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## **EMPLOYEE DEMOTIVATION BETWEEN THE PHENOMENON OF BOREOUT AND BURNOUT**

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**Abstract:**

*The study of this article started from the idea that the level of motivation of human resources is increasingly lower. The statement is justified by the increasing time spent by individuals at work, unrewarded activities or even by the lack of creativity, disinterest in the organization. Boreout and burnout are two current and common phenomena in organizations, regardless of the size or field of activity. Their accentuation can affect both individual and organizational performance, and there is the possibility of major dysfunctions. The main objective of this article is to show what are the causes of the appearance of these two phenomena in the organization, what are the consequences and how they manifest themselves depending on the generation from which the employees come.*

*Key words: demotivation, performance, human resources, burnout, boreout, generations*

### **1. Introduction**

We are increasingly witnessing an increase in the state of stress of human resources in organizations, whether we are talking about their field of activity, size or even their environment (civil or military). The causes or factors are diverse, from personal problems, from physical and mental exhaustion (burnout) to boredom syndrome at work (boreout). The human resource within organizations, whether civilian or military, is composed as normal, of almost all generational categories (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y – Millennials, Generation Z), which makes both knowledge, perceptions and resilience to stress or other factors of a negative nature different. The fact is that, for each generation, the degree of difficulty of the challenges is different.

Excessive fatigue but also boredom or routine at work also become elements that contribute to increasing the level of demotivation. In addition to these, another component can be added, stress that intensifies depending on the nature or severity of the situations. At the same time, demotivation can also be a cause that occurs as a result of an unrewarded effort that the human resource has identified, which can negatively affect both the relationship with superiors and colleagues but can also affect productivity. So, demotivation is a phenomenon whose components are related to the performance of the human resource and the quality of the professional activity.

In organizational settings, employees often begin their roles with only the requisite skills to perform at an acceptable level. As they gain experience and develop new competencies, the scope and complexity of their responsibilities may remain static. Over time, this lack of progression can result in decreased motivation, increased stress, and workplace boredom [1].



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## 2. Boreout syndrome in organizations

It is certain that boreout syndrome is the opposite of burnout syndrome. Boreout syndrome has been present in organizations for many years, even though it has not received much attention. Boreout occurs among employees who are not sufficiently intellectually stimulated at work, who do not have enough tasks to perform, or who feel that what they do does not spark their interest.

There are also common causes of boredom at work, such as a lack of continuous challenge, routine and monotony, lack of recognition and feedback, lack of autonomy, an unsatisfactory work environment, lack of career prospects, and the overuse or underuse of skills.

In the book *Diagnosis Boreout: Why under-challenge at work makes you sick (Diagnose Boreout: Warum Unterforderung im Job krank macht)* authors Philippe Rothlin and Peter R. Werder say that approximately 15% of office employees are at risk of developing *boreout* - a condition characterized by chronic boredom and demotivation in the workplace. These individuals often feel underchallenged and disengaged, frequently resorting to pretending to work in order to appear productive. Having mentally withdrawn from their roles, they become resigned to a lack of meaningful engagement. *Boreout* represents the inverse of burnout; while burnout stems from excessive workload and stress, *boreout* arises from insufficient stimulation and underutilisation of skills. Its consequences are similarly detrimental, leading to decreased morale, reduced productivity, and negative impacts on organizational performance [2]. The term "out" is a combination of the two English words "bore" (boring) and "out" (out). The combination of the two results in the expression "out of boreness". Therefore, someone who suffers from "bore-out" is a certain type of "out of boreness". Of course, this does not mean that no longer being bored puts an end to boredom, and therefore variety and enthusiasm return. On the contrary, boredom becomes so intense that a new, much worse dimension opens up for the affected person. The two authors also propose a simple sketch that includes the boreout elements, exemplified and adapted in Fig. 1.. It can be seen that the two define the concept of boreout by an imbalance between the time spent at the office and the actual work done there.

