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How Generation Z Shapes the Future of Work and Faces Burnout: Evidence from a Multinational Context in Portugal

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Master's in International Management

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PhD, Shaozhuang Ma, Associate Professor with Habilitation,
Iscte-IUL

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Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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Acknowledgments

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Resumo

A presente disertação explora o impacto da Geração Z no mundo do trabalho, através da análise da relação entre exigências laborais, autonomia, burnout e intenção de saída. Aplicando por base o modelo Job Demands-Resources (JD-R), foi elaborado um estudo quantitativo com colaboradores de uma multinacional do sector químico, avaliando o impacto das exigências profissionais e dos recursos disponíveis no bem-estar e na retenção de profissionais da Geração Z.

Recorrendo a uma amostra de 121, testamos o modelo de hipóteses utilizando o PROCESS. Os resultados obtidos revelaram que as exigências laborais predizem níveis elevados de burnout, que por sua vez aumentam a intenção de saída. Demonstram ainda que a autonomia tem um impacto protetor ao mitigar o impacto das exigências no burnout e reduzindo a probabilidade de abandono organizacional. Complementarmente, também se conclui que a Geração Z apresenta maior vulnerabilidade ao vínculo burnout-intenção de saída em comparação com gerações anteriores, revelando uma predisposição mais acentuada para abandonar funções quando perceciona baixos níveis de autonomia.

Estes achados demonstram a relevância da autonomia, flexibilidade e bem-estar psicológico como fatores centrais para atrair e reter o talento da Geração Z. A um nível mais prático, este estudo apresenta linhas condutoras para gestores e profissionais de recursos humanos no desenho de políticas organizacionais mais adaptadas às expectativas destas geração. Do ponto de vista teórico, contribi para a literature ao aplicar o modelo JD-R numa perspetiva geracional, evidenciando a necessidade de integrar diferenças intergeracionais em modelos de motivação e saúde ocupacional.

Palavras-chave: Geração Z; burnout; autonomia; intenção de saída; JD-R model.

Classificação JEL: J24-Escolha profissional; M54- Gestão do trabalho

Abstract

This dissertation exams the relationship between job demands, autonomy, burnout, and turnover intention. Based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, a quantitative study was conducted with employees of a multinational chemical company, assessing the associations of job demands and available resources on the well-being and retention of Generation Z professionals.

Using a sample of 121, we tested the hypothesized model with PROCESS. The results obtained revealed that job demands predict high levels of burnout, which in turn increases the turnover intention. They also show that autonomy has a protective effect by mitigating the impact of demands on burnout and reducing the likelihood of organizational withdrawal. In a complementary way, it was also concluded that Generation Z is more vulnerable to the burnout-turnover intention link compared to previous generations, revealing a more pronounced predisposition to leave jobs when they perceive low levels of autonomy.

These findings demonstrate the relevance of autonomy, flexibility, and psychological well-being as key factors in attracting and retaining Generation Z talent. On a more practical level, this study provides guidelines for managers and human resources professionals in designing organizational policies that are better suited to the expectations of this generation. From a theoretical point of view, it contributes to the literature by applying the JD-R model from a generational perspective, highlighting the need to integrate intergenerational differences into models of motivation and occupational health.

Keywords: Generation Z; burnout; autonomy; turnover intention; JD-R model

JEL Classification: J24- Occupational Choice; M54- Labor Management

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and definition of the problem

In recent decades, the labor market has suffered significant transformations in the way it is conceived, organized, and valued. These transformations have been driven by globalization, digital transformation, new forms of communication, and the growing appreciation of psychological well-being in the professional context (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Dolot, 2018; McCrindle, 2014). In this framework, the entry of Generation Z into the job market represents a turning point with the potential to transform the world of work as we know it profoundly. Their massive entry into the market raises a central and urgent question: How will Generation Z transform the world of work as we know it?

Generation Z, comprising individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Tulgan, 2013), was a generation raised in an environment surrounded by technology, social networks, and characterized by socio-economic instability, environmental changes, and rapid digital innovation (Singh & Dangmei, 2016; Gaidhani, Arora & Sharma, 2019). This generation stands out for its fluid relationship with information, preference for instant communication, appreciation of diversity, and search for purpose at work. And unlike previous generations, Generation Z doesn't necessarily prioritize stability and a linear career; instead, they place more importance on autonomy, work-life balance, growth opportunities, and alignment with their personal values (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017; Schwabel, 2014).

In this climate, organizations need to understand the motivations of this generation. If this doesn't happen, organizations may face serious challenges in attracting, retaining, and motivating their talent. Phenomena such as early burnout, intention to leave, and low organizational loyalty are often pointed out as symptoms of the misalignment between traditional practices and new work expectations (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Wang, Zhang, & Lin, 2023). It is therefore essential to analyze the factors that influence the professional behavior of Generation Z.

The findings of this dissertation confirm that job demands significantly increase burnout, which in turn predicts turnover intention. At the same time, autonomy emerges as a crucial protective factor that mitigates burnout and reduces turnover intention. Importantly, the results highlight that Generation Z employees are more vulnerable to the burnout turnover link than older generations, reinforcing the urgency of addressing these challenges in contemporary workplaces.

Although there are studies that analyze generational differences in general terms, there is still a gap in the literature regarding the concrete and long-term impact that Generation Z may have on organizational dynamics, talent retention, and employee well-being. Much of the academic research continues to focus on the Millennial generation, despite the fact that Generation Z is fast becoming the dominant demographic group in entry-level and early career roles across multiple sectors. This dissertation aims to fill that gap by investigating how the specific expectations of Generation Z, especially concerning autonomy, job demands, burnout, and intention to leave, are transforming the way work is structured and experienced.

1.2. Theoretical Foundation and Analysis Model

To better understand the dynamics of this generation with the world of work, this study is based on the Job Demands- Resources (JD-R) model, developed by Demerouti et al. (2001) and later expanded by Bakker & Demerouti (2007,2017). The JD-R model explores the proposition that workers' well-being is affected by two broad dimensions: job demands (such as workload and emotional demand) and job resources (such as social support, autonomy, and feedback).

High demands without adequate support can lead to burnout, while resources help maintain motivation and prevent the negative effects of occupational stress (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017). Based on this model, 3 main variables that affect the well-being and retention of Generation Z workers were explored:

- Burnout, understood as the emotional exhaustion generated by prolonged and unmanaged demands (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; World Health Organization, 2019).
- Intention to leave, defined as the conscious desire to leave the organization (Mobley, 1977; Wang, Zhang & Lin, 2023).
- Autonomy, seen as a protective resource that can mitigate the negative effects of demands (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Van den Broeck et al., 2021; Howard et al., 2023).

1.3. Relevance of the Study

Generation Z is emerging as one of the most influential groups in the current and future job market. As this generation becomes the majority of the workforce, its impact on management practices, organizational culture, and even the structure of the professions themselves will be inevitable. The way they work, communicate, and make decisions is profoundly different from

previous generations, being marked by high digital literacy, a strong social conscience, and a demand for authenticity and work-life balance.

