

WHAT BURNS OUT YOUNG GENERATIONS? PART I. PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT AMONG EMPLOYEES FROM GENERATIONS Y AND Z – PROBLEM ANALYSIS

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Abstract. Professional burnout is one of the most toxic phenomena affecting employees in contemporary organisations. Previously researchers focused on the professional burnout syndrome in the context of professions involving severe stress in the workplace. However, the changing realities of the modern world, turbulent shifts in the social, economic and business dimensions, as well as challenges of psychosocial nature mean that the burnout problem is increasingly noticed among young employees who theoretically should not be significantly affected by this phenomenon at this stage of their career. The purpose of this research is the empirical identification and assessment of organisational and psychosocial factors which can be strong determinants of the occurrence and development of professional burnout among representatives of generations Y and Z. The studies presented in this paper present the perspective of employees – generation Y and Z representatives employed in Polish businesses. The research results demonstrate organisational and psychosocial factors which in the opinion of the subjects of the research are the strongest determinants of the occurrence of professional burnout. The research results presented in this paper constitute part of a larger research project. The second part of the research is presented in the article "What Burns Out Young Generations? Burnout and Countermeasure Methods and Practices: The Perspective of Generation Y and Z Employees, Part II."

Keywords: generation Z, generation Y, professional burnout syndrome, occupational stress, work-life balance.

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1. Introduction

Burnout is a term which appeared for the first time in the psychological literature in Freudberger's article (1974) in the *Journal of Social Issues*. This phenomenon is an individual experience specific to the job context. Studies conducted in the last 25 years have remained focused on situational factors which constitute the main correlates of this phenomenon (Maslach et al., 2001). In the approach proposed by Maslach, burnout is characterised by a high level of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and low sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1993). Initially, Maslach assumed that burnout is the result of a specific social relationship that occurs between two people, in which a "giver" and a "recipient" are distinguished (Maslach, 1993). In this approach, burnout largely concerned social professions, where there was engaging contact between people, both physically and often mentally (doctors, nurses, teachers, policemen, etc.). This relation-

ship often generates specific burdens on the emotional and mental level and at the same time requires high own resources in terms of, for example, the level of empathy, understanding, communication. Only the analysis of subsequent research in this area led to changes in Maslach's assumptions that working conditions played an important role in shaping the phenomenon of burnout among employees. This much more universal model of burnout no longer focused only on social professions, the idea of which is to support other people. In her new approach, Maslach referred to the interactive concepts of stress in which it is the result of abnormal relationships at the level of the individual and the environment in which he or she functions (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Burnout is not just a problem of individuals, but also the social environment in which they work because workplaces shape the way in which people interact with others and how they carry out their duties (Rakovec-Felser, 2011). The professional burnout syndrome constitutes a prolonged response to chronic

emotional and interpersonal stressors connected with the workplace. It arises as a result of the lack of coordination between employees and their work environment (Dedić, 2005). The problem of burnout is increasingly noticed among young employees – representatives of generations Y and Z, despite the fact that the period of occupational activity of these generations is relatively short. The changing realities of the modern world – economic and social, but also mental, cause the stress in organisations to ramp up to alarming levels, simultaneously influencing the rise of many negative phenomena among young employees. The important factors which impact the level of organisational stress include changes arising from work schedules (shift work, irregular hours), time pressures, routine and monotonous activities, physical conditions (noise, heat, lighting), tasks carried out in isolation or interactive ones, controlled and uncontrolled tasks. Stress can also be the outcome of problematic relationships with coworkers or superiors, conflicts, unfair treatment, conflicting requirements at work, overloading with duties or the opposite – insufficient stimulation (Rosenthal & Alter, 2012). The multitude of factors indicates their organisational nature connected on the one hand with the strategic functioning of the given organisation and, on the other hand – the work organisation itself within the specific structures. But the factors listed also include the psychosocial dimension connected with broadly understood relationships and psychological aspect of human functioning in a work environment. In this context, the question which of the factors constitute the greatest threat today in the organisational and psychosocial dimension and how employees, but also businesses themselves, can protect their own capital, becomes one of the important challenges of management.

2. Burnout – problematic aspects of the phenomenon in the context of functioning of young generations

Professional burnout in literature is believed to be the result of long-term exposure of employees to stress (Szcześniak et al., 2024). Currently it is assumed that the professional burnout syndrome is of universal nature, which means that it may affect anyone, regardless of their profession, age, sex, work experience (Przychocka & Lewiński, 2024). Previously the majority of research focused on the burnout syndrome by referring to professions most exposed to chronic stress, including the medical sector (doctors, nurses, psychologists, psychotherapists), public services (policemen) or education (teachers, educators), and thus social professions involving intense contact with other human beings, both in the emotional and often physical dimension (cf. e.g. Heymann et al., 2024; Guastello et al., 2024; Martinez- Hollingsworth et al., 2025; Edokpolor et al., 2025; Menon et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024; Yavuz & Ilgaz, 2024; Kostas et al., 2024). Christina Maslach points out, however, that burnout is more the matter of person-job matching and this phenomenon can-

