



The person-oriented approach to burnout: A systematic review

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ABSTRACT

The variable-oriented approach has dominated empirical burnout research, but during the last 10 years a person-oriented approach to burnout has also become common. The aim of this systematic literature review was to identify, categorize and evaluate the empirical research to date that has adopted a person-oriented approach to burnout. The results of these studies were then compared with those generated by variable-oriented burnout research. An electronic search of seven databases was conducted in spring 2015. Initially 470 publications were identified, 24 of which met the selection criteria. The reviewed articles were categorized into three groups based on their research target(s): (1) intra-individual patterns of burnout symptoms (i.e., types of burnout) (42%), (2) intra-individual development of burnout over time (i.e., burnout trajectories) (33%), and (3) patterns of well-being indicators within individuals (i.e., well-being types) (33%). The typical burnout types and trajectories identified by person-oriented research were largely parallel with the information produced by variable-oriented research, but also brought out the heterogeneity of the burnout experience by revealing atypical burnout and well-being types and individual developmental trajectories. The advantages, along with the challenges, of taking a person-oriented approach are discussed. Based on the study designs, methodologies, and main findings of the reviewed studies, five avenues for future person-oriented burnout studies are proposed.

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