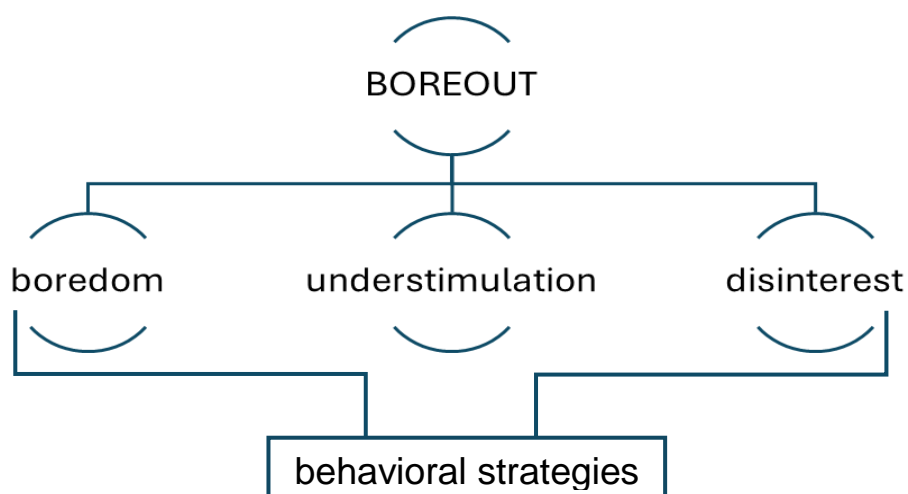


Fig.1 The three understimulation elements of the boreout concept by Rothlin P. and Werder P. R. (Source: adaptation after [2], p. 13)



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Since this syndrome is understood as an absence from work, its psychological consequences do not cease to appear in various forms: from low self-esteem to shame (having the conviction of a person that he is not good enough or as good as his colleagues), from the feeling of guilt (receiving a salary without having achieved much or even nothing) to the lack of involvement and from here to the easy transition and to a general state of helplessness. Over time, these states listed above can also lead to the demotivation of human resources within organizations regardless of the generation they belong to.

Boredom is a psychological state characterized by a lack of interest, mental stimulation, or engagement with one's current activity or environment. Often described as a form of "mental idleness," boredom can occur across all age groups and contexts. It typically arises when individuals perceive their tasks or surroundings as monotonous, unchallenging, or lacking in meaning, leading to feelings of restlessness, diminished motivation, and apathy. Boreout is a psychological condition characterized by chronic boredom, particularly within the workplace. Unlike transient boredom, boreout carries a more insidious, existential dimension, emerging when individuals perceive their work as lacking purpose, significance, or meaningful engagement. This persistent sense of meaninglessness can lead to a profound sense of disengagement and demotivation. Similar to burnout and workaholism, boreout has been associated with adverse mental health outcomes, including increased risk of anxiety, depression, and other stress-related disorders, as evidenced by emerging empirical studies [3].

What many people don't know is that this situation ends up negatively affecting those who experience it. The lack of goals and the presence of disinterest in the work carried out soon give way to frustrations, causing long-term depression, apathy and concentration problems.

As a first conclusion, it can be said that boreout syndrome affects both the organization, by decreasing efficiency or even productivity, and the human resource, gradually turning into a demotivating factor.

### **3. Burnout syndrome in organizations**

Burnout is a condition that arises from prolonged and persistent exposure to workplace stress, and is closely linked to psychosocial risk factors within the occupational environment.

The term burnout was first introduced by Herbert Freudenberger (1974) to describe a state of mental and physical exhaustion resulting from prolonged involvement in demanding work-related situations [4]. In recent years, the World Health Organization (2019) has defined burnout as an occupational phenomenon arising from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three core dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance or negative attitudes toward one's job, and reduced professional efficacy [5]. Its official recognition took place gradually, the World Health Organization (WHO) included burnout in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as an "occupational phenomenon" in 2019, emphasizing that it is related to professional work, but is not a medical condition. This inclusion marked an important step in validating and standardizing burnout syndrome as a global mental health issue.

