

# Validation of the Lithuanian Version of the Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA-LT)

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**Abstract.** *Background.* Parenting is both a complex and stressful activity. When parenting stress severely and chronically overwhelms parents' resources to cope, parental burnout occurs. The purpose of this study was to validate the Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA) for researching a Lithuanian sample of parents. *Methods.* Questionnaire included demographics, Parental Burnout Assessment, Emotional Regulation Questionnaire, and Co-parental Cooperation tool. The data were collected from a sample of 208 Lithuanian parents. *Results.* The value for Cronbach's alpha in Lithuania was high and similar to other studies. Confirmatory factorial analysis confirmed the four-factor structure of the PBA. The average parental burnout reported was higher than in other studies. The correlations of the PBA-LT with other variables replicate previous studies and serve as evidence for the validity. Younger age, having a child aged 0–4 years, not having a paid professional activity, suppression of emotions, and not having emotion regulation skills are the risk factors of parental burnout. *Conclusions.* The study supports the high internal consistency of PBA-LT, and the four-factor structure of the PBA-LT has been confirmed.

**Keywords:** burnout, Lithuania, parental, PBA, psychometric, validation.

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## Introduction

The numbers of employees' work-related stress have been continuously growing (Work-Related Stress, 2020). In prolonged work-related stress, burnout has been arising. Burnout affects 5%–7% of the general population. It is a mix of exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness. Burnout victims get emotionally and physically exhausted. For those who have to fulfil both professional and parental responsibilities burnout is more prevalent (Kossek and Lautsch, 2012). As parenting has been shown to be both a complex and stressful activity (Deater-Deckard, 2014), individuals with kid(s) are seriously facing the challenge of participating successfully both as an employee and a family member since involvement in any role is associated with additional demands on the working hours, time allocated to care for children, and time for household tasks (Prottas and Hyland, 2011).

Parenting stress is perfectly common, normal and even necessary. However, pressure on parents has intensified since the 1980s to the point that parenting stress has become the rule rather than the exception (Kessler et al., 2017). When parenting stress severely and chronically overwhelms parents' resources to cope, parental burnout occurs. It manifests through parents feeling exhausted, and it is run down by their parenting role, detaching themselves emotionally from their children, not enjoying the fact of being with their children anymore, and losing pleasure in parenting while also not recognizing themselves as the parent they used and wanted to be (Hubert and Aujoulat, 2018; Roskam, Brianda, and Mikolajczak, 2018).

The recent COVID-19 pandemic locked down many parents across the world at home with their children for weeks and months, and, for some parents, especially those who had to work from home while being constantly solicited by their children, the lockdown was being experienced as a very difficult time (Mikolajczak and Roskam, 2020). Social isolation, unstable finances, and psychological distress have been found to be connected to higher levels of parental stress, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Griffith, 2020). A study in Italy showed that more than 80% of parents of 1–13-year-old children reported high levels of psychological distress, whereas nearly one in five (17%) reported significant parenting-related exhaustion. Greater parenting-related exhaustion was predicted by psychological distress, lower parental resilience, motherhood, fewer perceived social connections, and being single, as well as having a child with special needs, having more children, and having younger children (Marchetti et al., 2020). The greater risk of burnout is associated with the aim to be perfect parents, the lack of emotion and stress management abilities, the lack of emotional or practical support from the co-parent and/or the social network, having children with special needs (Lin et al., 2021; Sorkkila and Aunola, 2020; Lebert-Charron et al., 2018; Lindström, Aman, and Lindahl Norberg, 2011; Lindström, Åman, and Lindahl Norberg, 2010; Séjourné et al., 2018; Mikolajczak et al., 2018; Gérain and Zech, 2018; Mehauzen and Piroux, 2018). On the other hand, factors such as good emotional

competencies can buffer or cancel the detrimental effect of perfectionistic concerns on parental burnout (Lin et al., 2021).

