

WORKPLACE STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN GENZ EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

The increasing dependence of the modern workplaces on Generation Z (Gen Z) workers implies that the perception of workplace stress and mental health provision services that appeal to this generation requires a more profound comprehension. The research explores the structural relationships between stress and burnout at the workplace, organizational mental health support, job satisfaction, and employee engagement. The survey was conducted with 312 Gen Z workers in various industries using a cross-sectional survey. To test the hypothesized model, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used. The findings suggest that workplace stress is a major contributor to burnout ($\beta = 0.52, p < .001$), and it explains 46 percent of its variance. Burnout has a negative influence on job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.48, p < .001; R^2 = .38$) and employee engagement ($\beta = -0.44, p < .001; R^2 = .34$), which proves the harmful influence of burnout on work-related outcomes. In addition, the organizational mental health support is a considerable moderator of the dependence between organizational stress and burnout ($\beta = -0.18, p < .01$), which shows buffering effect of organizational stress on psychological strain. The results also contribute to the literature because the authors have incorporated stress and support mechanisms into one model (Gen Z employees). The research highlights the relevance of organized mental health programs and positive leadership towards promoting sustainable interaction and health among new workforce groups. Keywords: Workplace Stress, Burnout, Organization Mental Health Support, Perceived Organizational Support, Employee Engagement, Job Satisfaction, generation Z, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

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1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary workplace is being marked by a high rate of technological development, growth in performance expectations, and a transforming organizational structure. In this dynamic situation, the Generation Z (Gen Z) employees, who are the people born around the middle of the 1990s until the early 2010s, become a substantial, and increasingly important, portion of the labor force. Being digital natives who reveal in competitive and usually unstable labor markets, Gen Z employees are facing unusual work-related stressors that influence their mental health.

Occupational stress or workplace stress is a situation that occurs when work demands surpass the ability of an individual to deal with them. High expectations of productivity, role ambiguity, decreased job security, continuous connectivity to the internet, and a desire to showcase a fast-tracked career movement are common stressors to Gen z workers. A culture of hybrid and remote work has only complicated the working environment. Although flexibility can lead to better autonomy, it can also cause work-life boundaries, social isolation, and burnout risk to intensify.

Burnout, which is a chronic work-related stress that has failed to be managed, is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lessened professional efficacy. Constant stress in young employees may result in anxiety, lack of job satisfaction, disengagement and increased turnover intentions. Gen Z has high regard to purpose, inclusivity and work-life balance, so there is a potential that a lack of alignment between organizational culture and employee expectations can increase psychological pressure.

Thus, the nature and determinants of workplace stress among Gen Z employees should be considered to resolve the emerging mental health issues in the modern organizational context.

1.1. Organizational Mental Health Support and Strategic Interventions

Organizations have started creating systematic support systems to address the issue of mental health in the workplace due to growing awareness of the problem. These are mental health policies, HR-led programs on well-being, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), stress management

programs, and flexible work arrangements. Such measures should be effective as well as available, accessible, inclusive, and aligned with the needs of the employees.

Another massively important aspect that affects mental health outcomes is perceived organizational support, which is the extent to which employees think that their organization appreciates their efforts and is concerned about their well-being. Psychological safety and supportive leadership are especially significant to the workers of Gen Z. Leaders that foster open communication, empathy, and transparency make employees feel at ease communicating about stress-related issues without the fear that they may be stigmatized or punished.

Moreover, the audience on the mediating discrepancy between mental health support and overall well-being is worker engagement. The above benefits are particularly witnessed when organizations foster a positive workplace culture, embrace work-life balance, and incorporate mental health considerations into HR policies, then the employees are likely to enjoy greater job satisfaction and less burnout.

Although there is an increasing practice of workplace well-being programs, there is still a gap in implementing a specific mental health support strategy that is focused on Gen Z needs. This research, thus, aims at investigating the connection between workplace stress and mental health support provided by organisations to Gen Z workers and suggest specific measures that organisations may take in order to establish psychologically healthy, supportive, and sustainable working conditions.

1.2 Objectives of the study

- ✓ To investigate the primary causes of workplace stresses in Gen Z employees.
- ✓ To examine the effects of job stress on job burnout and job satisfaction.
- ✓ To assess the efficacy of organizational mental health support (e.g., EAPs or HR well-being programs, supportive leadership).
- ✓ To suggest the options that the organizations can follow to improve mental health support to accommodate Gen Z workers.

