

**Parental Burnout in Romania: Validity of the Romanian version of the
Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA-RO)**

Elena Stănculescu¹

Isabelle Roskam²

Moïra Mikolajczak²

Ana Muntean³

Anca Gurza⁴

University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania

²Psychological Sciences Research Institute, UCLouvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

³West University of Timisoara, Timisoara, Romania

⁴General Department of Social Assistance and Child Protection, Timisoara, Romania

Abstract

The concept of parental burnout (PB) only recently gained the attention of researchers, mainly through the International Investigation of Parental Burnout (IIPB) a 40-country study of the prevalence of PB around the world. Based on the current gold-standard instrument to evaluate parental burnout, that is Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA) the present research investigates the psychometric properties of the Romanian version of the PBA (PBA-RO) in a sample of 650 Romanian parents (64.3% mothers; $M_{age} = 36.60$; $SD = 5.73$). First, we examined internal consistency and construct validity. The results displayed good reliability and the confirmatory factor analyses replicated both expected first- and second-order four-factor models. Second, the positive association between parental burnout and perfectionism, as well as the negative relation between parental burnout and both life satisfaction and resilience, confirmed the PBA-RO's concurrent validity. Third, we replicated the low correlations with sociodemographic characteristics (i.e., age, educational level, family type, number of children, children's age, number of women in the household, number of men in the household, hours spent with children, having a paid professional activity, and neighborhood). The results were discussed according to the Romanian cultural context of parenting. Given the good psychometric properties of the PBA-RO, we concluded that it can successfully measure parental burnout for this population.

Keywords: exhaustion, contrast with previous parental self, feelings of being fed up, emotional distancing, resilience, life satisfaction, perfectionism

Throughout history, most adults became parents and have raised children, making being a parent a fairly mundane experience. However, the fact that it is commonplace does not make it an easy experience, because it involves many responsibilities and challenges in terms of children's physical and mental health; their motor, intellectual, and social development; and their ability to integrate into the society and culture to which they belong (Bornstein, 2013; LeVine, 1977). Parenting thus brings its fair share of stress, and when the stress is too intense, too prolonged, and not met with the resources required to address it, the result can be a state of burnout (Mikolajczac & Roskam, 2018).

Parenting can be wonderful, but it is also stressful (for reviews, see Abidin & Abidin, 1990; Crnic & Low, 2002; Deater-Deckard, 2008). But parental burnout is not ordinary parenting stress (Brianda et al., 2020; Kawamoto et al., 2018; Lebert-Charron et al., 2018). Whereas parenting stress is perfectly common, normal and even necessary, parental burnout occurs when parenting stress severely and chronically overwhelms parents' resources to cope. The level of stress experienced by parents in burnout is consequently much higher than that of ordinary parents. As shown by Brianda and colleagues (2020), the level of hair cortisol (an indicator of the stress experienced over the last three months) of parents seeking treatment for parental burnout is twice as high as that of demographically matched control parents; it is even higher than patients suffering from severe chronic pain (Van Uum et al., 2008).

Parental burnout has recently been described and studied as a four-dimensional syndrome: emotional exhaustion in the parental role (i.e., the parent is so tired that simply thinking about all the things that must be done for the children makes them feel like they are at the end of their rope), emotional distancing from children (i.e., the parent is no longer able to show their children that they love them and is distant; they what has to be done, but not more), feelings of being fed up (i.e., feelings of being fed up in the parental role, with the

parent no longer taking any pleasure in parenting), and contrast with previous parental self (i.e., the parent no longer recognizes themselves as a parent, they are no longer the good father or mother that they once were; Hubert & Aujoulat, 2018; Roskam et al., 2018).

Interest in this topic is growing, as it reflects the experiences of many families that clinicians and professionals encounter in mental health services. With a prevalence of around 5 to 8%, parental burnout appears to affect many parents (Roskam et al., 2018; Roskam & Mikolajczak, 2020; Roskam et al., 2017). The consequences of parental burnout are dramatic for the parent themselves, with the risk of suicide increasing significantly, much more than for job burnout or depression (Mikolajczak et al., 2019). The same issue applies to alcohol consumption (Mikolajczak et al., 2018a). The cortisol level found in burned out parents helps explain their psychosomatic complaints (Brianda et al., 2020). However, the consequences of parental burnout do not end with the parent: They also affect children, and burnout is associated with a clear increase in neglect and violence (Mikolajczak et al., 2018a; Mikolajczak et al., 2019).

For these reasons (i.e., parental burnout's prevalence and deleterious consequences), it is necessary to address parental burnout not only for research purposes to better understand the phenomenon, its antecedents, and its consequences, but also for clinical purposes to better treat and prevent it (Brianda et al., 2020). In both research and clinical settings, this requires a valid measure of parental burnout. Just because such an instrument exists in another language and has been validated in another culture does not mean that the instrument can be translated and directly applied elsewhere. Parenting is rooted in culture (Bornstein, 2013), and it is necessary to ensure that the concept and measurement of parental burnout makes sense in the context of a given culture. This is what we have done in Romania by translating and validating the Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA) – the gold standard measure of parental

burnout. Before presenting the results of this validation process, we will discuss the particularities of parenting in Romania.