Parental burnout has been identified to be a separate and unique psychological syndrome which differs from parental stress, depression, and job burnout in both theory and practice (Mikolajczak et al., 2019; Mikolajczak, Gross, and Roskam, 2019). Parental burnout has been shown to affect both mothers and fathers (Roskam et al., 2017), with the prevalence varying between 8% and 36% (Lindström, Aman, and Norberg, 2011; Roskam et al., 2017).

The need to extend the knowledge regarding the assessment, prevention, and treatment of parental burnout is called a priority (Gruber et al., 2020). Also, it needs to be taken into account that parental experiences are deeply influenced by cultural, societal, and economic contexts. Lithuania's unique sociocultural environment, marked by shifting family structures and changing parental roles (Jančaitytė, 2011; Juozeliūnienė and Seymour, 2020), necessitates a validated tool which would accurately reflect these nuances. Since there has so far been no parental burnout assessment instrument previously validated in the Lithuanian language, the purpose of this study was to validate the Lithuanian version of *Parental Burnout Assessment* (hereafter *PBA-LT*), i.e., the reliability, the factor structure, and the correlation between PBA-LT scores and sociodemographic characteristics of the instrument have been examined.

## Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Lithuanian language and was a part of the International Investigation of Parental Burnout network study (PI: Hedwig Van Bakel, Tilburg University, the Netherlands), conducted in 26 countries, which is aimed to assess the prevalence of parental burnout and the relation between parental burnout and individual circumstances in the different participating countries.

**Sample.** The data were collected from a sample of 208 Lithuanian parents, of whom, 100 were fathers (48.08%), and 108 were mothers (51.92%). The participants' age ranged from 28 to 51 (Mean=36.14; SD=5.626). 36 respondents (17.3%) had higher education, 34 persons (16.3%) had vocational education, 105 parents (50.5%) held Bachelor's, and 32 (15.4%) – Master's degrees. Most of the research participants (n=175; 84.1%) were raising their child(ren) in a two-parent family, while 23 were single parents (11.1%). 169 of the parents (81.3%) had a paid professional activity. 84.6% of the parents lived in an average neighborhood, while the remaining participants either lived in a relatively disadvantaged neighborhood (2.4%) or a relatively prosperous neighborhood (11.5%). Overall, the participants had from one to three children living in their household. 90 parents (43.3%) raised one kid, while 103 respondents (49.5%) had two children. 14 respondents reported having a child with medical, physical, emotional, cognitive or behavioral problems.

**Instrument.** A questionnaire was used to collect the data. It included the following parts:

- Demographics;
- *Parental Burnout Assessment* (Roskam, Brianda, and Mikolajczak, 2018): 23 items (nine items measure exhaustion in the parental role, six items measure contrast with the previous parental self, five items measure feelings of being fed up as a parent, and three items measure emotional distance from one's child(ren)). All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (0 – 'never', 6 – 'daily'). The PBA text was translated from English to Lithuanian by a professional translator, and was then back-translated by another translator, and proofreading was performed by a native speaker of English. After an initial reliability (pilot) study, it was decided to use the PBA Lithuanian version unchanged for the main study.
- *Emotional Regulation Questionnaire* (Gross, John, 2003): 10 items (6 items measure emotion regulation, whereas 4 items measure emotion suppression. All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (0 – 'strongly disagree', 6 – 'strongly agree'). The Questionnaire was translated from English to Lithuanian by a professional translator, and was then back-translated by another translator, and proofreading was done by a native speaker of English.
- Co-parental Cooperation Inventory (Teubert and Pinquart, 2011): 4 items. The Inventory was translated from English to Lithuanian by a professional translator, then was back-translated by another translator, and proofreading was performed by a native speaker of English.
- All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (0 – 'completely false', 6 – 'completely true').

**Procedure.** This research was part of the research project called *Factors in Parental Satisfaction and Exhaustion around the World* initiated by Tilburg University, the Netherlands, and carried out by the *International Investigation of Parental Burnout* consortium (led by Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium). The Ethical Review Board of Tilburg University approved the conducting of this study.