1.3 Hypothesis

H1: Stress at work has a positive correlation with burnout in employees of Generation Z.

H2: Job satisfaction and employee engagement have a negative relationship with burnout in Gen Z employees.

H3: Organizational mental health support mediates relationship between workplace stress and burnout, that is the positive relationship between workplace stress and burnout is less when perceived organizational support is high.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Workplace Stress, Hybrid Work and Mental Health among Gen Z

The issue of stress in the workplace and its effects on mental health has been an area of study in the organizational setting. As [3] established, work-life balance has a positive relationship with psychological well-being, and negative relationship with psychological distress among Indian managers, balance policies should be well structured to facilitate mental health.

This validates the fact that the organizational resources are able to mitigate occupational stress. The trend towards flexible and hybrid work products has also affected the welfare of employees. In an overview of hybrid work environments, [23] demonstrated the topicality of the Job Demands-Resources framework and featured the variables of burnout, engagement and leadership effectiveness as an important variable influencing the post-pandemical workplaces. To complement this, [8] found that flexible work and non-territorial office set ups have a significant impact on loneliness and job satisfaction among Gen Z workers and that a sizable percentage experience depression that is mild to clinical.

These results show that a hybrid working environment could be both flexible and more psychologically vulnerable. Disruptions related to pandemic have also contributed to worsening mental health risk. [4] by means of a multilevel meta-analysis, have shown a high prevalence of depression, anxiety and PTSD in populations that have suffered coronavirus pandemics. At the generational scale, [1] discovered that Gen Z has a stronger level of happiness pressure and emotional frailty than older generations implying that Gen Z is more emotionally sensitive.

Also, [21] found that, despite being associated with beneficial outcomes, workplace hazing contributes to moral injury and quiet quitting intentions in Gen Z employees, which demonstrates the ability of negative organizational climates to cause withdrawal behaviors.

Gen Z mental health outcomes are also influenced by the digital workplace dynamics. The study conducted by [14] found psycho-physiological effects of non-verbal communication processes through memes on Gen Z employees.

Likewise, [24] determined that the implementation of AI has an indirect effect on the well-being of employees, as it leads to task optimization and safety enhancement in the workplace. Collectively, these papers depict that structural, relational and technological spheres produce stress in the workplace among Gen Z.

2.2. Organizational Support, Leadership and Engagement as Protective Mechanisms

The systems that support organizations play a key role in reducing stress at work or enhancing mental health. The article by [16] revealed that organization culture and leadership play a significant role in determining the mental health of the employees, and the organization interventions mediate these effects.

This highlights the importance of leadership and systematic policies of enhancing psychological resilience. Social support is a resource that has been found to be important to Gen Z employees. The results of [22] revealed that organizational support and connectedness and recognition in the workplace are major predictors of internship satisfaction and career intentions among hospitality interns of Gen Z.

Likewise, [6] stated that the family and friend support fosters organizational socialization by relational energy among Gen Z employees. These results emphasize the significance of a support system internal and external in creating engagement and adaptation.

The perceived organizational support is also mediating in the well-being of the employees. The study expressed in [10] showed that the existence of insincere diversity practices has a negative impact on well-being, organizational commitment and job performance, and that perception of organizational support plays a significant role in mediating the correlation. This implies that genuineness in organizational activities is vital in terms of sustaining trust and psychological security.

Engagement literature also supports the value of mentoring, recognition and job control among the Gen Z employees. The article [15] underlined such antecedents of engagement as mentoring and

job ownership among Gen Z professionals. It was proved that positivity resonance and positive emotions can result in a thriving mental health and better performance outcomes [13]. Also, [18] suggested that the key elements of successfully utilizing the Gen Z strengths in the workplace are diversity and technology integration and organizational supports.

2.3 Research Gap

Although prior studies have examined workplace stress, hybrid work, burnout, and organizational support mechanisms, most research investigates these constructs in isolation. There is limited empirical evidence integrating workplace stressors, burnout outcomes, and structured mental health support within a unified framework focused specifically on Gen Z employees.

Additionally, existing literature rarely examines how organizational mental health support moderates the relationship between workplace stress and key outcomes such as burnout, engagement, and job satisfaction among Gen Z. While generational studies highlight Gen Z's distinct psychological characteristics and expectations, there is insufficient evidence on whether current organizational support systems are strategically aligned with these needs.

