

Review

Burnout through the Lenses of Equity/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Disabled People: A Scoping Review

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Abstract: Burnout is a problem within the workplace including in higher education, the activity of activism, and in reaction to experiencing systemic discrimination in daily life. Disabled people face problems in all of these areas and therefore are in danger of experiencing “disability burnout”/“disablism burnout”. Equity/equality, diversity, and inclusion” (EDI) linked actions are employed to improve the workplace, especially for marginalized groups including disabled people. How burnout is discussed and what burnout data is generated in the academic literature in relation to EDI and disabled people influences burnout policies, education, and research related to EDI and to disabled people. Therefore, we performed a scoping review study of academic abstracts employing SCOPUS, the 70 databases of EBSCO-HOST and Web of Science with the aim to obtain a better understanding of the academic coverage of burnout concerning disabled people and EDI. We found only 14 relevant abstracts when searching for 12 EDI phrases and five EDI policy frameworks. Within the 764 abstracts covering burnout and different disability terms, a biased coverage around disabled people was evident with disabled people being mostly mentioned as the cause of burnout experienced by others. Only 30 abstracts covered the burnout of disabled people, with eight using the term “autistic burnout”. Disabled activists’ burnout was not covered. No abstract contained the phrase “disability burnout”, but seven relevant hits were obtained using full-text searches of Google Scholar. Our findings suggest that important data is missing to guide evidence-based decision making around burnout and EDI and burnout of disabled people.



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Keywords: burnout; “disabled people”; “people with disabilities”; “disability burnout”; “disablism burnout”; “activist burnout”; “life burnout”; “equity, diversity, and inclusion”; “diversity, equity, and inclusion”; “equality, diversity, and inclusion”; “scoping review”

1. Introduction

Academic coverage of burnout focuses on many different settings and groups. One of the main areas of academic inquiry into burnout engages with the negative reactions of workers to work-related stress [1–4]. Another area of academic inquiry looks at burnout beyond the workplace [5], such as the stress of being an activist [6] or the stress of having to constantly encounter systemic problems such as racism [7]. Various measures of burnout exist [8–13] and burnout prevention is one main focus of research [14–19].

Disabled people face many challenges workplace-wise [20–28] and as activists [29–39], and disabled people face systemic disablism (discrimination based on their body/mind abilities) in their daily life [40–42]. All of these problems can lead to “disability burnout”/“disablism burnout”.

Many different EDI-related phrases such as “equity, diversity, and inclusion”, “equality, diversity, and inclusion”, “diversity, equity, and inclusion” [43–64], and EDI policy frameworks such as Athena SWAN (UK) and the Canadian framework Dimensions: equity,

diversity and inclusion [65–79]) are employed to improve the acknowledged problematic workplace situations of marginalized groups including disabled people and to change the research ecosystem [43,80]. EDI actions are also seen to be needed in daily life [81], and the external systemic discriminations in daily life [82,83] experienced by marginalized groups are seen to impact EDI implementation [80].

Data generated in academic inquiries can shape academic, policy, and educational activity around burnout given, for example, the focus on evidence-based decision making. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate and to record what data is generated in the burnout-focused academic literature in relation to disabled people and to EDI. To achieve this, we endeavoured to answer three research questions using a scoping review of academic abstracts employing quantitative hit count and qualitative analysis approaches: (1) Which and how are EDI policy frameworks, EDI phrases, and EDI groups mentioned in the academic abstracts covering burnout? (2) To what extent and how are disabled people mentioned in the burnout-focused academic literature covered? (3) To what extent and how are the phrases “disability burnout”, “disablism burnout”, “ableism burnout” and other burnout phrases linked to disabled people, such as “autistic burnout” or “deaf burnout”, mentioned in the burnout-focused academic literature covered?

1.1. Burnout and the Workplace

Burnout syndrome has been covered within the workplace setting since the 1960s, and the first evaluation criteria were developed in the 1980s [3]. “Burnout may be defined as a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that results from long-term involvement in work situations that are emotionally demanding” [4] (p. 501), (see also for definitions at [3,84]). What the scope of burnout is and what measures ought to be used are still discussed [85–88]. Various social theories are applied to burnout, such as social cognitive theory, social exchange theory, organizational theory, structural theory, job demands-resources theory, and emotional contagion theory [89]. Some characteristics of workplace burnout are exhaustion, mental distance, cynicism, depersonalization, and professional inefficacy [89].

As for workplace causes of burnout, there are many, such as excessive demands, work overload, working time arrangements [90], chronic occupational stress [91], prolonged screen time causing digital burnout [92], perfectionism, lack of coping skills for stress, lack of control over office processes and schedule, poor relationships with colleagues, lack of time for self-care, difficult and complicated patients, not enough time in the day, excessive paperwork, regret over chosen career [93], personal and situational challenges [94], job expectations beyond the scope of one’s skills and experience [95], wrong type of work [96], abuse [97], microaggression [98–102], emotional demands [103], social-environmental perspective [104], organizational characteristics [105], professional dissatisfaction [106], anxiety, sense of helplessness [107], and psychosocial factors such as work-family conflict, team climate, and organizational justice [108].

Prevention of burnout is seen as a public health priority [109], of public interest [110], and important on the individual and organizational level [111]. A “Proactive Burnout Prevention Inventory” has been developed [112] and a “Burnout Prevention Questionnaire for Coaches” [113–115]. It is argued that prevention has to include single, individual, social, organizational, and work-environmental contexts [116]. Prevention interventions engage with expectations, role definition, sharing of feelings, and ambition [117]. Burnout prevention takes into account the different realities of groups [118]; the need for increased training, mentorship, peer support, supervision, organizational culture, and interdisciplinary licensure efforts [18]; the interaction between personal and situational factors [15]; sex differences in how individuals respond to work-related stress [119]; and the need to increase a sense of belonging [120]. Burnout preventions deal with the root causes of burnout [121]; individual vulnerability and situational stressors [122]; self-initiated efforts focusing on resources and demands in the workplace, home, and personal domain [123]; and improvement of organizational culture [111]. Burnout prevention should start before

burnout impacts the person [124]. Apps for the prevention of burnout exist [125]. It is recognized that more research is needed [126,127] and that feedback, esteem, and fairness are key factors for the prevention of burnout [128].

Disabled people are one group that faces many challenges within the workplace [20–28]. For example, according to Statistics Canada, 35% of disabled university professors, instructors, teachers, and researchers “experienced unfair treatment or discrimination in the past 12 months and 47% saw themselves subjected to at least one type of harassment in the past 12 months” [129]. Thus, the percentage of disabled university professors, instructors, teachers, and researchers experiencing unfair treatment or discrimination, or harassment is the highest of all groups recorded. As such, they are in danger of experiencing burnout at the workplace, and, consequently, it is important to know what the academic burnout literature covers in relation to disabled people.

