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FROM FRAGMENTATION TO INTEGRATION: THE THEORETICAL ARCHITECTURE OF OCCUPATIONAL BURNOUT RESEARCH

Abstract

Occupational burnout research has accumulated a large and theoretically heterogeneous literature, yet the distribution and comparative architecture of the frameworks used to explain burnout remain insufficiently mapped. This theory-focused systematic review aimed to identify prevalent theoretical frameworks, compare their explanatory mechanisms, examine multi-framework use, assess integration of work engagement and psychological well-being, and evaluate contextual adaptability. A software-assisted multi-source search and screening workflow identified 564 unique publication records; 407 explicitly named at least one substantive theoretical framework. Framework prevalence, single- and multi-theory use, major co-occurrences, and 12 extracted analytical dimensions were synthesized at publication-record and theory levels. Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory was most frequently named (47.9%), followed by Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (29.2%), while 46.4% of theory-coded records used multiple frameworks. The field exhibited a core-periphery architecture: a concentrated demand- and resource-oriented core coexisted with a broad theoretical «long tail». Major frameworks differed in causal logic and in their treatment of positive occupational outcomes; no consensual architecture integrating burnout, engagement, and psychological well-being was identified. Contextual adaptability also varied, with JD-R and COR showing broad theoretical capacity through different mechanisms. The review provides a comparative basis for more explicit, mechanism-led framework selection and for future context-sensitive theory development.

Keywords: occupational burnout, theoretical frameworks, theory mapping, work engagement, psychological well-being.

Introduction

Occupational burnout occupies an established position in occupational health psychology as a work-related syndrome associated with chronic job stressors and remains a focus of sustained scientific and practical attention across occupational sectors [1]. Its institutional status has also been consolidated: the eleventh revision of the International Classification of Diseases characterizes burnout as an occupational phenomenon resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed, rather than as a medical condition [2]. This classificatory decision sharpened

rather than settled the theoretical question, since it specifies where burnout arises without specifying the mechanisms through which it develops. The justification for the present review lies not in the volume of this literature, but in its theoretical structure. Contemporary burnout research draws on multiple theoretical traditions that differ in the constructs they admit, the mechanisms they propose, and the outcomes they are designed to model [3]. Such plurality is not itself a deficiency. It becomes a scientific problem when framework selection may be guided by disciplinary convention without explicit comparison of what competing frameworks are structurally equipped to explain, while theory use accumulates faster than it is systematically mapped.

The theoretical field developed through several partly overlapping phases. Early clinical and descriptive formulations emphasized exhaustion, disillusionment, and depleted motivation among staff in helping professions, and were derived largely from practice observation rather than from formal construct definition [4]. Multidimensional conceptualization subsequently defined burnout through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment, establishing the tripartite structure that shaped much of the subsequent measurement literature [5]. Alongside this line, stage, process, and existential formulations proposed distinct internal orderings of burnout development; these traditions persist in contemporary work and appear in the present corpus as separately named frameworks.

A second lineage originated in occupational stress research rather than in burnout research proper. Configurational models located strain in the combination of high job demands with low decision latitude, later extended by workplace social support as a third dimension [6, 7]. Imbalance models instead located strain in a failure of reciprocity between effort expended and reward received, with overcommitment as an amplifying personal disposition [8, 9]. Both traditions were formulated to explain health outcomes broadly rather than burnout specifically, and both operate with comparatively delimited construct sets – a property that becomes analytically relevant once contextual adaptability is compared.

A third lineage reframed burnout in terms of resources. Conservation of Resources theory proposed that stress arises from the threat of resource loss, actual loss, or failure to gain resources following investment, and that losses accumulate more readily than gains [10]; burnout was subsequently interpreted within this logic as an outcome of sustained depletion [11]. Job Demands–Resources theory combined an energy-depletion process with a motivational process and allowed demands and resources to be specified for particular occupational settings rather than fixed in advance [12, 13]. This openness has been identified as both the framework's principal strength and a source of conceptual criticism, since a taxonomy able to absorb almost any working condition raises questions of falsifiability [14]. Longitudinal meta-analytic work has since supported the reciprocal structure of the two processes while indicating that estimates vary across designs and populations [15].

A persistent complication of this plurality is the conflation of burnout as a construct, instruments used to measure it, and theoretical frameworks advanced to explain its development. Reviews document substantial variation in burnout definitions and measurement approaches [3], and the introduction of instruments built on alternative construct definitions has widened rather than resolved this variation [16]. Meta-analytic evidence on the temporal relations between job stressors and burnout further indicates that conclusions depend on the measurement and design assumptions adopted [17]. The Maslach Burnout Inventory is a measurement instrument rather than a theoretical framework, yet measurement instruments and substantive theories may become blurred in review and coding contexts. Credible mapping of theory use therefore requires their explicit separation, which motivated the named-theory coding strategy used here. Framework prevalence is treated as a descriptive property of the literature and not as evidence of theoretical validity.

The theoretical problem also extends to positive occupational outcomes. Burnout research intersects with work engagement and psychological well-being, yet these constructs do not form a consensual causal model. Engagement is related to, but not reducible to, the inverse of burnout, and burnout and engagement have been modeled through separable pathways [18]. Psychological well-being is likewise not the mere absence of burnout; resource-based work has examined explicit links between well-being and burnout [19]. Need-based approaches offer a further alternative, locating burnout, motivation, and well-being within a single account of need satisfaction and frustration [20]. The relevant theory-level question is how different frameworks structurally locate these outcomes: through separate pathways, shared mechanisms, or continuum assumptions.

A further dimension of theoretical comparison is contextual flexibility. Occupational settings generate context-specific conditions, and frameworks differ in whether their construct architectures can accommodate them without structural modification. Evidence that national cultural values moderate relationships among job demands, resources, and occupational outcomes illustrates the theoretical importance of context [21]. Research in Kazakhstan and the wider Central Asian region has documented burnout across several occupational groups and identified working conditions, job demands, and institutional support as associated factors [22, 23, 24]. These settings are also characterized by routine professional functioning in more than one language. For the present comparison, linguistically complex work environments were therefore selected as an illustrative contextual test case. They exemplify conditions that fixed construct sets may not readily represent. This use is analytical only: the review makes no claim that bilingualism or language switching causes burnout.