Work-related exhaustion is a psychological state experienced by employees, characterized by profound fatigue, impaired regulation of cognitive and emotional functions, and a marked sense of mental detachment from work-related activities [6].

If we refer to the current situation in Romania, whether we are talking about the public or private, civil or military domain, the burnout phenomenon seems to be increasing. This growth has



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started to gain momentum especially since the pandemic period. The intensification started from the expectations that the human resource has and with the situations that it is willing to tolerate, then with the level or resilience to stress (insecurity at work, excessive work or failure to meet the deadlines for completing tasks, disruptive factors of any kind in the work environment, etc.). Without a doubt, the harmful effects of burnout lead to both a decrease in organizational productivity, affect personal relationships and health problems (in the long term most of the time). A series of studies are also being carried out in Romania on this burnout phenomenon with a visible negative impact on human resources. For example, a study conducted in 2024 by the APSAP Training Center highlights the increase in the number of employees affected by burnout (especially among women). This study also highlights the fact that 40% of employees who work shifts frequently experience professional burnout, among the main reasons that lead to physical and mental exhaustion are fatigue, overwork, unbalanced work schedule, repetitive work and lack of peace or privacy outside of work. A total of 2,053 employees (from the private and public sectors) participated in this study. As a conclusion, burnout is a real syndrome, with a considerable negative impact on employee performance, a fact that should not be ignored by managers, bosses, leaders [7]. In some European countries, burnout is recognized as a phenomenon associated with work, a result of occupational stress. In Romania, burnout is not yet considered a disease, but there are debates on the subject.

One of the reasons for excessive burnout at work is related to the constant involvement of the human resource. In the second quarter of this year (2025), Romania remains in first place in Europe in terms of employee engagement, with a percentage of 35%, despite a slight decrease of 1% compared to the previous year [8].

Another, much larger study was conducted this year (2025) by Gallup Global Workplace [9]. Gallup starts in this study from defining the concept of *employee engagement* by associating several components that can influence the accentuation of the burnout phenomenon that have been divided into three categories: *life evaluation* (thriving, suffering, struggling), *daily emotions* (daily stress, daily anger, daily sadness, daily loneliness) and *job market* (job climate, intent to leave). At the European level, Gallup conducted the study on 37 countries: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Northern Cyprus (Territory of Republic of Cyprus), Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.

In the following lines, some of these statistical data will be presented with reference to Europe in general and to Romania in particular. The top five and last five countries will be graphically represented with the corresponding values for each.



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**Life evaluation - thriving**

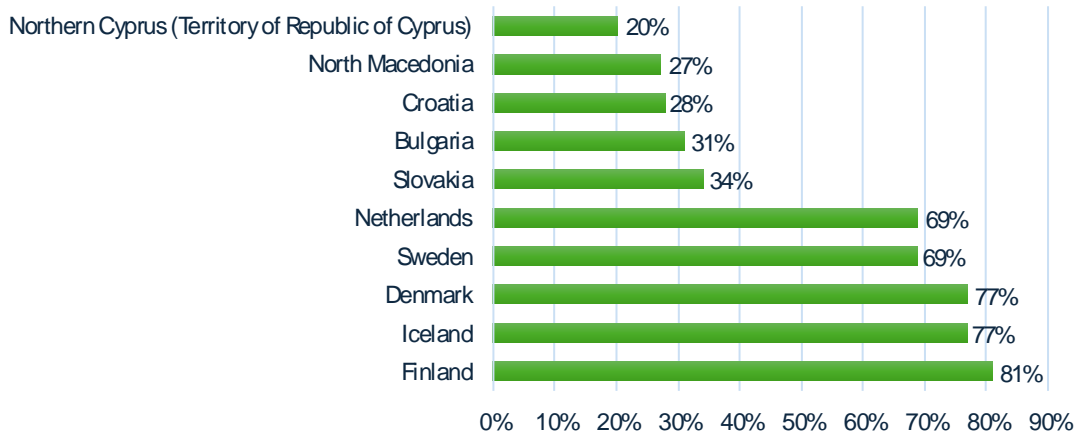


Fig.2 Life evaluation - thriving

(Source: author based on data collected from the Gallup 2025 Report, p. 103)