not be restricted to just social professions (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). An analysis of the problems of burnout shows that research usually concentrates around specific professions, sectors or industries, but is much less frequently carried out in relation to specific generational groups. In this approach, the context of functioning of the youngest active generations which include generations Y and Z attracts particular attention. The time frames of inclusion in individual generations remain vague but the analysis of literature enables us to assume that representatives of generation Y are people born from 1977 (see e.g. Valentine & Powers, 2013) to no later than 2000 (cf. e.g. Hassan et al., 2019). Whereas researchers include people born between 1995 and 2012 in representatives of generation Z (see e.g. Barhate & Dirani, 2021). It is predicted that generation Y which has been already actively functioning in the labour market and consolidating its position will become dominant in 2025 (Kawińska, 2020). The characteristics of generation Y, however, show that this generation, despite being non-homogenous, has been defined as extremely active, full of people who live very fast and operate in many areas of activity at the same time. It has been noticed that they desire to have everything immediately or very quickly. If they fail to achieve their assumed goal, they become frustrated and impatient (Ericsson Consumerlab, 2013). The constant rush and intensity of activities undertaken are among the key features of this generation, but they have their consequences. The millennials, as generation Y is also referred to, despite their undoubted advantages in the context of functioning in a work environment, such as high level of education, knowledge of technologies, preparedness for operating within areas connected with cultural diversity and global economy, also have significant disadvantages which are expressed in their expectations, needs and challenges that this generation places before employers, but also themselves. The demanding attitude towards the employer, high demands concerning salary and non-salary terms of employment, reluctance to follow the rules. The lack of opportunity for development and feeling stuck in a rut at work are a reason to make a change (Czyczerska et al., 2020). Alongside their high self-esteem, need for self-fulfilment, individualism which plays an important role in the professional and private life, this translates into the quality of their work, degree of their commitment, and relationships with employers. The representatives of generation Y, although they adapt to changes easily, are very impatient in their striving to succeed (see Kawińska, 2020). Generation Z in turn is often characterised as a selfish generation, lost in the real world, having a low level of empathy and motivation for work, having problems forming lasting relationships. Brought up in a world of unreal illusions, they face up to open divisions in finances, assets, prestige and finally also politics in the contemporary society (Kubacka-Jasiecka & Passowicz, 2014). The realities in which they function, but also work environment that does not match their needs and what they have imagined, often become the source of stress. Research shows that the most significant reasons of

stress experienced by generation Z employees include – work overload, incorrect division of tasks, lack of clearly defined goals, interpersonal conflicts with coworkers, lack of clarity in organisational communications (Niewińska & Samul, 2024). Meanwhile, an increased level of stress is often associated with reduced productivity, lower employee commitment, deterioration of overall output. Long-term exposure to stress without sufficient coping strategies may lead to burnout and further to emotional and physical exhaustion which translate into lower motivation, creativity, poorer productivity (Rana et al., 2024). A link between burnout and job satisfaction is also noticed. The feeling of burnout affects psychological productivity but also behaviour, which is connected with job dissatisfaction (Athamneh, 2024). The problem of burnout undermines employees' physical and mental wellbeing, which in consequence translates into poor productivity, failure to meet professional standards, larger number of mistakes, or reduced creativity in resolving them (Wulandari et al., 2023). The reasons behind burnout are multifaceted and include both personality, organisational and demographic factors. Personality factors, which include perfectionism or strong desire for control, combined with organisational stressors, such as e.g. overwhelming workload and lack of recognition, contribute to professional burnout. The importance of demographic factors (e.g. age) is also emphasised, whereas younger employees, particularly those from generation Z, are more susceptible to burnout (Putri & Dudija, 2024). The role of organisational factors in the context of professional burnout is significant, as Cherniss proposes, indicating that working conditions are the very source of stress at work, whereas it is less dependent on traits of an individual. Based on research, he indicated five factors behind stress at work which can lead to burnout – doubts as to one's competences, difficult customers, bureaucracy, lack of self-fulfilment opportunities, bad interpersonal relationships (Cherniss, 1993). Occupational stress is becoming more and more common, regardless of the profession, and impacts all areas of an individual's life. Decades of research on stress have provided definitions which have not changed significantly, but currently a greater need for dealing with burnout as a consequence of long-term occupational stress has been noted (Marinac et al., 2024). Professional burnout as approached by Kraczla is a state characterised by frustration and exhaustion, loss of emotional energy and decreased physical strength, and in consequence reduced motivation to perform work with the previous level of commitment. This phenomenon, as the author emphasises, is not just tiredness, because a person may be tired with work but still continue to get satisfaction from it. The burnout syndrome affects people who started their employment with full commitment, lofty ideas and expectations, and also expected to find the sense of meaning of life in their chosen profession (Kraczla, 2013). From Schaufel's and Enzmann's point of view, professional burnout may be understood through the integration of subjective, interpersonal, organisational and social factors. In the researcher's assumption, burnout is a chronic, negative

mental state resulting from professional work which may develop in any mentally healthy person. It is manifested in progressing exhaustion, growing discouragement, reduced effectiveness of own activities, weakening motivation, increase in negative attitudes and behaviours. The base source of the developing symptoms is the lack of compatibility between the person's aspirations and the working conditions (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Burnout may have various sources but as a rule it may be considered in three key aspects – individual, connected with traits of personality, temperament, biological features. The second category is the sphere of interpersonal contacts (interpersonal conflicts, mobbing, bad communication, lower self-esteem of employees). The third one in turn covers the area of occupational stress sources (physical environment, method of performing work – being rushed, monotony, as well as stress arising from the way the employee functions in the organisation, e.g. lack of opportunity to express their own opinion). Lack of opportunity for developing professional qualifications or, quite the opposite, excessive requirements in this respect are also pointed out (Bańkowska, 2016). Such approach yet again proves that reasons of burnout should be sought in broadly understood organisational as well as psychosocial factors connected with the functioning of a person in the given group, team, relationships. However, the importance of these factors for the occurrence of professional burnout in individual persons will vary significantly. In this context, individual differences concerning mental resilience, personality, temperament, or general health will be key to the occurrence of symptoms, and further – the ability to cope with them.

The presented literature analysis indicates a significant research gap in relation to the research conducted so far. Firstly, as indicated, most studies on burnout focused on social professions, ignoring the importance of a diverse work environment in which there does not necessarily have to be intensive contact with other people, but other organizational or social factors may be important. Secondly, the literature still shows fragmentary research on burnout among young generations, who at this stage of their professional career only seem not to face the problem of burnout or to a very limited extent. Meanwhile, the realities of the modern world, uncertainty, unpredictability, high dynamics of change (Rozbicka, 2024) mean that the conditions in which work is carried out (regardless of its specificity) may significantly affect the occurrence of specific pathologies also in the dimension of human functioning in the organization, including burnout (see, e.g. Przybylski, 2025).