Parenting in Romanian Family

Romania is the only Eastern European country of Latin origin; most of its neighbors are Slavic countries. The population is mostly Christian-Orthodox. Although the country has an agricultural tradition, currently, a little more than half the population lives in urban areas. Agrarian societies tend to foster more collectivistic values, as individuals must stay together and cooperate in their work in order to achieve and sustain their welfare. The historical context specific to the communist period instilled a collectivist mentality in a coercive manner, with the state gaining decision-making power even on aspects related to family life. Thus, the discourse related to the collectivist character of Romanian culture remains subject to debate (Negovan et al., 2016). In recent decades, a return to the values of the pre-communist period has been seen. According to a national Gallup survey (Luca, 2005), the individualism index has a value 49, slightly higher than the score of 30 mentioned in Hofstede's study (1984).

This difference reveals a decreasing collectivism that can be explained by the development of capitalism in Romania in recent decades. During the post-communist period, Romania benefited from foreign investments, and people had an increasing number of opportunities to operate independently and to have entrepreneurial initiatives of their own, creating thus wealth for themselves. Beyond its placement on the collectivism–individualism axis, the concrete reality shows that in Romania, the family represents the most important value of people and the cardinal support of their lives. In addition, the child is considered the central value of the family (Robila & Krishnakumar, 2004), and the idea that a family must have a child to be fulfilled is widespread.

Another interesting aspect of parenthood under the communist regime must be mentioned to deeply understand how, in a collectivistic culture, the gender-stereotypical expectations toward the parental role and the almost equal involvement of fathers and mothers in childrearing coexisted. Due to low income and scarce economic resources, mothers and fathers worked in shifts in childrearing, as a result of which both were involved in caring for their children (Robila, 2004).

Romanian family values, although changing, do not indicate a clear trend towards postmodernity (Popescu, 2011). The traditional family model remains highly strongly, even by those who live in alternative family models. In Romania the preference for legally constituted family-type households still persists. Married couples with children are predominant in family lifestyles. As pointed out in the last Romanian population census (Eurostat, 2015), over half of Romania's resident population aged 20 and over (61.1%) had a legal marital status, and divorced persons accounted for 5.4%. Consensual unions families (4.5% of the total resident population) are growing in Romania at an average level in the European context (according to the last population census carried out in all EU Member States, 8.8 % of the Europe population aged 20 and over lived in a consensual union). Although marriage is not considered necessary, it remains the form of a positively valued family in which individuals are seen as happier, while others – informal cohabitation and especially single-parent families – being less preferred (Popescu, 2010).

The collective mentality in Romania remains characterized by male hegemony, even if gender stereotypes have dissipated in recent decades (Stănculescu, 2009). Traditionally, man is associated with qualities such as power, strength, dominance, dynamism, risk-taking, assertiveness, strategic thinking, self-assertion, the ability to support the family, and being the head of the family. Woman, by virtue of her perennial experience in the private space, in the care of the household, raising and educating children, is traditionally perceived as having

qualities such as sensitivity, conformity, passivity, empathy, devotion. The parental role is, of course, influenced by these gender-stereotypical expectations.

As mentioned, Romania is witnessing a certain dilution of gender stereotypes (Stănculescu, 2013); however, despite the emergence of more egalitarian gender attitudes, gender roles continue to reflect a consistent traditional image. Although man no longer occupies the hegemonic position of the past, men are favoured. Especially in parental tasks, the husband does not devote considerable time to helping his wife. The issue of childcare has a special significance in the overburdening of women, especially those who have a paid job, with the domestic role. Working women are forced to limit the time that they allocate to other activities in order to be able to focus on childcare (Iluț, 2005). Women's double burden represents a considerable stressor.

As noted above, a return to the traditional values promoted in the pre-communist period is occurring, but in a nuanced manner. The traditional image of the family has increasingly been complemented by the characteristics of the egalitarian model. More precisely, sociologists have shown that women, those with higher education and those in urban areas support considerably more equality in the family (Bădescu et al, 2007). According to Kovacs (2014), in Romania, postmodern trends are relatively poorly represented, and the attitudes of Romanians towards the family are predominantly conservative, although the egalitarian model of family or sharing of activities in childrearing is more accepted, especially in the educated and urban population. As highlighted in a study conducted on national samples (Popescu, 2010), people with a high level of education are less dependent on gender-stereotypical expectations and are more likely to share activities in the household, including childrearing. Thus, women receive more support from men, who find it natural to get involved in activities traditionally associated with women.

Parental burnout has not yet been investigated in the Romanian scientific community. Instead, there are empirical studies on other type of burnout syndrome, namely professional burnout among: (i) teachers (Vlăduț & Kallay, 2011); (ii) medical staff (Bria et al., 2013; Gănceanu-Rusu, 2020); (iii) social workers (Diaconescu, 2015). In regard to parental stress, a few studies were carried by Romanian psychologists. They focused especially on resources and programs of intervention for stress management. More precisely, various lines of research have been outlined: (i) the buffering effect of emotional support on parental stress experienced in family with disabled children (Oșvat & Bălătescu, 2011); (ii) the impact of positive parenting training on parental stress, depression and anxiety (Ionuțiu, 2016); (iii) the efficacy of cognitive-behavioral parent intervention to manage foster parents' stress and quality of life improvement (Gavița et al., 2010); (iv) negative affect, mothers' stress and coping strategies (Gorgan & Decsei-Radu, 2009); (v) perceived stress and life satisfaction in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders (Vasilca & David, 2018).