1.2. Activist Burnout

“Activist burnout has been defined as when long-term activism-related stressors deteriorate activists’ physical or emotional health or sense of connectedness to their movements, impacting their effectiveness or abilities to remain engaged” and “Making matters worse, burnout begets burnout, as movement work is taken up by fewer people, who begin to burn out, engage less effectively, and take out their hopelessness on fellow activists” [6] (p. 364). There is “professional or full-time activism and leisure activism as well as workplace-based and community-based activism” [6] (p. 375). Existing research on activist burnout [6,130–140] addresses topics including human rights [130], social justice [130,134], animal rights [6], bisexual college students [136], racial justice [133,135], youth activists [130] and references [141,142] mentioned in [130], feminism [131,143], academic women activists [138], peace [144], climate activism [145] and campus activism [146]. Vocational burnout theory is one theory applied to studies concerning activist burnout [6].

Causes of activist burnout mentioned include issues internal and external to the activist and problems within and between movements [6,135,136]. Examples of the causes of activist burnout include being different from the norm [6,135,136,146]; unreasonable expectations [136]; working too much [136]; working on issues around identity [136,146]; working outside the system [146]; the persistence of sexism, racism, and other oppressions [6]; emotional labour [6]; the way one’s lived experience outside the activism impacts the activism [6]; and treatment of activists in organizations [6].

Disabled people face many problems as activists that can lead to burnout, many of which are unique to them such as issues of physical access [29–39,147]. Ally burnout was covered in a 2022 thesis [148] and is another topic of importance to disabled people as activists.

1.3. Problem-Based Burnout or Life Burnout

Recently, a theme emerged where burnout is linked to a specific problem one experiences. For example, Hawkins argued that many of the burnout aspects he experiences are a reflection of experiencing decades of racism and, as such, he coined the phrase “racism burnout” [7].

Hawkins writes,

“To the extent that racism affected my life, perhaps the most important lesson learned during my pre-retirement self-reflecting was an appreciation for its cumulative and additive effects. No one event was a tipping point, but some events are far more impactful than others. I also realized that many sources of my pre-retirement, Baldwinian rage can be traced to events that go back to the now-distant past” [7] (p. 303).

However, burnout used in phrases highlighting a problem is still rare. Google Scholar, for example, does not return any hits for the phrases “discrimination burnout”, “sexism burnout”, or “LGBTQ2S + phobia burnout”. At the same time, literature exists that, addresses “racism and burnout” [149], “gender and burnout” [98,150,151], and how gendered

microaggression contributes to burnout [98–101]. Scholars have stated that “Sexism, racism, discrimination, microaggressions, and inequities may all influence the individual’s experience of burnout and often overlap” [150] (p. 9) and that “Lesbian, gay, or bisexual students reporting higher mistreatment specific to sexual orientation had an 8-fold higher predicted probability of burnout compared with heterosexual students” [152] (p. 1). It is also proposed that studies should look at adaptation burnout, which is “a potential outcome of marginalized groups having constantly to adapt to the non-marginalized groups” [80] (p. 191).

Disabled people face systemic disablism (discrimination based on their bodily/mental abilities) in their daily life [40–42], which can lead to burnout; as such, phrases that cover disabled people or specific “disabilities” together with burnout, such as “disability burnout”, “disablism burnout”, “autistic burnout”, or “deaf burnout” would be valid to use.

Then there is the phrase “life burnout”, which is described as one indicator of psychological well-being and is defined as “a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that results from long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding” [153]. This definition is the same as the one used for workplace burnout [4] (p. 501), [154] (p. 11) only leaving out the term “work”. Another definition excluding the word “work” reads “Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands” [155] and see [156] (p. 873). This definition of burnout, considered in light of the systemic problems and the constant disablism disabled people face [40,41], suggests that life burnout could be a danger for many disabled people.

1.4. EDI and Burnout

Many different EDI-related phrases such as “equity, diversity, and inclusion”, “equality, diversity, and inclusion”, “diversity, equity, and inclusion”, “belonging, dignity, and justice”, “diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging”, “diversity, dignity, and inclusion”, “equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility”, “justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion”, “inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility”, “inclusion, diversity, equity, and accountability”, “equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization” [43–64], and EDI policy frameworks such as Athena SWAN (UK), Science in Australia Gender Equity (Australia), the National Science Foundation (NSF) (USA) program NSF ADVANCE, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) See change with STEM Equity Achievement (SEA Change) program, and the Canadian framework Dimensions: equity, diversity and inclusion [65–79]) are used to discuss and develop policies to improve workplace including higher education environments, especially for marginalized populations. To quote from the Canadian EDI policy frameworks:

Dimensions: equity, diversity and inclusion Canada invites postsecondary institutions to take part in a transformation to increase equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and help drive deeper cultural change within the research ecosystem by identifying and eliminating obstacles and inequities. This will support equitable access to funding opportunities, increase equitable and inclusive participation, and embed EDI-related considerations in research design and practices [78] (see also Dimension charter [69]).

Although the original focus of EDI frameworks such as Athena SWAN was on gender and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), that focus has moved beyond STEM and beyond gender to include other groups seen as marginalized including disabled people [75] (see also [43,157]); (for disability terms see [158] (p. 38)).

EDI phrases are used within and outside the academic workplace. There is, for example, an EDI network group on LinkedIn that has over 78,000 members.

The academic journal “Equal Opportunities International” started in 1981 and was renamed in 2010 to “Equality, Diversity and Inclusion”. A section on the aim of the journal states

Equal opportunities and its allied concepts, including inequality, inequity, disadvantage, diversity, and inclusion, have been studied extensively across all disciplines of social sciences and humanities. The advent of legal and social reforms in the field, as well as the broadening of the theory of equal opportunities to include a wider range of inequalities based on sex, race, disability status, age, sexual orientation, marital status, nationality and social class have all contributed to the general growth of scholarly interest in the field. EDI engages with this interest, offering a platform for critical and rigorous exploration of equal opportunities concerns including gender, ethnicity, class, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, as well as other nascent and incipient forms of inequalities in the context of society, organisations and work [159] (cited in [80]).

Under the section discussing the journal's aim, it is furthermore acknowledged that It is important to acknowledge that there are some dichotomies between the reality and rhetoric of equal opportunities, the forms of practitioner and the academic knowledge in the field, scholarly approaches to equal opportunities across disciplines of social sciences and humanities, as well as their use of concepts and methods in order to uncover inequalities, and offer strategies for change towards equality of opportunity, valuing of diversity or pursuit of social inclusion [159] (cited in [80]).