3. Method

3.1. Purpose and research questions

The research results presented in this paper constitute part of a larger research project. The purpose of this study has been the empirical identification and evaluation of factors

of organisational and psychosocial nature that can strongly determine the occurrence and development of burnout among representatives of generations Y and Z.

The main focus has been the diagnosis of perceptions of representatives of generations Y and Z in terms of dysfunctions arising in organisations, which potentially can constitute risk factors connected with the occurrence of burnout. Research problems assumed in this paper have been presented in the form of questions:

1. Which factors of organisational and psychosocial nature are deemed by representatives of generations Y and Z to be strong risk factors contributing to the occurrence of burnout in relation to their work and to what degree are they experienced in their organisations?
2. What are the differences in the evaluation of individual organisational and psychosocial factors from the point of view of women and men?

3.2. Research sample

The assumed objective determined the purposeful selection of people for the research sample. The key criterion for inclusion in the sample was age – representatives of generations Y and Z where for the purposes of this research it has been assumed that generation Y included persons born between 1977 and 1995. In turn, persons born between 1996 and 2006, i.e. at the time of the study capable of undertaking full-fledged professional activity in Poland, were considered generation Z and included in the study. Another relevant criterion was having professional experience, whereas the area in which work was carried out was of no importance. Persons meeting the criteria indicated were included in further analyses.

139 respondents with at least one year of professional experience, who were representatives of various professions, were included in the study. Representatives of generation Y constituted 39.6% of study subjects, whereas representatives of generation Z – 60.4%. Women were a dominant share – 71.2 %, men constituted 28.8% of respondents. Data are presented in Table 1 and 2.

Table 1. Generations to which the surveyed individuals belong (source: based on own study)

Generation	N	%
Y	55	39.6
Z	84	60.4
Total	139	100.0

Table 2. Gender of respondents (source: based on own study)

Gender	N	%
Female	99	71.2
Male	40	28.8
Total	139	100.0

Nearly half of the respondents – 45.3% have been working for 1 to 3 years, whereas one in three respondents – 32.4% has more than 10 years of professional experience. Groups of people with 4–6 years of experience (15.1%) and 7–10 years of experience (7.2%) were smaller. More than half of respondents have secondary education – 58.2%. People with higher education at the bachelor's degree level – 20.1% and master's degree level – 15.1% also constitute a large group. Few respondents had education at the level of a doctoral degree – 2.2%, vocational – 1.4%, engineering degree – 1.4, % and MBA – 1.4%. Data are presented in Table 3 and 4.

Table 3. Professional experience of respondents (in years) (source: based on own study)

Professional experience	N	%
1–3 years	63	45.3
4–6 years	21	15.1
7–10 years	10	7.2
>10 years	45	32.4
Total	139	100.0

Table 4. Education of the respondents (source: based on own study)

Education	N	%
Vocational	2	1.4
Secondary	81	58.3
Higher Bachelor's degree	28	20.1
Higher Engineering	2	1.4
Higher Master's degree	21	15.1
MBA	2	1.4
PhD	3	2.2
Total	139	100.0

3.3. Tools and research procedure

The research was carried out during the period of March–April 2025 in Poland. The diagnostic survey method and the computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) technique were used. The data were collected in two ways – through the LinkedIn portal – an international social portal aimed at linking professionals and at developing professional and business contacts, where a link to a questionnaire survey was placed, and among employees of businesses which agreed to the survey being conducted among their personnel. Employees of businesses from the following sectors took part in the study: IT, electronics, medicine, pharmacy, services, finance, education. The questionnaire contained 12 questions in total: 6 questions concerned metric data which allowed the characterisation of the given group in terms of demographics, and the next 6 questions referred directly to aspects connected with the burnout phenomenon.

In the first part, based on an analysis of source literature, a list of key factors connected with the burnout phenomenon was prepared. It was broken down into factors of organisational and psychosocial nature. From the available cafeteria, respondents could select factors which best characterised their individual experiences. The second part of the questionnaire contained questions covering the list of organisational and psychosocial factors that were evaluated by respondents on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 meant that the respondent did not experience the given phenomenon, and 5 – that they experienced it to a very high degree. Questions in the third part concerned the burnout coping strategies.

The survey carried out was anonymous. The data were collected using the survio.com platform, and statistical analyses were performed in the IBM SPSS Statistics program. Descriptive statistics adequate for the level of variable measurement were used in the study. In order to examine the relationships between the variables, selected statistical tests and coefficients are also used. The Mann-Whitney U Test was performed to check whether there was a statistically significant difference between two groups in terms of range variables on a 1–5 scale. Three levels of statistical significance were adopted (from the highest to the lowest: $p < 0.001$ – predetermined***, $p < 0.01$ – predetermined** and $p < 0.05$ – predetermined*). Then the groups are statistically significantly different from each other. Pearson's Chi-Squared test for independence was carried out in order to check whether there is a statistically significant association between categorical variables. Three levels of statistical significance were adopted (from the highest to the lowest: $p < 0.001$ – predetermined***, $p < 0.01$ – predetermined** and $p < 0.05$ – predetermined*). Then the association between variables is statistically significant. Cramér's V correlation coefficient was calculated in order to check the strength of correlation between categorical variables. This coefficient is applied when Pearson's Chi-Squared test for independence has shown a statistically significant association. Its theoretical range is 0 to 1. The further it is from 0 and the closer it is to 1, the stronger the correlation between variables. The coefficient proves the existence of a correlation, however it provides no information about the cause and effect.