Against this background, a precise gap can be identified. Existing reviews have extensively addressed burnout conceptualization and measurement [3] and have reviewed major burnout models and process accounts [25, 26]. What remains insufficiently developed is a theory-level mapping of how named frameworks are distributed and combined across occupational burnout research, and whether these frameworks differ systematically in mechanisms, positive-outcome integration, and contextual capacity. The object of this review is the theoretical use of named frameworks in occupational burnout research; its subject is their distribution, mechanisms, co-occurrence, positive-outcome integration, and contextual adaptability. The study uses a theory-focused systematic theory-mapping approach. Its practical significance lies in supporting explicit framework selection based on explanatory architecture and the constructs and contextual conditions under study.

This review aimed to map the theoretical architecture of occupational burnout research and comparatively examine how major frameworks conceptualize burnout, explain its development, integrate positive occupational outcomes, and accommodate contextual complexity. The aim was operationalized in five tasks, formulated as research questions:

RQ1. Which named theoretical frameworks are most prevalent in occupational burnout research, and how is the theoretical field structurally distributed?

RQ2. How do the major theoretical frameworks differ in their conceptualization of burnout and in the mechanisms proposed to explain its development?

RQ3. What patterns of multi-framework use and theoretical co-occurrence characterize occupational burnout research?

RQ4. To what extent do the major frameworks integrate burnout with positive occupational outcomes, particularly work engagement and psychological well-being?

RQ5. Which theoretical frameworks show the greatest capacity to accommodate context-sensitive demands and resources, including complex bilingual or multilingual work environments?

Materials and methods

Review design

This study was designed as a theory-focused systematic review and systematic theory-mapping review of occupational burnout research. Rather than aggregating effect estimates, it treated the field's theoretical apparatus as the object of inquiry. The analysis addressed RQ1–RQ5 as formulated in the Introduction.

The unit of analysis was theory use within unique occupational burnout publication records. This level was selected because theoretical commitments enter the scientific record through publications and can be verified at that level. The implications of this choice were assessed through a study-level sensitivity analysis reported in Adjudication, duplicate removal, and unit of analysis.

Search and screening process

The search workflow was conducted on 8 July 2026 using SciSpace Agent under an author-defined specification focused on theoretical models and conceptual frameworks for occupational, job, and work-related burnout. Forty-seven queries were executed across SciSpace search, SciSpace Full Text, SciSpace Library, Google Scholar, and PubMed Advanced, followed by a combine-and-rerank step. The combine-and-rerank step consolidated the source outputs into a single relevance-ranked pool of the top 1,000 records, which constituted the title/abstract screening set. Complete source-specific queries were preserved in the search log.

Title/abstract screening used a seven-criterion relevance rubric covering theoretical centrality, mechanism analysis, positive-outcome coverage, contextual flexibility, measurement-only focus, non-occupational context, and superficial theoretical mention. SciSpace Agent applied the author-specified rubric with a threshold of 4.0/5: 577 of 1,000 records were retained and 423 excluded. The 577 retained records then underwent full-text relevance screening using the same rubric at 4.5/5; 573 were retained and four excluded. The complete workflow is summarized in figure 1.

