that for organizations striving for socially sustainable activities, understanding generational differences is not only a management tool but also a necessary condition for ensuring long-term employee engagement.

1.2. Employee burnout and analysis of influencing factors

One of the most prominent researchers on burnout, Maslach (1981), provided a definition that has become the most widely recognized and used in the academic community. Burnout is described as a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion resulting from prolonged unresolved stress experienced in the work environment and in various situations (Maslach and Leiter, 2016). Although there are many definitions of burnout in the scientific literature, most authors agree on Maslach's (1981) division of burnout into three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decrease in personal aspirations.

From the perspective of social sustainability, burnout is not only a personal issue but also a systemic organizational challenge. High levels of burnout indicate that work environments may be failing to provide the necessary conditions for employee well-being, inclusion, and long-term productivity – all key elements of social sustainability. Better integration of technology would allow people to work more efficiently, but it is necessary to take into account generational differences. Older generations need training that allows them to adapt more quickly to technological progress, thereby strengthening the entire organization.

Researchers in scientific papers and studies identify the main organizational factors that have a significant impact on burnout: organizational support (Bakker and Demerouti, 2004; Pacevičius, 2004; Maslach and Leiter, 2016), workload (Abromaitienė and Stanišauskienė. 2014; Maslach, 1981; Karasek, 1979), flexibility of working time and place (Kossek et al., 2012; Hoffman et al., 2020; Hayes et al., 2020; Aldossari and Chaudhry, 2021), autonomy (Maslach and Leiter, 2016; Fernet et al., 2013; Zhang and He, 2022; Yang et al., 2024). It is these factors that are traditionally considered key elements of ensuring well-being in the context of social sustainability (Alsulami et al., 2022; Bailey et al., 2025; Belás et al., 2024; Docherty et al., 2009). However, technological divide is a relatively understudied phenomenon. Generational differences create technological gaps that, if not eliminated, organizations may

face significant operational difficulties in the future (Braciníková & Matušínská, 2018). Aligning competencies, focused on meeting different needs, is essential for organizational success (Adão et al., 2020; Mishchuk et al., 2021; Savanevičienė et al., 2025). Otherwise, there is a risk not only of setting generations at odds, but also of losing employees and the efficiency of organizational management.

These organizational factors were selected because they are consistently identified in the burnout literature as the most influential job demands and resources. According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework, workload represents a central demand that exhausts employees' energy, while organizational support, flexibility, and autonomy are considered core job resources that can buffer stress and promote well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). This aligns with evidence from low-engagement workforces, where two-way communication, supportive leadership, regular feedback, and fair treatment emerged as the decisive engagement drivers, while their absence directly eroded workers' sense of value and heightened exhaustion-like disengagement – underscoring that organisational support functions similarly as a protective resource across highly disparate labour-market contexts (Dendere et al., 2025). Prior studies repeatedly confirm that employees experiencing heavy workloads are more likely to suffer from emotional exhaustion (Maslach et al., 2001), whereas supportive work environments, flexible arrangements, and autonomy help to preserve motivation, foster engagement, and reduce burnout risk (Allen et al., 2015; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Fernet et al., 2013; Kossek et al., 2012). Thus, these four antecedents reflect not only the most widely examined drivers of burnout, but also the essential dimensions of socially sustainable work environments.

These factors are widely recognized not only as predictors of burnout but also as essential components of socially sustainable work environments. Workload balance, supportive relationships, flexibility, and autonomy are central to ensuring decent work conditions and long-term employee engagement.

Organizational support is defined as an employee's perception that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Bakker and Demerouti, 2004; Karacsony et al., 2025). Such support is also one of the most important indicators of social sustainability in the work environment (Kobal Grum & Babnik, 2022; Hernik et al., 2025; Ierokhin et al, 2025). Research shows that strong organizational support can reduce the risk of burnout because employees feel more supported and valued. This includes motivating employees and helping them transition to a broader use of technology. Numerous scientific studies examining work resources have investigated the relationship between organizational support and burnout (West et al., 2018; Winnubst, 2017). Support from managers and senior specialists is particularly significant (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Oliinyk et al., 2024). In addition, management encouragement and organizational support are among the factors that support employee motivation and well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Workload is one of the primary topics widely analyzed in research (Maslach, 1981), as it is a key factor in burnout. Excessive work demands can lead to emotional exhaustion and reduce work efficiency. Research confirms that workload is directly related to burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Due to a high workload, employees are often forced to work longer hours, thereby reducing their time for rest (Maslach et al., 2001). More active use of technology can help streamline current operations while reducing the workload on employees.

