



**International
Attachment
Conference 2026**

A Combined Exploration of Romantic and Child
Attachment Associations with Parental Burnout:
Preliminary Findings Across Insecure Patterns

Chloé Jeanne
(speaker, PhD student)

Maria Elena Brianda
(PhD, thesis supervisor)

PARENTAL BURNOUT (PB)

Chronic stress syndrome related to one's parental role

Parental **exhaustion** (physical, emotional or cognitive)

Emotional **distancing** from one's children

Feelings of **being fed up** with the parenting role

Contrast between current and past parental self

Mikolajczak et al., 2019 ; Roskam et al., 2018

PB CONSEQUENCES

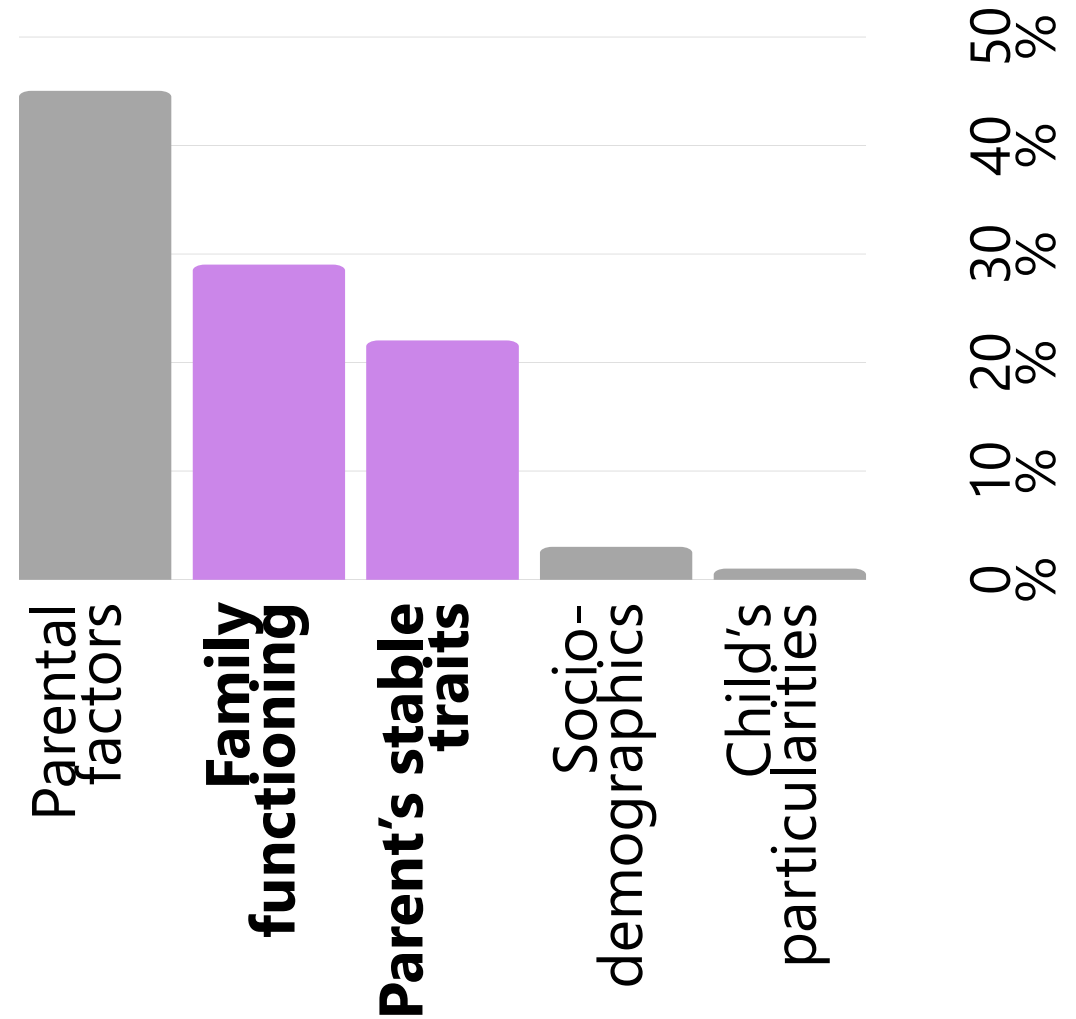
- Increase in **suicide ideation**
- Positive associations with **intimate partner violence**
- Increase of **violent and neglectful parenting behaviours**