With this in mind, understanding how Generation Z will impact the world of work is no longer just an academic exercise, but a strategic necessity for organizations wishing to remain competitive and attractive. The mismatch between what young people value at work and what companies offer will eventually lead to high levels of demotivation, early burnout, and turnover, with direct consequences for productivity, innovation, and operating costs.

This study, therefore, has a double relevance:

On a theoretical level, in that it contributes to furthering knowledge about the psychosocial factors that influence Generation Z's work behavior, applying the JD-R model in a specific generational context that has not yet been explored. It also strengthens the importance of autonomy as a key resource in this new reality.

On a practical level, it offers valuable insights for leaders and human resources managers, supporting the development of organizational policies that are more adapted to the expectations of the new generation. Understanding how these dynamics work makes it possible to design more effective strategies for attracting, retaining, and developing talent, promoting more sustainable and motivating work environments.

By integrating concepts such as burnout, intention to leave, emotional demands, and autonomy, this research aims to shed light on the mechanisms that underpin Generation Z's work experience, allowing us to anticipate the challenges and opportunities that this generation brings with it.

1.4. Problem Statement

The job market has experienced rapid transformation due to technological, social, and generational changes, forcing organizations to adapt to new realities and expectations. The entrance of Generation Z, the first 100% digital generation, brings a new paradigm to the professional environment, with behaviors, values, and priorities that challenge traditional organizational models (Singh & Dangmei, 2016; Gaidhani, Arora & Sharma, 2019).

The central problem of this research lies in the urgent need for companies to understand and respond to the expectations of Generation Z. Analyzing the existing literature suggests that Generation Z strongly values autonomy, flexibility, work-life balance, and alignment with social values, rather than job security or vertical progression typical of previous generations (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Wang, Zhang 6 Lin, 2023). In contrast, many companies continue to

apply management models designed for other generations, which can lead to disconnection, demotivation, burnout, and higher turnover intentions.

While there are already many studies on other generations and their relationship with the work environment, empirical studies focused on Generation Z are still limited, especially concerning the impact of job demands (such as emotional load and pressure), the role of resources such as autonomy, and consequences such as burnout and intention to leave. In addition, there is not much knowledge about how companies should reformulate their structures and practices to attract and retain the talents of this emerging generation.

The lack of a clear understanding of how to integrate and motivate Generation Z represents a real risk for organizations that don't get up to speed, whether it's a loss of competitiveness, an increase in turnover, or the difficulty of building innovative teams aligned with contemporary values.

This dissertation seeks to fill that gap, offering an in-depth analysis of the factors that influence the work experience of Generation Z and how they could drive significant changes in the work environment, from talent management to organizational culture. Through the lens of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the study provides evidence that autonomy not only reduces burnout and turnover intention but also buffers the impact of demands on burnout (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

1.5. Research Objectives

In light of the literature review and the theoretical framework adopted, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between job demands, burnout, autonomy, and turnover intention among Generation Z employees, with a special focus on the practical implications for the future of work.

The specific objectives are:

1. To assess the association of job demands, namely workload and emotional demand,, and burnout among Generation Z workers.
2. To investigate the relationship between burnout and intention to leave, analyzing whether high levels of emotional exhaustion are associated with a greater predisposition to leave the job.
3. To explore the mediating role of burnout in the relationship between job demands and intention to leave, understand whether burnout acts as an explanatory mechanism for this link.

4. To analyze the moderating role of perceived autonomy (flexibility) in the relationship between job demands and burnout, testing whether autonomy can mitigate the negative effects of demands on psychological well-being.

By achieving these objectives, it is hoped to generate useful knowledge to support the organizational transformation needed to welcome, develop, and motivate Generation Z, thus contributing to understanding how this generation is changing and will continue to change the world of work.

1.6. Structure

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research problem, outlines the theoretical foundation, and states the objectives. Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature, focusing on Generation Z, the JD-R model, and key constructs such as burnout, autonomy, and turnover intention. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, including the sample, instruments, and analytical strategies employed. Chapter 4 reports the empirical results, including descriptive analyses, hypothesis testing, and advanced statistical models. Chapter 5 discusses the findings in light of the literature, highlights theoretical contributions, outlines practical and managerial implications, identifies limitations, and suggests directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Introduction

The dynamics of the labor market have evolved substantially with the entry of new generations, especially Generation Z. It is essential to understand that preferences at work and organizational culture change from generation to generation, and it has become essential for companies to understand this and adapt to these differences as new generations enter the workforce (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Dolot, 2018). It is necessary to understand how to motivate employees and how to keep them interested in their work to achieve better results (Schwabel,2014). In this sense, it is crucial to understand what preferences the current new generation of workers has. Generation Z, made up of individuals born between 1997 and 2012, is entering the job market against a backdrop of profound social and economic transformations (McCrindle, 2014; Singh &Dangmei, 2016). Studies indicate that, unlike previous generations, members of Generation Z have unique characteristics that influence their professional preferences and behavior. These factors are crucial to understanding phenomena such as burnout and turnover in the workplace. To investigate these relationships, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model offers a robust theoretical framework for analyzing the impact of job demands and available resources on the well-being of workers, in this case, Generation Z (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

2.2. Generations

Although each human being is an independent individual, there is always a tendency to want to generalize and define different groups of people. An example of this tendency is the creation of the term “generation".

The notion of generation has been the subject of much discussion in academic literature. Although to date there is no universal consensus on its definition, authors agree on certain fundamental aspects. A generation can be understood as a group of people born in a similar time period, often categorized by specific time intervals, and who share the same relevant cultural, social, and historical experiences during critical phases of their formative and developmental years (Anna Dolot, 2018, p. 44).

Blauth et al. (2011) corroborates this view, defining a generation as a group of individuals who share similar life experiences, such as major historical events, common hobbies, idols, and early work experiences. Mannheim (1952) contributed to the development of this concept by

pointing out that the phenomenon of generations is one of the fundamental factors driving the dynamics of historical development.

These individuals grew up and were educated under the same historical, economic, social, and political conditions. They have also been exposed to many of the same cultural, environmental, and historical milestones, as well as dealing with the same type of technology and development. This similar set of circumstances can have an impact on how people make decisions and behave in similar ways (Mannheim, 1952, p. 320).

It is important to note that defining the years that separate one generation from another is complex (Anna Dolot, 2018, p. 44). Nevertheless, the definition of generations and the study of their specific characteristics are important, as they have an influence on the economy, the job market, organizations, and marketing strategies. The correlation between age, generational differences, and management will increasingly become an important issue for companies (Anna Dolot, 2018, p. 44).