Reducing burnout is mentioned in EDI plans [160] and by funding agencies in EDI efforts [161]. It is also known that people involved in EDI work experience burnout [162–167]. Microaggression is one factor linked to burnout [98–102,164,168,169]. It is argued that EDI should take microaggressions into account [70,170]. Microaggression is seen as a problem for EDI in, for example, the Canadian EDI policy frameworks [70,171]. The University of Manitoba report of the President's Taskforce on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion highlighted:

Experiences of microaggressions were disproportionately reported by members of underrepresented groups. Among students, Indigenous and Black students, students who identify as 2SLGBTQ+, and students with disabilities were more likely to report experiences of microaggressions. o Indigenous and racialized staff, staff who identify as 2SLGBTQ+, staff who identify as transgender/gender non-binary, and staff who indicated experiencing one or more disabilities reported experiencing more microaggressions than other staff. o Indigenous and racialized faculty, faculty who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ and faculty with a disability reported above average incidents of microaggressions [163] (p. 21).

Given the importance of EDI-related policy discussions and actions and their focus on evidence-based decisions and the danger of burnout for people involved in EDI work due to lack of support, it is important to ascertain what data around burnout is generated in conjunction with EDI phrases and frameworks.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Design and Theoretical Framework

Scoping studies are useful in identifying the extent of research that has been conducted on a given topic and the current understanding of a given topic [172,173]. Our scoping study focuses on the extent of academic research that has been conducted on burnout in relation to disabled people with the focus being on burnout experienced by disabled people and burnout research that makes the linkage to EDI phrases and frameworks. Our study employed a modified version of the stages for a scoping review outlined by [174].

Various theories are applied within the academic burnout literature, such as vocational burnout theory [130], social cognitive theory, social exchange theory, organizational theory, structural theory, job demands-resources theory, and emotional contagion theory [89]. All of these theories could be applied to engage with burnout and disabled people and burnout and EDI.

Microaggression is one action that exacerbates burnout [98–102,164,168,169]. Recently, various authors advanced microaggression theory [175–187]. According to Nadal, “Microaggression theory had been expanded to include discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability status, religion, ethnicity, and other identity groups” [179] (p. 1310). Various measures have been developed recently to advance microaggression theory such as the “Microaggression Experiences at Work Scale”, which contains an eight-item measure related to LGBT identity [188], and the “Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Positive Identity Measure” with its subscales of self-awareness, authenticity, community, intimacy, and social justice [189], which “assesses positive identity, or feeling good about oneself in the context of LGB identity” [188] (p. 1386). Other measures developed recently were the “Sexual Orientation Microaggressions Scale (SOMS)”, the “Gender Identity Microaggressions Scale” [190], the “LGBT People of Color Microaggressions Scale” [191], the “Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Scale (ARMS)” [192], and the “Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS)” [193]. All of these measures could be reworded to cover other marginalized groups, such as disabled people as a whole and different disability subgroups. Various studies focused on ableist microaggressions [194–200] and microaggression scales related to disabled people have been developed, such as the “Ableist Microaggressions Scale” [201–203]. All of these measures could be used to engage with the impact of microaggression on burnout.

Stress experienced by minority groups has been discussed for some time [204]. “‘Minority stress’ refers to how marginalized individuals are stressed by ideologies and social norms which accord them a minority position” [205] (p. 6). Minority stress theory is used to argue that minority groups face “chronic sociocultural stressors distinct from those faced by faculty in general” [168] (p. 4), or, in other words, “traditionally marginalized community members experience stressors that members from privileged groups do not experience” [206] (p. 174). Further minority stressors include “expectations of rejection or mistreatment, vigilance and desire to conceal identity, and the internalization of social stigma” [207] (p. 4). Stressors also include “external conditions and events, such as discrimination and victimization. Internal minority stressors include expectations of rejection and discrimination, concealment of minority identity, and internalizations of negative dominant cultural attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, and values” [204] (p. 806).

The minority stress model makes use of a variety of theories such as identity theory, intergroup relations theory, identity management theory, social theory of stress, and psychological theories of stress [204], and it is seen as cumulative if more than one marginalized identity is taken into account [208]. Minority stress theory and the minority stress model are applied to marginalized groups; used first by Meyer for LGBTQ2S+ people [209,210], it is now applied to other marginalized groups such as disabled people [211–213]. Ableism [212], systemic ableism [213], and internalized ableism [214] are mentioned as stressors. Recently, some studies looked at minority stress models and theory in conjunction with burnout [215]. One article argued that trans students experience minority stress, noting that some reacted to minority stress by engaging in activism, while others who stated they did not engage in trans activism mentioned burnout as one reason [216]. “Students who engaged in activism/advocacy cited their personal values, sense of personal and community responsibility, desire for community, and opportunities for engagement in explaining their involvement. Students who did not engage emphasized other obligations and identities as taking precedence, visibility concerns, lack of connections to campus trans communities (e.g., as nonbinary students or students of colour), burnout, mental health issues, activism not being a priority, and structural barriers” [216] (p. 66).

2.2. Identification of Research Questions

The aim of our study was to better understand the academic coverage of burnout in relation to disabled people and EDI. To fulfill this aim, we answered the following research questions: (1) Which and how are EDI policy frameworks, EDI phrases, and EDI groups mentioned in the academic abstracts covering burnout? (2) To what extent and how are

disabled people mentioned in the burnout-focused academic literature covered? (3) To what extent and how are the phrases “disability burnout”, “disablism burnout”, “ableism burnout”, and other burnout phrases linked to disabled people, such as “autistic burnout” or “deaf burnout”, mentioned in the burnout-focused academic literature covered?

2.3. Data Sources, Data Collection, and Search Strategies

On 3 March 2023, we searched the EBSCO-HOST (an umbrella database that includes over 70 other databases itself), Scopus, and Web of Science academic databases with no time restrictions. These databases were chosen because together they contain journals that cover a wide range of topics from areas relevant to our research questions, including burnout-focused journals such as “Burnout Research”. For inclusion criteria, scholarly peer-reviewed journals were included in the EBSCO-HOST search; reviews, peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, and editorials were included in Scopus; and the Web of Science search was set to all document types. For exclusion criteria, all data found through the search strategies (Table 1) not covering the content mentioned under inclusion criteria was excluded from the content analysis.

2.4. Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, we used two strategies.

In the first approach, we used a manifest online hit count coding approach to ascertain the presence of terms linked to marginalized groups covered under EDI, “isms” and phobias, and disability terms in phrases together with burnout in abstracts containing the term “burnout”.