Therefore, a significant gap exists in developing an integrated model that evaluates (1) workplace stressors affecting Gen Z, (2) their impact on burnout and job-related outcomes, and (3) the buffering role of organizational mental health support mechanisms.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The present research assumes a quantitative and explanatory research design to investigate the correlations between workplace stressors, burnout/psychological strain, organizational mental health support, and job satisfaction and engagement in Gen Z employees. The study is cross-sectional by nature given that the information was obtained at one time among the respondents of the Gen Z generation.

The research is deductive in nature through which the research hypotheses are built on the theoretical foundations that have existed such as the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model and

Organizational Support Theory. The aim is to test the proposed conceptual framework empirically and establish the direct, mediating, and moderating relationships between the identified variables.



Figure 1: Research Methodology Flow of the Study

Figure 1 shows the systematic research process that was followed in this study. The methodology will start with the comprehensive literature review to find the theoretical basis and the constructs in regards to workplace stress and mental health support among the Gen Z workers. As a result of this review, a conceptual framework was created and hypothesis formulation was done.

A pilot study was then conducted on a structured questionnaire to make sure it is reliable and easy to understand. Gen Z employees in the corresponding sectors were then sampled. Following the data cleaning and screening, reliability and validity analysis were done to ensure consistency in measurement.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized to initially test the hypothesized relationship between stressors at work, burnout, organizational mental health support, and job satisfaction and engagement. The conclusions were evaluated to make strategic recommendations and conclusions.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The population under the proposed study is the Gen Z employees, which are typically defined as people born between 1995 and 2010 and are currently working in the corporate, IT, hospitality, service, or other industries. Because Gen Z is the new generation of workers whose psychological and professional demands are different, it is possible to analyze a specific generation with more precision and specificity.

Depending on the accessibility of respondents, a purposive or stratified sampling method will be adopted. It is assumed that the study will gather the answers of about 250-400 respondents, which can be regarded as sufficient to conduct the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. The respondents will be restricted to people who have at least six months of work experience so that they are adequately exposed to the work environment and stress dynamics.

3.3. Data Collection Method

A structured questionnaire was used in the collection of primary data, which is going to be distributed via online assessment tools or direct distribution. The questionnaire is going to be broken down into various sections to obtain the relevant information in a systematic manner.

Initial stage collect demographic data including age, gender, sector, work experience, and mode of work (on-site, hybrid, or remote). The second part will be used to measure workplace stressors, such as job demands, hybrid work pressure, role ambiguity, and work-life imbalance. Burnout and psychological strain will be evaluated in the third section. In the fourth section, organizational mental assessment support systems, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), HR well-being programs, supportive leadership, psychological safety, and mental health policies, will be assessed. The last part will be a measure of job satisfaction and employee engagement.

The questions that were measured based on a five-point Likert scale of the strongly disagree to strongly agree to guarantee consistency and reliability in the responses.

3.4. Variables of the Study

The research incorporates various variables formulated on the basis of the conceptual framework. The independent variables are the stressors at the workplace (job demands, hybrid pressure, role ambiguity, and work-life imbalance). Burnout or mental stress is a mediating variable to show how stress is converted to work outcomes. Organizational mental health support is a moderating variable, and it can condition the relationship between the outcomes and the extent of stress. Job satisfaction and engagement of the employees are the dependent variables that measure employee well being and performance at the organization.

This is a variable framework with a structure that enables the research to test the direct and indirect effects in a single integrated model.

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

The statistical software SPSS used to analyze the data collected. At the very beginning, the descriptive statistics will be calculated to summarize demographic features and the distributions of the variables. Cronbachs Alpha will be used to determine the reliability of measurement scales to make sure that they are internally consistent.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is used to measure construct validity. The relationship among the variables is analyzed using correlation analysis. The proposed research model then tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), including mediation and moderation effects. This method of analysis allows studying all intricate relations in the conceptual context.

3.6. Reliability and Validity

To achieve the research rigor of methodological validity, the content validity is achieved by reviewing the questionnaire by experts. Factor analysis procedures were used to establish construct validity. Scale's reliability will be established using Cronbach Alpha acceptance of which will be at 0.70 and higher. These processes make sure that the measurement tools are suitable and reliable in terms of reflecting the constructs being studied.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

When undertaking the research, ethical principles are strictly observed. All the respondents asked to fill in informed consent and participation in the study voluntary.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section shows the empirical results of the study and discusses them in the context of the hypotheses and theory proposed. These findings are systematically presented starting with descriptive statistics and reliability analysis, analysis of measurement model and structural model testing.