Although we don't have a consensus on the periods that define the individuals who are or are not part of a generation, by combining various ideas and thoughts, we have come to the conclusion that different researchers always come to the same conclusion: that certain aspects and characteristics define each generation. So, the most important thing is not to define the specific period of the generation, but to understand its priorities and values, which are different from one to the next (Bogdanowicz, Bailey, 2002). The different generations have an influence on business styles and trends and are evolving and learning from the mistakes of previous generations.

As mentioned, there is no consensus in the literature when it comes to defining the years/periods that determine each generational group, so significant discrepancies can be found in academic research when we consult different sources.

Table 1: Definition of Generations

Generation	**Hammil (2005)**	**Martin &Tulgan (2002)**	**Remarks**
Veterans/Silent	1992-1945 (Veterans)	*Not Specified*	Overlaps with Silent Generation (US Census: 1928- 1945); Hammil uses a broader start date

Baby Boomers	1946-1964	1946-1964	Fully consistent across both sources
Generation X	1965- 1980	1965-1977	Martin & Tulgan use a narrower window; Hammil includes late ‘70s births
Generation Y/ Millennials	1981 - 2000	1978-2000 (Millennials)	Martin & Tulgan begin earlier (1978 vs 1981); otherwise, mostly aligned
Generation Z	Not defined	Not defined	Defined only by the US Census (2005-present); not discussed in either Hammil or Martin & Tulgan

Source: of their own authorship

2.3. Generation Z in the Workplace

This research will focus on Generation Z, on account of its unique position as the first generation to grow up entirely in the digital era. As we can see from the previous literature, a generation is shaped by the cultural, social, and historical experiences shared during its formative and developmental years. In the case of Generation Z, this is exposure to rapidly evolving technology, social networks, and global interconnectivity. Understanding this generation's specific work preferences and potential pain points is important for organizations looking to effectively manage and retain this increasingly significant part of the workforce.

2.3.1. General characteristics

Generation Z is made up of individuals born mainly after 1996, mostly children of Generation X (Tulgan, 2013). However, different authors disagree on the years that limit this generation. Singh Dangmei (2016, p.2 cited by Anna Dolot, 2018, p.45) considers that individuals from this generation “were born in the 1990s and grew up in the 2000s, during the most profound changes of the century, existing in a world with the web, internet, smartphones, laptops, freely available networks and digital media" (Singh, Dangmei, 2016, p. 2).

"*Generation Z is determined to be highly connected, living in an era of high-tech communication, technology-driven lifestyles and prolific use of social media."* (Gaidhani, Agora & Sharma, 2019, p.2806)

From this perspective, this generation was created to be agile in the digital world and in technologies. Some also call this generation: Generation I, Gen Tech, Digital Natives, Gen Wii, etc. (Singh, Dangmei, 2016). Individuals from this generation have access to technology from an early age, which gives them the view that they are "digital integrators" (McCrindle, 2014), or “digital natives" (Friedrich et al., 2010; Sidorcuka and Chesnovicka, 2017). Members of this generation are highly connected, and technology is present in almost every area of their lives. Generation Z also has a preference for visualization over other senses, with the vast majority of them turning to videos that summarize the issue rather than reading articles or information leaflets to solve something or learn new things (McCrindle, 2014).

They are the first generation to have been educated at the peak of globalization and culturally diverse times, which makes them more open to diversification and equality, as they have access to different cultures, backgrounds, and circumstances through social networks (McCrindle, 2014; Schwabel, 2014; Lanier, 2017). The Institute for Emerging Issues (2012) adds that due to this high level of communication via technology and social media, this generation is the most ethnically diverse and technologically advanced. This phenomenon occurs in a context of constant technological and social change, in a world dominated by the internet, cell phones, computers, and social networks, which directly impacts the way this generation interacts with the world (Singh Dangmei, 2016, p.2, cited by Anna Dolot, 2018, p.45).

2.3.2. Preferences and Expectations at Work

Understanding what Generation Z values in the workplace is key for organizations aiming to a ttract, engage, and retain young talent. As this generation increasingly shapes the future of wo rk, their distinct expectations and priorities are influencing how companies structure roles, de velop cultures, and define success. By recognizing and responding to these preferences, empl oyers can build more adaptive and appealing work environments that align with the evolving workforce landscape.

2.3.2.1. Job security and Turnover intention

Job security refers to the perception of stability and continuity in the employment relationship, i.e., the worker's confidence that they will keep their job for the foreseeable future, without imminent risks of involuntary dismissal. This concept is intrinsically linked to financial stability, job benefits, and career progression, and has historically been valued as one of the main pillars of job satisfaction and well-being (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). The presence

of job security can positively influence organizational commitment, reduce stress levels, and promote greater employee loyalty (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989). However, its perceived value tends to vary between generations: while previous generations considered it essential, younger generations, such as Generation Z, prioritize factors such as autonomy, purpose, and personal development, showing less attachment to traditional job security (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017; Schwabel, 2014).

Although Meret et al. (2018) point to job security as one of the most relevant factors for job choice, Sidorcuka and Chesnovicka (2017) found that Generation Z do not seek long-term or lifetime jobs. This can be attributed to the fact that Generation Z members do not have great enthusiasm for a fixed job and prefer to explore various opportunities, rather than committing to a single employer in the long term (Schwabel, 2014). This is also reinforced by Sidorcuka and Chesnovicka (2017), who indicate that Generation Z tends to be attracted to companies that offer innovation, educational opportunities, and specific benefits.

The value of stability at work varies from study to study, but in general, it doesn't appear to be one of this generation's main priorities, as they move between jobs easily, looking for versatility and an escape from routine. To date, they are the most educated and sophisticated generation ever (Hysa, 2016, p. 390; Steinerowska-Streb, Wziątek-Staśko, 2016, pp. 81-82). The young workers who make up this generation see self-employment as a form of professional activity and, in many cases, even prefer this option because they see it as better paid and providing a greater sense of independence (Pocztowski, Buchelt, Pauli, 2015, p. 19). As Gaidhani et al. (2019, p. 2807) point out, “Generation Z individuals are more likely to leave their jobs if they are not offered flexibility and purpose”, indicating a greater propensity for turnover when their fundamental expectations are not met.

Given these trends, the concept of turnover intention is particularly relevant to understanding the work behavior of Generation Z. Turnover intention refers to an employee's conscious and deliberate desire to leave an organization (Mobley, 1977) and is often seen as an antecedent to leaving a job. In the case of Generation Z, this high intention may not derive from dissatisfaction in the traditional sense, but rather from an active search for alignment between work and personal identity (Wang, Zhang & Lin, 2023). The lower value placed on job security, combined with a preference for personal fulfillment and flexible working conditions, makes this generation more likely to consider quitting when their expectations are not met. Understanding the factors that precede this intention, especially burnout and perceived demands at work, is therefore essential for developing effective strategies for retaining and engaging this generation in the labor market.

2.3.2.2. Autonomy

When it comes to skills, Generation Z values the development of “soft skills", such as interpersonal skills, more than traditional “hard skills" or technical skills (Adecco, 2015). However, research such as Tulgan's (2015) indicates that Generation Z does not yet have a strong set of soft skills at the start of their working life, which shows that this generation is still in the process of developing these skills, despite their stated preferences.