As can be seen in Fig. 2, of the 37 countries on which the study was conducted, the highest percentage in the *life evaluation – thriving* category was recorded by Finland with 81%, and the last place was Northern Cyprus (Territory of the Republic of Cyprus) with 20%. Romania is neither in the top 5 nor in the last five, but is in the 11th position with a percentage of 53%.

**Daily stress**

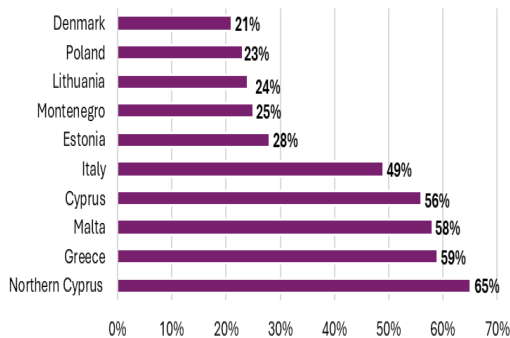


Fig.3 Daily emotions – stress

(Source: author based on data collected from the Gallup 2025 Report, pp. 104-105)

**Daily Anger at work**

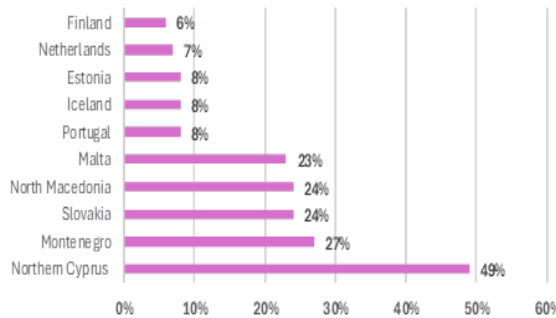


Fig.4 Daily emotions - anger

**Daily Sadness**

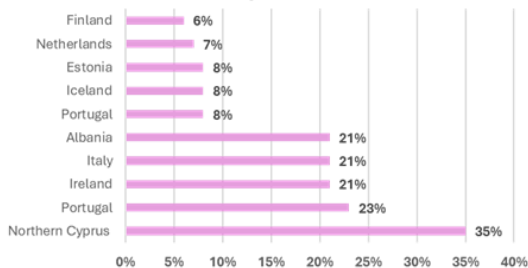


Fig.5 Daily emotions – sadness

(Source: author based on data collected from the Gallup 2025 Report, pp. 106-107)