The data were collected in June 2020. Because of the Governmental measures (social distancing and partial lockdown) taken due to the COVID-19 crisis, it was not possible to distribute paper versions of the questionnaire. Thus, the study was conducted through the online research platform (apklaus.lt). Since every school in Lithuania has a local e-network, information about the project as well as the link of the survey was sent to the management bodies of the schools of three municipalities of Lithuania. The managers of the participating schools shared the link to the survey with all the parents via local e-networks. Since the online research platform used did not allow quitting and thus leaving an incomplete survey, the attrition rate was 0%.

**Data Analysis.** The data from the questionnaires were converted into the SPSS version directly from the online research platform. The data analysis was carried out by using the SPSS software version 24. Cronbach's alphas were calculated to determine

the internal consistency of the PBA-LT items and subscales, whereas factor analysis was used to find the internal construct validity, and correlation analysis was used to determine the relations between the variables, while the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the differences for categorical variables. The level of significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

## Results

The value for Cronbach's alpha in Lithuania was excellent (0.968), denoting a strong consistency between the PBA-LT variables. Analysis showed excellent consistency of the subscales as well (see Table 1).

**Table 1.**

*Reliability of PBA-LT subscales*

Subscale	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Emotional exhaustion	0.920
Contrast with previous parental self	0.926
Feelings of being fed up	0.931
Emotional distancing	0.826

The obtained results show strong correlations between each PBA-LT subscale (from 0.771 to 0.851,  $p < 0.001$ ) and strong correlations between each subscale and the total score (Table 2).

**Table 2.**

*Spearman correlation coefficients between PBA-LT subscales and the total score*

Subscale	PBA-LT	p
Emotional exhaustion	0.951	<b>0.000</b>
Contrast with previous parental self	0.936	<b>0.000</b>
Feelings of being fed up	0.916	<b>0.000</b>
Emotional distancing	0.867	<b>0.000</b>

As the PBA was based on a theoretical model, the concept validity was verified by using factorial analysis. All the estimated factor loadings found in the Confirmatory factorial analysis were significant at  $p < 0.001$ . Standardized factor loadings ranged between 0.53 and 0.86.  $S-B\chi^2(253) = 5697.43$  was significant at 0.000 level. Other fit measures demonstrated a good fit to the data with CFI=0.952, GFI=0.99, RMSEA=0.07, and SRMR=0.04. Standardized factor loadings are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

Standardized factor loadings for confirmatory factor analysis of the Lithuanian version of the PBA (N=208)

		EX	CO	FU	ED
EX1	I feel completely run down by my role as a parent [Jaučiuosi visiškai išsisekęs tėčio/mamos vaidmenyje]	0.79			
EX2	I have the sense that I'm really worn out as a parent [Atrodo, kad išsisečiau kaip tėtis/mama]	0.81			
EX3	I'm so tired out by my role as a parent that sleeping doesn't seem like enough [Aš esu toks pavargęs nuo tėvo/mamos vaidmens, kad miego vis atrodo nepakankamai]	0.80			
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 [Atsibudęs ryte ir pagalvojęs apie dieną su vaikais, jaučiuosi pavargęs dienai dar neprasidėjus]	0.83			
EX5	I find it exhausting just thinking of everything I have to do for my child(ren) [Vien galvojimas, ką turiu padaryti dėl vaiku, vargina]	0.71			
EX6	I have zero energy for looking after my child(ren) [Visiškai neturiu jėgų prižiūrėti vaikų]	0.79			
EX7	My role as a parent uses up all my resources [Mano, kaip tėčio/mamos vaidmuo, išmanęs atima visas jėgas]	0.77			
EX8	I have the impression that I'm looking after my child(ren) on autopilot [Atrodo, kad vaikus prižiūriu autopilotu]	0.64			
EX9	I'm in survival mode in my role as a parent [Dedu pastangas rasti jėgų atlikti tėčio/mamos vaidmenį]	0.54			
CO1	I don't think I'm the good father/mother that I used to be to my child(ren) [Atrodo, kad nebesu toks geras tėtis/mama, koks buvau anksčiau]		0.82		
CO2	I tell myself that I'm no longer the parent I used to be [Kartoju sau, kad nebesu toks tėtis/mama, koks buvau]		0.70		
CO3	I'm ashamed of the parent that I've become [Man gėda dėl to, koku tėčiu/mama tapau]		0.79		
CO4	I'm no longer proud of myself as a parent [Nebesididžiuoju savimi kaip tėčiu/mama]		0.78		
CO5	I have the impression that I'm not myself anymore when I'm interacting with my child(ren) [Jaučiu, kad bendraudamas su vaikais nebesu savimi]		0.78		