The findings are then discussed as per the existing literature on workplace stress, burnout, and organizational mental health support on Gen Z employees. A special focus is put on the analysis of how stress at work directly influences burnout and how burnout, in turn, affects job satisfaction and engagement and the moderating effect of organizational mental health support. Both theoretical implications and practical insights of the discussed discussion apply to organizations that would want to construct successful mental health approaches specific to the Gen Z workforce.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics of Gen Z Employees (N = 312)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	148	47.4
	Female	156	50.0
	Other/Prefer not to say	8	2.6
Work Mode	On-site	92	29.5
	Hybrid	154	49.4
	Remote	66	21.1
Sector	Information Technology	108	34.6
	Hospitality	64	20.5
	Corporate/Services	96	30.8
	Other	44	14.1
Work Experience	6 months – 1 year	124	39.7

	1–3 years	142	45.5
	Above 3 years	46	14.8
Mean Age (Years)	—	24.3	(SD = 2.1)

The demographic profile of the 312 Gen Z employees that were used in the study are given in table 1. The gender distribution is quite even with 50.0 percent females and 47.4 percent males making up the sample. Almost fifty percent of the interviewees (49.4%) are in hybrid employment which is an indication of the increasing trend of flexible work arrangement among Gen Z workers.

Regarding the sectoral representation, most of the participants work in the Information Technology sector (34.6 percent), then in the Corporate/Service roles (30.8 percent) and then in the Hospitality (20.5 percent). Such allocation shows satisfactory coverage of areas that have high levels of digitalization and changing workplace organizations.

Most of the respondents possess a low level of career experience as 45.5% has 1-3 years of working experience and 39.7% has lower work experience. The average age of the respondents is 24.3 years (SD = 2.1), which proves that it corresponds to the Gen Z generation.

In general, the sample has enough diversity in terms of gender, employment mode, industry, and the level of experience, which proves the relevance of the findings in the context of Gen Z professionals.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Workplace Stress	3.42	0.71	0.88				
2. Burnout	3.18	0.76	0.54**	0.91			
3. Organizational Mental Health Support	3.67	0.68	- 0.29**	- 0.41**	0.89		

4. Job Satisfaction	3.51	0.73	- 0.38**	- 0.56**	0.48**	0.90	
5. Employee Engagement	3.58	0.70	- 0.35**	- 0.52**	0.51**	0.63**	0.92

Note: N = 312. Cronbach's alpha coefficients are reported on the diagonal in bold. $p < .01$

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of the variables under study, their reliability coefficient and correlation between each other. Any construct has very high internal consistency, and the alpha value of Cronbach is between 0.88 and 0.92, which is better than the recommended Cronbach alpha of 0.70.

Burnout is significantly positively associated with work stress ($r = 0.54, p < .01$) which is a preliminary confirmation of H1. Burnout is also associated with job satisfaction ($r = -0.56, p < .01$) and employee engagement ($r = -0.52, p < .01$), which can be taken as the first evidence to support H2.

Organizational mental health support has a negative relationship with stress in the workplace ($r = -0.29, p < .01$) and burnout ($r = -0.41, p < .01$) as well as a positive relationship with job satisfaction ($r = 0.48, p < .01$) and engagement ($r = 0.51, p < .01$). Such relationships indicate that perceived support can be used as a buffer resource in the proposed model. On the whole, the correlation patterns are relevant to the theoretical expectations and the point of the analysis has been made to proceed to the structural model analysis.

Table 3. Measurement Model Results

Panel A: Convergent Validity

Construct	No. of Items	Factor Loadings (Range)	CR	AVE
Workplace Stress	5	0.72 – 0.86	0.90	0.64
Burnout	6	0.75 – 0.89	0.93	0.69

Organizational Mental Health Support	5	0.71 – 0.88	0.91	0.66
Job Satisfaction	4	0.78 – 0.90	0.92	0.74
Employee Engagement	5	0.73 – 0.87	0.91	0.67

Note: All factor loadings are significant at $p < .001$.