Romanian researchers have studied parental practices mainly from the perspective of clinical, developmental and positive psychology. Those based on clinical conceptual models explored the negative outcomes of low acceptance or/and high parental control as: adolescents' perfectionism (Damian et al., 2013) and depressive symptoms (Diaconu-Gherasim et al., 2017). In developmental studies association between parental practices and identity development in adolescence (Negru Subțirică et al., 2016, 2018) and relationship between mother-child similarities in value orientations in adolescence and perceived maternal parenting (Friedlmeier & Trommsdorff, 2011) were highlighted. In the positive psychology framework the association between parental practices and children's and adolescents' well-being was found (Negovan et al., 2016).

The Current Study

The main aim of this study is to validate the Romanian version of the PBA (PBA-RO) by testing its construct and concurrent validity. In particular, the reliability of the instrument, first- and second-order four-factor models, expected relations with other variables (i.e., gender, perfectionism, life satisfaction, and resilience), as well as correlations with sociodemographic variables (i.e., age, educational level, number of children, family type, children's age, number of women and men living in the household, number of hours spent with children, having a paid professional activity, and neighbourhood) were analysed.

As a first hypothesis, we assumed that the four-factor structure of the PBA-RO would fit the data, all the estimated factor loadings being statistically significant. Driven by the theoretical conceptualization of parental burnout and by previous research studies of PBA validation (e.g., Aunola et al., 2020), we expected that a second-order factor model as total Parental Burnout as latent variable would also fit the data. In the second hypothesis we presumed that the PBA-RO has concurrent validity. More specifically, we developed two sub-hypotheses: (i) we supposed that there is a positive relationship between parental burnout and perfectionism; (ii) we assumed that parental burnout is negatively related to resilience and life satisfaction. Developing the sub-hypothesis presuming a positive relationship between parental burnout and perfectionism, we considered the fact that perfectionistic people enjoy less of what they do, as they reflect on what they would have achieved if they had acted perfectly. A previous study (Kawamoto et al., 2018) provided evidence for the association between parental burnout and perfectionism. There is no such thing as perfect parenting, so intolerance toward weaknesses or mistakes exerts a pressure that consumes energy and makes parents more vulnerable to stressful situations. Perfectionists have a less appropriate and unrealistic approach to adverse circumstances in the sense that they over-motivate themselves

to have a flawless image in front of others (Mitchelson & Burns, 1998). The replication of the association between parental burnout and perfectionism is an important step in the validation of the Romanian version of PBA. And we already know that parental burnout has some specific deleterious consequences (Mikolajczak et al., 2018b; Mikolajczak et al., 2019).

The negative relationship between parental burnout and resilience assumed in the second sub-hypothesis was based on a positive psychology approach that emphasizes the benefit of people in adverse contexts (Smith et al., 2010; Tugade et al., 2004). Resilience represents the ability to withstand adversity and return to homeostasis after the impact of stressors. Thus, resilient people are those who evolve favourably in situations with a high risk of triggering detrimental effects, continuing to maintain their emotional health. According to Fredrickson (2013), resilient people have deeply emotional self-awareness and counteract the negative effects generated by stressful situations much more rapidly than people with low resilience. Relationships between resilience and burnout in the case of health professionals, therapists, and teachers are well-described in the literature (e.g., Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2011). The presumed negative relationship between parental burnout and life satisfaction was also set up within the framework of positive psychology. Specialists have proved the predictive role of resource-loss specific to job burnout syndrome and life dissatisfaction (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012). Nevertheless, drawing a model of antecedents and consequences of parental burnout was out of the scope of the current study (which is a validation study). And the cross-sectional nature of the data would prevent us to provide assumptions about the directions of the relations between parental burnout on the one hand and perfectionism, life satisfaction and resilience on the other hand.

In the third hypothesis we supposed low associations between parental burnout and sociodemographic variables. This assumption was based on previous findings (Lebert-

Charron et al., 2018; Le Vigouroux & Scola, 2018; Lindström et al., 2011; Mikolajczak et al., 2018b; Roskam et al., 2017; Roskam et al., 2018).

Method

Participants

Our sample included 650 parents (64.3% mothers), whose age ranged from 18 to 65 ($M_{age} = 36.60$; $SD = 5.73$). In terms of family types, 84.5% of participants were raising their child/ren with a partner who was the other biological parent (two-parent family), 8.5% were single parents, 3.5% were in step-families, and 3.5% were in multigenerational families. Overall, the participants had between 1 and 6 children, whose ages ranged from 0 to 40 years ($M = 7.78$; $SD = 5.15$) for the oldest and from 0 to 33 years old ($M = 4.54$; $SD = 3.91$) for the youngest. The parents spent between 1 and 18 hours per day with their child/ren ($M_{hours} = 7.83$, $SD = 6.50$). Their homes were located in lower-class neighbourhood (5.1%), in middle-class neighbourhood (32.4%), or in upper-middle-class neighbourhood (62.5%). Regarding employment status, 89.1% of the parents had paid professional activity. The number of successfully completed school years ranged from the compulsory level (10 school years – 6.3%), high-school (12 school years – 17.2%), the bachelor level (15 to 17 school years – 34.5%), up to 17 school years – 42%.