CO6	I feel as though I've lost my direction as a dad/mum [ <i>Jaučiuosi, tarsi nebežinau, kaip būti tėčiu/mama</i> ]		0.71		
FU1	I can't stand my role as father/mother any more [ <i>Nebegaliu pakęsti būti tėčiu/mama</i> ]			0.86	
FU2	I can't take being a parent any more [ <i>Nebegaliu būti tėčiu/mama</i> ]			0.76	
FU3	I feel like I can't take any more as a parent [ <i>Jaučiu, kad nebegaliu būti tėčiu/mama</i> ]			0.80	
FU4	I feel like I can't cope as a parent [ <i>Jaučiuosi, kad negaliu susidoroti su tėviška atsakomybe</i> ]			0.68	
FU5	I don't enjoy being with my child(ren) [ <i>Nesimėgauju būdamas su vaikais</i> ]			0.74	
ED1	I do what I'm supposed to do for my child(ren), but nothing more [ <i>Būdamas tėčiu/mama atlieku tik tai, kas būtinausia, bet nieko daugiau</i> ]				0.59
ED2	Outside the usual routines (lifts in the car, bedtime, meals), I'm no longer able to make an effort for my child(ren) [ <i>Be įprastinių veiklų (ikėlimas/pagalba įlipti į automobilį, suruošimas miegui, maisto gaminimas) nebegaliu stengtis dėl vaikų</i> ]				0.79
ED3	I'm no longer able to show my child(ren) how much I love them [ <i>Nebegaliu vaikams parodyti, kaip juos myliu</i> ]				0.64
Cronbach's alpha		0.92	0.93	0.93	0.83

Notes. EX=Exhaustion in one's parental role; CO=Contrast with previous parental self; FU=Feelings of being fed up with parenting; ED=Emotional distancing from one's children.

These results have confirmed the validity of the Lithuanian version of the PBA.

The overall mean parental burnout score was 40.68 (SD 23.23, PBA scores ranged within 0–138), and the lower score means a lower level of burnout. One respondent scored the floor points (137), whereas 8 study participants scored ceiling points (0).

There was no statistical difference when comparing the burnout of mothers and fathers ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, burnout differed depending on the age of respondents, i.e., older parents tend to experience a lower level of burnout ( $r = -0.227$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). The number of children living in a household did not increase the burnout ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, the number of children aged 0–4 years is positively associated with a higher level of parental burnout ( $r = 0.228$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). Parents with paid professional activity reported a lower level of parental burnout ( $p < 0.05$ ). More parental burnout and its dimension correlations with the sociodemographic variables are displayed in Table 4.



**Table 4.**

*Correlation between parental burnout and its dimensions and sociodemographic variables, parenthood constellation, emotion regulation or suppression, parental violence and neglect, and co-parental cooperation*

Variables	PBA	Emotional exhaustion	Contrast with previous parental self	Feelings of being fed up	Emotional distancing
Age	<b>-0.227</b>	<b>-0.319</b>	-0.124	<b>-0.161</b>	-0.123
Level of education	0.065	0.097	-0.023	0.063	0.113
Number of children	0.002	0.032	-0.016	-0.008	-0.036
Time spent with children	0.066	0.070	0.025	0.091	0.063
Emotion regulation	<b>-0.195</b>	<b>-0.235</b>	<b>-0.187</b>	-0.129	-0.088
Emotion suppression	0.274	0.284	0.242	0.246	0.205
Co-parental cooperation	0.055	0.099	0.075	-0.032	-0.012