Panel B: Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratios)

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5
1. Workplace Stress	—				
2. Burnout	0.61	—			
3. Organizational Support	0.38	0.49	—		
4. Job Satisfaction	0.55	0.68	0.57	—	
5. Engagement	0.52	0.63	0.60	0.72	—

Threshold: HTMT values below 0.85 indicate adequate discriminant validity.

The results of the measurement model are reported in Table 3. Constructs are all well convergent with factor loading being higher than the supporting factor of 0.70 and significant. The Composite Reliability (CR) values are between 0.90 and 0.93 which is more than the acceptable Composite Reliability of 0.70 showing high internal consistency.

The values of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are between 0.64 and 0.74 which is higher than the suggested amount of 0.50, which further verifies that there is sufficient convergent validity. The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was used to examine the discriminant validity. All the values in HTMT are less than the conservative value of 0.85, which indicates that the constructs are empirically different between each other.

Measurement model meets the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity, which promotes the next phase of structural model evaluation.

Table 4. Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Structural Path	β	t-value	p-value	f ²	Result
H1	Workplace Stress → Burnout	0.52	9.84	< .001	0.37	Supported
H2a	Burnout → Job Satisfaction	- 0.48	8.76	< .001	0.29	Supported
H2b	Burnout → Employee Engagement	- 0.44	7.95	< .001	0.24	Supported
H3	Stress × Organizational Support → Burnout	- 0.18	3.42	.001	0.06	Supported

Model Explanatory Power

Endogenous Variable	R ²	Interpretation
Burnout	0.46	Moderate explanatory power
Job Satisfaction	0.38	Moderate explanatory power
Employee Engagement	0.34	Moderate explanatory power

Note: Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was used to estimate significance levels.

The proposed hypotheses are all supported by empirical evidence using the structural model results. In line with H1, workplace stress has a strong and positive impact on burnout ($b = 0.52$, $p < .001$), meaning more stressful the employee is the higher a psychological strain becomes. The effect size ($f^2 = 0.37$) indicates a significant effect.

As shown in support of H2, burnout shows significant negative correlations with both job satisfaction ($b = -0.48$, $p < .001$) and employee engagement ($b = -0.44$, $p < .001$). These results prove that emotional exhaustion decreases positive attitudes to work and the level of engagement.

In relation to H3, the workplace stress and organizational mental health support interaction is significant and negative ($b = -0.18$, $p = .001$). This shows that organizational support also undermines the positive correlation between stress and burnout, which proves its buffering effect. Nevertheless, the effect size ($f^2 = 0.06$) indicates the existence of the small significant moderating effect. The R^2 values are .46, .38 and .34, representing moderate explanatory power, which is appropriate in behavioral research in organizations.

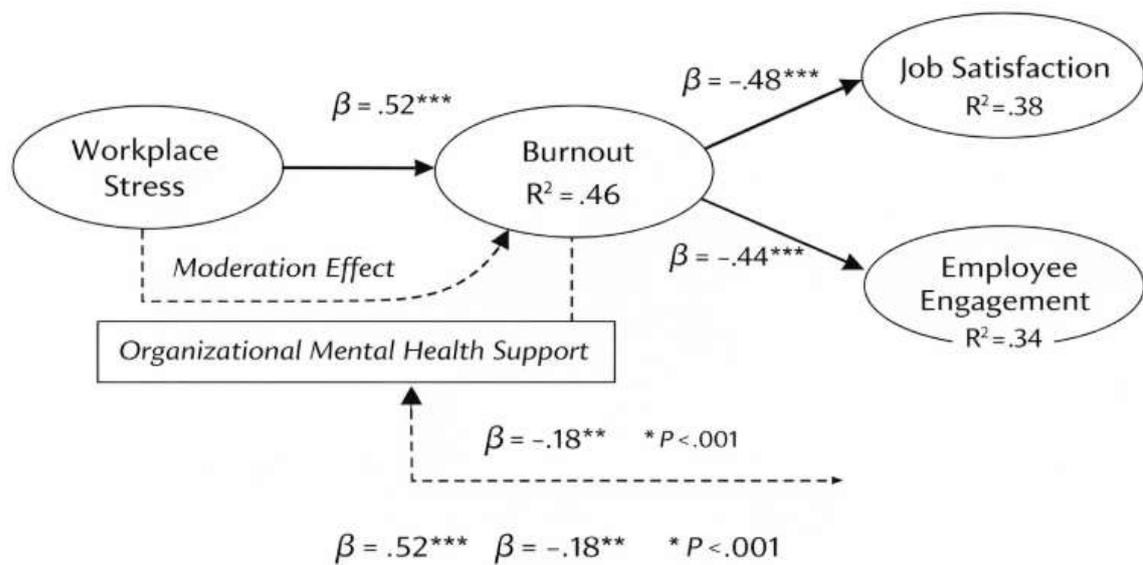


Figure 2: Final Structural Equation Model with Standardized Path Coefficients and Explained Variance