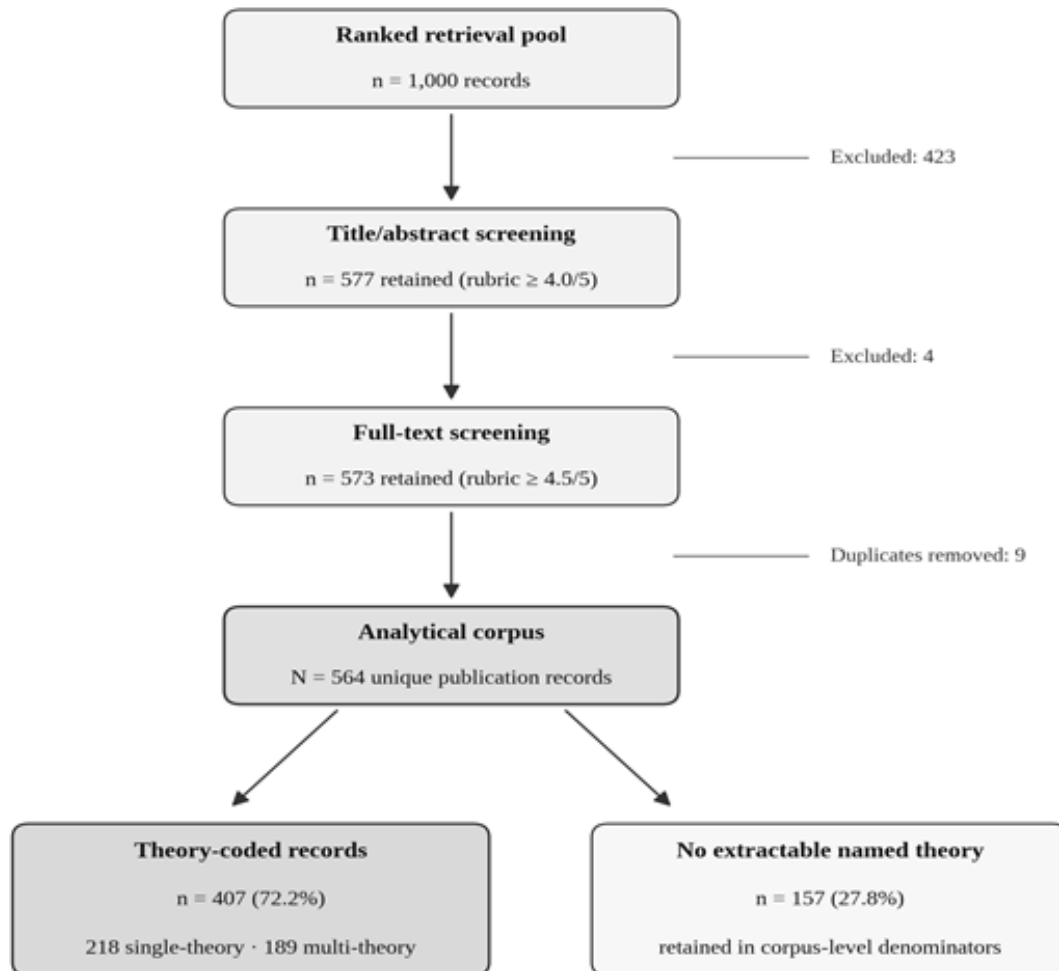


Figure 1 – Search, screening, and corpus formation workflow

Note: Compiled by the authors based on the study data.

Search, screening, and structured extraction were software-assisted using SciSpace Agent and were not independently duplicated by a second reviewer. Retained records underwent full-text extraction into the predefined template described in Theory extraction and analytical dimensions; missing information was recorded explicitly rather than imputed. Theory-label adjudication, Maslach-model classification, and bibliographic duplicate verification were manually reviewed by the author. No protocol was prospectively registered.

Eligibility and corpus definition

Eligible records were peer-reviewed theoretical, conceptual, systematic-review, or empirical articles that explicitly used, developed, compared, or critically discussed frameworks for occupational, job, or work-related burnout. Classical and contemporary theories from occupational health, organizational, stress, motivation, resource, person-environment, and related traditions were eligible. Non-peer-reviewed sources and measurement-only articles without substantive theoretical discussion were excluded. The archived search specification set neither a separate language restriction nor a predefined publication-date limit.

The review distinguished corpus inclusion from theory-coded status. Removal of nine confirmed duplicate publication records yielded $N = 564$ unique records. Corpus inclusion did not require a named theory; theory-coded status required explicit naming of a substantive framework under the rule set out in Theory identification and label normalization, and records without an extractable named theory remained in corpus-level denominators. Records could satisfy the relevance rubric through substantive theoretical discussion of burnout without naming a specific framework extractable under that normalization rule; such records were retained in the corpus but were not classified as theory-coded.

Theory extraction and analytical dimensions

The extraction template captured 12 dimensions: Theory Name and Original Authors; Theoretical Origin and Disciplinary Field; Burnout Conceptualization; Core Theoretical Mechanism; Main Antecedents and Causal Factors; Role of Demands and Resources; Person-Environment Interaction; Mediators and Moderators; Positive Outcomes Integration; Negative Outcomes; Empirical Support and Limitations; and Contextual Flexibility. These fields supported prevalence mapping and theory-level synthesis. Coverage varied: Core Theoretical Mechanism was informative for 485/564 records (86.0%), Positive Outcomes Integration for 562/564 (99.6%), and Contextual Flexibility for 121/564 (21.5%); RQ5 was therefore treated as exploratory.

Theory identification and label normalization

A record was classified as theory-coded only when the extraction field explicitly named a substantive theoretical framework. General descriptions of burnout without an identifiable named framework were not coded as theory use, preventing prevalence inflation through inferred theoretical commitments.

Measurement instruments were not treated as theoretical frameworks. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was reclassified as measurement use wherever it appeared in the theory-extraction field. Eleven MBI labels were retained in the normalized coding inventory for audit transparency but contributed zero to framework prevalence.

The Maslach multidimensional/process model was counted only where a model, theory, or tripartite-structure attribution explicitly referred to Maslach, Maslach and Jackson, or Leiter and Maslach. Bare conceptualization, definition, or “burnout syndrome” attributions were treated as definitional anchoring rather than theory use; 13 such cases were retained separately. Areas of Worklife was treated as a distinct framework and never merged with the Maslach model.

Methodological frameworks such as grounded theory and the Walker and Avant concept-analysis approach were excluded from substantive theory counts because they structure research conduct rather than explain burnout.

Theory-label normalization was conservative: only abbreviation, spelling, hyphenation, suffix, and translation variants of the same framework were merged. Distinct frameworks were not merged (e.g., DRIVE with JD-R, DISC with JDC, or Social Cognitive Career Theory with Social Cognitive Theory). A row-level normalization audit trail was preserved.

Adjudication, duplicate removal, and unit of analysis

Two targeted manual adjudication procedures were applied. First, 77 records in which an explicitly named theory co-occurred with incomplete citation metadata were reviewed; 73 were confirmed as theory-coded. Second, all candidate Maslach-model occurrences were adjudicated against the strict attribution criterion: 43 candidates, minus five criterion exclusions, plus three pattern-matching corrections, minus one duplicate, yielded the final $n = 40$.

Duplicate handling was based on bibliographic verification; title similarity alone was insufficient. Nine confirmed duplicates, including alternative copies, stubs, and version records, were removed, reducing the screened set from 573 to 564 unique publication records.

Three probable version/publication pairs were retained as distinct records: a 1993 book chapter and 2017 reprint, a 2009 conference-proceedings version and 2014 journal version, and a 2002 Spanish-language original and 2003 English translation. To evaluate their influence, all three pairs were collapsed in a study-level sensitivity analysis, yielding $N = 561$ records (405 theory-coded; 156 without an extractable named theory).

Analytical strategy

The analysis comprised three linked components. Corpus-level mapping calculated framework prevalence, classified records as single- or multi-theory, and quantified major pairwise co-occurrences.

Multi-theory records were counted once under every explicitly named framework, so aggregate percentages exceed 100%. Co-occurrence analysis was descriptive and used raw pair counts without adjustment for marginal framework prevalence.

Theory-level synthesis compared major frameworks by burnout conceptualization, explanatory mechanism, antecedent and demand/resource logic, positive-outcome integration, and contextual adaptability. Other extracted dimensions informed the synthesis where available but were not treated as separate quantitative outcomes. A dedicated strand examined how work engagement and psychological well-being were located through separate pathways, shared mechanisms, or continuum assumptions.