Procedure

The current study was conducted as part of the International Investigation of Parental Burnout (IIPB), a consortium gathering 40 countries over the world, set up and led by Isabelle Roskam and Moïra Mikolajczak at *UCLouvain* in Belgium. Approval was obtained from the ethics committee of University of Bucharest (Reg.No.CEC: 02/12.01.2018; Date: 12.01.2018). The translation of the IIPB survey into Romanian was achieved following a forward-backward translation procedure, in accordance with the recommended

methodological approach described by Sousa and Rojjanasrirat (2011). It was highlighted after back-translation that the items of the Romanian version were very similar to the original one. The inclusion criteria were: to live with the child /children, to have Romanian nationality. The informed consent that they signed allowed participants to withdraw at any stage without having to justify their decision. They were assured that the data would remain confidential and anonymous. The data about sociodemographic characteristics and parental burnout were collected either online (via a Qualtrics survey) between January and May 2018 (40.6%) or via a paper-and-pencil version of the survey completed in various schools from Bucharest (59.6%) during parent meetings between January and May 2019. We shared the online survey via various social networking sites, one of which included an NGO involved in organizing parenting workshops. For those who completed the paper-and-pencil version, the three additional measures of perfectionism, life satisfaction, and resilience were included in the survey for concurrent validity purposes. Additional information about the comparability of the two subsamples, that is, online versus paper-and-pencil, is available in supplemental material.

With regard to attrition, 805 parents participated in the research at the onset (i.e., an attrition rate of 12.7%). In particular, 103 participants who agreed to complete the online version withdrew very quickly after accepting, and 52 online questionnaires contained missing data for the PBA. The final sample consisted in 650 parents who completed the questionnaire under consideration in the current study, namely, sociodemographic items and PBA. The three measures of perfectionism, life satisfaction, and resilience were obtained in a subsample of 323 participants (i.e., those who completed the paper-and-pencil data collection, of whom the attrition rate was 0%).

Measures

Sociodemographic characteristics. Participants were asked about their socio-demographic characteristics: gender, age, educational level, family type (two-parent, single parent, and step-family), number of children, age of the oldest and youngest child, number of women and men in the household, number of hours spent with children, having a paid professional activity, and neighbourhood (disadvantaged, average, prosperous).

Parental burnout. Parental burnout was assessed using the Romanian version of the PBA (Roskam et al., 2018), a 23-item self-report measuring parental burnout. The PBA includes four subscales: Emotional Exhaustion (nine items; e.g., “I am so tired out by my role as a parent that sleeping doesn’t seem like enough”), Contrast with Previous Parental Self (six items; e.g., “I don’t think I’m the good father/mother that I used to be to my child[ren]”), Feelings of Being Fed Up (five items; e.g., “I can’t take being a parent any more”), and Emotional Distancing (three items; e.g., “I am no longer able to show my child[ren] how much I love them”). Items are rated on seven-point Likert scales: *never* (0), *a few times a year or less* (1), *once a month or less* (2), *a few times a month* (3), *once a week* (4), *a few times a week* (5), and *every day* (6). The initial validation study (Roskam et al., 2018) conducted with French- and English-speaking parents displayed high internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alphas of .93, .93, .90, and .81 for the four subscales and .96 for the global score (i.e., the sum score of all PBA items).

Perfectionism. Perfectionism was measured with the Perfectionistic Self-Presentation Scale (PSPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), a 23-item measure of perfectionism style. Respondents must rate their agreement with the statements on a seven-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Sample items include: “I do not want people to see me do something unless I am very good at it” and “If I seem perfect, others will see me more positively”. In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha was .85 (95% CI [.82, .86]).

Life satisfaction. Life satisfaction was assessed with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985), a five-item measure of life satisfaction. Each item is scored from 1 (*disagree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*). Sample items include: “In most way my life includes my ideal” and “The conditions of my life are excellent”. Studies on Romanian adaptation of the SWLS (Marcu, 2013; Marian, 2007) have shown good psychometric properties, namely unifactorial structure, convergent validity, and high internal consistency, Cronbach’s alpha ranging between .81 and .85. In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha was .89 (95% [.87, .90]).

Resilience. Resilience was evaluated with the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS; Smith et al., 2008), a six-item scale measuring ability to bounce back or recover from stress. Each item is scored from 1 (*disagree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Items include positively worded and negatively worded sentences, such as “I usually come through difficult times with little trouble” and “It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens”. Previous studies conducted on the Romanian population (Macovei, 2015; Stănculescu, 2016) have shown good internal consistency of the BRS, Cronbach’s alpha ranging between .81 and .83. In the current study, Cronbach’s alpha was .81 (95% CI [.79, .82]).