4. Results

At the first stage of research, it was analysed which factors of organisational nature were believed by representatives of generations Y and Z to be strong risk factors contributing to the occurrence of burnout in relation to their job and to what degree they experience it in their organisations. The analyses conducted show that definitely the largest proportion of representatives of generation Y believe that bad climate in the work environment is a particularly strong organisational factor leading to the occurrence of burnout (50.9%). The situation among representatives of generation Z is different. The largest percentage among them pointed to monotony and routine at work (51.2%), however these are closely followed by: bad climate in the work environment (47.6%), lack of opportunity for professional development (44%), and pressure to perform (42.9%).

As the Chi-Square test showed, a statistically larger percentage respondents from generation Y (20%) than from generation Z (8.3%) pointed to bureaucracy and extensive procedures (Cramér's V = 0.170). Also, a statistically significantly larger percentage of respondents from generation Y (29.1%) than from generation Z (14.3%) indicated work overload (Cramér's V = 0.181). And a statistically significantly larger percentage of respondents from generation Y (27.3%) than from generation Z (11.9%) pointed to lack of attention to work-life balance (Cramér's V = 0.196). Correlation coefficients in the case of all these three differences indicate weak correlations between variables. Data are presented in Table 5.

At the next stage, the relevance of factors of psychosocial nature for the occurrence of burnout among generation Y and Z employees was verified. The analysis of data indicates that definitely the largest number of respondents from generation Y pointed to three psychosocial factors which, in their opinion, constitute main reasons for the occurrence of burnout: no sense in the tasks performed (43.6%), lack of a sense of real impact on what happens in the organisation (41.8%) and mobbing (40%). In turn, two factors most frequently indicated by generation Z are the lack of kindness in interpersonal relationships at the team level and mobbing (41.7% each). The Chi-Square Test showed that statistically significantly more respondents from generation Z (14.3%) than from generation Y (3.6%) pointed to lack of belief in one's own competences. Cramer V correlation coefficient (0.163) indicates poor correlation between belonging to the given generation and the significance of this factor. The data are presented in Table 6.

Table 5. Organisational factors and professional burnout – from the perspective of employees from generations Y and Z (source: based on own study)

Which of the organisational factors do you believe to be potentially strong reasons behind the occurrence of burnout?	Generation				Chi-Square Test	
	Y		Z			
	N	%	N	%	Chi-2	p
Multitasking	11	20.0	27	32.1	2.467	0.116
Pressure to perform	17	30.9	36	42.9	2.011	0.156
Lack of professional development opportunities	17	30.9	37	44.0	2.415	0.120

End of Table 5

Which of the organisational factors do you believe to be potentially strong reasons behind the occurrence of burnout?	Generation				Chi-Square Test	
	Y		Z			
	N	%	N	%	Chi-2	p
Monotony, routine at work	19	34.5	43	51.2	3.727	0.054
Conflicts at the organisation	16	29.1	19	22.6	0.739	0.390
Bad climate in the work environment	28	50.9	40	47.6	0.144	0.704
Managers lacking communication skills	10	18.2	11	13.1	0.671	0.413
Unclear division of duties	12	21.8	13	15.5	0.906	0.341
Unclear rules for awarding bonuses, raises, promotions	9	16.4	11	13.1	0.288	0.591
Infrequent meetings with the line manager	1	1.8	1	1.2	0.092	0.761
Lack of cooperation and support at the employee-manager level	5	9.1	3	3.6	1.867	0.172
Limited access to knowledge which supports the task performed	3	5.5	8	9.5	0.755	0.385
Bureaucracy, extensive procedures	11	20.0	7	8.3	4.013	0.045*
Lack of clear, precise company strategy	3	5.5	1	1.2	2.162	0.141
Mismatching between duties and the employee's level of knowledge and skills	4	7.3	4	4.8	0.386	0.534
Quantitative/qualitative work overload	16	29.1	12	14.3	4.529	0.033*
Quantitative/qualitative work underload	2	3.6	3	3.6	0.000	0.984
Mentally taxing relationships with clients, business partners	7	12.7	4	4.8	2.894	0.089
Mentally taxing relationships with coworkers	10	18.2	8	9.5	2.210	0.137
Doubts as to one's own competences, skills, knowledge	3	5.5	1	1.2	2.162	0.141
Lack of attention to work-life balance	15	27.3	10	11.9	5.322	0.021*
Favouring other employees	6	10.9	8	9.5	0.070	0.791
Duration of the contract of employment and its type	1	1.8	7	8.3	2.601	0.107
Bad working conditions at the office	4	7.3	7	8.3	0.051	0.821
Not knowing one's role in the company and what is expected of one	2	3.6	3	3.6	0.000	0.894
Lack of access to company benefits	1	1.8	4	4.8	0.831	0.362

Note: % do not add up to 100 because respondents could choose more than one answer.

Table 6. Psychosocial factors and professional burnout – from the perspective of employees from generations Y and Z (source: based on own study)

Which of the psychosocial factors do you believe to be potentially strong reasons behind the occurrence of burnout?	Generation				Chi-Square Test	
	Y		Z			
	N	%	N	%	Chi-2	p
No sense in tasks performed	24	43.6	30	35.7	0.878	0.349
Lack of a sense of real impact on what happens in the organisation	23	41.8	24	28.6	2.606	0.106
Lack of kindness in interpersonal relationships at the team level	18	32.7	35	41.7	1.126	0.289
No mental support from the manager	15	27.3	16	19.0	1.298	0.255
Rivalry at work	10	18.2	16	19.0	0.016	0.898
Disrupted communication on the employee-manager line	14	25.5	16	19.0	0.806	0.369
Disrupted communication on the employee-coworkers line	7	12.7	11	13.1	0.004	0.950
Lack of trust in people in the organisation	15	27.3	14	16.7	2.265	0.132
Mobbing	22	40.0	35	41.7	0.038	0.845
Interpersonal conflicts	15	27.3	14	16.7	2.265	0.132
No independence, autonomy	4	7.3	9	10.7	0.464	0.496
Isolation	3	5.5	6	7.1	0.156	0.692
No respect towards one	16	29.1	27	32.1	0.145	0.703
No belief in one's own competences and skills	2	3.6	12	14.3	4.162	0.041*
Feeling of emptiness, dejection	9	16.4	14	16.7	0.002	0.963
Depreciating one's own successes, failing to notice one's own successes	4	7.3	7	8.3	0.051	0.821
Low ability to adapt to changes	0	0.0	3	3.6	2.008	0.157
Perfectionism	9	16.4	7	8.3	2.104	0.147

Note: % do not add up to 100 because respondents could choose more than one answer.