## Discussion

Although parental burnout can have detrimental consequences to the families, the investigation of this phenomenon is still in its infancy (Sorkkila and Aunola, 2020). Parental burnout assessment is crucial to be analyzed because of chronic or overwhelming experiences and is important to be acknowledged as its independent psychological phenomenon (Roskam, Brianda, and Mikolajczak, 2018). Moreover, parental burnout is not always successfully distinguished from job burnout or depressive symptoms even if they are loaded on different factors; however, job burnout, parental burnout, and depressive symptoms have some common consequences (Mikolajczak et al., 2020; Roskam, Raes, and Mikolajczak, 2017). Since there had been no parental burnout assessment instrument previously validated in the Lithuanian language, the purpose of this study was to validate the Lithuanian version of *Parental Burnout Assessment* (hereafter PBA-LT), i.e., the reliability, factor structure, and correlation between the PBA-LT scores and the sociodemographic characteristics to be used in the Lithuanian population. PBA validation precludes the possibility to determine if the structure and expression of parental burnout varies across countries or cultures (Roskam, Raes, and Mikolajczak, 2017).

Validation and research results of the Lithuanian population brought to the light the fact that there is no scientific difference within other populations when comparing



burnout of mothers and fathers. As long as parenthood remains among the most gender-typed social roles in adulthood (Roskam and Mikolajczak, 2020; Mikolajczak et al., 2020), the research involved almost equal parts of males and females. The results confirming the validity of the Lithuanian version of PBA-LT expressed no statistical difference when comparing the burnout of mothers and fathers ( $p > 0.05$ ). Our results show that burnout as a phenomenon occurs in fathers and mothers equally. As a contradiction to inductive research making conceptualization and measurement of parental burnout, the authors Roskam, Brianda, and Mikolajczak (2018) indicated that the use of PBA itself could probably have limitations to the extent that PBA was created only on the basis of the testimonies of mothers suffering from burnout. Therefore, it was not clear why the PBA scores varied across the genders. Their research (Roskam, Brianda, and Mikolajczak, 2018) conducted with French-speaking and English-speaking parents revealed that PBA scores were significantly lower for fathers than for mothers. However, this gender difference was not found when using PBI (*Parental Burnout Inventory*). Therefore, it was assumed as a possible limitation of the research to determine whether this result reflects a higher sensitivity of PBA regarding true gender differences or, on the contrary, a lack of sensitivity of PBA to the detection of fathers with burnout. However, a more recent study (Roskam and Mikolajczak, 2020) confirmed that, even given gender inequality in parenting, it surprisingly showed that parental burnout affects both mothers and fathers in equal proportion (as established by using PBA). In addition, parental burnout is associated with individual differences including neuroticism (Mikolajczak et al., 2018) and perfectionism (Kawamoto and Furutani, 2018). For example, PBA validation in Japan (see Furutani et al., 2020) revealed that mothers' PBA-J total scores were higher than fathers' scores. Nevertheless, the authors stated that there are at least two problems with interpreting these differences than simply their plain capacity to mean that mothers suffer more from burnout than fathers. First, there are no clinical cut-offs defined for PBA-J, which makes it difficult to verify when parental burnout really started. Second, it cannot be determined whether these differences are related to gender or parental roles; to do so, one would need to look at the PBA-J responses of parents of the same sex. They found that the correlations between PBA-J and neuroticism and co-parenting disagreement were low, and correlations with family disorganization were weak-to-moderate.

The value of Cronbach's alpha in Lithuania was high and similar to other studies (Roskam et al., 2018; Szczygieł et al., 2020; Aunola et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2020; Arikan et al., 2020), which supports high internal consistency of PBA. Confirmatory factorial analysis confirmed the four-factor structure of the PBA: emotional exhaustion in one's parental role, contrast with the previous parental self, feelings of being fed up with one's parental role, and emotional distancing from one's children. Possibly, there could be some differences as notified in diverse cultural backgrounds, like the PBA-Persian version, which is deemed a promising tool, but the 'Emotional Distancing' subscale should be used with caution. The PBA-Persian demonstrated good criterion

validity vis-à-vis parental satisfaction and well-being (Mousavi, Mikolajczak, and Roskam, 2020).