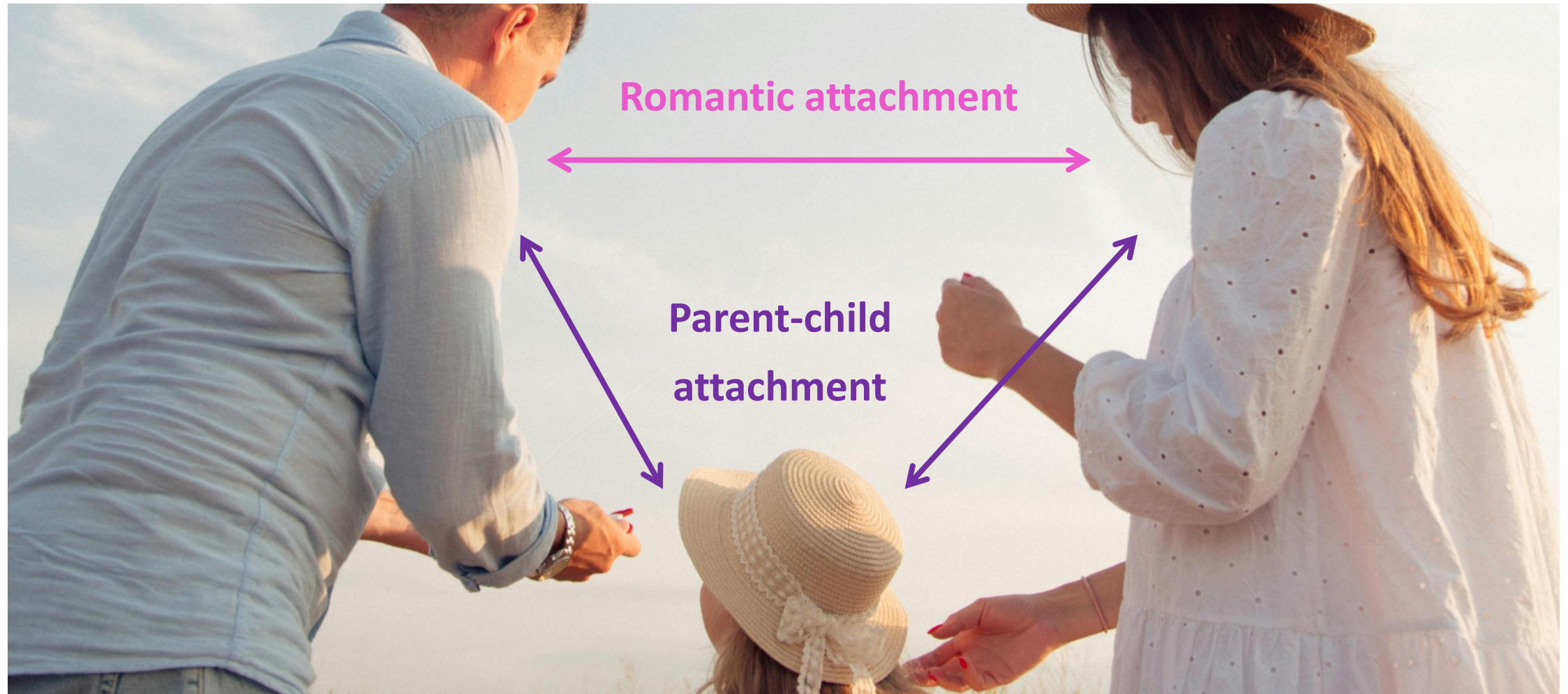


Mikolajczak et al, 2019; Prandstetter et al., 2021; Schitteck et al., 2024b

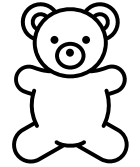
Family's functioning and parent's stable trait contribution to parental burnout

Mikolajczak et al., 2018





CHILD ATTACHMENT: INSECURE DIMENSIONS



Child uncertainty/lack of confidence regarding the attachment figure's availability to offer comfort and protection (Bowlby, 1982; Favez, 2013)

Insecure-ambivalent
Insecure-avoidant
Insecure-disorganized

ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT



The specific attachment to the romantic partner (Chaperon & Dandeneau, 2017)

	Attachment anxiety	Attachment avoidance
Core needs in relationships	Proximity, support, connexion	Autonomy, independance
Coping with stress	Rely on others	Rely on themselves
Main fears	Abandon / unresponsiveness	Intimacy / dependance

Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Fraley et al., 2011; Fraley et al., 2000

PB & ATTACHMENT



PB & adult attachment:

3 studies

Significant associations

- between **parents attachment to their parents** and PB in 2 studies
- between **romantic attachment** and PB but no regression effect in 1 study