Contextual flexibility was assessed as the capacity to accommodate context-sensitive demands and resources within an existing construct architecture. Bilingual and multilingual work environments were used only as an illustrative test case of theoretical adaptability, not as established causal antecedents of burnout.

Third, the analysis distinguished corpus-level quantitative results, theory-level comparative synthesis, and interpretive conclusions. Framework prevalence was treated strictly as descriptive; frequency of use was not interpreted as theoretical validity or superiority.

Results and discussion

Distribution and concentration of theoretical frameworks (RQ1)

The analytical corpus comprised $N = 564$ unique publication records. Of these, 407 (72.2%) explicitly named at least one substantive theoretical framework, whereas 157 (27.8%) contained no extractable named theory. Among theory-coded records, 218 were single-theory and 189 were multi-theory (46.4%). Coding yielded 855 substantive theoretical framework mentions and 11 separately retained MBI instrument labels, for a total normalized coded-label inventory of 866 (table 1).

Table 1 – Analytical corpus and theory-coding profile

Category	n	%
Unique publication records	564	100.0
Theory-coded records	407	72.2
Records without extractable named theory	157	27.8
Single-theory records	218	38.7 of corpus; 53.6 of theory-coded
Multi-theory records	189	33.5 of corpus; 46.4 of theory-coded
Substantive theoretical framework mentions	855	-
MBI instrument labels retained separately	11	-
Total normalized coded-label inventory	866	-
Note: MBI labels ($n = 11$) are measurement-instrument labels, retained for audit transparency and excluded from framework prevalence. Compiled by the authors based on the study data.		

Framework prevalence was markedly uneven (Table 2, Figure 2). JD-R was named in 195 theory-coded records (47.9%) and COR in 119 (29.2%). ERI (51; 12.5%), JDC/JDCS (49; 12.0%), and the Maslach multidimensional/process model (40; 9.8%) formed a second group; every other individually ranked framework appeared in fewer than 5% of theory-coded records.

The corpus also showed a pronounced long-tail pattern. Long-tail frameworks were named substantive frameworks appearing too infrequently for individual ranking (e.g., attachment theory, affective events theory). Of theory-coded records, 153 (37.6%) contained at least one long-tail framework and 43 (10.6%) were long-tail-only. Prevalence describes use and does not establish theoretical validity or superiority.

Comparative explanatory mechanisms of major burnout frameworks (RQ2)

The five most prevalent frameworks-JD-R, COR, ERI, JDC/JDCS, and the Maslach multidimensional/process model-were compared on burnout conceptualization, core mechanism, primary antecedents, demands/resources, protective factors, and temporal or process logic (Table 3). The comparison summarizes the theoretical claims represented in the extraction fields rather than asserting empirically established causal relations.

Table 2 – Prevalence of normalized theoretical frameworks

Rank	Theoretical framework	n	% of theory-coded records
1	Job Demands–Resources model (JD-R)	195	47.9
2	Conservation of Resources theory (COR)	119	29.2
3	Effort–Reward Imbalance model (ERI)	51	12.5
4	Job Demand–Control / Job Demand–Control–Support models (JDC/JDCS)	49	12.0
5	Maslach multidimensional/process model	40	9.8
6	Golembiewski phase model	19	4.7
7	Social exchange theory	17	4.2
8	Transactional stress model (Lazarus & Folkman)	15	3.7
9	Existential model (Pines)	14	3.4
10	Self-Determination Theory	12	2.9
10	Cherniss process model	12	2.9
12	Freudenberger clinical model	9	2.2
13	Effort–Recovery model	7	1.7
14	Areas of Worklife	6	1.5
14	Person–Environment fit	6	1.5
16	Shirom–Melamed model	5	1.2
17	Job Characteristics Model	4	1.0
17	Equity theory	4	1.0
17	Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura)	4	1.0
17	DISC model	4	1.0
21	Vitamin model (Warr)	3	0.7
22	Terror Management Theory	1	0.2
22	DRIVE model	1	0.2

Note: Denominator = 407 theory-coded records. Percentages exceed 100% because multi-theory records were counted under each named framework. Tied ranks share a rank number. Compiled by the authors based on the study data; designations of the five most frequently named frameworks follow their original sources [5–8, 10–13].

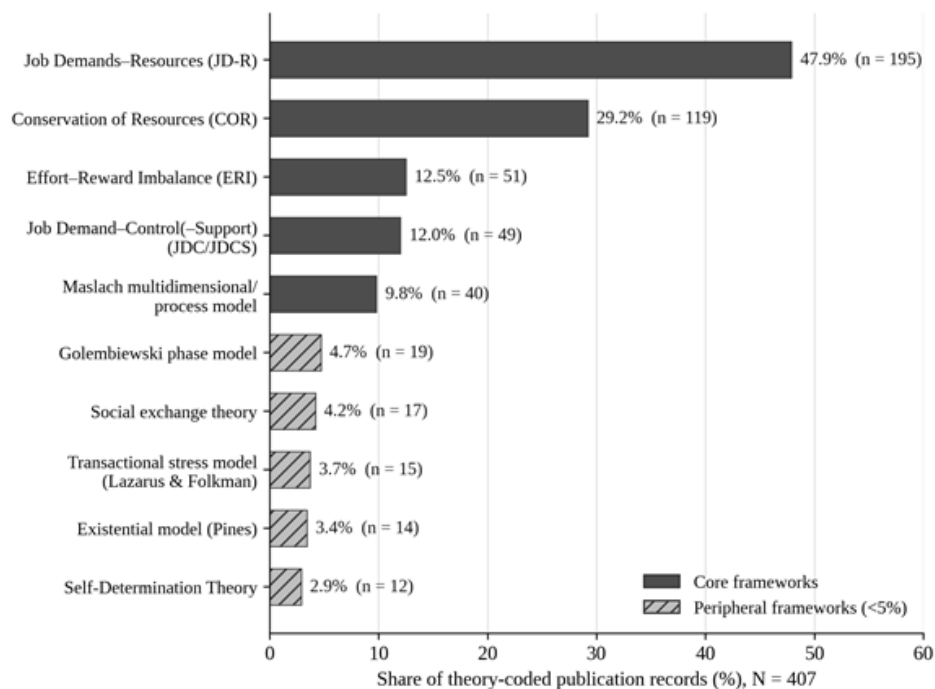


Figure 2 – Prevalence of the ten most frequently named theoretical frameworks (% of theory-coded records, N = 407)

Note: Compiled by the authors based on the study data.