In the second approach, we performed a directed thematic analysis [217–220] of downloaded abstracts (strategies 1–4 and 6–7) and full texts (strategy 5). To obtain the abstracts, we downloaded the citations (which also contained the abstracts) obtained through the search strategies (Table 1) into the Endnote 9 software. After using Endnote 9 software to eliminate duplicates of abstracts, we downloaded all abstracts into the qualitative analysis software NVIVO 12™. As for the full text of strategy 5, we downloaded every file as a PDF and searched for the presence of “disability burnout”. The ones that had that phrase were labelled in their file name as relevant.

As for the abstracts, one of us coded (coloured) the abstracts that contained the term “burnout” in NVIVO 12™ sections (20 words). The complete abstracts with the coloured areas were printed as one PDF per strategy and then read in Adobe Acrobat by both authors to find relevant abstracts (those that covered burnout of disabled people). The relevant coded abstracts were then thematically analyzed by both authors using the comment function in Adobe Acrobat. We used Adobe Acrobat because only one author had access to NVIVO, and we used NVIVO to highlight the burnout sections in the abstracts to make it easier to focus on relevant areas when coding the PDFs. We identified abstracts that covered burnout in relation to EDI and abstracts that covered burnout of disabled people. As for the coding procedure, we (both authors) familiarized ourselves with the content of all abstracts and the full texts and independently identified relevant data [219]. We then independently identified and clustered the themes based on meaning, repetition, and the research questions [220,221]. Any differences in qualitative data coding were few and were discussed between the authors (peer debriefing) and revised, as needed.

For strategies 4 and 5, we eliminated false positives of the full texts that did not reflect “disability burnout” but rather covered “disability, burnout” or “disability; burnout” and similar false positives. For the seven full texts obtained (through strategy 5), we used the full quotes and did not paraphrase the content due to the importance of the concept of “disability burnout”.

Table 1. Search strategies used.

Strategy	Sources	Search Terms	Hits
Strategy 1	Scopus/EBSCO-HOST/ Web of Science	ABS (Burnout) AND ABS (ADHD OR "Attention deficit" OR Autism OR "Autism spectrum disorder" OR Deaf OR Disabled OR "Disabled people" OR Dyslexia OR "Hearing impairment" OR "Learning disability" OR "learning impairment" OR "Neurodiv*" OR "People with disabilities" OR "Physical disability" OR "Speech impairment" OR "Visual impairment" OR Wheelchair)	563 (downloaded)—duplicates = 303 abstracts used for analysis
Strategy 2	Scopus/EBSCO-HOST/ Web of Science	ABS (Burnout) AND ABS (disabilit*)	1052 (downloaded)-duplicates = 461 abstracts used for analysis.
Strategy 3	Scopus/EBSCO-HOST/ Web of Science	ABS ("disability burnout" OR "autistic burnout" OR "deaf burnout" or "blind burnout" OR "impairment burnout" or "autism burnout" OR "ADHD burnout" OR "neurodiv* burnout" OR "Autism spectrum disorder burnout" or "attention deficit burnout" OR "dyslexia burnout" or "ableism burnout" OR "disablism burnout" OR "ability burnout" OR "wheelchair burnout" OR "disabled burnout")	51 (downloaded)-duplicates = 26 abstracts used for analysis
Strategy 4	Scopus/EBSCO-HOST/ Web of Science	Full text ("disability burnout")	2 (both false positive)
Strategy 5	Google Scholar	"disability burnout"	75 (after clicking on every result that suggested English text), full text were downloaded (7 were relevant after reading the full texts)
Strategy 6	Scopus/EBSCO-HOST/ Web of Science	ABS (Burnout) AND ABS ("Athena SWAN" OR "See change with STEMM Equity Achievement" OR "Dimensions: equity, diversity and inclusion" OR "Science in Australia Gender Equity" OR "NSF ADVANCE" OR "equity, diversity and inclusion" OR "equality, diversity and inclusion" OR "diversity, equity and inclusion" OR "diversity, equality and inclusion" OR "Belonging, Dignity, and Justice" OR "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging" OR "diversity, Dignity, and Inclusion" OR "Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility" OR "Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion" OR "Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility" OR "Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accountability" OR "Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization")	28 downloaded- duplicates = 13 abstracts used for analysis
Strategy 7	Scopus	ABS (burnout) AND Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (2010–2022) (title of journal). The title of its predecessor Equal Opportunities International (1981–2010) was not available in Scopus and journal Equality Diversity and Inclusion An International Journal (2010–2013) Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion at Work: A Research Companion (2009)	1 (downloaded)

2.5. Trustworthiness Measures

Trustworthiness measures include confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability [222–224]. Differences in codes and theme suggestions of the qualitative data were few and were discussed between the authors (peer debriefing) and revised as needed [223]. Confirmability is evident in the audit trail, made possible by using the comment function in Adobe Acrobat and the coding functions in NVIVO 12™ software. As for transferability, the description of our method gives all the required information for others to decide whether they want to apply our keyword searches to other data sources such as grey literature, other academic literature, or other languages, or whether they want to perform more in-depth research.

3. Results

In the result section we first provide some hit count frequency results covering different aspects of research questions 1–3 around EDI-related groups (many terms linked to disabled people taken from [158] (p. 38)), “isms” and phobias, and disability-related terms together in a phrase with burnout. We then provide the results of our qualitative analysis whereby we cover the results in order of the research questions.

3.1. Quantitative Hit Count Results

As for research question one, none of the 5 EDI policy frameworks (“Athena SWAN”, “See change with STEMM Equity Achievement”, “Dimensions: equity, diversity and inclusion”, “Science in Australia Gender Equity”, “NSF ADVANCE”) had any hits. Of the twelve EDI phrases searched (“equity, diversity, and inclusion”, “equality, diversity, and inclusion”, “diversity, equity, and inclusion”, “diversity, equality, and inclusion”, “belonging, dignity, and justice”, “diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging”, “diversity, dignity, and inclusion”, “equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility”, “justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion”, “inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility”, “inclusion, diversity, equity, and accountability”, and “equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization”), “diversity, equity and inclusion” had twenty-seven hits (twelve relevant) and “equity, diversity, and inclusion” had one hit (relevant). Table 2 lists the frequency of terms relevant to EDI-related groups (many terms linked to disabled people taken from [158] (p. 38)), “isms” and phobias, and disability-related terms in phrases with burnout in online searches (Scopus, EBSCO-HOST, Web of Science) of abstracts (duplicates between databases not eliminated).

Table 2. Frequency of terms relevant to EDI-related groups (many terms linked to disabled people taken from [158] (p. 38)), “isms” and phobias, and disability-related terms in phrases with burnout.

Terms	Burnout in Abstracts 121, 581 = 100%
	EDI-related Groups
ADHD	27
“African-American”	175
Addiction	616
“Anxiety disorder”	405
Asian	305
“Attention deficit”	19
Autism	364
“Autism spectrum disorder”	85
“Black”	572 (but very likely much less if linked to a human)
“Chronic disease”	260
“Chronic pain”	81

Table 2. Cont.