Data Analysis

We first performed a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to examine to what extent the Romanian data fit with the initial measurement model (Roskam et al., 2018), i.e., first-order four-factor model: exhaustion in parental role (9 items), contrast with previous parental self (6 items), feelings of being fed up (5 items), and emotional distancing (3 items). We also tested whether the data would fit with a second-order four-factor model that has been found in other countries (e.g., Finland: Aunola et al., 2020) and that makes even more sense theoretically speaking: four first-order factors forming a second-order factor, namely parental burnout. Skewness and kurtoses indicated indeed that PBA items displayed deviations from

normality. Conceptually, these deviations from normality make sense: burnout is not expected to be normally distributed in the population. The estimation method used was diagonally weighted least squares (DWLS) based on asymptotic covariance and polychoric correlations matrices. We used several goodness-of-fit indices to determine the acceptability of the models: chi-square corrected for non-normality, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the root mean square residual (RMR) the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), the comparative fit index (CFI), the incremental fit index (IFI), the goodness of fit index (GFI), and the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI). For CFI, IFI, GFI, and AGFI, values close to .95 and above are to be taken as good fit, values close to .90 and .95 be taken as acceptable fit. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), RMSEA values close to .06 or below represent good fit, .07 to .08 moderate fit, .08 to .10 marginal fit, and $>.10$ poor fit. RMR and SRMR should preferably be less than or equal to .08. We evaluated reliability through Cronbach's alpha. These statistical analyses were conducted using LISREL 9 software (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2012).

With regard to the relation between the PBA-RO and other variables, we computed Spearman correlations between the PBA-RO and the discrete (age), categorical (educational level, number of children, age of the youngest and the oldest child, number of women and men in the household, hours spent with children, neighbourhood), and ordinal variables (perfectionism, life satisfaction, and resilience). We also computed one-way ANOVAs to test the mean differences for categorical variables (i.e., gender, family type, and having paid professional activity).

Results

Construct validity

The CFA revealed that all the estimated factor loadings were statistically significant at $p < .001$. As displayed in Table 1, the standardized factor loadings ranged from .54 to .93. In

any case, the cut-off criterion of being above .40 was fulfilled (Pituch & Stevens, 2016).

Correlations between the four latent factors were positive and significant: $r = .96$ for emotional exhaustion and contrast with previous parental self, $r = .97$ for emotional exhaustion and feelings of being fed up, $r = .96$ for emotional exhaustion and emotional distancing), $r = .96$ for contrast with previous parental self and feelings of being fed up, $r = .95$ for contrast with previous parental self and emotional distancing, and $r = .92$ for feelings of being fed up and emotional distancing.

Insert Table 1 about here

In terms of model fit to the data, chi-square corrected for non-normality $\chi^2 [224, 650] = 413.53$ ($p < .001$) was significant, indicating possible discrepancies or misfit. However, it is accepted in the literature (Pituch & Stevens, 2016) that chi-square test is impacted by a large sample size. As the SEM is a large-sample technique, it is not uncommon to obtain a statistically significant chi-square test. Other fit measures demonstrated a good fit to the data with CFI = .98; IFI = .98; GFI = .99; AGFI = .99; RMSEA = .094 (90% CI [.080, .098]); RMR = .059; SRMR = .059. Likewise, considering the high correlations between the four factors and the theoretical conceptualization of parental burnout, we tested a second-order four-factor model, including the four dimensions of the PBA as first-order factors and global parental burnout as second-order factor. The results of the second-order model are presented in Figure 1. Similarly to the previous model, this higher order model showed a good fit to the data with chi-square corrected for non-normality $\chi^2 [226, 650] = 411.73$ ($p < .001$), CFI = .98; IFI = .98; GFI = .99; AGFI = .99; RMSEA = .094 (90% CI [.080, .098]); RMR = .059; SRMR = .059. These results confirmed the validity of both first- and second-order models with four-factor structure of the Romanian version of the PBA.

Insert Figure 1 about here

As displayed in Table 1, the Cronbach's alphas, ranging from .73 to .93, showed good to high internal consistency for the four PBA subscales. The Cronbach's alpha for the global score was .95 (95% CI [.93, .96]).

Concurrent validity

The correlations between parental burnout and its four dimensions on the one hand and perfectionism, life satisfaction, and resilience on the other supported the concurrent validity of the PBA-RO. As displayed in Table 2, the coefficients ranged from .20 to .33 for perfectionism, from -.29 to -.41 for life satisfaction and from -.29 to -.37 for resilience. A similar pattern of associations was found for mothers and fathers.

Insert Table 2 about here

In line with our expectations, gender-related differences were found for parental burnout. The results confirmed that mothers had higher level of parental burnout than fathers for the global score, $F(1, 648) = 21.39, p = .01$, as well as for the four dimensions of the PBA, with respectively, $F(1, 648) = 38.91, p = .01$ for exhaustion in parental role, $F(1, 648) = 24.64, p = .01$ for contrast with previous parental self, $F(1, 648) = 16.29, p = .01$ for feelings of being fed up, and $F(1, 648) = 7.68, p = .01$ for emotional distancing.

Insert Table 3 about here

As shown in Table 3, in line with previous findings (Roskam et al., 2018), the bivariate relations between parental burnout and sociodemographic characteristics were low. With regard to ordinal and continuous variables, the coefficients ranged from .00 to .18, with

the highest correlation found with the number of hours spent with children. With regard to the categorical variables, we found no difference for the family type except for with Feelings of Being Fed Up, $F(3, 646) = 2.64, p = .02$ (see in Table 4 descriptive statistics of PBA subscales and global score according to gender, family type, and having a paid professional activity).