Autonomy is also a key factor for Generation Z. They prefer work environments that offer greater freedom in terms of working hours and location, allowing them to better reconcile their personal and professional lives.

Individuals from this generation are also the first generation to seek employment not just in their immediate vicinity, but all over the world, since characteristics such as openness to mobility and knowledge of foreign languages characterize the majority of Generation Z members. However, although this preference appears in several studies (such as Kirchmayer and Fratričová, 2017), the research carried out by Meret et al. (2018) suggests that Generation Z may not attach as much importance to this factor, given that many young people do not yet have enough experience with the reality of work to realize the relevance of autonomy.

2.4. JD-R Model

The Job Demands and Resources (JD-R) model, originally proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001) and later expanded by Bakker and Demerouti (2007, 2017), is one of the most widely used models when it comes to understanding workers' occupational health, engagement, and performance. It differs from classic models such as the Job Characteristics Theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). The JD-R is a flexible and heuristic model that can be applied to different occupational contexts, regardless of the specific demands or resources of each profession or organization. Its great strength lies in its flexibility and applicability to different professional contexts, regardless of the specific requirements or resources of each occupation. This adaptability has ensured its relevance over time and allowed for important updates in the light of new labor market dynamics.

This model divides work characteristics into two central categories: job demands and job resources. Job demands are the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects that require continuous effort on the part of the worker and are associated with physiological and/or psychological consequences. Some examples of these characteristics are work overload, work-family conflicts, and stressful emotional interactions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). As far as

job resources are concerned, they have to do with the elements that help workers achieve their professional goals and that, in a way, reduce the impact that the demands of the job have on workers. Resources also stimulate personal growth, some examples of which are support from colleagues and supervisors, autonomy, performance feedback, and development opportunities (Bakker et al., 2023).

The model explores two distinct psychological processes:

Health Impairment Process: excessive demands, such as high pressure at work and difficult customers, lead workers to emotional exhaustion, which in turn harms the worker's performance and health (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Some authors, such as Hockey (1993), suggest that workers initially try to protect their performance by making additional efforts, but that as their energy levels are depleted, their ability to maintain optimal performance is compromised. Empirical studies confirm that people who are in a severe state of exhaustion have slower reactions, less precision, and difficulty maintaining performance throughout the day (Veldhuizen et al., 2003).

Motivational process: the lack of resources at work makes it difficult, and in some cases even impossible, to achieve certain goals and objectives, which leads to a feeling of frustration and possibly cynicism, a way for the worker to psychologically distance themselves from the work, which is used as a self-protection mechanism (Maslach, 1993; Wright & Bonett, 1997). Hobfoll (1989) reinforces this idea with the theory of resource conservation, which argues that the loss or threat of loss of resources is stressful and leads to withdrawal as an attempt to minimize damage.

The JD-R model more thoroughly explores the interaction between job demands and resources, as illustrated by the buffer hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that resources can mitigate the negative effects of demands on well-being. Resources such as social support and feedback reduce the impact of interpersonal pressures and conflicts on stress and exhaustion (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2023).

In recent decades, the JD-R model has been broadened to reflect the new digital reality, constant high connectivity, and remote working. Studies indicate that the model has evolved to encompass complex dynamics and non-linear interactions between demands and resources, with a focus on the role of contextual factors such as organizational support in digital environments (Tang et al., 2025). The most recent literature considers that the model should also include digital resources and technological demands, as there is increasing pressure to always be connected, especially after working hours, which can lead to burnout if there are no limits to this need for connectivity (Scheel, Klonek & Seibt, 2024).

Another recent aspect is the incorporation of resources and demands outside of work, such as those from personal or family life. Some studies propose an integrated approach between domains, suggesting that the balance between professional and personal resources is essential for well-being and engagement at work (Van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2022).

A different approach emphasizes the importance of the role of emotions and emotional regulation within the model. This means that the way employees interpret and manage emotions at work has an impact on how the demands of the job affect them and can amplify or soften the possibility of burnout. Thus, in more recent versions of the model, emotions or emotional regulation appear as moderators or mediators (Hu et al., 2023).

In short, the JD-R is a comprehensive model that explains how aspects of the work environment influence well-being and performance through both pathogenic and motivational processes. Its versatility and robust empirical basis make it a valuable tool for organizational interventions focused on occupational health, engagement.

2.5. Burnout

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines burnout as "a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed" (World Health Organization, 2019). This occupational phenomenon manifests itself in three main dimensions: emotional exhaustion, feelings of cynicism or mental detachment in relation to work and reduced professional effectiveness. More recent studies reinforce this conceptualization, highlighting the impact of burnout not only on mental health but also on organizational performance (Bianchi, Verkuilen & Schonfeld, 2024). According to the authors, "burnout should be viewed not as a momentary stress reaction but as a chronic and cumulative response to work-related demands" (Bianchi et al., 2024, p. 3).

Based on this, we hypothesize: *H1: Job demands (workload, emotional demand) are positively associated with burnout among Generation Z employees.*

2.6. Turnover intention

Turnover intention is defined by Mobley (1977) as a worker's conscious predisposition to leave their current job in the near future. It has been one of the most consistent predictors of actual employee withdrawal behavior. This intention can arise after the employee has been exposed to a combination of factors, which recent studies include factors such as burnout, low perceived

organizational support, and a lack of alignment with individual values and expectations (Wang, Zhang & Lin, 2023). These authors stress that "burnout mediates the relationship between job stress and turnover intention, particularly in younger workers with lower tolerance for rigid environments" (Wang et al., 2023, p. 9). Based on this, we hypothesize: *H2: Burnout is positively associated with turnover intention among Generation Z employees.*

In Generation Z, we may find higher intentions, as they have less resistance to traditional work environments and are constantly looking for professional experiences that provide purpose, recognition, and balance.

Drawing on the JD-R model's health impairment process and empirical findings linking burnout to turnover intention, we propose: *H3: Burnout mediates the relationship between job demands (workload, emotional demand) and turnover intention among Generation Z employees.*

2.7. Autonomy and the Theory of Self-Determination

Autonomy in the work context can be defined as freedom and control over your own actions at work; in other words, we can translate this as the possibility of making decisions, managing your own time, and organizing tasks with a high degree of self-direction. The authors Deci and Ryan (2000) developed the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which argues that autonomy is one of the three universal basic psychological needs, along with competence and relationship. The theory supports that satisfying these needs is fundamental to promoting intrinsic motivation, well-being, and sustainable performance.