Terms	Burnout in Abstracts 121, 581 = 100%
"Comprehension disability"	0
Deaf	16
Depression	X (over 1000)
Diabetes	506
Disabilit*	1653 (this number is higher than in strategy 2 because once one downloads the abstracts in EBSCO-HOST it eliminates the duplicates of results based on the 70 databases it covers)
Disabled	296
"Disabled people"	13
Disease	X (over 1000)
Dyslexia	5
Ethnic*	292
Gay OR lesbian OR "homosexual*"	80
Gender	X (over 1000)
"Hard of Hearing"	6
"Hearing impairment"	11
Hispanic*	201
"HIV/AIDS"	186
Impaired	732
Impairment	X (over 1000)
"Indigenous People*" OR "Aboriginal*" OR "First Nation*" OR Metis OR Inuit OR "Native American*"	83
Latin*	220
"Learning disability" OR "learning impairment"	26
"LGBT*"	50
"Medical condition"	55
"Mental health"	X (over 1000)
"Mental illness"	X (over 1000)
"Neurodiv*"	13
"Of color" OR "of colour"	335
Patient	X (over 1000)
"People with disabilities"	34
"Physical disability"	22
Race	586
"Racialized"	16
"Racialized minorit*"	0
Schizophrenia	77
"Speech impairment"	0
Transgender	39
"Visible minorit*"	0
"Visual impairment"	9

Table 2. Cont.

Terms	Burnout in Abstracts 121, 581 = 100%
Wheelchair	13
Women	X (over 1000)
Isms, and Phobias	
Ableism	5
"Ageism" or "agism"	8
Anti-racism	2
Colonialism	0
Disablism	0
Homophobia	9
"Racism"	248
Sexism	11
Transphobia	2
Disability terms in phrase with burnout (all hits checked, and false positives not recorded)	
"Autistic burnout"	11
"Ability burnout"	Returned hits but all false positive so 0
"Ableism burnout"	0 even 0 with full text search
"ADHD burnout"	0
"Attention deficit burnout"	0
"Autism burnout"	0
"Autism spectrum disorder burnout"	0
"Blind burnout"	0
"Deaf burnout"	0
"Disability burnout"	Returned hits but all false positive so 0
"Disabled burnout"	0
"Disablism burnout"	0 even 0 in full text search
"Dyslexia burnout"	0
"Impairment burnout"	Returned hits but all false positive so 0
"Neurodiv* burnout"	0
"Wheelchair burnout"	0

Covering different aspects of research questions 1–3, Table 2 shows a very uneven coverage of EDI-related groups, with many terms linked to disabled people taken from [158] (p. 38) generating few to no hits. As for "isms" and phobias, only racism received a substantial coverage, while "isms" related to disabled people received few (ableism, 5) or no hits (disablism) Finally, burnout in a phrase together with disability-related terms returned only relevant abstracts with the phrase "autistic burnout". All the other searches, if they returned hits, provided false positives; for example, a search of "ability burnout" provided instances of "ability, burnout" and "ability. Burnout" as results, neither of which is the desired phrase but, rather, two words separated by a comma or a period.

3.2. Qualitative Analysis

3.2.1. EDI and Burnout

Concerning the first research question concerning EDI and burnout, we found thirteen relevant abstracts containing EDI phrases and “burnout” (strategy 6). As for relevant abstracts from the journals that contained “equality, diversity, and inclusion” in the title, only one abstract containing the term “burnout” was found (strategy 7). Of the thirteen abstracts, four covered burnout parallel to EDI, so were false positives [225–228]. None of the abstracts mentioned disabled people. Six abstracts made the connection to discrimination against marginalized groups, mentioning the terms “women”, “Indigenous women”, “women of colour”, “race”, “gender”, “non-binary”, “LGBTQ”, “URM person, of color”, and burnout, and indicated that DEI actions are needed or were taken [169,229–233]. One argued that DEI decreases burnout [234] and one argued that the purpose of DEI is to decrease burnout [235]. One argued that DEI done only by a few leads to burnout [236], a theme that was also present in the one abstract obtained by strategy 7, which examined “how unique features of diversity and inclusion (D&I) work are related to burnout” and mentioned that factors of burnout include “lack of clear job duties, conflicting job demands, lack of top management support, and experiences of tokenism” and that although “D&I professional experience higher levels of exhaustion than other professionals, they also experience greater professional efficacy” [237] (p. 38).

3.2.2. Burnout of Disabled People

In this section we first cover abstracts containing the phrase “autistic burnout”, then abstracts that cover autistic people without using the phrase “autistic burnout”, and then the abstracts covering other disabled people.

As for the second research question regarding the burnout of disabled people, of the 764 abstracts, all but 30 were false positives, as they did not cover the burnout of disabled people. Most false positives reflected the theme of burnout by others due to dealing with disabled people, depicting disabled people as the cause of burnout. For example, some titles of articles include: “Investigation of the relationship between burnout, life satisfaction and quality of life in parents of children with disabilities” [238] (p. 679), “Burnout, Depression, and Anxiety Levels among Healthcare Workers Serving Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder” [239] (p. 1), “Measuring staff burnout in a community home” [240] (p. 51), “Level of burnout among teachers of students with learning disabilities in Riyadh” [241] (p. 260), “The effects of social, familial, and economic stress on social workers working with disabled individuals” [242] (p. 1207), “Reducing burnout in mothers with an intellectually disabled child: An education programme” [243] (p. 2552), “Burnout in providers serving individuals with ASD: The impact of the workplace” [244] (p. 1), and “Comparative Study of Teachers in Regular Schools and Teachers in Specialized Schools in France, Working with Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder: Stress, Social Support, Coping Strategies and Burnout” [245] (p. 2874).

Within the 30 abstracts, none covered burnout of disabled activists. None covered concepts such as microaggression, “minority stress”, or mentioned theories. Eight covered “autistic burnout” [246–253], five covered autistic people without using the phrase “autistic burnout” [254–257], and seventeen used the generic term “disability” or terms for specific disabilities such as “learning disability”, “cerebral palsy”, “cystic fibrosis”, “dyslexia”, “spinal cord injury”, “lumbar disc herniation”, “lower back pain”, “workers with visual impairment”, “deaf and hard of hearing people”, and “athletes with a disability” [258–275].