**Daily loneliness**

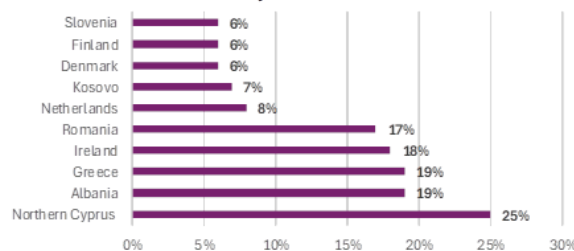


Fig.6 Daily emotions - loneliness



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Fig.3, Fig.4, Fig.5 and Fig. 6 show the representative statistics for the second category of the study, Daily emotions. As mentioned before, this category included daily stress, daily anger, daily sadness, daily loneliness. In Fig.3, Daily emotions - stress, Northern Cyprus ranks first in terms of respondents' daily stress (21%), and Denmark ranks last (65%). Romania is in 20th place, somewhere below the middle position with a percentage of 37%. In Fig.4, Daily emotions - anger, Northern Cyprus is also in first place but this time with a percentage of 49%, Finland in last place with a percentage of 6%. In this category, Romania ranks 17th with a percentage of 15%. In Fig.5, Daily emotions - sadness, the highest percentage (so also on the 1st place) is also recorded by Northern Cyprus with 35%, and the last Kosovo with a percentage of only 4%, which means that the human resource is very relaxed during working hours. And here Romania is also in the middle of the ranking, more precisely on the 22nd place, by a percentage of 15%. In Fig.6, Daily emotions – loneliness, the 1st place in the ranking is also occupied by Northern Cyprus with a percentage of 25%, and the last place is occupied by Slovenia with a percentage of 6%. As can be seen, Romania is on the number 5 position, with a fairly successful percentage of 17%.

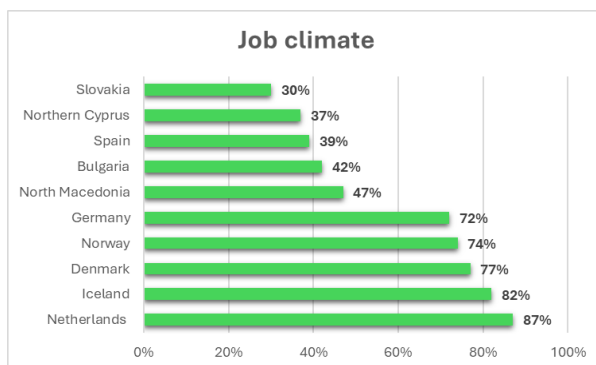


Fig.7 Job Market - job climate

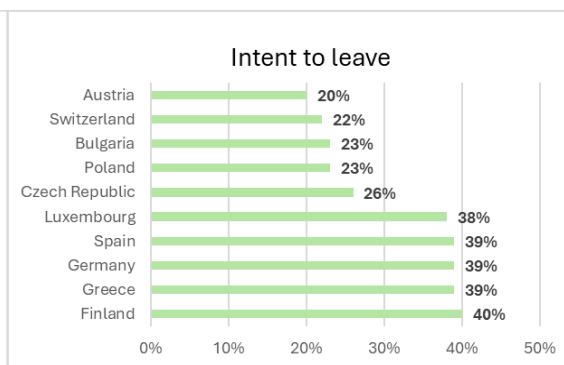


Fig.8 Job Market – intent to leave

(Source: author based on data collected from the Gallup 2025 Report, pp. 108-109)

In the last category of the study, Job Market, two subcategories were included, as can be seen in Fig.7 Job climate and Fig.8. Intent to leave. As for the organizational climate, the respondents' response depended on the opportunity to find a better job compared to the offer of jobs in their proximity. Thus, respondents in the Netherlands are in first place (87%) and are convinced that it would be a good time if they had to take this step for their professional future. Slovakia is in last place with 30%. In this subcategory, Romania ranks 26th with a percentage of 52%. In Fig.8 Job Market – intent to leave, the respondents were questioned about their willful action of looking for a job at the time of the study. Finland is here in first place with 40% and Austria in last place with 20%. Romania ranks 32nd with a percentage of 27%, which is a good thing compared to the staff turnover.

#### 4. Conclusions

In conclusion, both burnout and boreout affect not only employee well-being but also have significant implications for organizations. Most of the time, both boreout and burnout are caused by organizations. Thus, the responsibility of organizations is to take the appropriate measures to prevent and solve burnout or boreout situations.



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In order to reduce or eliminate the phenomena of boreout and burnout, it would be preferable for organizations both in Romania and in other countries to invest more in the leadership culture and managerial professional development and to support a healthy organizational climate and, moreover, to adapt it generationally. On the other hand, some long-term designed human resource retention strategies should be considered.

Both syndromes, boreout and burnout can be prevented by the human resource.

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