Three contrasts organize the comparison. JDC/JDCS and ERI explain burnout-related strain through adverse work configurations or imbalance; COR through sustained resource loss and possible loss spirals; JD-R through health-impairment and motivational processes; and the Maslach model through a burnout-centered multidimensional/process conceptualization. Second, JDC/JDCS and ERI foreground comparatively delimited construct sets, whereas JD-R and COR allow broader contextual specification of demands or resources. Third, the frameworks differ in process logic: cumulative strain, resource-loss/gain dynamics, parallel health-impairment and motivational processes, or the sequential ordering of burnout dimensions.

Comparatively, JD-R displayed the broadest integrative architecture among the five dominant frameworks because its open demands/resources taxonomy and dual-process structure accommodate both strain-oriented and motivational logic. This is an observation about explanatory architecture, not empirical superiority or validity.

Table 3 – Comparative explanatory logic of major occupational burnout frameworks

Framework	Burnout focus	Core mechanism	Demands/resources and process logic
JD-R	Exhaustion/disengagement under unfavorable job conditions	Dual health-impairment and motivational processes	Open, context-specific demands/resources; sustained demands deplete energy, resources support motivation/engagement
COR	Burnout as possible consequence of resource depletion	Resource-loss primacy; loss and gain spirals	Broad valued-resource logic; accumulating loss may intensify strain, while reservoirs and gains can counter depletion
ERI	Strain from failed effort–reward reciprocity	High effort combined with low reward; overcommitment can amplify strain	Delimited effort/reward constructs; chronic non-reciprocity produces cumulative strain
JDC/JDCS	Strain/exhaustion in high-strain job configurations	High demands with low control; low support in JDCS	Delimited demand/control/support constructs; sustained adverse configuration and buffering by control/support
Maslach model	Multidimensional syndrome: exhaustion, cynicism/depersonalization, reduced efficacy	Deterioration across burnout dimensions under chronic stressors	No formal demand/resource taxonomy; process ordering of dimensions remains contested
Note: Characterizations synthesize the corpus extraction fields (see Theory extraction and analytical dimensions). JD-R = Job Demands–Resources model; COR = Conservation of Resources theory; ERI = Effort–Reward Imbalance model; JDC/JDCS = Job Demand–Control(–Support) models. Compiled by the authors based on the study data and on the primary sources of the frameworks compared [5–8, 10–13].			

Multi-framework use and patterns of theoretical co-occurrence (RQ3)

Multi-framework use characterized 189 of 407 theory-coded records (46.4%); 218 records named a single framework. Co-occurrence was therefore examined at publication-record level (Table 4).

The most frequent raw pair was JD-R x COR (58 records), followed by JDC(S) x ERI (29) and JD-R x JDC(S) (28). Other recurrent raw pair counts are shown in Table 4. These values describe repeated co-naming at publication-record level and are not adjusted for the marginal prevalence of the individual frameworks; they should therefore not be interpreted as evidence of preferential theoretical association.

JDC(S) showed a distinctive pattern: 46 of 49 records (93.9%) named it with at least one other framework, and only three used it alone.

A study-level sensitivity analysis collapsed the three probable version/publication pairs retained under the publication-record unit. The resulting corpus contained N = 561 records: 405 theory-coded, 156 without an extractable named theory, 217 single-theory, 188 multi-theory, 852 substantive framework mentions, and 863 total coded labels. COR decreased from 119 to 118 records and social exchange theory from 17 to 16; all other framework counts were unchanged. Collapsing the pairs did not materially alter framework ranking, headline percentages, or the major co-occurrence structure.

Table 4 – Major theoretical framework co-occurrences

Framework pair	Co-occurrence n
JD-R × COR	58
JDC(S) × ERI	29
JD-R × JDC(S)	28
COR × JDC(S)	16
COR × ERI	12
JD-R × Maslach model	8
JD-R × Self-Determination Theory	6
Maslach model × Pines	5
Note: Co-occurrence n = number of records naming both frameworks. Counts are raw and unadjusted for marginal framework prevalence. Compiled by the authors based on the results of the present review (N = 564 publication records).	

Integration of burnout, work engagement, and psychological well-being (RQ4)

Positive-outcome integration was compared across the five major frameworks while treating burnout, work engagement, and psychological well-being as analytically distinct constructs. The comparison concerns theoretical architecture rather than empirical adequacy.

ERI and JDC/JDCS are primarily strain-focused. Reward, decision latitude, and social support function chiefly as protective conditions within adverse-strain processes rather than as origins of a separate positive-outcome pathway. Positive functioning is therefore represented mainly indirectly, without implying that positive constructs are absent from these traditions.

COR occupies an intermediate position. Its loss/gain architecture provides an explicit basis for positive adaptation through resource gain, reservoirs, and gain spirals, but work engagement is not a native construct and positive adaptation emerges from the same resource logic that explains burnout.

JD-R presents the most explicit dual-process architecture: sustained demands are associated with health impairment and burnout, whereas job resources support motivation and work engagement. Burnout and engagement are thus located in related but non-identical pathways, giving the framework an explicit capacity to represent negative and positive occupational outcomes simultaneously.