Within the eight abstracts mentioning “autistic burnout” [246–253], three gave definitions [246,248,251]; for example, in one abstract two definitions are given: namely “autistic burnout is described as a debilitating condition that severely impacts functioning, is linked to suicidal ideation and is driven by the stress of masking and living in an unaccommodating neurotypical world”, and the second one being “highly debilitating condition characterised by exhaustion, withdrawal, executive function problems and gen-

erally reduced functioning, with increased manifestation of autistic traits—and distinct from depression and non-autistic burnout” [246] (p. 2356).

Five abstracts outlined factors leading to autistic burnout, with a common focus on masking, social camouflaging (behaving as someone one is not), and the need to accommodate “normal” people [247,248,250,251,253]. Stress in one’s daily life [253] and lack of autism awareness and acceptance within society [248] were other factors discussed. One abstract gave the following factors for autism burnout: “(1) Systemic, pervasive lack of autism awareness. (1.1) Discrimination and stigma. (2) A chronic or recurrent condition. (3) Direct impact on health and well-being. (4) A life unlived. (5) A blessing in disguise? (6) Self-Awareness and personal control influence risk. (6.1) “You need enough balloons to manage the weight of the rocks.”(7) Masking: Damned if you do, damned if you don’t. (8) Ask the experts. (8.1) Stronger together. The overarching theme was that a pervasive lack of awareness and stigma about autism underlies autistic burnout” [247] (p. 52).

Two studies examined recovery from autistic burnout [248,249] and one noted misdiagnosis of autistic burnout [252]. Two studies engaged with the “Conceptual Model of Autistic Burnout (CMAB)” [248,250]. One study introduced the “AASPIRE Autistic Burnout Measure” tool [253].

Among articles not using the phrase “autistic burnout” but covering autism and burnout, the problems of masking and of having to fit in were prominent themes [254,255]. One abstract introduced a tool for autistic people to decrease the danger of burnout [254], one argued more studies are needed [256], and one argued that occupational burnout is similar “among the neurotypical and neurodivergent employees” [257].

Among articles not covering autism, one main theme was that disability was the cause of burnout [269,272,273], with two studies describing ways to decrease burnout through acceptance, commitment therapy, and digital storytelling [258,259]. This is different to how burnout is discussed with non-disabled people, where the focus is mostly on an external problem that the person encounters and not on the person themselves as the cause of the burnout.

Another main theme was that the burnout of the disabled person was caused by the external factors the disabled person experienced, including a lack of support or inappropriate support outside work [266,267] and a lack of support within the workplace [268]. One reported on the negative impact of burnout on a disability [264], one argued in one sentence that reducing burnout is needed (without engaging with burnout in the full text of the paper) [265], and one saw burnout as a risk factor for generating a disability [274].

Two studies stated that there was a higher incidence of burnout in athletes with a history of a disability [270] and disabled people with hearing problems [271]. Reading the full text of these two papers indicates that neither examined whether the burnout was caused by external factors the person with the disability experienced or by the disability itself.

One paper reported on the fear and indecision about the disclosure of dyslexia [260]. Reading the full text, a section on the reluctance to disclose stated that “For those with dyslexia their difficulties were compounded by participants’ reluctance to disclose their disability or self-advocate for support for fear of discrimination, stigmatisation and retribution” [260] (p. 10).

Two studies have opposite views on the existence of burnout in massage therapists with visual impairment; one study suggested that there was a problem of burnout [261] and the other suggested that there was very little burnout [262]. Ref. [263] argued that more research on burnout is needed, stating “burnout, which is one of the most studied aspects related to work fields in the general population, has hardly been considered in people with disabilities” [263] (p. 7). One article suggested fear avoidance beliefs action by a disabled patient as a factor in burnout [275].

3.2.3. Phrases of Disability or Disabled People-Related Terms Together with Burnout

As for the third research question regarding phrases of disability or disabled people-related terms appearing together with “burnout” (strategy 3), we only found “autistic burnout” and “autism burnout” in the abstracts already covered under the 30 abstracts located for research question 2. Digging deeper in relation to the phrase “disability burnout” using strategies 4–5 we obtained seven relevant articles that contained the phrase “disability burnout”, with the main one defining disability burnout as burnout of disabled people [276]. Carol Gill wrote the following:

Understandably these facts of disability oppression can take a toll on the morale of persons with disabilities.³⁷ After struggling with employment bias, poverty, blocked access to the community and its resources, unaccommodating and selective health services, lack of accessible and affordable housing, penalizing welfare policies, and lack of accessible transportation, some may experience what is known in the disability community as “disability burn-out.” This term refers to emotional despair engendered by thwarted opportunities and blocked goals. It is aggravated and intensified by years of exposure to disability prejudice and devaluation. In fact, a frequently repeated theme in research interviews with persons with disabilities and illnesses is, “I can live with my physical condition but I’m tired of struggling against the way I’m treated.”³⁸ [276] (p. 180).

Three abstracts [277–279] referred to Carol Gill’s article [276]. One used the term “disability burnout” with a parent burned out by caring for their child [280], another suggested that having to constantly educate on one’s “disability” adds to disability burnout [281], and a third argued that what they found concerning “autistic burnout” could be generalized to “disability burnout” or burnout based on marginalization [248].

4. Discussion

This is the first scoping study, to our knowledge, investigating what the academic burnout literature says about the burnout of disabled people and how burnout is covered in conjunction with EDI phrases and policy frameworks. We found only fourteen abstracts related to EDI and burnout. Furthermore, within the 764 abstracts (strategy 1 and 2) generated with burnout and different disability terms, disabled people were mostly mentioned as the cause of burnout for others, while only 30 abstracts covered the burnout of disabled people. As for the phrase “disability burnout”, we found none in the 764 abstracts but seven relevant hits using full-text searches of Google Scholar (strategy 5). Our findings are problematic for disabled people and the EDI discourse. We discuss the problems in more detail in the remainder of the discussion section, first covering burnout and disabled people, then burnout and EDI after that.

4.1. Burnout and Disabled People

Burnout is covered as it manifests in many different settings, such as the workplace [282–285], in groups including activists [6,130,131,134–136,142] as well as students [286–290]. Burnout is also linked to the stress of having to constantly encounter systemic problems such as racism [7]. Disabled people face many challenges that can lead to disability/disablism burnout: in employment [20–28], including in securing employment in the first place [40,291]; as students [292–299] in all levels of education [40]; as activists [29–38,147]; and in their daily lives [40,82]. As such, our finding that the literature covered hardly engaged with the burnout of disabled people is problematic.

What the scope of burnout ought to be is still discussed [85–88]. We suggest that the scope of burnout in all its settings must engage with the disability/disablism burnout that disabled people face, not only in the framework of “disabled people” as a group, but with attention to individual characteristics, as different disabled people face different burnout dangers. Burnout coverage must move beyond suggesting disabled people causing burnout in others, which is the theme we found most often. All the causes of burnout

mentioned in the introduction apply just as well to disabled people and add to the danger of disability/disablism burnout.