In the course of work, the degree of intensity concerning the experiencing of individual factors by respondents in their organisations was also verified. Tables 7 and 8 present descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation) and results of the test of significance of differences between generations. The higher the mean and the median on a scale of 1–5, the higher the degree to which organisational and psychosocial factors are experienced in the organisation in relation to one's own person.

From among organisational factors, both respondents from generation Y and respondents from generation Z experience multitasking to the definitely highest degree. It is also worth noting a number of statistically significant differences between generations as regards experiencing individual organisational factors. As U Mann-Whitney Test showed, respondents from generation Y experience pressure to perform, unclear rules for awarding bonuses, raises or promotions, and quantitative/qualitative work overload to a statistically significantly higher degree than

respondents from generation Z. In turn, respondents from generation Z experience such factors as: monotony, routine at work, quantitative/qualitative work underload, duration of the contract of employment and its type, as well as bad working conditions to a statistically significantly higher degree than respondents from generation Y.

On the other hand, from among psychosocial factors, representatives of generation Y experience lack of a sense of real impact on what happens at the organisation as well as perfectionism in carrying out tasks, approach to work and duties to the definitely greatest degree. The lack of trust in people in the organisation is the third factor on this list. Respondents from generation Z, in turn, experience perfectionism in carrying out tasks, approach to work and duties to the greatest degree from among psychosocial factors. Which is interesting, there is only one statistically significant difference between the generations. This refers to the lack of a sense of real impact on what happens in the organisation. It is experienced by employees

Table 7. Generation vs degree to which individual organisational factors are experienced in the organisation in relation to one's own person (source: based on own study)

Degree to which organisational factors are experienced in the organisation in relation to yourself	Generation						U Mann -Whitney Test	
	Y			Z				
	M	Me	SD	M	Me	SD	Z	p
Multitasking	4.05	4	1.13	3.80	4	1.11	-1.576	0.115
Pressure to perform	3.67	4	1.14	3.17	3	1.37	-2.059	0.040*
Lack of professional development opportunities	3.07	3	1.29	2.98	3	1.26	-0.424	0.672
Monotony, routine at work	2.93	3	1.29	3.54	4	1.37	-2.711	0.007**
Conflicts at the organisation	2.84	3	1.38	2.73	3	1.38	-0.503	0.615
Bad climate in the work environment	2.89	3	1.45	2.62	2	1.33	-1.107	0.268
Managers lacking communication skills	3.04	3	1.35	2.67	3	1.31	-1.565	0.118
Unclear division of duties	3.09	3	1.25	2.82	3	1.28	-1.126	0.260
Unclear rules for awarding bonuses, raises, promotions	3.56	4	1.48	2.81	3	1.45	-2.934	0.003**
Infrequent meetings with the line manager	2.13	2	1.32	2.15	2	1.24	-0.291	0.771
Lack of cooperation and support at the employee-manager level	2.49	2	1.41	2.49	3	1.22	-0.253	0.800
Limited access to knowledge which supports the task performed	2.47	2	1.41	2.39	2	1.13	-0.114	0.910
Bureaucracy, extensive procedures	3.05	3	1.41	2.67	3	1.43	-1.581	0.114
Lack of clear, precise company strategy	2.80	3	1.51	2.39	2	1.23	-1.529	0.126
Mismatching between duties and the employee's level of knowledge and skills	2.45	3	1.29	2.36	2	1.32	-0.483	0.629
Quantitative/qualitative work overload	3.65	4	1.19	3.11	3	1.41	-2.243	0.025*
Quantitative/qualitative work underload	1.91	1	1.14	2.35	2	1.23	-2.097	0.036*
Mentally taxing relationships with clients, business partners	2.55	2	1.44	2.73	3	1.44	-0.739	0.460
Mentally taxing relationships with coworkers	2.75	3	1.40	2.80	3	1.40	-0.211	0.833
Doubts as to one's own competences, skills, knowledge	2.24	2	1.26	2.62	3	1.33	-1.642	0.101
Lack of attention to work-life balance	3.11	3	1.40	2.83	3	1.51	-1.098	0.272
Favouring other employees	3.00	3	1.56	2.69	3	1.46	-1.186	0.236
Duration of the contract of employment and its type	1.91	1	1.47	2.57	3	1.47	-2.853	0.004**
Bad working conditions at the office	1.98	2	1.18	2.50	2	1.34	-2.279	0.023*
Not knowing one's role in the company and what is expected of one	2.11	2	1.29	2.19	2	1.28	-0.427	0.669
Lack of access to company benefits	2.71	3	1.67	2.86	3	1.54	-0.618	0.537

from generation Y to a much greater degree than employees from generation Z.

In the course of work, it was also checked how differences in the evaluation of individual organisational and psychosocial factors shaped from the point of view of women and men. The research shows that definitely the largest share of women (47.5%) believe that it is bad climate in the work environment that is an organisational factor that can be a particularly strong reason behind burnout. Women also pointed to monotony and routine at work (42.4%), as well as pressure to perform (36.4%) and lack of professional development opportunities (36.4%).