The Maslach model is comparatively burnout-centered and organized around the syndrome and relations among its dimensions. Where engagement enters this tradition, it may be positioned through a burnout–engagement continuum assumption, while an independent-constructs view also appears in the corpus. Self-Determination Theory provides a contrasting mechanism in which need satisfaction versus frustration can locate burnout, engagement-related motivation, and psychological well-being within one theoretical logic.

Psychological well-being was less consistently integrated as a core endogenous construct than burnout or engagement. Across frameworks it appeared as a distal outcome, adjacent health construct, or resource-related state, and its causal location varied. No consensual model linking burnout, engagement, and psychological well-being emerged from the corpus.

Overall, positive occupational functioning ranged from peripheral or indirectly represented (ERI, JDC/JDCS), to resource-gain based (COR), continuum-based in part of the Maslach tradition, or explicitly modeled through a motivational process (JD-R).

Contextual adaptability and linguistically complex work environments (RQ5)

Contextual flexibility was compared as the capacity of a framework to accommodate context-sensitive demands and resources. Bilingual and multilingual work environments served solely as an illustrative test case; no language-related condition discussed below is treated as an established empirical finding of the review. Because informative Contextual Flexibility extraction was available for 121 of 564 records (21.5%), this comparison is exploratory and concerns theoretical capacity within the available extraction rather than comprehensive corpus-wide contextual validity.

JD-R permits substantial contextual adaptability because its demand and resource categories are open and context-specific. Illustrative applications of this taxonomy to linguistically complex environments are presented in the Discussion, Context-sensitive theory development.

COR permits comparable contextual accommodation through a different logic: language competence, belonging, communicative confidence, status, or supportive networks may be theorized as valued resources, and threats to them within resource-loss dynamics.

JDC/JDCS and ERI can register contextual conditions, but generally by translating them into existing categories of demand, control, support, effort, or reward. Their capacity for contextual accommodation is therefore narrower rather than absent.

The Maslach model can reflect context through chronic stressors, interpersonal demands, and person–work mismatch, but provides no explicit taxonomy for classifying emerging context-specific demands and resources. Areas of Worklife remained a distinct framework and was not merged into this characterization.

Among the dominant frameworks, JD-R and COR appeared to offer the broadest capacity to accommodate context-sensitive occupational conditions through different construct logics: an open demands/resources taxonomy and dual-process architecture in JD-R, and a broad valued-resource definition with loss/gain dynamics in COR. This is a theoretical-capacity inference, not evidence of superior contextual performance.

The language-related conditions above are illustrative; the review does not establish their prevalence, magnitude, or causal effects.

Discussion

Interpreting these results, three concepts are proposed as interpretive devices—core–periphery architecture, mechanism-complementary integration, and theoretical interoperability—not as directly coded empirical categories.

A concentrated yet theoretically plural field

RQ1 revealed simultaneous concentration and plurality. JD-R and COR accounted for the largest shares of explicit theory use, followed by ERI, JDC/JDCS, and the Maslach model; yet 37.6% of theory-coded records contained at least one long-tail framework, 10.6% were long-tail-only, and 27.8% of the corpus contained no extractable named theory.

We propose core–periphery architecture as an interpretive label for this configuration. The term is used here as a distributional metaphor; no formal network or statistical core–periphery model was estimated. Burnout theory has not converged on a single explanatory model, but neither is theory use evenly fragmented. A small group of demand- and resource-oriented frameworks occupies structurally central positions while a plural long tail persists. “Core” denotes frequency of explicit theory use, not validity or superiority; “periphery” does not imply theoretical irrelevance.

Prior reviews have catalogued burnout models and traced their development [3, 25, 26]. The present contribution is to quantify the structure of that diversity—its concentration, long tail, no-theory segment, and recurrent framework combinations—and to interpret the field as neither a settled paradigm nor an undifferentiated plurality.

From syndrome description toward mechanism-based explanation

RQ2 showed that the dominant frameworks differ principally in explanatory machinery. As an interpretive synthesis rather than a coded taxonomy, and drawing on the extraction-field synthesis for frameworks beyond the five compared in Table 3, four broad mechanism families can be distinguished: demand-strain and imbalance (JDC/JDCS, ERI); resource depletion, conservation, and gain (COR, JD-R health-impairment logic, Effort-Recovery), with COR articulating resource-based reasoning most explicitly [10]; multidimensional and process conceptualizations (Maslach, Golembiewski, Cherniss); and motivational, need-based, relational, or meaning-oriented mechanisms (JD-R motivational pathway, Self-Determination Theory, social exchange/equity reasoning, existential approaches).

Within this grouping, the two most frequently named frameworks foreground mechanisms linking occupational conditions to burnout—dual demand–resource processes in JD-R [12] and resource-loss dynamics in COR [11]—whereas the multidimensional tradition is organized around syndrome structure and internal process [5], with the internal ordering of its dimensions remaining contested [3]. The present architecture is therefore consistent with movement from syndrome-centered description toward mechanism-oriented occupational explanation. Because framework use was not coded by publication period, this is not a demonstrated historical shift.

Recurrent and non-uniform patterns of multi-framework use

Nearly half of theory-coded records (189/407; 46.4%) named multiple frameworks. Raw co-occurrence counts were highest for JD-R x COR (58), JDC(S) x ERI (29), and JD-R x JDC(S) (28). Because raw counts were not adjusted for marginal framework prevalence, they cannot establish preferential pairing; they provide a descriptive basis for asking whether some combinations may serve complementary explanatory functions.

We propose mechanism-complementary integration as a hypothesis-generating concept: co-used frameworks may contribute distinct mechanisms or levels of analysis. JDC(S) and ERI, for example, can jointly represent task structure/control and effort-reward reciprocity [9]. JD-R and COR also offer distinguishable demand/resource and loss/gain logics [27], but their high raw co-occurrence does not itself show preferential complementarity.

Co-occurrence captures joint naming, not integration depth, rationale, or intent. The observed patterns are compatible with mechanism-complementary integration but do not demonstrate it. Prevalence-adjusted co-occurrence or network analysis, combined with direct analysis of authors' integration rationales, would be required to test the proposition more directly.