Flexibility in terms of working hours and location allows employees to balance their work and personal lives better, thereby reducing stress and the risk of burnout. Research shows that work flexibility is associated with a lower risk of stress and burnout for employees, as they can more easily adapt to their needs (Allen et al., 2015). Additionally, such policies enhance employees' commitment to the organization (Kossek et al., 2012). Using technology for remote

work can help attract professionals seeking flexible work schedules. This includes creating new systems related to remote business management. Increasing technological competencies strengthens the competitiveness and resilience of the organization to external factors.

Autonomy at work, or the freedom to make decisions about one's work, is an important factor in reducing the risk of burnout. High autonomy enables employees to control their work processes, thereby reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction (Fernet et al., 2013). Research confirms that autonomy strengthens employees' self-control and reduces the risk of burnout (Deci and Ryan, 2000). It enables them to feel capable of making decisions within their area of competence (Maslach and Leiter, 2016).

Based on the insights of scientists, organizational support, optimal workload, flexibility in working time and location, and granted autonomy are essential factors that can reduce the risk of burnout. To strengthen the theoretical positioning of this article, two principal frameworks are employed. The first is Maslach's multidimensional theory of burnout, which conceptualizes burnout as comprising emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997). This framework has become the dominant lens in burnout research and provides a foundation for understanding how prolonged work-related stress manifests at the individual level. The second framework is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which explains how job characteristics categorized into demands and resources affect employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). According to the JD-R model, high demands such as excessive workload and role conflict are primary drivers of strain and burnout, while resources such as organizational support, autonomy, and flexibility can buffer these effects. Integrating these two perspectives allows for a comprehensive analysis: Maslach's model clarifies the dimensions of burnout as outcomes, while the JD-R model explains the mechanisms through which organizational factors contribute to these outcomes. By combining these frameworks, the present study provides a theoretically grounded approach to investigating generational differences in burnout within the broader discourse of technological progress and social sustainability.

2. Methodological approach

According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, workload is one of the primary job demands that depletes employees' energy and contributes to burnout (Maslach, 1981; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Empirical studies have consistently shown that high workload is strongly associated with emotional exhaustion, as employees struggle to meet excessive demands (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Consequently, workload is expected to have a detrimental effect on well-being across different generations.

H1. Workload is positively related to burnout among employees of Generations X, Y, Z.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) theory suggests that employees who feel supported by their organization develop a stronger sense of belonging and psychological resources, which protect them from burnout (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Prior studies have emphasized that organizational support is a critical job resource, reducing emotional exhaustion and depersonalization while fostering engagement (Fernet et al., 2013; Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

H2. Organizational support is negatively related to burnout among employees of Generations X, Y, and Z.

Flexibility in working hours and location allows employees to better reconcile professional and personal life, reducing work–life conflict and mitigating stress (Kossek et al., 2012; Hoffman et al., 2020). In the context of social sustainability, flexibility is considered a

core element of modern workplace well-being (Aldossari & Chaudhry, 2021). As such, higher flexibility is expected to serve as a protective resource against burnout across generations.

H3. Flexibility in working hours and location is negatively related to burnout among employees of Generations X, Y, and Z.

Self-determination theory emphasizes autonomy as a fundamental psychological need that enhances intrinsic motivation and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When employees experience autonomy, they feel more control over their tasks and are more resilient to stressors (Fernet et al., 2013). Prior studies also show that autonomy reduces the likelihood of emotional exhaustion and cynicism, making it a vital factor in preventing burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

H4. Autonomy is negatively related to burnout among employees of Generations X, Y, Z.

The research employs a quantitative research method, specifically an online questionnaire survey, which enables the collection of data from a larger number of respondents and the generation of representative results. The research questionnaire used validated scales (Table 3). The questionnaire also included questions about the demographic characteristics of the respondents (age, gender, marital status, education, work experience, and number of children).

Table 3. Research design ant compatibility results

Variable		Scale and author	Number of statements	Cronbach's alpha
Burnout	Emotional exhaustion	Maslach & Jackson (1981)	9	0,948
	Depersonalization	Maslach Burnout Inventory	5	0,757
	Reduced personal accomplishment	(MBI–HSS)	8	0,773
Workload		Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (2004) Workload Subscale	4	0,889
Organizational support		Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (2004) Supervisor and Coworker Support Subscales	6	0,901
Flexibility in work location and time		Hill et al. (2001)	4	0,882
Autonomy		Morgeson & Humphrey (2006) Work Design Questionnaire, Autonomy Subscale	3	0,925

Source: *own compilation*

All survey statements were measured on a 7-point Likert scale from "1 = strongly disagree" to "7 = strongly agree".