For example, emotional labour is often linked to burnout [300–303], and in our relevant abstracts, the emotional labour of trying to fit in was the main factor of burnout mentioned [247,248,250,251,253]. In our study, the factor of emotional labour was mentioned in relation to “autistic burnout”. However, the emotional labour of having to fit in is not limited to autistic people or neurodiverse people. Not being accepted for who one is is a well-known problem disabled people face in general [304–312] as workers [313–317] and students [318–322]. Many disabled people do not disclose their “disability”, whether as workers [317,323–325] or students [326–332]. For example, in one study it was found that only 35% of youth with disabilities disclose their “disability” [333]. This lack of disclosure might be due to the cost that comes with disclosure. For example, a recent 2019 statistic recorded by Statistics Canada on “Unfair treatment, discrimination or harassment among postsecondary faculty and researchers” [129] showed that individuals selecting “has a self-reported disability” reported unfair treatment or discrimination in 35.0% of cases and harassment in 47.0% of cases. In contrast, those that selected “Has no self-reported disability” reported unfair treatment or discrimination in 15.4% of cases and harassment in 26.0% of cases [129]. At the same time, the need to mask is seen to add to “autistic burnout” [247,248,250,251,253]. Masking is also a problem for other disabled people and can lead to disability/disablism burnout for other groups of disabled people that can, and feel they ought to, mask their “disability”. As such, we suggest that Raymaker et al. are correct when they say in their conclusion what they found in relation to autistic burnout might be applicable to “disability burnout” in general or burnout of marginalized groups in general [248].

Microaggression is one action adding to burnout [98–102,164,168,169]. Microaggression theory [175–187] includes “discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability status, religion, ethnicity, and other identity groups” [179] (p. 1310). Various measures have been developed recently to advance microaggression theory [188–193] covering LGBTQ2S+ groups, gender, and race. All these measures could be reworded to cover disabled people as a group and different disability groups. At the same time, various studies exist that focus on ableist microaggressions [194–200], and microaggression scales related to disabled people have been developed such as the “Ableist Microaggressions Scale” [201–203]. These measures have not yet been used to link microaggression and burnout, but the foundation for such research is there. The microaggression measures developed to cover disabled people could be used to further the investigation into “disability burnout”, “autistic burnout”, and burnout of other specific disability groups, as well as the intersectionality of “disability” with other marginalized identities, as in the case of the “LGBT People of Color Microaggressions Scale” [191]. The “Acceptability of Racial Microaggressions Scale (ARMS)” [192] could be modified to look at the acceptability of “disablism microaggression”, or what some would call the acceptability of “ableist microaggression”.

According to the literature, burnout prevention has to include single, individual, social, organizational, and work-environmental contexts [116]. There are so many different contexts for different disabilities and different workplaces that many studies are needed to ascertain what makes disabled people burn out. As for the strategy of burnout prevention through increasing individuals’ sense of belonging [120], there are many studies indicating that disabled people do not feel they belong [325,334–337] and report on the othering they experience [338–340]. As for taking into account the different realities of groups [118], a recent study by [80] made a case for taking into account the lived reality of marginalized groups including disabled people outside of work within workplace policies. Emens wrote about the extra work a disabled person has to do—what Emens calls life admin, discrimination admin, and disability admin [82]—that impacts one’s reality at the workplace. Concerning the notion of dealing with the root causes of burnout [121], many studies need to be performed with disabled people to provide evidence as to what the root

causes actually are. With existing evidence and a high-level of literacy, one can start to rectify a burnout situation before burnout impacts the person [124].

As for activist burnout, it is troubling that not one abstract in our study mentioned disabled people as activists, suggesting that the existing activist burnout literature does not cover disabled activists. Disabled people have a long history as activists [341]. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [40] and the United Nations 2018 Flagship Report on Disability and Development: Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for, and with Persons with Disabilities [342] are just two documents that reflect the many problems disabled people still face that require activism. However, disabled people face many barriers to activism [37], including a hierarchy of activism and call-outs by the privileged as a tool for silencing [343]. A recent ABC News story outlined the burnout disabled environmental activists feel due to the many barriers they face in being activists [147]. Gill notes that the reality is that “disability burnout” is a general problem faced by the disability community [276] (p. 180), suggesting that it can be also a major reason for burnout among disability activists. So why did no study in the literature we covered engage with activism burnout in relation to disability activism and disabled people as activists? All of the activism burnout problems outlined in the activism burnout literature, such as being different from the norm [6,135,136,146]; unreasonable expectations [136]; working too much [136]; working on issues around identity [136,146]; working outside the system [146]; the persistence of sexism, racism, and other oppressions [6]; emotional labour [6]; how one’s lived experience outside the activism impacts the activism [6]; and treatment of activists in organizations [6] apply to disabled people and can cause “disability/disablism burnout” of disabled activists. For example, Fenney outlines the problems disabled activists face in environmental movements and organizations [344,345]. Then there are structural issues hindering the activism of disabled people, such as physical and other accessibility issues [37,147]. It is argued that activist burnout scholarship neglects “marginalized-identity activists” [133] (p. 1), although the author of the paper in question focuses on activists of colour reflecting on a study that found that the racism they experience was the primary reason for their burnout [346] (cited in [133]). Our study suggests that studies covering the burnout of marginalized identity activists in relation to disabled people are missing. A 2022 thesis addressed “ally burnout” [148], another topic of importance to disabled people, who depend extensively on allies. Ally burnout could be covered as one area that engages with disability activism and burnout.

Hawkins used the phrase “racism burnout” [7], reflecting that the continuing experience of racism was a reason for the burnout. Indeed, many studies stated that racism is a factor in burnout [169,229,230,347,348].

Hawkins writes,

To the extent that racism affected my life, perhaps the most important lesson learned during my pre-retirement self-reflecting was an appreciation for its cumulative and additive effects. No one event was a tipping point, but some events are far more impactful than others. I also realized that many sources of my pre-retirement, Baldwinian rage can be traced to events that go back to the now-distant past [7] (p. 303).

The content we found for the phrases “autistic burnout” and “disability burnout” reflects the same sentiment. It is troubling, however, how little content we found related to “disability burnout”, given that “disability burnout” is a common concept used within the disability community, as noted by Gill [276] whereby the burnout is seen to be caused by the treatment of the disabled person. In two abstracts in our study, a similar disconnect between the community using the term “autism burnout” and the lack of academic visibility of the term was noted [246,248].