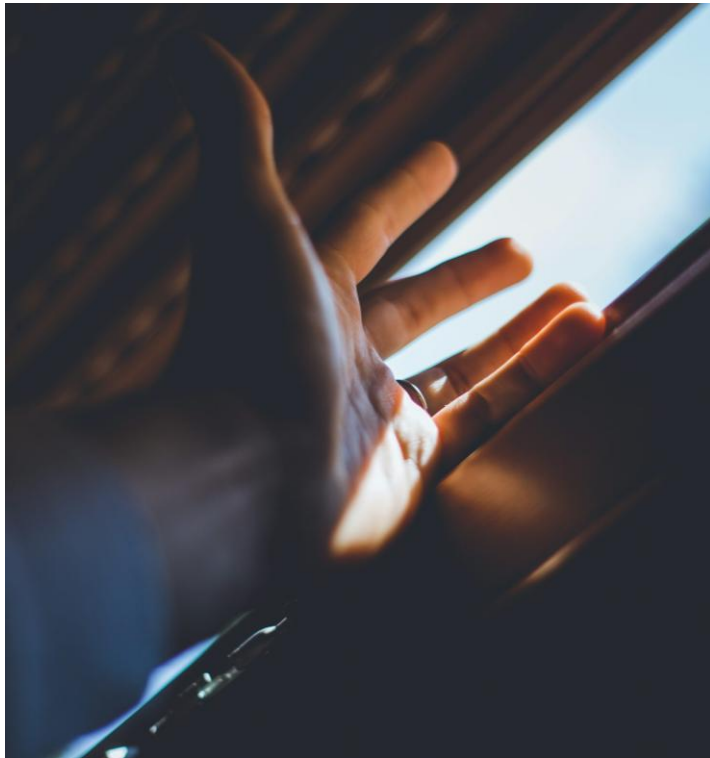
PB & child attachment:

0 study



Need for more evidence on these associations

THE TRANSMISSION GAP BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILD ATTACHMENT



Child attachment is not fully explained by parents' own attachment style: « **Transmission gap** »

Parents' psychopathology is among the factors within this gap (e.g., depression).

➤ **What part does PB plays within this gap?**

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

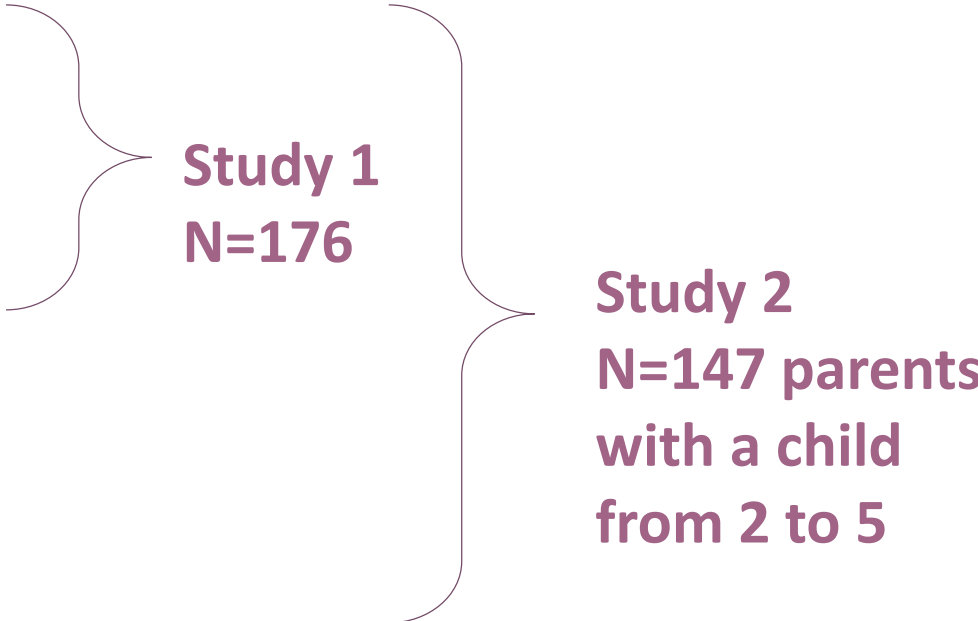
- 1) Examine the associations between **PB and romantic attachment** dimensions
 - 2) Examine the associations between **PB and the child attachment** insecure patterns
 - 3) Examine **how much PB predicts child attachment insecurity beyond parents' romantic attachment**
-