The sample size calculation indicated that at least 399 respondents were required to ensure the reliability of the research. Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling technique to capture representation across different generations. Data were collected in Lithuania between January 31 and February 6, 2025, resulting in 454 fully completed questionnaires. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and all respondents provided informed consent prior to completing the survey, in line with institutional ethical guidelines.

Data analysis was performed based on the responses of 454 respondents. The survey data were processed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 27.0 software package. Statistical data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics methods, ANOVA analysis, analysis of means, correlation, and regression analyses. The reliability analysis of the scales showed that

all scales and subscales are reliable, as the calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all questionnaire categories is from 0,757 to 0,948.

3. Conducting research and results

The analysis of factors influencing burnout among employees of different generations included 454 respondents – representatives of generations X (35,9 %), Y (39,2 %), and Z (24,9 %). Looking at the demographic characteristics of Generation X, it can be seen that the majority (69,9 %) of respondents are women, people with higher education (75,5 %), working at their current workplace for more than 21 years (35,6 %), married (71,2 %), and have two children (55,2 %). These individuals are at the greatest risk of knowledge depreciation - having worked in one workplace for a long time may make it harder for them to adapt to a sudden technological leap. In addition, it is likely that employee support structures in such organizations may be focused only on new, younger employees.

When analyzing the characteristics of Generation Y, it can be seen that the majority (77,5 %) of respondents are women, people with higher education (77,0 %), working at their current workplace for 1-5 years (38.8 %), married (61,8 %), and without children (41,6 %).

The distribution of Generation Z representatives by gender is quite similar - men (51,3 %) and women (48,7 %). Most have secondary (47,8 %) and vocational (43,4 %) education, have been working in their current organization for less than 1 year (54,9 %), are single (57,5 %), and have no children (87,6 %).

This research aimed to determine whether generations differed in terms of both burnout dimensions and organizational factors. Therefore, ANOVA analysis and Tukey HSD Post Hoc test were performed, which helped accurately identify which generations differed from each other. The results of the research shows that in all aspects, Generation X was significantly different from Generations Y and Z. However, no differences were found between Generations Y and Z.

In order to determine the influence of organizational factors, which the literature also associates with social sustainability, on the burnout of employees of generations X, Y, and Z, a regression analysis was conducted. Accordingly, Hypotheses H1–H4, which proposed significant relationships between workload, organizational support, flexibility, autonomy and burnout, were not supported. Sector-specific evidence from transport workers similarly shows that job content, workload, organisational culture and function, interpersonal relations, and the work–life interface jointly shape psychosocial risk and job satisfaction, indicating that the same core organisational-factor structure examined here for generational burnout also operates as a determinant of occupational well-being in physically demanding, non-office-based sectors (Mościcka-Teske et al., 2023). As shown in Table 4, no significant relationships were found between organizational factors and burnout among Generation X employees.

Table 4. Regression analysis of Generation X organizational factors and burnout dimensions

	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal accomplishment
Organizational factors	R^2 = 0,533 p = 0,654	R^2 = 0,030 p = 0,114	R^2 = 0,079 p = 0,000
Workload	-0,045	-0,284	0,313
Organizational support	-0,561	-0,523	0,842
Flexibility in work location and time	-0,636	-1,077	0,664
Autonomy	-0,679	-0,901	0,454

Source: *own compilation*

Table 5 illustrates similar results for Generation Y, where none of the predictors reached statistical significance. The table shows that organizational factors are more related to exhaustion and depersonalization than to a sense of achievement. Work flexibility would reduce the likelihood of burnout. To ensure flexibility, technological progress in the company is necessary - high automation of the workplace, ensuring remote work in the service sector, external control systems. Generation Y is able to quickly accept changes, so technological transformation can be effective.

Table 5. Regression analysis of Generation Y organizational factors and burnout dimensions

	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal accomplishment
Organizational factors	R^2 = 0,258 p = 0,000	R^2 = 0,288 p = 0,000	R^2 = 0,142 p = 0,000
Workload	0,169	0,200	-0,053
Organizational support	-0,358	-0,369	-0,290
Flexibility in work location and time	-0,686	-0,687	-0,131
Autonomy	-0,397	-0,361	-0,119

Source: *own compilation*

Regression analysis of Generation Z employees revealed that organizational factors also did not show statistically significant influences in this generation (Table 6). In the case of Generation Z, it is seen that as organizational factors increase, burnout rates decrease. This confirms the importance of technological solutions - by applying technologies, it is possible to better organize daily work operations, thus providing employees with a sense of security. Usually, a higher workload increases exhaustion, but in the case of Generation Z, being able to correctly organize current work operations, it is possible to achieve a high level of efficiency. In addition, Generation Z is in great need of organizational support - by acting on the principles of mentoring, employees will be better involved in collective activities, thus achieving higher performance results. Ensuring flexibility through technological means creates conditions for the effective inclusion of Generation Z representatives in the labor market.