Interestingly, one of the articles we found that covered “disability burnout” stated, “When searching Google Scholar for literature on ‘disability burnout’ I noticed the citations referred to staff burnout—the stress that challenges caregivers of people with disabilities. None of the retrieved articles dealt with the stress challenging people with disabilities

who have to deal not only with the limitations of their condition, but also with social policies and practices that marginalize or ostracize them on the basis of disability” [281] (p. 106). Our scoping review found the same bias for how burnout was covered in relation to disabled people.

Indeed, the very concept of “disability burnout” and similar phrases such as “autistic burnout” could be used much more to flag the burnout of disabled people as a group and different disability groups. Some use the term “ableism” with the meaning of “discrimination against disabled people” [349], the term “disablism” also covers discrimination based on irrelevant ability norms [350] and ability privileges [41] to critically analyse the situation of disabled people; likewise, “ableism burnout” and “disablism burnout” could also be used as critical terms.

In [80] it is proposed that studies should engage with “adaptation burnout”. Content related to “disability burnout” and “autistic burnout” we found in our study suggests that “adaptation burnout” is one aspect of “disability burnout” and “autistic burnout”. We furthermore suggest that “adaptation burnout” applies also to other groups, such as those experiencing racism burnout, LGBTQ2S + phobic burnout, and gender burnout. Then there is the phrase “Life burnout”, which is described as one indicator of psychological well-being and is defined as “a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that results from long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding” [153] (see also [155,156]). Disabled people can be seen to fit that very definition, given the descriptions of “disability burnout” offered by Gill [276]. As such, many studies could be done to engage with life burnout in relation to disabled people.

“Minority stress” refers to how marginalised individuals are stressed by ideologies and social norms which accord them a minority position” [205] (p. 6), and is also experienced by disabled people [211–213]. The minority stress model makes use of a variety of theories such as identity theory, intergroup relations theory, identity management theory, social theory of stress, and psychological theories of the stress [204], any of which can be applied to disabled people outside of covering minority stress. “Minority stressors include external conditions and events, such as discrimination and victimization. Internal minority stressors include expectations of rejection and discrimination, concealment of minority identity, and internalizations of negative dominant cultural attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, and values” [204] (p. 806). All these stressors are experienced by disabled people. Ableism [212], systemic ableism [213], internalized ableism [214], and disablism [343] are noted as stressors. The quote from Carol Gill describing “disability burnout” [276] (p. 180) reflects many of the stressors identified in minority stressor discussions.

Recently, some studies examined minority stress models and theory in conjunction with burnout [215,216]. Given that disabled people are experiencing minority stress, the minority stress model could be used as one angle to engage with “disability burnout”, disabled activists’ burnout, the burnout of disabled workers, and the burnout of disabled people in general.

4.2. Burnout and EDI

Many EDI phrases and EDI policy frameworks are employed to improve the acknowledged problematic workplace situations of marginalized groups including disabled people [80], although problems around the coverage of disabled people within EDI academic literature [43] and EDI academic inquiries in general [80] are noted. One of the main tasks of EDI policies is to decrease the negative workplace realities of marginalized groups, which should, as one consequence, decrease burnout. Reducing burnout is mentioned in EDI plans [160]. At the same time, it is recognized that burnout at work is linked to quality of life outside the workplace [351], work/life balance, and life admin [82,83], and that the realities experienced by marginalized groups outside work have to be taken into account in EDI efforts in the workplace [80]. Given that marginalized groups are at high risk of burnout at the workplace or in activities such as activism [135,152,169,230,347,352–357], and that life burnout can impact workplace burnout, it is problematic that EDI policy

concepts and EDI policy frameworks were rarely covered or simply not covered at all within the burnout academic literature and that burnout was not a theoretical, practical, and evidence focus in the EDI-focused academic literature. It is argued that EDI should take microaggressions into account [70,170]. Microaggression is recognized as a problem for EDI, for example, in the Canadian EDI policy framework [70], and is mentioned on university EDI webpages [171] and in EDI reports from universities [163]. At the same time, microaggression is linked to burnout [98–102,164,168,169]. As such, more work is needed to look at microaggression and burnout through an EDI lens. Furthermore, it is noted that people involved in EDI work experience burnout [161–167], which is something that also needs further academic attention. Minority stress is identified as a workplace problem [358–360] for the groups covered by EDI policy frameworks. A recent guest editorial in the journal “Sexual Abuse” suggested using minority stress as a lens to fill “JEDI [Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion]-related gaps in existing research on sexual violence” [361] (p. 792). Given that minority stress theory is applied to various marginalized groups and is seen as a workplace issue that marginalized groups face, EDI could be used to strengthen minority stress theory by adding content around the minority stress of marginalized groups at the workplace in conjunction with and beyond burnout.

4.3. Limitations

The search was limited to specific academic databases, the English language literature, and to abstracts. As such, the findings are not to be generalized to the whole academic literature, non-academic literature, or non-English literature. We also did not use the phrase “mental health” as a search term together with burnout, this would mostly give false positives that do not cover disabled people. Indeed, in SCOPUS alone we obtained 3075 hits for abstracts that contained “mental health” together with “burnout”. Reading the first twenty abstracts, none covered disabled people and most saw burnout as a mental health issue. However, our findings allow conclusions to be made within the parameters of the searches.

5. Conclusions, Implications, and Future Research

Our findings suggest a lack of academic inquiry into burnout in the EDI-focused literature and biased engagement with disabled people in relation to burnout. As for academic implications, burnout-related academic inquiry covering disabled people must be de-biased, and further research is needed to make “disability burnout”, “disablism burnout”, and “disability-specific” burnouts, such as “autistic burnout”, visible. Many more burnout studies are needed that explicitly use an EDI lens. It is also an EDI issue how disabled people are covered (or not) within the burnout-focused literature. As for education implications, data is missing that can be used to cover burnout in a way that does not neglect or bias against disabled people, and data is missing that can be used to teach about EDI and burnout. As for policymakers, the same implications as noted for education exist.

Many research projects related to burnout and disabled people and burnout and EDI could be done. For example, one could investigate how to decrease the burnout of marginalized groups covered under EDI. Investigating the link between lived experience and burnout within workplaces and activities such as activism, investigating the concepts of “disability burnout”, “disablism burnout”, and burnout linked to specific disability groups, such as “deaf burnout”, and investigating burnout of people involved in EDI work would also be warranted. One could further investigate “autistic burnout” or audit burnout coverage in other discourses. Other concepts such as “racism burnout” and other burnout phrases covering a systemic problem such as “LGBTQ2S + phobia burnout”, “sexism burnout”, “transphobia burnout”, “discrimination burnout”, and “adaptation burnout” could be engaged with further. One could generate concrete numbers of the compositions of people involved in EDI work at a given workplace and the issues they face related to burnout or use the “ableist microaggression scale” and other microaggression measures to

investigate microaggressions against disabled people and other marginalized groups and what they mean for burnout.

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