As Howard et al. (2023) point out, "autonomy is not merely about independence but about the perceived alignment between one's actions and inner values, which fosters engagement and psychological well-being" (p. 6). As far as the workplace is concerned, higher levels of autonomy are associated with increased levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and a lower propensity to burnout (Van den Broeck et al., 2021). Generation Z strongly values autonomy and freedom of action, and this is a resource in the workplace that becomes essential for maintaining their motivation and mitigating the negative effects that can follow from professional demands. Considering autonomy's potential buffering effect on stress outcomes, we hypothesize: *H4: Autonomy (flexibility) moderates the relationship between job demands (workload, emotional demand) and burnout among Generation Z employees, such that high autonomy weakens this relationship.*

2.8. Research Model

The present literature review navigated the unique characteristics that distinguish Generation Z from other generations and explored their preferences in the labor market. It has also analyzed the fundamental principles of the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) model, as well as some variables relevant to this study, such as burnout, autonomy, and turnover intention. We can conclude from this section that it is important to investigate how work-related factors influence the psychological well-being and retention of Generation Z employees.

Based on the literature on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and the work-related preferences of Generation Z, the following conceptual framework was developed. It illustrates the hypothesized relationships among job demands, burnout, autonomy (as a job resource), and turnover intention:

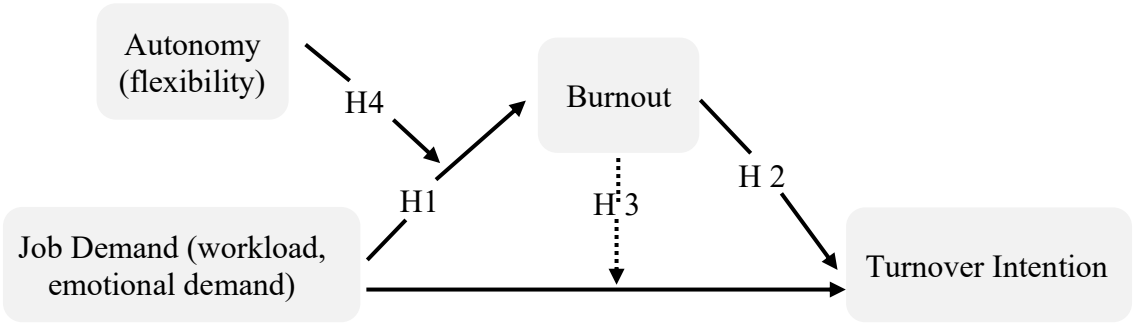


Figure 1: Conceptual model

Source: of their own authorship

This model serves as the foundation for the development of the following hypotheses, which will be empirically tested in the subsequent sections of this study.

H1: Job demands (workload, emotional demand) are positively associated with burnout among Generation Z employees.

H2: Burnout is positively associated with turnover intention among Generation Z employees.

H3: Burnout mediates the relationship between job demands (workload, emotional demand) and turnover intention among Generation Z employees.

H4: Autonomy (flexibility) moderates the relationship between job demands (workload, emotional demand) and burnout among Generation Z employees, such that high autonomy weakens this relationship.

This model aims to contribute to the understanding of how organizational conditions influence the well-being and retention of Generation Z workers, offering theoretical insights and practical implications relevant to human resource management.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional, and correlational approach, thus ensuring objectivity and replicability. The cross-sectional nature is justified by the fact that the data were collected at a single point in time. This research aims to analyze the Relationships that may exist between job demands, burnout, autonomy, and turnover intention among Generation Z employees, based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theoretical model.

3.1. Procedure and Sample

The data was collected online, through the distribution of a questionnaire via Google Forms, from employees of a company in the chemical sector. The collection took place during the month of July. The target population consisted of approximately 500 employees of the chemical sector company under study, covering different functional areas and hierarchical levels.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, an informative introduction was included, ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, and data confidentiality. To ensure the quality and validity of the responses, excluding biased responses due to lack of attention, attention checks were introduced. Three questionnaires were excluded from the final sample for not meeting these criteria. Thus, of the 124 questionnaires received, the final sample consisted of N=121 participants, on which the data analysis was based. The sample is non-probabilistic in nature for convenience, since all employees were invited to participate by completing a digital questionnaire.

3.2. Measurement Scale

An online questionnaire was administered, developed based on scientific literature. The questionnaire was structured into four main sections: Autonomy, Job demands, Burnout, and Turnover Intention. Responses were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly agree”), allowing for continuous quantification of participants’ perceptions.

3.2.1 Job Demand

Job demands were assessed using a scale composed of five items adapted from classic instruments in this area (Demerouti et al., 2001). The different items aimed to capture the employee's perception of the level of intensity and pressure involved in their daily work tasks,

including the objective workload and associated emotional demands. An example of one of the items used is “My job requires me to work intensely.” The scale showed a satisfactory level of internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s α of 0.78.

3.2.2. Autonomy

Autonomy was measured using four items adapted from the work of Howard et al. (2023). This scale reflects the degree of freedom and self-determination that employees perceive they have in performing their tasks, as well as their ability to make decisions related to their work. An example of one of the items used to measure this is, “I have the freedom to decide how to perform my tasks.” The reliability of the scale proved to be adequate, with a Cronbach's α of 0.82, demonstrating consistency among the various items.

3.2.3. Burnout

In order to assess burnout, six items based on the literature review were used. In this section, the main objective was to understand the dimensions related to emotional exhaustion and the feeling of weariness resulting from work. An example of one of the items used is: “I feel emotionally exhausted because of my work.” Internal consistency was high, with a Cronbach's α of 0.89, demonstrating that the items reliably measure the phenomenon of burnout.

3.2.4. Turnover Intention

Finally, to measure turnover intention, three items adapted from Mobley's work (1977) were used. This variable reflects the employee's subjective predisposition to leave the organization and seek new job opportunities. An example of an item used for this purpose is: “I often think about looking for another job.” The scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, so the items have good reliability.

Overall, all scales used showed adequate levels of internal consistency, with Cronbach's α values above the threshold of 0.70 recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). These results support the strength of the measures used and their suitability for the empirical context of this study.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 19), and PROCESS v4.3 (Hayes, 2018) was used for mediation and moderation models. The analysis strategy involved several complementary steps. First, the database was prepared and cleaned, followed by an assessment of the internal consistency of the scales using Cronbach's α (Field, 2018). Following this, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, confidence intervals) were calculated for each variable, providing an overview of the central tendencies and dispersion of responses. Subsequently, Pearson's correlation was used to identify associations between the main constructs under analysis.

In order to examine intergenerational differences, Student's t-tests for independent samples were performed, comparing Generation Z participants with those from other generations. Multiple linear regressions were used to test predictive relationships, such as the influence of demands on burnout and burnout on turnover intention. To test the mediation hypothesis, PROCESS Model 4 was used, which allowed us to verify whether burnout mediates the relationship between demands and turnover intention. Finally, moderation and moderate mediation were analyzed using PROCESS Models 7 and 14, assessing the role of generation in the relationship between burnout and intention to leave, using bootstrapping of 5000 samples and confidence intervals of 95%.