Why JD-R occupies a structurally central position

JD-R was the most frequently named framework and appeared in several recurrent raw pairings, but these counts may partly reflect its high marginal prevalence and are not direct evidence of preferential association. Theoretical interoperability is therefore proposed as an architecture-based concept: the capacity of a framework to operate alongside external theoretical mechanisms without requiring their full absorption.

JD-R's open, occupation-specific demand/resource categories can accommodate constructs from other traditions [12, 13], while its health-impairment and motivational processes provide distinct theoretical attachment points, as illustrated by JD-R-SDT applications [28] and demand-side refinements [29]. These features support interoperability as a cautious proposition, not universal compatibility or empirical superiority.

JDC(S) as a complementary architecture

The JDC(S) pattern was particularly distinctive: 46 of 49 records (93.9%) named it with another framework and only three used it alone. This does not imply obsolescence or deficiency. Its focused demand-control(-support) construct set remains analytically specific and is productively combined with ERI [9]. A cautious inference is that JDC(S) often functions in burnout research as a complementary occupational-stress architecture, while co-named frameworks contribute resource dynamics, reciprocity, motivational processes, or burnout-specific conceptualization.

Burnout, engagement, and psychological well-being remain unevenly integrated

RQ4 found no consensual architecture linking burnout, work engagement, and psychological well-being, consistent with treating engagement as distinct from the inverse of burnout and well-being as distinct from its absence [18]. ERI and JDC/JDCS represent positive functioning mainly through protective conditions within strain-focused models. COR extends a single resource logic to positive adaptation through gain spirals and reservoirs [19, 30]. JD-R locates burnout and engagement in related but separable pathways [18, 29] and permits well-being-related outcomes downstream in some applications [27]. The Maslach tradition may admit engagement through a continuum assumption that the corpus records as contested. Self-Determination Theory offers a different need-based mechanism: burnout risk is located in the frustration of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs [20], while recent dual-theory applications combine SDT with JD-R to organize system-level well-being interventions [28].

Psychological well-being is the least consistently located construct in these architectures: it appears as a distal outcome, adjacent health construct, resource-related state, or is absent as an explicit theoretical component. Studies should specify whether well-being is treated as antecedent, resource, mediator, moderator, or distal outcome rather than append it as an unlocated outcome. Otherwise, cumulative hypothesis development and cross-study comparison remain difficult.

Context-sensitive theory development

RQ5 indicated unequal openness to emerging occupational conditions. JD-R can locate context-specific conditions within an open demands/resources taxonomy; cultural-moderation evidence illustrates this capacity [21]. COR permits comparable accommodation through its broad valued-

resource definition and loss/gain dynamics [30]. JDC/JDCS and ERI generally translate context into existing construct categories, while the Maslach model admits context through stressor and mismatch logic. JD-R and COR therefore appeared to offer the broadest contextual accommodation through different theoretical logics; this is a capacity inference, not evidence of superior contextual performance.

Bilingual and multilingual work environments served strictly as a test case. Language switching, communication effort, cognitive load, language-related exclusion, linguistic accommodation, multilingual competence, and communicative support illustrate conditions an open architecture could represent; they should not be interpreted as established antecedents of burnout on the basis of this review. Empirical identification of whether such demands and resources operate, in which occupations, and with what consequences should precede formal model testing. Flexible frameworks make contextual incorporation easy, which also creates a risk of inserting assumed constructs without evidence.

Theoretical implications

The findings support six implications. Burnout theory use is better represented as an architecture of central frameworks, recurrent combinations, and a plural periphery than as a linear succession of models. Framework selection should follow explanatory mechanism and construct architecture rather than prevalence. Multi-framework use should state what each framework contributes. Theory comparison should distinguish prevalence, explanatory scope, empirical support, integrative capacity, and contextual flexibility. Positive outcomes, especially psychological well-being, should be positioned explicitly within causal architectures. Context-specific demands and resources should be empirically identified before incorporation into flexible frameworks.

Limitations

Several limitations bound the conclusions. First, theory coding required explicit naming of a substantive framework. This conservative rule reduces prevalence inflation through inferred commitments but may underestimate implicit theoretical influence; the 157 no-theory records may include conceptually theory-informed work. The prevalence structure therefore describes explicit theory use in the published record.

Second, the unit was the unique publication record rather than the underlying study. Collapsing three probable version/publication pairs did not materially alter framework ranking, headline percentages, or major co-occurrence structure, but publication frequency remains distinct from the number of unique empirical studies.

Third, comparative synthesis depended on extraction completeness. Coverage was high for Core Theoretical Mechanism (485/564; 86.0%) and Positive Outcomes Integration (562/564; 99.6%) but sparse for Contextual Flexibility (121/564; 21.5%). RQ5 is therefore an exploratory theory-capacity assessment based on available extraction rather than a comprehensive corpus-wide evaluation.

Fourth, co-occurrence measures joint naming rather than integration depth, rationale, or intent. Raw pair counts were not adjusted for marginal framework prevalence and cannot establish preferential association. The three proposed interpretive concepts are not directly coded empirical categories; prevalence-adjusted or network analyses could test the structural propositions more directly.

Fifth, bilingual and multilingual work environments were an author-defined contextual test case, so contextual-capacity inferences are not evidence of real-world language effects. Screening was software-assisted and not independently duplicated; no inter-rater reliability statistic was calculated and no protocol was prospectively registered. No temporal trend analysis was conducted. Because the review mapped explicit theory use rather than pooled effects or intervention outcomes, conventional study-level risk-of-bias appraisal was not used as an eligibility or weighting criterion.

Conclusion

This review mapped occupational burnout theory use across 564 unique publication records. The field is concentrated but not theoretically convergent: JD-R and COR occupy structurally central positions, followed by ERI, JDC/JDCS, and the Maslach model, while a broad long tail persists and more than a quarter of the corpus names no framework. We propose core-periphery architecture as a distributional metaphor for this configuration; structural centrality denotes frequency of explicit theory use, not superiority or greater validity.