Insert Table 4 about here

In addition, the results showed that parents with paid professional activity demonstrated a lower level of parental burnout than those without job, $F(1, 648) = 5.66, p = .01$. They were less exhausted, $F(1, 648) = 8.13, p = .01$, experiencing less contrast with previous parental self, $F(1, 648) = 6.97, p = .01$, as well as being less distant from their children, $F(1, 648) = 3.39, p = .03$.

Discussion

In this study, we tested the psychometric properties of the Romanian version of the PBA. Our results support the good psychometric properties of the PBA-RO. They replicate the initial first-order four-factor model. They also provide support to the second-order four-factor model encompassing the four dimensions of the PBA as first-order factors and global parental burnout as second-order factor. Having an instrument that has been validated in many languages and in very different cultures bodes well for intercultural research in the field of parenting and family psychology, offering opportunities for teams of researchers to collaborate to better understand the micro-, meso- and macro-level determinants of parental burnout. Moreover, when research is conducted using the same instruments, it facilitates comparisons between results obtained in different contexts. Empirically-based diagnostic

instruments are also necessary for professionals working with families, whether in the prevention or treatment of psychological disorders.

Considering the Romanian cultural background that was set out in the introduction section, expected gender differences were found, which was not the case in studies conducted in Eastern and collectivistic cultures [i.e., Iran (Mousavi et al., in press) and Turkey (Arikan et al., in press)] included in the current thematic issue. Although gender stereotypes have faded amid the adoption of an egalitarian model of the family including greater flexibility between partners, Romanians' attitudes towards the family still remain predominantly conservative. According to Robila (2004), during pre-communist period, women tended to internalize assumptions about their own status in society, most notably the value of their role in the family and the deep differences between men and women. Although it is largely accepted that parenthood is highly desired by men and women, household duties are expected to be performed mainly by women. Men are more interested in providing financial security, while women are the managers of the household (Bădescu et al., 2007). Our results are in line with those obtained by Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998), who reported gender differences in job burnout. They explained these outcomes by the fact that women are more emotionally responsive and are at greater risk of experiencing emotional exhaustion than men. Our results are also consistent with those of Roskam and Mikolajczak (2020), suggesting that gender role education continues to reinforce gender essentialism in parenting.

The current study is the first to test the association among parental burnout, resilience, and life satisfaction. As expected, our findings provided evidence for the negative associations among parental burnout, resilience, and life satisfaction. Additionally, our results parallel previous outcomes found in the Japanese cultural context (Kawamoto et al., 2018), emphasizing a positive relationship between perfectionism and parental burnout. The same pattern obtained in our research highlights that, even in the case of Romanian parents, very

high expectations and zero tolerance for inherent shortcomings in the parental role are related to parental burnout.

With regard to the relations between parental burnout and the sociodemographic variables, our hypotheses were fulfilled. Similarly to the previous findings (Mikolajczak et al., 2018b), no or low correlations between sociodemographic characteristics and parental burnout were found. Comparing the global score of parental burnout and its dimensions across family types, we found significant differences between single-parent families and other family types only in the case of feelings of being fed up. Thus, our results are somewhat similar to but do not replicate the findings obtained by Lebert-Charron et al., (2018) in the French cultural context, emphasizing that single mothers experienced higher parental burnout. As pointed out in the introduction, the family and parenting are highly valued in Romanian culture. The specificity of parenting is marked by the consideration of children as the highest goal for both mothers and fathers. A possible explanation of the lack of significant differences in terms of overall PBA score would be that the subjective perception of burnout is diminished by the need to resolve a cognitive dissonance phenomenon [described in the literature by Higgins (1987) in the self-discrepancy theory]. Such dissonance is created by the contrast between feeling emotionally distant from their own children, lacking resources in caring for them, scarce efficacy as a parent, and the idea deeply promoted in the collective mind regarding the child as the highest goal of both mothers and fathers. The significant differences on scores of feelings of being fed up between single family and other family types could be explained by arguing that the single parent tries to replace the other's parent absence, eventually assuming a double role. This is an additional source of underlying fears, concerns, and self-doubts contributing to the overloaded parental role. The lack of support from the partner is another aspect that could explain the statistical differences obtained between feelings of being fed up in single family and other family types.