4. Findings

In this chapter, we'll show you the results of the statistical analysis conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (v.19) and PROCESS Macro 4.3 software. The analyses were made in accordance with the objectives outlined and the hypotheses formulated in the theoretical framework.

4.1. Sample Description

The sample consisted of employees of a multinational chemical company. It included workers of both sexes, of different nationalities, ages, and levels of professional experience, reflecting the age and functional heterogeneity of the organization under analysis. This diversity is particularly relevant to the purposes of this study, as it allows us to explore not only general relationships between variables but also potential differences associated with age and generational affiliation in the context.

After applying the previously defined exclusion criteria, namely the exclusion of questionnaires that did not comply with the attention checks, the final sample consisted of N=121 participants. Of these, 53.3% belong to Generation Z (up to 30 years old), while the remaining 46.7% correspond to older generations (Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers). In terms of gender, the sample consisted of 57.9% women and 37.2% men, 1.7% non-binary participants, and 3.3% who preferred not to answer, reflecting a relatively balanced gender distribution in the organization. In terms of length of service at the company, 12.4% of employees had been there for less than 6 months, 16.5% between 6 months and 1 year, 27.3% between 1 and 3 years, and 43.8% for more than 3 years.

Table 2: Characterization of the sample (N=121)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender			
	Female	70	57.9%
	Male	45	37.2%
	Non-binary	2	1.7%
	Prefer not to say	4	3.3%
Generation/Age			
	Generation Z (≤ 30 years)	64	53.3%

	Others generations	56	46.7%
Seniority			
	< 6 months	15	12.4%
	6 months – 1 year	20	16.5%
	1-3 years	33	27.3%
	> 3 years	53	43.8%
Education			
	High school or lower	7	5.8%
	Bachelor's degree	56	46.3%
	Master's degree	55	45.5%
	Doctorate	1	0.8%
	Other	2	1.7%
Department			
	IT & Technology	26	21.5%
	Human Resources	15	12.4%
	Procurement	9	7.4%
	Finance	12	9.9%
	Marketing & Advertising	3	2.5%
	Others	56	46.3%

Source: of their own authorship

4.2. Variance Analysis

Several statistical analyses were conducted to test the study hypotheses. We began by calculating descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations to explore preliminary associations between the main variables. Following this, Student's t-tests were performed to compare differences between generations, and multiple linear regressions were conducted to examine predictive relationships between demand, burnout, autonomy, and turnover intention. Finally,

mediation and moderated mediation analyses were used to investigate the role of burnout as a mediating variable and the moderating effect of autonomy on these relationships.

4.2.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

In order to describe the behavior of the main variables and explore preliminary associations, means (M), standard deviations (SD), and Pearson correlations were calculated. The results are presented in Table 3.

When analyzing Pearson's correlations between variables, the results obtained show that job demands correlate positively with burnout (r=.52, $p < .001$), which preliminarily supports Hypothesis 1, according to which higher levels of demands are associated with greater burnout.

Burnout also showed a positive relationship with Turnover Intention ($r = .47$, $p < .001$), which is in line with Hypothesis 2, which postulated that higher levels of burnout would be associated with a greater turnover intention.

Autonomy, on the other hand, showed a negative correlation with burnout ($r = –.41$, $p < .001$) and with Turnover Intention ($r = –.38$, $p < .001$), which predicted that autonomy would function as a protective resource.

This pattern of correlations is consistent with the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), reinforcing the notion that resources (autonomy) cushion the effects of demands and burnout, while high demands increase the risk of exhaustion.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1.Job Demands	2.99	0.81	—			
2. Burnout	2.66	0.86	.52***	—		
3.Autonomy	4.01	0.72	-.29**	-.41**	—	
4. Turnover Intention	2.75	0.83	.34***	.47***	-.38***	—

**p < 0.01; ***p <.001

Source: of their own authorship

4.2.2. T-Test Results on Generation Differences

In order to understand the differences between Generation Z and other generations, Student's t-tests were performed on independent samples. As reported in Table 4, participants were divided into two groups: Generation Z (≤ 30 years) and other generations (> 30 years). The results show that Generation Z reports significantly lower levels of Autonomy (M = 3.76, SD = 0.79) compared to other generations (M = 4.23, SD = 0.58, t = 3.76, p < .001) and significantly higher levels of Turnover Intention (M = 3.12, SD = 0.79) than other generations (M = 2.42, SD = 0.77, t = -5.05, p < .001). These differences confirm that Generation Z would differ from other generations in terms of autonomy and turnover intention.

In the case of the other two variables Demands & Burnout, the results (Job Demands- Generation Z: M = 3.10, SD = 0.86; Others: M = 2.89, SD = 0.77; t = -1.48, p = .141) or (Burnout- Generation Z: M = 2.81, SD = 0.92; Others: M = 2.52, SD = 0.79; t = -1.80, p = .075), are not statistically significant, although the values suggest a tendency toward greater burnout among younger people.

Table 4: - t-tests comparing Generation Z and other generations

Variables	Gen Z (M, SD)	Others gen. (M, SD)	t	p
Demands	3.10 (0.86)	2.89 (0.77)	-1.48	.141
Burnout	2.81 (0.92)	2.52 (0.79)	-1.80	.075
Autonomy	3.76 (0.79)	4.23 (0.58)	3.76	<.001
Turnover Intention	3.12 (0.79)	2.42 (0.77)	-5.05	<.001

Source: of their own authorship

These results echo recent studies suggesting greater vulnerability of Generation Z to turnover intentions, associated with lower levels of perceived autonomy.

4.3. Linear Regressions

Regression analyses were performed to test the predictive relationships between variables. The purpose of this analysis was to examine the effects of demands and autonomy on burnout and turnover, as well as to test the hypotheses outlined in the JD-R model.

4.3.1. Regression for Burnout

We began by performing a linear regression to assess the impact of job demands and autonomy on burnout. This analysis explained 27% of its variance ($R^2 = .27$, $p < .001$).

Demands positively predict burnout ($B = 0.55$, $\beta = 0.52$, $p < .001$), thus confirming Hypothesis 1. Autonomy, on the other hand, showed a significant negative effect ($B = –0.48$, $\beta = –0.41$, $p < .001$), suggesting that higher levels of autonomy are associated with lower levels of burnout.

These results reinforce the importance of considering both demands and autonomy in explaining employees' emotional exhaustion.

4.3.2. Regression for Turnover Intention

We then analyzed the effect of burnout and autonomy on turnover intention. The model revealed that the predictors explain 22% of the variance in Turnover Intention ($R^2 = .22$, $p < .001$).

Burnout positively predicts Turnover Intention ($B = 0.44$, $\beta = 0.47$, $p < .001$), confirming Hypothesis 2: employees who experience greater burnout are more likely to develop an intention to leave.

Autonomy, on the other hand, had a significant negative effect on Turnover Intention ($B = –0.39$, $\beta = –0.38$, $p < .001$), thus confirming that higher levels of autonomy reduce the predisposition to leave the organization.