On the other hand, among men the two most frequently indicated factors are bad climate in the work environment (52.5%) and monotony and routine at work (50%), but the lack of professional development opportunities (45%) and pressure to perform (42.5%) come very close behind. This means that the top factors are very similar for both sexes. Only in the case of quantitative/qualitative work overload it turned out that statistically significantly larger number of women (25.3%) than men (7.5%) pointed to it. The correlation between the sex and the significance of this factor is weak (Cramer V = 0.200). The data are presented in Table 9.

Table 8. Generation vs degree to which individual psychosocial factors are experienced in the organisation in relation to one's own person (source: based on own study)

Degree to which psychosocial factors are experienced in the organisation in relation to yourself	Generation						U Mann -Whitney Test	
	Y			Z				
	M	Me	SD	M	Me	SD	Z	p
No sense in tasks performed	2.49	2	1.33	2.39	2	1.25	-0.351	0.725
Lack of a sense of real impact on what happens in the organisation	3.20	4	1.48	2.61	3	1.34	-2.397	0.017*
Lack of kindness in interpersonal relationships at the team level	2.42	2	1.32	2.40	2	1.28	-0.047	0.963
No mental support from the manager	2.69	3	1.59	2.44	2	1.41	-0.757	0.449
Rivalry at work	2.53	2	1.46	2.36	2	1.35	-0.627	0.531
Disrupted communication on the employee-manager line	2.45	2	1.44	2.36	2	1.38	-0.362	0.717
Disrupted communication on the employee-coworkers line	2.27	2	1.37	2.37	2	1.32	-0.523	0.601
Lack of trust in people in the organisation	2.84	3	1.40	2.70	3	1.41	-0.582	0.560
Mobbing	2.38	2	1.55	2.24	2	1.45	-0.475	0.635
Interpersonal conflicts	2.38	2	1.35	2.36	2	1.39	-0.155	0.877
No independence, autonomy	2.33	2	1.25	2.19	2	1.30	-0.807	0.420
Isolation, loneliness in the organisation	1.89	1	1.20	2.22	2	1.28	-1.640	0.101
No respect towards one	2.11	2	1.37	2.08	1	1.42	-0.330	0.742
No belief in one's own competences and skills	2.13	2	1.32	2.41	2	1.41	-1.132	0.258
Feeling of emptiness, dejection	2.53	2	1.23	2.51	2	1.44	-0.310	0.756
Depreciating one's own successes, failing to notice one's own successes	2.20	2	1.34	2.64	3	1.48	-1.691	0.091
Low ability to adapt to changes	1.91	1	1.24	2.13	2	1.29	-1.048	0.294
Perfectionism in carrying out tasks, approach to work and duties	3.04	3	1.49	2.94	3	1.41	-0.403	0.687

Table 9. Sex vs opinion on which organisational factors are the main reasons behind the occurrence of burnout (source: based on own study)

Which of the organisation factors do you believe to be potentially particularly strong reasons behind the occurrence of burnout?	Sex				Chi-Square Test	
	Woman		Man			
	N	%	N	%	Chi-2	p
Multitasking	27	27.3	11	27.5	0.001	0.978
Pressure to perform	36	36.4	17	42.5	0.455	0.500
Lack of professional development opportunities	36	36.4	18	45.0	0.894	0.344
Monotony, routine at work	42	42.4	20	50.0	0.662	0.416
Conflicts at the organisation	29	29.3	6	15.0	3.089	0.079
Bad climate in the work environment	47	47.5	21	52.5	0.288	0.592
Managers lacking communication skills	15	15.2	6	15.0	0.001	0.982
Unclear division of duties	20	20.2	5	12.5	1.146	0.284
Unclear rules for awarding bonuses, raises, promotions	13	13.1	7	17.5	0.441	0.506

End of Table 9

Which of the organisation factors do you believe to be potentially particularly strong reasons behind the occurrence of burnout?	Sex				Chi-Square Test	
	Woman		Man			
	N	%	N	%	Chi-2	p
Infrequent meetings with the line manager	2	2.0	0	0.0	0.820	0.365
Lack of cooperation and support at the employee-manager level	4	4.0	4	10.0	1.865	0.172
Limited access to knowledge which supports the task performed	7	7.1	4	10.0	0.335	0.562
Bureaucracy, extensive procedures	10	10.1	8	20.0	2.476	0.116
Lack of clear, precise company strategy	3	3.0	1	2.5	0.029	0.866
Mismatching between duties and the employee's level of knowledge and skills	5	5.1	3	7.5	0.315	0.575
Quantitative/qualitative work overload	25	25.3	3	7.5	5.581	0.018*
Quantitative/qualitative work underload	5	5.1	0	0.0	2.096	0.148
Mentally taxing relationships with clients, business partners	9	9.1	2	5.0	0.654	0.419
Mentally taxing relationships with coworkers	14	14.1	4	10.0	0.433	0.510
Doubts as to one's own competences, skills, knowledge	2	2.0	2	5.0	0.905	0.341
Lack of attention to work-life balance	16	16.2	9	22.5	0.776	0.378
Favouring other employees	8	8.1	6	15.0	1.506	0.220
Duration of the contract of employment and its type	7	7.1	1	2.5	1.097	0.295
Bad working conditions at the office	9	9.1	2	5.0	0.654	0.419
Not knowing one's role in the company and what is expected of one	5	5.1	0	0.0	2.096	0.148
Lack of access to company benefits	5	5.1	0	0.0	2.096	0.148

Note: % do not add up to 100 because respondents could choose more than one answer.