Table 6. Regression analysis of Generation Z organizational factors and burnout dimensions

	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal accomplishment
Organizational factors	R^2 = 0,331 p = 0,005	R^2 = 0,208 p = 0,001	R^2 = 0,160 p = 0,000
Workload	-0,363	-0,206	-0,424
Organizational support	-0,921	-0,681	-0,351
Flexibility in work location and time	-1,397	-0,907	-0,410
Autonomy	-1,284	-0,810	-0,571

Source: *own compilation*

The article revealed significant generational differences that are already affecting the labor market. Organizations that do not adapt, do not change their behavior and do not use technology, risk scaring away representatives of the younger generations and losing their competitiveness. Technological innovations, new forms of work and united teamwork by involving new employees can assist to create a strong organization that is able to withstand the challenges of the future.

4. Discussion

The findings of this article provide a nuanced understanding of how burnout manifests across generations and challenge established assumptions in the literature. Previous research has emphasized the central role of organizational factors such as workload, organizational support, flexibility, and autonomy in predicting burnout (Maslach, 1981; Allen et al., 2015). However, the absence of statistically significant relationships in this study suggests that the explanatory power of these factors may be diminishing in contemporary workplaces. This discrepancy underscores the importance of re-examining burnout antecedents in light of generational and cultural contexts, as well as through the lens of social sustainability.

On the one hand, these results are consistent with previous research by scientists, which states that the most significant and most obvious differences are observed not between adjacent, but between subsequent generations (Gursoy et al., 2013; Lyons and Kuron, 2014; Twenge and Campbell, 2012). On the other hand, this findings refine this perspective by showing that such contrasts do not always emerge uniformly but may depend on cultural and technology-context factors. This duality challenges the assumption of universal generational gaps and calls for more cross-national studies to determine the extent to which these patterns hold across contexts.

The traditional norms with which Generation X grew up valued hard work as a guarantee of success, and work was often a priority, sometimes even at the expense of personal life (Stanišauskienė, 2015). When it comes to workload, a valuable insight can be noted: Generation X employees are people who most often started their professional careers when the work culture was dominated by a hierarchical, less flexible model that emphasized less psychological well-being (Alkire et al., 2020). For them, workload may not mean stress, but meaning, responsibility, or even professional status. In other words, what is theoretically treated as a risk factor may in their experience be perceived as a positive aspect (if a person is given many tasks at work, it means that they are needed). This insight extends the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework by showing that job demands may be reinterpreted as resources depending on generational value systems (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). However, the main focus is not on the number of working hours, but on the results achieved. Work results are inevitably linked to technological progress, which helps to multiply the results achieved by the employee. The slow integration of Generation X employees harms not only the employees themselves, but also the organization itself, which loses its competitive advantage.

According to this study, neither flexibility in working hours and locations, nor organizational support, nor autonomy had a statistically significant impact on the burnout dimensions of Generation X employees. This generation was the first to experience the breakthrough of information technologies; therefore, its representatives often have a strong internal need for continuous improvement, and their ability to learn and adapt quickly makes them more resilient to changes in external organizational conditions (Alkire et al., 2020; Leelamanothum et al., 2018). This contradicts prior findings that consistently identified autonomy and organizational support as central protective resources (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Deci & Ryan, 2000). The divergence suggests that the impact of organizational resources is not static but may evolve with generational socialization and cultural context.

Research shows that employees who are not in the habit of seeking help or support from organizations often underestimate its importance (Ng and Sorensen, 2008). Lithuanian culture still has a strong view that resolving emotional or psychological difficulties is a personal matter, not the responsibility of the organizational system. In addition, older employees, in order to maintain a professional image, tend to avoid discussing difficulties. As a result, even if organizational support actually exists, it may be ignored or not seen as a resource.