METHOD

Cross-sectional studies

Online survey with self-reported measures

- **Parental burnout:** Parental burnout Assessment (PBA)
- **Romantic attachment:** Experience in close relationships-Revised (ECR-R)
- **Child insecurity:** Attachment Insecurity Screening Inventory (AISI)



Study 1
N=176

Study 2
N=147 parents
with a child
from 2 to 5

PARTICIPANTS

N= 323 parents in a couple relationship

90% of **women**

50% **Belgium**, 45% **other French-speaking European countries**

73% between **30-39 years**, 15% 40-49, 10% 18-29

71% with **superior education**

86% with a **job**

Mean couple relationship duration= **10 years** (SD=5.04)

81% of **biparental families**

83% with **1 or 2 children**

DATA ANALYSIS



1) Examine the associations between **parental burnout and romantic attachment** dimensions

1.1. Bivariate Spearman correlations

1.2. Regression of romantic anxiety and avoidance on PB

RESULTS

1.1. Bivariate Spearman correlations between PB, romantic attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance



Variable	Mean	SD	Min-Max	Parental burnout	Anxiety
Parental burnout	27.42	24.02	0-138		
Romantic anxiety	57.7	19.07	18-120	.40***	
Romantic avoidance	46.6	18.31	18-103	.29***	.58***

RESULTS

1.2. Regression of romantic anxiety and avoidance on PB



R-square= .15

Variable	Beta	<i>p</i> value
Romantic attachment anxiety	.39	<.001
Romantic attachment avoidance	.12	.11

DATA ANALYSIS



- 1) Examine the associations between **parental burnout and romantic attachment** dimensions
- 2) Examine the associations between **parental burnout and the child attachment** insecure patterns

Bivariate Spearman correlations

RESULTS



Bivariate Spearman correlations between PB and insecure-ambivalent, insecure-avoidant and insecure-disorganized

Variable	Ambivalent	Avoidant	Disorganized
Parental burnout	.16	.15	.35***

DATA ANALYSIS

- 1) Examine the associations between **parental burnout and romantic attachment** dimensions
- 2) Examine the associations between **parental burnout and the child attachment** insecure patterns
- 3) Examine how much **parental burnout predicts child attachment insecurity beyond parents' romantic attachment insecurities**

Forward regressions

RESULTS

Forward regression of romantic attachment and PB on child-attachment insecure dimensions

Insecure-ambivalent

Variable	Partial r-square	<i>p</i>
Romantic anxiety	.05	.005
PB	.004	.45

Insecure-avoidant

Variable	Partial r-square	<i>p</i>
PB	.04	.01
Romantic avoidance	.02	.12

Insecure-disorganised

Variable	Partial r-square	<i>p</i>
PB	.12	<.001
Romantic anxiety	.02	.06

DISCUSSION

Key results

1. When romantic attachment anxiety and avoidance are considered together, **only romantic attachment anxiety regressed significantly on PB**
 2. The relative predictive weight of PB and RA varies depending on the child's attachment dimensions. **For the avoidant and disorganized dimensions, the main predictor was PB, whereas for the ambivalent style, it was romantic anxiety.**
-

DISCUSSION



Key results

1. When romantic attachment anxiety and avoidance are considered together, **only romantic attachment anxiety regressed significantly on PB**

The role of anxiety:

- **Preoccupations** about being underappreciated or abandoned, **hypervigilance**, heightened **perceived stress** (Simpson & Rholes, 2016)
- Romantic anxiety and **parenting stress** (Overall et al., 2022)
- Larger associations between romantic anxiety and **several mental health issues** (depression, GAD, BPD, loneliness, etc.; Zang et al., 2022)



DISCUSSION



Key results

2. The relative predictive weight of PB and RA varies depending on the child's attachment dimensions

For the avoidant and disorganized dimensions, the main predictor was PB

- **PB and child avoidance: the role of emotional distancing // depression** (Sliwerski et al., 2020)
 - **PB and child disorganization: the role of violence and neglect?**
 - PB, violent and neglectful parenting behaviours (Mikojczack et al., 2019; Schittek et al., 2024b)
 - Child disorganization, neglect and violence (e.g., Granqvist et al., 2017)
-

DISCUSSION



Key results

2. The relative predictive weight of PB and RA varies depending on the child's attachment dimensions

For the ambivalent dimension, the best predictor was romantic anxiety

- « Intergenerational transmission of attachment » (Verhage et al., 2015)
- **Common needs, fears and processes** (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991)

PB added a small but not significant part of explanation to child ambivalence

- Shared variance?
-

LIMITS

- 90% mothers (limits generalizability)
- Self-report (vs dyadic)
- **Cross-sectional**
- **Selection bias: concerned mothers?**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION



Chloe.Jeanne@uliege.be

Linked in:



MariaElena.Brianda@uliege.be

Acknowledgments: Angelique Feraut & Carlota Arenal Recio

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. M. (s. d.). *Attachment Styles Among Young Adults : A Test of a Four-Category Model*.