This paper provides empirical support that extends the growing research body on parental burnout. It adds to the evidence of the cross-cultural validity of this measure. The results of our study highlight that the PBA-RO may be successfully used for the Romanian population. It is the first study on this topic conducted in Romania – an Eastern European country whose culture promotes family values on the background of belief that children represent the highest goal for both mothers and fathers. It is useful for the scientific community to have a comprehensive picture of parental burnout in both Western and Eastern European cultures. Summing up, this research highlighted that PBA-RO is a scale with good psychometric properties, which can be used by Romanian specialists in assessing parental burnout. Overall, our research contributes to the literature not only by validating the PBA-RO, but also by considering for the first time a positive psychology approach in the study of parental burnout, emphasizing a negative relationship between life satisfaction, resilience, and parental burnout.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While it provided evidence for the validity of the PBA-RO, this study has several limitations. First, although the present study was carried out among a relatively large sample, it is not representative of the entire Romanian population. The predominance of urban residents in the sample of the present research weakens the generalizability of the findings. Through collaboration with the Romanian Institute for Public Opinion Polling (IRSOP), a research project could be conducted involving a nationally representative sample, thus including residents from both rural and urban areas. Additionally, the mean level of parental burnout in our sample is quite low, suggesting that the number of burned out parents is limited. Second, it is known that parental burnout symptoms are subjective and have shortcomings in terms of objective evaluation, taking into consideration that answers can be distorted by the social desirability bias. Consequently, further verification – using objective

measures of parental burnout, such as hair cortisol [conceptualized in a previous study (Brianda et al., 2020) as a biomarker of parental burnout] – are needed. It may be fruitful to develop an inquiry into another goal to better understand the nature of parental burnout and how parents experience it, exploring real experiences through qualitative research methods such as phenomenology and grounded theory. Another future research could be the replication in a cross-cultural study of the current burnout model within a positive psychology framework. Third, we did not provide evidence in the current study of predictive validity with regard to the specific consequences of parental burnout (in particular, suicidal ideations, neglect and violent behaviours towards children). However, the evidence for the reliability and validity of the PBA-RO represents a starting point for Romanian specialists to explore this promising and challenging research topic.

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Table 1

Standardized regression weights from CFA and Cronbach's alphas in the Romanian sample

		EX	CO	FU	ED
EX1	I feel completely run down by my role as a parent	.87			
EX2	I have the sense that I'm really worn out as a parent	.89			
EX3	I'm so tired out by my role as a parent that sleeping doesn't seem like enough	.63			
EX4	When I get up in the morning and have to face another day with my child(ren), I feel exhausted before I've even started	.64			
EX5	I find it exhausting just thinking of everything I have to do for my child(ren)	.86			
EX6	I have zero energy for looking after my child(ren)	.78			
EX7	My role as a parent uses up all my resources	.82			
EX8	I have the impression that I'm looking after my child(ren) on autopilot	.56			
EX9	I'm in survival mode in my role as a parent	.93			
CO1	I don't think I'm the good father/mother that I used to be to my child(ren)		.85		
CO2	I tell myself that I'm no longer the parent I used to be		.87		
CO3	I'm ashamed of the parent that I've become		.92		
CO4	I'm no longer proud of myself as a parent		.90		
CO5	I have the impression that I'm not myself any more when I'm interacting with my child(ren)		.89		
CO6	I feel as though I've lost my direction as a dad/mum		.85		
FU1	I can't stand my role as father/mother any more			.90	
FU2	I can't take being a parent any more			.87	
FU3	I feel like I can't take any more as a parent			.54	
FU4	I feel like I can't cope as a parent			.92	
FU5	I don't enjoy being with my child(ren)			.58	
ED1	I do what I'm supposed to do for my child(ren), but nothing more				.69
ED2	Outside the usual routines (lifts in the car. bedtime. meals), I'm no longer able to make an effort for my child(ren)				.87
ED3	I'm no longer able to show my child(ren) how much I love them				.84
	Exhaustion in Parental role	Contrast with previous parental self		Feelings of being fed up	
α	.89 (95%CI [.86, .91])	.93 (95%CI [.90, .94])		.77 (95%CI [.75, .80])	

Note Factor loadings >|.40| are in bold; EX: Exhaustion in parental role; CO: Contrast with previous parental self, FU: Feelings of being fed up; ED: Emotional distancing.

Table 2

Correlations between Parental Burnout, Perfectionism, Life Satisfaction and Resilience (n = 323)

		Parental Burnout				
		Global score	EX	CO	FU	ED
Perfectionism	Male	.28**	.26**	.27**	.29**	.31**
	Female	.30**	.30**	.27**	.16**	.33**
	All	.30**	.29**	.27**	.20**	.33**
Life Satisfaction	Male	-.51**	-.47**	-.54**	-.46**	-.42*
	Female	-.37**	-.38**	-.35**	-.23**	-.38**
	All	-.40**	-.41**	-.40**	-.29**	-.39*
Resilience	Male	-.44**	-.43**	-.40**	-.44**	-.46*
	Female	-.33**	-.32**	-.35**	-.25**	-.34**
	All	-.36**	-.35**	-.36**	-.29**	-.37**

Note * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; EX: Exhaustion in parental role; CO: Contrast with previous parental self, FU: Feelings of being fed up; ED: Emotional distancing.