In terms of the working time, this study showed that parents involved in paid professional activity reported a lower level of parental burnout ( $p < 0.05$ ). The same results were found in other studies, which proved that parents working part-time displayed higher levels of burnout than parents working full-time, as demonstrated by PBA (Mousavi, Mikolajczak, and Roskam, 2020). It has been confirmed by other studies, evidencing that parental burnout has specific symptoms (Mikolajczak et al., 2020; Brianda et al., 2020). A related study analyzing specificity was carried out in Belgium during the COVID-19 lockdown situation (see Schrooyen et al., 2021). This study identified that parental burnout has a clear relationship with the parental identity's self-endorsement, related to the parental need satisfaction playing a mediating role in these associations. The authors found out that parental identity serves as a source of resilience in an uncertain period, such as a pandemic situation. The results of a French-speaking population survey suggested that parental burnout is a multi-determined syndrome mainly predicted by three sets of factors: parent's stable traits, parenting, and family-functioning (Mikolajczak et al., 2018). Similar identity findings were published in a large Belgian population study conducted by Piotrowski (2020) which showed that mothers who were higher on attachment avoidance and anxiety were characterized by a stronger belief that people who are important to them expect them to be flawless and perfect (socially prescribed perfectionism). The study was the very first to show that both characteristics are also related to the sense of parental identity among mothers.

Regarding this last point, the results of the current study shed some light on an intriguing result of Mikolajczak et al. (2017) who found no difference in the average burnout score between single parents and parents with a spouse. In order to go deeper into this counterintuitive result, in this study, differentiation was made between single parents by choice, and burdened single parents. Descriptive statistics showed that single parents by choice scored lower on burnout than parents with a partner who themselves scored lower than burdened single parents. Although these differences were not statistically significant, this pattern of the results fully explains why single parents (in general) did not score higher on burnout in previous studies.

The average parental burnout reported was higher than in other studies. The differences may be explained by cultural differences, as different countries have different cultural traditions and religious norms. These cultural differences are also discussed in diverse populations (Mousavi, Mikolajczak, and Roskam, 2020; Kawamoto and Furutani, 2018; Furutani et al., 2020). However, the correlations of PBA-LT with other variables replicate previous studies and serve as evidence for the validity.

Regardless of the differences of the burnout level, the results when comparing the socio-demographical variables were quite similar. Younger age, having a child aged 0–4 years, not having a paid professional activity, suppression of the emotion, and not having emotion regulation skills are all risk factors of parental burnout. The same as

in the validation of Lithuanian BPA, the validation of the Polish BPA version revealed that significant correlations were found between PBA-PL and neuroticism, emotional intelligence, maladaptive perfectionism, perceived social support, depressive symptoms, marital satisfaction, and life satisfaction (Szczygieł et al., 2020). This was also found by other studies (Le Vigouroux and Scola, 2018) investigating the sociodemographic patterns and parental burnout relationship, where it was established that the influence of dispositional factors (parent's and child(ren)'s personality) on parental burnout is important to understand. Personality corresponds to the tendency of individuals to act, think and feel emotions. It was found that agreeableness and emotional stability (i.e., the opposite of neuroticism) protected against parental burnout.

The results of this study provide evidence that the concept of parental burnout makes sense for Lithuanian parents, and that PBA-LT can be considered as a psychometrically sound instrument to measure it. This validation establishes a benchmark for longitudinal studies and cross-cultural comparisons. It opens avenues for exploring the parental burnout prevalence, risk factors, and consequences within Lithuania, thereby contributing to the global research on parenting.

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### ***Declaration of interest statement***

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the submission of this manuscript.

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### ***Data availability statement***

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [A.B.], upon reasonable request.

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