The results of the regression analysis for Generation Y also did not reveal significant influences between organizational factors and burnout, so it is worth looking at the context of Generation Y itself. They are highly adaptable to change, tending to prioritize meaningful activities and emotional well-being (Lyons et al., 2015; Twenge and Campbell, 2012; Stanišauskienė, 2015). They are the first generation to grow up with constantly changing social norms, economic upheavals, and increasing globalization. This is especially important when it comes to technology adaptation processes - some employees feel anxious about publicly acknowledging gaps in their technological knowledge, as this may be treated as a fundamental shortcoming in order to maintain their workplace. At the same time, they have faced a labor market that has rarely lived up to those promises: unstable working conditions, economic downturns, and a competitive environment. As a result, Generation Y is characterized by a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, they seek meaning, balance, and inner peace at work, and on the other hand, they have learned not to trust systems, adapt, and manage themselves (Lyons et al., 2015; Twenge and Campbell, 2012). This conflicting experience may explain why organizational factors (workload, flexibility, organizational support, or autonomy) did not appear to be statistically significant. In terms of social sustainability, the case of Generation Y highlights the need for organizations to go beyond material resources and foster meaning, trust, and psychological safety. Addressing these deeper, non-structural needs is essential to ensure long-term employee engagement and resilience.

Considering the context and the results of the analysis, it is possible that Generation Z's attitude towards work, stress, and other factors is still being formed, as their professional experience is limited. In addition, the organizational environment in their lives may be less important than internal, existential issues. For them, work is not necessarily the central axis of life, but rather one of many projects through which they test themselves (Barhate and Dirani, 2022). This supports recent scholarship suggesting that Generation Z emphasizes personal growth and authenticity over traditional career structures (Schroth, 2019, Shekera, 2025).

From a sustainability standpoint, organizations must view Generation Z as a unique group whose well-being depends not only on job conditions but also on inclusion, growth opportunities, and authentic participation in decision-making. This implies that sustainability strategies should emphasize empowerment and personal development alongside traditional workplace improvements.

The results of this study are unexpected, but very significant. These results contradict the majority of the literature, which considers these aspects to be important factors of burnout (Maslach, 1981; Allen et al., 2015). This may mean that in today's world, the factors analyzed are no longer as important for the well-being of employees as previously stated in the literature. It means that an individualized approach to the employee, taking into account their personal needs, values, and life circumstances, is increasingly important in ensuring social sustainability. It can be argued that employees are more adaptable to a dynamic work environment, and that internal resources, emotional self-regulation, or even a sense of meaning in work are more important. Without technological progress, these goals will not be possible. Flexible work schedules, especially in the service sector, are inseparable from the use of technology. In addition, technology can even out generational differences, since its wise use would give advantages to the older generation. They, having a lot of knowledge, can find faster ways to solve problems with the help of technology.

In conclusion, these results challenge the prevailing assumption that improving organizational structures alone can prevent burnout. In today's diverse workforce, social sustainability requires a shift towards individualized approaches that consider generational differences, personal values, and life contexts. By integrating these elements, organizations can build socially sustainable environments that foster both employee well-being and long-term

organizational performance. Thus, the article contributes to theory by questioning the universal applicability of the JD-R model and extending it through the lens of generational value systems and social sustainability. It contributes to practice by showing that human resource strategies must be generation-sensitive, culturally informed, and centered on recognition, empowerment, and meaning-making.

Conclusion

Employees of different generations have varying attitudes towards work, loyalty, and motivation, as well as the means to promote them. Representatives of different generations are characterized by certain distinctive features that can manifest themselves both as strengths and as challenges. Younger employees are more likely to seek flexibility and self-realization, while older employees value stability, clarity, and security. Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decline in personal aspirations. Long-term stress, a high workload, and a lack of support and control determine it.

Empirical research has found statistically significant differences in the burnout experiences and assessments of organizational factors among employees of different generations. These differences are mainly evident when comparing Generation X with Generations Y and Z, while Generations Y and Z do not differ significantly from each other. However, the organizational factors examined in the article – organizational support, workload, flexibility of working time and place, autonomy – the results of the regression analysis did not reveal statistically significant effects of these on burnout in any generation. These results contribute to the literature by challenging the universal assumptions of the Job Demands-Resources model, which typically conceptualizes workload as a demand leading to strain and organizational support, flexibility, and autonomy as key protective resources. Tik research findings show that such factors may no longer operate uniformly across generations. Instead, burnout is shaped by generational value systems, cultural context, and employees' interpretive frameworks. By integrating social sustainability into the burnout discourse, this article extends theory towards a more dynamic, context-dependent understanding of employee well-being.

This article has several limitations. The use of convenience sampling in Lithuania limits the generalizability of results to other cultural or institutional contexts. Moreover, the article examined only four organizational factors, whereas other individual and contextual variables (e.g., value incongruence, leadership style, organizational culture) may also significantly influence burnout.

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