Multi-framework use is substantial, but raw co-occurrence counts are prevalence-dependent and do not establish preferential pairing. Mechanism-complementary integration and theoretical interoperability are therefore proposed as hypothesis-generating concepts concerning, respectively, combinations of distinct explanatory mechanisms and architectures able to operate alongside external mechanisms. Because integration depth, pairing preference, and rationale were not directly coded, both remain interpretive propositions.

Burnout, work engagement, and psychological well-being remain unevenly integrated, with no consensual three-construct architecture and an unstable theoretical location for psychological well-being. Contextual flexibility also differs across frameworks: JD-R and COR appear to offer the broadest structural capacity to accommodate context-sensitive conditions through different logics. Linguistically complex work environments served only as a test case; empirical identification of context-specific demands and resources requires dedicated research.

The practical implication is that framework selection should be explicit and based on the mechanism specified, the outcome architecture provided, and the contextual conditions represented—not on prevalence alone. The next stage of burnout theory development may depend less on identifying another universally dominant framework than on specifying more clearly which mechanisms, outcomes, and contextual conditions each framework is structurally equipped to explain.

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ФРАГМЕНТАЦИЯДАН ИНТЕГРАЦИЯҒА ҚАРАЙ МА: КӘСІБИ ЖАНУ ЗЕРТТЕУЛЕРІНІҢ ТЕОРИЯЛЫҚ АРХИТЕКТУРАСЫ

Андатпа

Кәсіби жануды зерттеу ауқымды әрі теориялық тұрғыдан әртекте әдебиетті қалыптастырды, алайда жануды түсіндіру үшін қолданылатын теориялық негіздердің таралуы мен салыстырмалы архитектурасы жеткілікті түрде жүйеленбеген. Осы теорияға бағытталған жүйелі шолудың мақсаты кең таралған теориялық негіздерді анықтау, олардың түсіндіру механизмдерін салыстыру, бірнеше теорияны қатар қолдану үлгілерін талдау, жұмысқа тартылу мен психологиялық әл-ауқаттың интеграциялануын және контекстік бейімделгіштікті бағалау болды. Бағдарламалық қолдауы бар көпдереккөзді іздеу және скрининг нәтижесінде 564 бірегей жарияланымнан тұратын корпус қалыптастырылды; олардың 407-сінде кемінде бір мазмұндық теориялық негіз тікелей аталған. Жарияланым және теория деңгейінде теориялық негіздердің таралуы, бір және бірнеше теорияны қолдану, негізгі теориялық қатар қолданулар және 12 аналитикалық өлшем синтезделді. Ең жиі Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) жұмыс талаптары мен ресурстары теориясы (47,9%), одан кейін Conservation of Resources (COR) ресурстарды сақтау теориясы (29,2%) аталды; теориялық кодталған жарияланымдардың 46,4%-ы бірнеше негізді қолданған. Салада «ядро–периферия» архитектурасы анықталды: талаптар мен ресурстарға бағытталған шоғырланған ядро кең теориялық «ұзын құйрықпен» қатар өмір сүреді. Негізгі теориялық негіздер себептік логикасы және оң кәсіби нәтижелерді қамту тәсілі бойынша ерекшеленді; кәсіби

жану, жұмысқа тартылу және психологиялық әл-ауқатты бір мезгілде біріктіретін келісілген архитектура анықталмады. Контекстік бейімделгіштік те әртүрлі болды; JD-R және COR әртүрлі механизмдер арқылы кең теориялық әлеует көрсетті. Шолу түсіндіру механизміне негізделген неғұрлым айқын теориялық таңдау мен контекстке сезімтал теорияларды одан әрі дамытуға салыстырмалы негіз ұсынады.

Тірек сөздер: кәсіби жану, теориялық негіздер, теорияларды карталау, жұмысқа тартылу, психологиялық әл-ауқат.

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ОТ ФРАГМЕНТАЦИИ К ИНТЕГРАЦИИ: ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКАЯ АРХИТЕКТУРА ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОГО ВЫГОРАНИЯ

Аннотация

Исследования профессионального выгорания сформировали обширную и теоретически неоднородную литературу, однако распределение и сравнительная архитектура объясняющих выгорание теоретических рамок остаются недостаточно систематизированными. Цель данного теоретически ориентированного систематического обзора состояла в выявлении наиболее распространенных теоретических рамок, сравнении их объяснительных механизмов, анализе использования нескольких теорий, оценке интеграции вовлеченности в работу и психологического благополучия, а также контекстуальной адаптивности. Программно поддержанный многоисточниковый поиск и скрининг позволили сформировать корпус из 564 уникальных публикаций; в 407 из них была прямо названа по меньшей мере одна содержательная теоретическая рамка. На уровне публикаций и теорий были синтезированы распространенность рамок, одно- и многотеоретическое использование, основные сочетания теорий и 12 аналитических измерений. Наиболее часто упоминалась теория требований и ресурсов работы (Job Demands-Resources, JD-R; 47,9%), затем – теория сохранения ресурсов (Conservation of Resources, COR; 29,2%); 46,4% теоретически кодированных публикаций использовали несколько рамок. Выявлена архитектура «ядро–периферия»: концентрированное ядро подходов, ориентированных на требования и ресурсы, сосуществует с широким теоретическим «длинным хвостом». Основные рамки различались по причинной логике и способу включения позитивных профессиональных исходов; согласованной архитектуры, одновременно интегрирующей выгорание, вовлеченность и психологическое благополучие, не выявлено. Контекстуальная адаптивность также различалась; JD-R и COR демонстрировали широкую теоретическую емкость посредством разных механизмов. Обзор создает сравнительную основу для более явного выбора теоретической рамки по механизму объяснения и для дальнейшего развития контекстно чувствительных моделей.

Ключевые слова: профессиональное выгорание, теоретические рамки, картирование теорий, вовлеченность в работу, психологическое благополучие.

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