Table 5: Linear regression results

Preditor	**DV**	**B**	**β**	**R^2**	**p**
Demands	Burnout	0.55	0.52	.27	<.001
Burnout	Turnover Intention	0.44	0.47	.22	<.001
Autonomy	Burnout	-0.48	-0.41	.17	<.001
Autonomy	Turnover Intention	-0.39	-0.38	.14	<.001

Source: of their own authorship

These results reinforce the JD-R model, empirically demonstrating that job demands act as predictors of burnout, while autonomy acts as a protective resource, mitigating both burnout and turnover intention.

And in this way, the data fully confirm the hypotheses H1and H2 and the protective role of autonomy:

- H1: Demands positively predict burnout.
- H2: Burnout positively predicts turnover intentions
- The negative effect of autonomy on burnout and turnover intention supports the JD-R model and highlights its role as a protective factor.

4.4. Mediation/Moderation Analyses

This section focuses on the explanatory mechanisms and determinants of the relationship between job demands, burnout, and turnover intention, as well as the effect on Generation Z, using mediation and moderation analyses.

4.4.1. Mediation Analysis (Hypothesis 3 testing)

Hypothesis 3 postulated that burnout mediates the relationship between job demands and turnover intention. To test this mediation, Hayes' PROCESS Macro was used (Model 4; 5,000 bootstraps).

The results showed the following effects:

- Total effect (c): Demands → Intention to Leave (B = 0.43, p < .001).
- Direct effect X → M (a): Demands → Burnout (B = 0.55, p < .001).
- Direct effect M → Y (b): Burnout → Intention to Leave (B = 0.44, p < .001).
- Controlled direct effect (c'): Demands → Intent to Leave (B = 0.19, p < .05), after controlling for burnout.
- Indirect effect (a*b): 0.24, 95% CI [0.12, 0.41], statistically significant.

When analyzing these results, we can see that they show that burnout partially mediates the relationship between demands and intention to leave, supporting hypothesis 3. Part of the impact of demands on intention to leave occurs indirectly, through increased burnout, although there is also a direct effect.

4.4.2. Moderation Analysis (Hypothesis 4 testing)

Analyses were conducted using the PROCESS Macro (Model 1; 5,000 bootstraps), introducing the interaction between Demands and Autonomy as an additional predictor in order to test hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 4 argues that autonomy moderates the relationship between demands and burnout, mitigating the negative effects of high job demands.

The results obtained show that:

- The main effect of demands was positive and significant (B = 0.55, p < .001);
- The main effect of autonomy was negative and significant (B = –0.41, p < .001);
- The interaction effect of Demands × Autonomy was significant and negative (B = –0.18, p = .032).

The results presented above validate hypothesis 4: autonomy moderates the relationship between demand and burnout, acting as a protective factor. When autonomy is low, increased demands lead to a marked increase in burnout. Conversely, in contexts of high autonomy, the impact of demands on burnout is significantly mitigated.

4.4.3. Models 7 & 14 Analysis (Generational role)

Additionally, we explored whether generation conditioned this mediation. Thus, analyses were conducted in Models 7 and 14 of PROCESS:

- Model 7 (Demands × Generation → Burnout): no moderating effect was found (p > .05), indicating that the direct relationship between demands and burnout is similar for Generation Z and the other generations.
- Model 14 (Burnout × Generation → Exit Intention): the effect was significant (B = 0.28, p = .017), revealing that Generation moderates the relationship between burnout and exit intention. The moderate mediation index was also significant (0.24, 95% CI [0.05, 0.46]), confirming that the indirect effect of demands on turnover intention via burnout is stronger for Generation Z.

Thus, we can affirm that hypothesis 3 is robustly supported, as the results show us that burnout is a central mediating mechanism, and its impact on turnover intention is especially pronounced among Generation Z employees.

With regard to hypothesis 4, based on these results, we can conclude that generation plays a significant moderating role, but only in the second stage of the process. Specifically, the impact of burnout on turnover intention is stronger in Generation Z than in older generations. Thus, although autonomy mitigates the relationship between demands and burnout, belonging to Generation Z amplifies the effect of burnout on the predisposition to leave the organization.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1. Discussion

Overall, the empirical results corroborate most of the hypotheses outlined in the theoretical framework and confirm the applicability of the JD-R (Job Demands–Resources) model to the organizational context studied.

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of job demands on burnout among Generation Z employees, the role of burnout as a mediator in predicting turnover intention, and the moderating role of autonomy. The results confirm that Generation Z has a particular relationship with the world of work, characterized by high emotional demands and workload, but also by a significant appreciation of autonomy. This confirms the relevance of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model for understanding the work experience of Generation Z.

As expected, it was found that job demands, namely workload and emotional demands, are associated with higher levels of burnout. This conclusion is supported by the central premises of the JD-R model, which argues that demands, when not accompanied by adequate resources, lead to emotional exhaustion and negative consequences for the well-being and motivation of workers (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017).

5.1.1. Hypothesis Testing

H1: Job Demands predict Burnout

Firstly, it was found that job demands positively predict burnout (H1), confirming the idea that high levels of workload and emotional demands contribute to professional exhaustion.

The descriptive analysis showed that Generation Z is particularly sensitive to working conditions, in line with the literature that describes this generation as highly conscious of work-life balance and intolerant of rigid or overburdened work contexts (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Dolot, 2018). In this sense, the confirmation of the positive relationship between demands and burnout suggests that if organizations do not adapt their practices, they may face not only occupational health problems but also higher turnover rates.

H2: Burnout predicts Turnover Intention

It was also demonstrated that burnout significantly predicts turnover intention (H2), reinforcing the notion that emotional exhaustion translates into a greater predisposition to leave the organization.

This result is consistent with previous research indicating that continuous exposure to workload pressures and emotional demands results in psychological exhaustion and, consequently, a greater intention to leave the job (Singh & Dangmei, 2016; Gaidhani, Agora & Sharma, 2019). The link between burnout and intention to leave was therefore confirmed as a solid relationship, which, in practice, highlights the need for burnout prevention policies to reduce turnover.

H3: Burnout mediates the relationship between demands and Turnover Intention

The mediation analysis reinforced the central role of burnout as an explanatory mechanism. It was demonstrated that burnout partially mediates the relationship between demands and exit intention (H3), with this effect being particularly pronounced in Generation Z. Thus, although part of the effect of demands on exit intention is direct, a significant proportion occurs indirectly, through increased burnout, especially among younger employees.

Emotional exhaustion thus emerges as a central mediator that transforms work overload into a predisposition to leave the organization, which is consistent with studies that recognize the loss of emotional stability as a critical factor in turnover (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989).

H4: Autonomy moderates the relationship between Job Demands and Burnout

Autonomy proved to be a protective factor, showing negative associations with both burnout and turnover intention. In addition, the moderation results showed that autonomy attenuates the relationship between demands and burnout, highlighting that in contexts of greater flexibility, the adverse effects of work demands are significantly mitigated (H4).