Table 3

Spearman correlations between parental burnout and sociodemographic characteristics

	Parental Burnout				
	Global score	EX	CO	FU	ED
Age	-.10 [*]	-.16 ^{**}	-.08	-.05	-.03
Educational level	.00	.01	.05	-.05	-.01
Number of children	.13 [*]	.10 [*]	.12 [*]	.06	.12 [*]
Age of the youngest child	-.17 [*]	-.19 [*]	-.12 [*]	-.08	-.11 [*]
Age of the oldest child	-.09 [*]	-.19 [*]	-.05	-.01	-.03
Number of women	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.05	-.05
Number of men	-.02	.00	-.04	-.02	-.04
Hours spent with children	.18 [*]	.21 [*]	.11	.15 [*]	.01
Neighbourhood	.02	.04	.02	-.03	.05

Note ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; PBA: Total score of the PBA; EX: Exhaustion in parental role; CO: Contrast with previous parental self, FU: Feelings of being fed up; ED: Emotional distancing.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics of PBA subscales and global score according to gender, family type, and having a paid professional activity

	Gender		Family Type				Having a paid professional activity	
	Mothers (n=418)	Fathers (n=232)	Two- parent family (n=538)	Single- Parent family (n=67)	Step- family (n=25)	Multi- generation family (n=20)	Yes (n=329)	No (n=321)
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
EX	20.58 (9.93)	15.73 (8.61)	18.96 (9.67)	19.54 (10.97)	20.43 (8.74)	18.44 (5.50)	17.59 (9.07)	20.73 (10.07)
CO	11.21 (6.81)	8.67 (5.02)	10.17 (6.21)	10.72 (6.63)	12.86 (7.74)	12.27 (6.38)	9.50 (5.78)	11.42 (6.79)
FU	9.82 (5.42)	8.08 (4.97)	8.95 (5.19)	11.05 (6.19)	9.86 (4.57)	9.72 (4.59)	9.06 (5.14)	9.45 (5.44)
ED	5.44 (3.27)	4.71 (3.01)	5.08 (3.09)	5.94 (3.69)	6.00 (2.73)	6.11 (3.67)	4.92 (3.05)	5.59 (3.26)
Total score	47.05 (23.28)	37.21 (20.08)	43.18 (22.30)	47.27 (25.11)	49.17 (20.39)	46.55 (17.27)	41.07 (20.92)	47.21 (23.58)

Note EX: Exhaustion in parental role; CO: Contrast with previous parental self, FU: Feelings of being fed up; ED: Emotional distancing

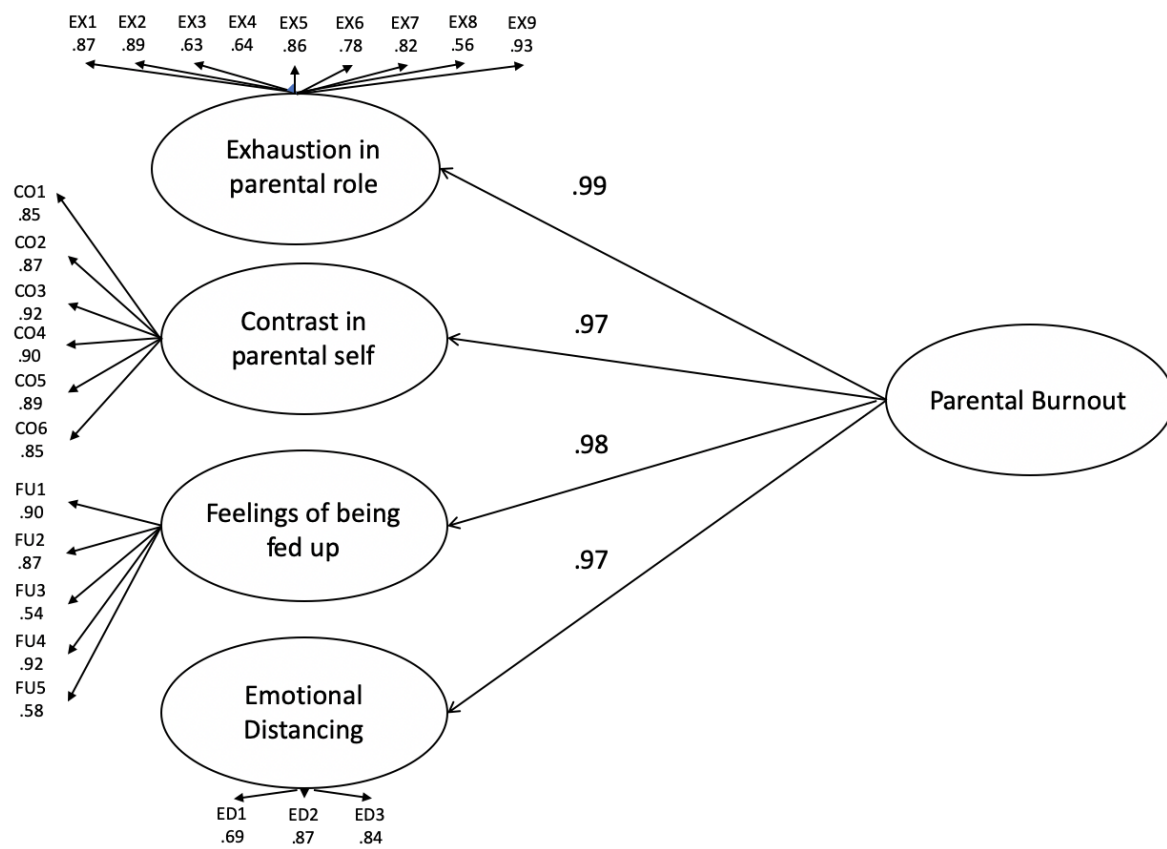


Figure 1. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis for the second-order four-factor model of the PBA-RO