In the case of psychosocial factors which constitute strong reasons behind professional burnout, women definitely most frequently pointed to mobbing activities (46.5%) and lack of kindness in interpersonal relationships at the team level (42.4%). In turn, among men, definitely the largest number indicated no sense in performing tasks (50%), as well as lack of a sense of real impact on what happens in the organisation (42.5%). As Chi-Square Test showed, statistically significantly more

women (23.2%) than men (7.5%) believe rivalry at work to be a significant factor (Cramer V = 0.183). Also significantly more women (46.5%) than men (27.5%) pointed to mobbing activities (Cramer V = 0.175). Whereas significantly more men (20%) than women (5.1%) believe that such factor is the lack of independence and autonomy (Cramer V = 0.232). Thus, the strongest correlation is between sex and the last one of the factors discussed. The data are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Sex vs opinion on which psychosocial factors are the main reasons behind the occurrence of burnout (source: based on own study)

Which of the psychosocial factors do you believe to be potentially strong reasons behind the occurrence of burnout?	Sex				Chi-Square Test	
	Woman		Man			
	N	%	N	%	Chi-2	p
No sense in tasks performed	34	34.3	20	50.0	2.940	0.086
Lack of a sense of real impact on what happens in the organisation	30	30.3	17	42.5	1.894	0.169
Lack of kindness in interpersonal relationships at the team level	42	42.4	11	27.5	2.690	0.101
No mental support from the manager	21	21.2	10	25.0	0.236	0.627
Rivalry at work	23	23.2	3	7.5	4.637	0.031*
Disrupted communication on the employee-manager line	24	24.2	6	15.0	1.438	0.230
Disrupted communication on the employee-coworkers line	16	16.2	2	5.0	3.149	0.076
Lack of trust in people in the organisation	21	21.2	8	20.0	0.025	0.873
Mobbing	46	46.5	11	27.5	4.236	0.040*

End of Table 10

Which of the psychosocial factors do you believe to be potentially strong reasons behind the occurrence of burnout?	Sex				Chi-Square Test	
	Woman		Man			
	N	%	N	%	Chi-2	p
Interpersonal conflicts	21	21.2	8	20.0	0.025	0.873
No independence, autonomy	5	5.1	8	20.0	7.510	0.006**
Isolation	6	6.1	3	7.5	0.097	0.755
No respect towards one	28	28.3	15	37.5	1.133	0.287
No belief in one's own competences and skills	10	10.1	4	10.0	0.000	0.986
Feeling of emptiness, dejection	14	14.1	9	22.5	1.441	0.230
Depreciating one's own successes, failing to notice one's own successes	6	6.1	5	12.5	1.621	0.203
Low ability to adapt to changes	2	2.0	1	2.5	0.031	0.860
Perfectionism	11	11.1	5	12.5	0.054	0.816

Note: % do not add up to 100 because respondents could choose more than one answer.

5. Discussions

The results of research conducted show a number of important aspects of organisational and psychosocial nature which may determine whether and to what extent professional burnout might occur among representatives of the youngest generations active in the labour market – Y and Z. The organisational factors which are particularly strongly noticed by generation Y include first and foremost bad climate in the work environment, whereas for representatives of generation Z – monotony, routine at work, bad climate in the work environment, lack of development opportunities, and pressure to perform. Representatives of generation Y more acutely perceive the problem with bureaucracy, extensive procedures, work overload, and lack of attention to work-life balance.

Meanwhile, as the literature indicates, high expectations from both family and society drive the need to continually improve one's performance, both in education and later at work. Demanding system of education combined with fierce competition in the workplace creates pressure that results in chronic stress and, consequently, burnout (Chen et al., 2023). In the context of psychosocial factors which may determine the occurrence of professional burnout, for generation Y it is no sense in tasks performed, lack of a sense of real impact on what happens in the organisation, but also mobbing activities. Such result indicates that many employees may feel like they are objects in the organization rather than a valuable member of the team who has real influence on how it functions. For representatives of generation Z, the problematic psychosocial factors include lack of kindness in interpersonal relationships at the team level but also mobbing activities, which brings a question what climate actually functions in contemporary enterprises and what type of management styles are adopted by managers. This is because their relevance is particularly visible in specific organisational behaviours. As researchers point out, burnout isn't limited to individuals but also affects social relationships on a much broader

scale. Many Generation Z members already experience loneliness and isolation, which isn't compensated for by the social media so readily used by this generation. Burnout can lead to withdrawal from social interactions and be caused by excessive fatigue and a lack of energy to communicate at all. This, in turn, translates into feelings of alienation and loneliness. A lack of social support is also a significant factor, exacerbating the problem, ultimately leading to "trapping in fatigue" (Lucas, 2024). This is precisely why the importance of relationships, kindness, and a healthy work environment is so important. Analysing the degree to which individual factors are felt by respondents in relation to their own person and in the context of functioning in the given organisation, generation Y declares that they feel most acutely the pressure to perform, unclear rules of awarding bonuses, raises, promotions, as well as quantitative/qualitative work overload. Generation Z, in turn, feels strongly the monotony, routine at work, quantitative/qualitative work underload. This result creates a question of how work is therefore organised. How are people selected for specific positions and what do the monotony, routine and work underload arise from. Can the recruitment processes be deemed effective if young employees have nothing to do during their working hours?

The analyses conducted pose a question on whether what is seemingly equated to burnout is not actually an overwhelming need to give your work a deeper meaning? In the context of the youngest active generation in the labour market, this is the first serious crisis of "adulthood" and a question of existential nature – who am I really? What work do I actually want to do and what professional role will in fact bring me fulfilment.