Note: The figure presents the structural relationships among workplace stress, burnout, job satisfaction, and employee engagement among Gen Z employees. Standardized path coefficients (β) are displayed along the arrows, and R^2 values are reported within endogenous constructs. The moderation effect of organizational mental health support on the relationship between workplace stress and burnout is indicated by the interaction path. $***p < .001$; $*p < .01$.

Figure 2 provides the ultimate structural equation model depicting the connections among workplace stress, burnout, job satisfaction, and employee engagement and the moderating effect of the organizational mental health support among Gen Z employees. According to the findings, workplace stress positively correlates with burnout ($b = .52$, $p < .001$), which proves that the perceived job demands and work-related pressure have a strong impact on the psychological strain of Gen Z workers. The moderate explanatory power is indicated by the R^2 value of .46 which

implies that workplace stress and the moderating power explain 46 percent of the variation in burnout.

Burnout, in its turn, has a strong negative influence on job satisfaction ($\beta = -.48, p < .001$) and employee engagement ($\beta = -.44, p < .001$). These conclusions prove that negative work attitudes and the level of involvement are decreased by emotional exhaustion. This model predicts 38% job satisfaction and 34% of employee engagement variance, which is significant predictive power in the field of organizational behavior.

Also, the interaction effect between the workplace stress and organizational mental health support is negative and significant ($\beta = -.18, p < .01$), meaning that the support of organization undermines the positive correlation existing between stress and burnout. This buffer effect implies that encouraging leadership, HR well-being programs, and mental health policies alleviate the negative effect of stress on psychological strain.

5. Discussion

This study proves the proposed model by providing empirical evidence related to workplace stress, burnout, organizational mental health support, and work-related outcomes among Gen Z workers. In line with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, job stress was observed to be a major factor in burnout, which validates the suggestion that job demands and role-related stressors are the major causes of psychological fatigue among young professionals. This finding is consistent with the previous studies that have established that Gen Z is more sensitive to work demands and work-related digitalization.

The adverse impacts of burnout on job satisfaction and staff engagement once again support the importance of emotional exhaustion in the development of work attitudes. The higher the burnout level, the less the motivation, lower the levels of satisfaction, and diminished engagement of Gen Z workers are. These results are in line with previous research that highlights the fact that burnout compromises affective and behavioral elements of employee well-being.

Notably, the protective nature of the supportive practices in the workplace is emphasized by the moderating role of the organizational mental health support. The considerable buffering effect indicates that a supportive leadership approach, HR well-being programs, psychological safety, and organized mental health policies may alleviate the negative effect of stress on burnout. Even

though the size of the moderation effect was small, it is still practically significant, which means that organizational interventions have the potential of minimizing damage caused by stress even in high-demand settings.

6. Conclusion

This paper presents empirical data that workplace stress is a great predictor of burnout in Gen Z workers, and burnout, in its turn, significantly lowers job satisfaction and employee engagement. The structural model has an intermediate explanatory power with the focus on the relevance of psychological strain as a key mechanism that can be used to understand the relationship between job demands and work-related outcomes. Notably, the mediating variable of organizational mental health support proves that supportive leadership, HR well-being programs, and organized mental health policies are protective resources. Though the effect of moderation is not significant, it has significant practical implications, implying that meaningful stress-related damage can be avoided by the interventions applied in organizations. The paper contributes to the field of theoretical studies by combining several theories, including the Job Demands-Resources framework and Organizational Support Theory as applied to the Gen Z setting. In practice, the results suggest that organizations should go beyond the generic wellness policies and implement generation-sensitive mental health policies. Finally, longitudinal design is suggested in the future research to provide causal inferences and investigate sector-specific or cross-cultural differences in stress-buffering processes among Gen Z employees.

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