Bowlby, J. (1982), ATTACHMENT AND LOSS: Retrospect and Prospect. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 52: 664-678. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1982.tb01456.x>

Chaperon, É., & Dandeneau, S. (2017). Le Questionnaire sur les structures relationnelles : Adaptation et validation de la version française du Experiences in Close Relationships—Relationship Structures Questionnaire. *European Review of Applied Psychology*, 67(4), 213-221. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erap.2017.04.002>

Favez, 2013. *L'examen clinique du couple : Théories et instruments d'évaluation*. Mardaga

Fraley, R. C., Heffernan, M. E., Vicary, A. M., & Brumbaugh, C. C. (2011). The experiences in close relationships—Relationship Structures Questionnaire : A method for assessing attachment orientations across relationships. *Psychological Assessment*, 23(3), 615-625. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022898>

Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000). An item response theory analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(2), 350-365. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.2.350>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Granqvist, P., Sroufe, L. A., Dozier, M., Hesse, E., Steele, M., Van Ijzendoorn, M., Solomon, J., Schuengel, C., Fearon, P., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M., Steele, H., Cassidy, J., Carlson, E., Madigan, S., Jacobvitz, D., Foster, S., Behrens, K., Rifkin-Graboi, A., Gribneau, N., ... Duschinsky, R. (2017). Disorganized attachment in infancy : A review of the phenomenon and its implications for clinicians and policy-makers. *Attachment & Human Development*, 19(6), 534-558.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616734.2017.1354040>

Mikolajczak, M., Gross, J. J., & Roskam, I. (2019b). Parental Burnout : What Is It, and Why Does It Matter? *Clinical Psychological Science*, 7(6), 1319-1329. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167702619858430>

Mikolajczak, M., Raes, M.-E., Avalosse, H., & Roskam, I. (2018). Exhausted Parents : Sociodemographic, Child-Related, Parent-Related, Parenting and Family-Functioning Correlates of Parental Burnout. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 27(2), 602-614. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0892-4>

Overall, N. C., Pietromonaco, P. R., & Simpson, J. A. (2022). Buffering and spillover of adult attachment insecurity in couple and family relationships. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 1(2), 101-111. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-021-00011-1>

Prandstetter, K., Murphy, H., & Foran, H. M. (2023). The Role of Intimate Partner Violence, Couple Dissatisfaction and Parenting Behaviors in Understanding Parental Burnout. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 32(1), 343-355. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-021-02218-5>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Roskam, I., Brianda, M.-E., & Mikolajczak, M. (2018). A Step Forward in the Conceptualization and Measurement of Parental Burnout : The Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA). *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*, 758.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00758>

Schittek, A., Roskam, I., & Mikolajczak, M. (2024). Parental burnout stages and their link to parental violence : A longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 95*, 101717.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2024.101717>

Schittek, A., Roskam, I., & Mikolajczak, M. (2025). Spiraling down : Fearful attachment style moderates the link between parental burnout and violence. *Family Relations, 74*(1), 565-575. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.13108>

Ścigała, D. K., Sikora-Ścigała, J., & Zdankiewicz-Ścigała, E. (2025). Alexithymia and attachment dimensions in relation to parental burnout : A structural equation modelling approach. *PLOS One, 20*(11), e0334647.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0334647>

Simpson, J. A., & Rholes, W. S. (2017). Adult attachment, stress, and romantic relationships. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 13*, 19-24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.04.006>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Śliwerski, A., Kossakowska, K., Jarecka, K., Świtalska, J., & Bielawska-Batorowicz, E. (2020). The Effect of Maternal Depression on Infant Attachment : A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(8), 2675. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17082675>

Verhage, M. L., Schuengel, C., Madigan, S., Fearon, R. M. P., Oosterman, M., Cassibba, R., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., & Van IJzendoorn, M. H. (2016). Narrowing the transmission gap : A synthesis of three decades of research on intergenerational transmission of attachment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 142(4), 337-366. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000038>

Zhang, X., Li, J., Xie, F., Chen, X., Xu, W., & Hudson, N. W. (2022). The relationship between adult attachment and mental health : A meta-analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 123(5), 1089-1137. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000437>