In the context of psychosocial factors, Generation Y states that the problem they feel most acutely is the real impact on what happens in the organisation, and on the other hand it experiences perfectionism, but also lack of trust in people in the organisation. Representatives of generation indicate on the other hand that things they find burdensome are perfectionism, approach to work and duties. In this respect, on the one hand we hear the need of

proving oneself, self-fulfilment in the professional role, but on the other hand – a barrier in the form of the scope of tasks and the work environment itself that possibly does not fully perceive and use the potential of the youngest employees. Research has shown anyway that representatives of generation Z are not certain of their competencies. Research also points to similarities in the perception of individual organisational factors between women and men of generations Y and Z. Women point to the problem of bad climate in work environment, monotony, routine, pressure to perform, lack of development opportunities. Men also indicate the problem of bad climate in organisations in which they work, and similarly notice monotony, routine, lack of development and pressure to perform. In the context of psychosocial factors, women in their organisations experience mobbing and lack of kindness, men in turn – no sense in tasks performed, lack of real impact on what happens in the organisation. Women also perceive the problem of rivalry at work, and men note the lack of independence and autonomy.

The research conducted clearly indicates that the climate in the organisation, i.e. the environment in which the work is performed, constitutes a significant problem which to a certain extent may condition the occurrence of burnout among young employees. It's already becoming clear that many members of the younger generation work in environments that demand high performance, which applies to freelancers, corporate employees, and entrepreneurs alike. The pressure to consistently achieve results causes long-term fatigue. This leads to a lack of concentration, a lack of creativity, and a decline in motivation. Ultimately, a persistent state of exhaustion may lead to a desire to change jobs or careers (Hartono & Prapunoto, 2024).

Numerous studies prove that the organisational climate is a key factor both in the context of effectiveness of employees themselves and the feeling of satisfaction with work, or building employee motivation (see e.g. Zhang & Liu, 2010; Mahal, 2009; Al'Ararah et al., 2024). Meanwhile, any disruptions in this area may constitute a predisposition to the occurrence of negative organizational behaviors among employees (e.g. mobbing) as well as create a basis for the emergence of pathologies, such as professional burnout or organisational stress. Mobbing, indicated in both groups, may be perceived as a method of coping in a demanding work environment in which there is no role clarity, the way of awarding bonuses, raises and promotions is unclear, and work atmosphere that lacks kindness or empathy limits a person's natural protection in situations connected with functioning in interpersonal relationships. High rivalry or lack of trust also contribute to mobbing activities (cf. e.g. Ostrowska & Michcik, 2014), and their impact on the psychophysical condition of employees is destructive (see e.g. Hogh et al., 2011).

In this context, in-depth analysis of the organisational environment in which employees exist should be the first element in the context of undertaking preventive actions counteracting professional burnout among young

employees, the more so as studies conducted by other researchers also indicate considerable relevance of this area. For example, Lubrańska in her research points to the significance of relationships between the organisational climate (and its various aspects) and burnout. This is because the highest burnout is experienced by people working in an autocratic climate, and the lowest – by people working in a supportive climate (Lubrańska, 2011).

The result pointing to monotony, routine and, in consequence, lack of feeling that given work makes sense, also attracts attention. This is an alarming result which indicates that the way in which tasks are defined and allocated, selection of appropriate people for the tasks – the use of their potential and competences, underloading or overloading with work may in the end translate not just into quality and effectiveness in the specific professional role, but first and foremost into the attitude to work, commitment to its performance, and in reality also loyalty towards the employer (see e.g. Chirkowska-Smolak, 2018).

6. Limitations, future directions of research and practical recommendation

The results of research are non-representative and cannot be generalised to the entire population. However, they indicate specific tendencies which occur in the given area surveyed and thus can constitute an impulse to undertaking in-depth research both in the quantitative and the qualitative dimension. The results obtained were sufficient to test the tool studying strong risk factors behind the occurrence of burnout among representatives of generations Y and Z, allowing for their organisational and psychosocial nature, as well as identification of areas which require further academic exploration.

The value of this research lies in the empirical identification of organizational and psychosocial factors that, according to current assessments by Generations Y and Z, may contribute to the occurrence of burnout. This work therefore provides a knowledge that addresses the work environment itself, some of its determinants, rather than the specific nature of the profession itself. Furthermore, the perspectives of younger generations – Y and Z – were taken into account, thus verifying whether the problem of burnout is largely related to a specific (long) period of employment. Importantly, however, the research was conducted on a relatively small sample, hence the need to expand its scope to draw generalized conclusions. Furthermore, the research was conducted among employees of Polish enterprises. Regional differentiation, including other European (or global perspective) countries, would provide a broader picture of the problem and also allow for comparison of strategies and approaches used to counteract it among both employees and employers.

Considering future directions of research, it is worth taking into account the aspect of creation of the organisational climate in relation to the shaping of specific organisational behaviours. This is because the results of research indicate that it is one of the most relevant factors behind

the emergence of specific behaviours, attitudes, activities. In this respect, the work environment, atmosphere and relationships constitute a pillar for the correct functioning of an employee in the organisation. It is certainly important that future research not only focus on social professions, where most research has been conducted to date, but also analyze specific conditions, environments, and relationships. Conducting research that takes into account the specifics of individual generations can also provide important information on the scale of the problem in contemporary business realities, the essence of today's definition of burnout, and ways of coping with this phenomenon among employees in diverse professions (e.g., freelancers, where stability and predictability are difficult, or strictly technical professions, focused on technology rather than working with people).

Practical implications primarily relate to a holistic approach to the problem of burnout in the workplace. Not only through the lens of the work environment itself, but also through the lens of employee needs, capabilities, and limitations.

Factors determining the occurrence of burnout are diverse, therefore, generalized countermeasures that are not tailored to individual needs and expectations may often fail to deliver the desired results.

The issue remains problematic, not only regarding the diagnosis itself, but also the identification of so-called "weak signals" that allow for early detection of the threat to enable countermeasures.

In this context, the role of managers leading teams becomes crucial, as they are responsible for creating a specific environment, atmosphere, work climate, and trust. It seems that without their involvement and support, early identification of the problem and potential remedial action will likely be impossible.

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