At the intergenerational level, group comparison tests confirmed that Generation Z reports lower levels of autonomy and a greater turnover intention when compared to older generations (H4). This generational vulnerability suggests that younger workers are at greater risk of developing turnover intentions, especially when they perceive low levels of autonomy.

This finding not only confirms the value of the job resources provided for in the JD-R model but also highlights the centrality of autonomy for Generation Z workers. For this group, autonomy is not limited to an operational or instrumental dimension, but represents an intrinsic value linked to the desire for independence, flexibility, and authenticity in working relationships (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017; Schwabel, 2014). Thus, the moderating effect of autonomy on burnout proves to be not only a protection but also an essential requirement for ensuring this generation's commitment to organizations.

The confirmation of the initially formulated hypotheses reinforces the applicability of the JD-R model in a generational context. In the first place, it was validated that the demands are positively related to burnout. Following was confirmed that burnout is directly associated with turnover intention, playing the role of mediator between demands and turnover intention. At last, it was verified that autonomy plays a moderating role, reducing the negative effects of demands on burnout. This moderating effect corroborates literature that emphasizes generational shifts in work values (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Dolot, 2018). While autonomy buffers stress for all employees, Gen Z's stronger turnover intention suggests that organizations cannot rely solely on traditional retention strategies. This consistency between the results and the hypotheses reinforces the robustness of the model applied to the reality of Generation Z.

In summary, the results show that, although resources such as autonomy can cushion the effects of demands, Generation Z employees are more vulnerable to the burnout-turnover intention relationship, which suggests relevant practical implications for the retention and management of young talent in the contemporary organizational context.

5.2. Practical/Managerial Implications

The conclusions that we have reached have significant practical implications for organizations. First, the identification of a direct relation between demands and burnout underscores the need to rethink the way work is structured. Task overload and the intensity of emotional demands should not be viewed as inevitable, but rather as factors that compromise the sustainability of organizational performance. Reducing these factors, through better work distribution or adequate psychological support, is essential for preventing the early exhaustion of younger workers.

Secondly, the results show us the importance of investing in the promotion of autonomy. Generation Z particularly values flexibility in task execution, participation in decision-making processes, and freedom in time management. This preference, already widely described in the literature (McCrindle, 2014; Friedrich et al., 2010), should not be understood as a mere expectation, but rather as an indispensable resource for motivation and commitment. Organizations that neglect this factor will be more vulnerable to high levels of turnover.

Thirdly, confirmation of the mediating role of burnout between demands and intention to leave shows that wellness programs and burnout prevention policies cannot be secondary. On the contrary, they should be an integral part of the people management strategy to promote

work environments that meet Generation Z's expectations regarding diversity, authenticity, and purpose (Lanier, 2017; Institute for Emerging Issues, 2012).

From a theoretical point of view, this study reinforces the robustness of the JD-R model but adds a relevant contribution by applying it to the reality of a generational cohort that has been little explored. The results show that, although the central mechanisms of the model remain valid, the interpretation of its effects must be contextualized. In the case of Generation Z, autonomy carries greater weight than it does for other generations, suggesting that theoretical models of motivation and well-being would benefit from being analyzed in consideration of generational differences (Bogdanowicz & Bailey, 2002; Dolot, 2018).

5.3. Theoretical Contributions

This study expands on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model by applying it specifically to Generation Z, a group that has been underrepresented in academic research until now. The results show that, although the central mechanisms of the model remain valid, that is, job demands lead to burnout, which in turn increases turnover intention, the role of autonomy proves to be particularly critical for this generation.

The analysis also adds an important nuance: the relationship between burnout and turnover intention is stronger among Generation Z workers than among older generations. This suggests that generational factors should be integrated not only into occupational health theories but also into talent motivation and retention models.

In the context of Generation Z, autonomy is not only a protective resource but an element of identity that is closely linked to this generation's expectations regarding work. The absence of limitation, but also as a breach in authenticity and alignment between personal and professional life. This helps explain why, despite still being in the early stages of their careers, members of Generation Z are more likely to leave an organization whenever they feel out of place or overwhelmed.

In theoretical terms, the results show that JD-R should be enriched with a generational perspective, recognizing that vulnerability to burnout and reaction to job demands are not universal, but vary according to the priorities and values of different cohorts.

5.4. Limitations and Future Studies

Despite the relevance of the results, it is important to recognize the limitations of the study. The main limitation is related to the cross-sectional nature of the research, which restricts the possibility of establishing causal relationships between variables. Longitudinal studies would be particularly useful to better understand the evolution of burnout and turnover intention over time in response to different levels of demands and autonomy (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Other limitations concern the sample considered, which does not allow the results to be generalized to all organizational contexts. It would be pertinent for future research to analyze different sectors and different organizations to understand the extent to which structural factors influence the work experience of Generation Z (Dolot, 2018).

Finally, it will be important to further study this generation's subjective perceptions of autonomy and burnout using qualitative methodologies. These approaches would allow for a more detailed understanding of the meanings attributed by Generation Z to the balance between demands and resources, complementing quantitative analysis with a more interpretive and contextualized perspective.

5.5. Conclusion

In summary, this study confirmed that job demands are directly associated with burnout and that burnout, in turn, is a robust predictor of turnover intention among Generation Z workers. It was also found that autonomy plays a key role in mitigating the negative effects of demands, reinforcing its centrality as a motivational resource for this generation. The analysis demonstrates that the JD-R model is adequate for understanding the work dynamics that shape the experience of Generation Z, but it also shows that this group has its own characteristics that must be recognized and integrated into management practices.

These results enable us to understand how Generation Z will transform the world of work. The evidence suggests that change is occurring not only because of their massive entry into the labor market, but above all because of the expectations and values they bring with them. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z attaches less importance to stability and linear progression, and places a strong emphasis on flexibility, purpose, and work-life balance (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Dolot, 2018; McCrindle, 2014). This reconfiguration of priorities means that organizations will have to rethink their operating models, or face high levels of turnover, demotivation, and talent loss.

Thus, Generation Z is contributing to changing the traditional paradigm of the labor market by placing psychological well-being, diversity, and autonomy at the center of the organizational agenda. This change is not just a momentary adaptation, but a structural movement with a direct impact on the future of people management and the design of professions themselves. If in the past, the dominant logic focused on job security and long-term loyalty, in the present and future, under the influence of Generation Z, organizations will have to offer more flexible, inclusive environments that are aligned with contemporary social values (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017; Schwabel, 2014).

In conclusion, it can be said that Generation Z will change the world of work by shifting the focus of organizational practices from a vision centered on stability and hierarchy to a logic based on autonomy, purpose, and human sustainability. Organizations that understand and integrate these changes will be better positioned to thrive, ensuring not only the attraction and retention of young talent but also the construction of more innovative and resilient work environments.

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