

Parenting and parental burnout in Africa

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Abstract

A recent initiative known as the International Investigation of Parental Burnout, sought to study the prevalence of parental burnout in over 40 countries globally using the Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA) instrument. Four countries investigated here provide a first insight into parental burnout in Africa, based on a pooled dataset of 738 parents (48.8% mothers) sampled from Burundi ($n = 187$; 25.3%), Cameroon ($n = 208$; 28.2%), Rwanda ($n = 240$; 32.5%), and Togo ($n = 103$; 14%). As a first step, we tested the content validity of the PBA that was developed and validated in Western countries. Second, we tested the relations between the PBA and several sociodemographic characteristics such as age, gender, and level of education. The results provide evidence that the concept of parental burnout makes sense for African parents, and that the PBA can be considered as a psychometrically sound instrument to measure it. However, the results also point to the need for further exploration of the nature of parental burnout in Africa. As in previous studies, low correlations between parental burnout and the sociodemographic characteristics were found. Finally, the current results suggest the existence of parenting subcultures across the four participating countries that would be interesting to document.

KEYWORDS

Africa, burnout, collectivism, exhaustion, parent

1 | INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, the role of the family has received increasing international attention around the globe. For instance, on September 25, 2015, Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, together with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda recognizes the family as the center of social life that should play an important role in ensuring the well-being of its members, including the education and socialization of children and young people (United Nations, 2015). In its earlier resolution of September 17, 2012, the United Nations General Assembly decided to proclaim June 1 as World Parents' Day to honor parents around the world as critical role players in family life. This World Day pays tribute to the dedication, commitment, and sacrifice of parents, and recognizes the essential role of parents in the upbringing, development, and protection of children (United Nations, 2012a). The important role of parents is also recognized by Article 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which stipulates that the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child rests with the parents or, where applicable, legal guardians (United Nations, 2012b).

Whilst parents are recognized as important role players in the socialization of children and well-being of their families, there is ample evidence to suggest that the universal activity of bringing up a child as a parent (known as parenting) can be stressful for many parents (Hubert & Aujoulat, 2018). This is more so in instances where parents lack the resources needed to handle stressors related to parenting (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018). A number of studies have found that parental stress can even translate into what is known as parental burnout (Mikolajczak, Gross, & Roskam, 2019). According to Roskam, Raes, and Mikolajczak (2017), parental burnout refers to a state of intense exhaustion related to one's parental role, in which one becomes emotionally distant from one's children and becomes doubtful of one's capacity to be a good parent. In other words, parents with this condition will have reached a point in their lives where they feel they are not good parents anymore. Though there is a steady increase of literature on parenting and parental burnout in the developed world in recent years, not much attention has been given to these two research focus areas in the developing societies such as those in Africa.

2 | PARENTING IN AFRICAN CULTURE

In many traditional African communities, parenting occurs within a collectivist environment of kin and community networks (Amos, 2013; Bray & Dawes, 2016; Brudevold-Newman, Dias, Mooya, Ranjit, & Ring, 2018; Degbey, 2012). According to Green, Deschamps, and Paez (2005), collectivism is characterized by a high level of interdependence, and is associated with a sense of duty toward one's group. In the context of family, collectivism manifests in the form of behavioral attitudes and adherence to norms or demands of in-groups such as the extended family. For Degbey (2012), the extended family system is made up of several generations that may include parents and their children, grandparents, uncles, and aunts and cousins, all living in one homestead or close to one another. In this context, the notion of parenthood cannot solely be the responsibility of a child's parents. Instead, brothers of a child's father are considered to be in the position of the biological father, whilst the wives of the father's brothers are equally in the position of the biological mother (Houzel, 1999). This means that a child knows his or her biological father and mother, but also acknowledges that several adults related to him or her are also social parents who play a parental role.

It is therefore expected in this context that every adult has a responsibility to play an educational role in relation to a child, even if they are not the biological parents of that child. In this situation, education takes a collective and social character that makes it the responsibility not only of the family, but also of members of the same village or neighborhood (Amos, 2013). In other words, the pressure that most Western parents face in order to be seen as good parents is likely to dissipate in the role-sharing arrangement that is created by the African extended family system. One segment of the extended family in the African community that plays an important role in parenting is grandparents. Unlike parents, their role is not to exercise authority but to transmit values, skills, and family history (Hummel & Perrenoud, 2009). In an exploratory study that sought to investigate the role of grandparents as perceived by families in both urban and rural settings in Burundi, it was found that all the 63 participating families (urban = 27; rural = 36) indicated that grandparents do play an important role in the education of children (Clinique de l'Education et de la Psychothérapie: Parenting in Burundi, survey, April 2020). The following narrative by one of the study participants points to the significance of grandparents:

"The mother-in-law is incomparable if it weren't for her, I wouldn't be in this land of the living, she has strongly supported me, she is exceptional. As for the stepfather, he takes the boys and talks with them, teaches them to differentiate between what is correct and what is not, how to speak in public, how to do certain activities, talks to them about the past and that is why they are smart at school. The good father is often with the children more than their father. I thank them very much."

As reflected in the above extracts, grandparents do appear to be an anchoring point, and a great source of emotional security for families. They look after the children and protect them when the parents are not available at home. They are able to take the time to play with the children unlike parents who are overwhelmed by their daily occupational activities. Depending on their advanced age, grandparents also have a lot more time than they had with their own children. The following extract by a 65-year-old grandfather interviewed for the study illustrates this point:

"With me, the little ones have the right to take their time, to go at their own pace. I decided to devote my day to them, I don't make any other appointments, we go for long walks in the forest, we have lunch at any time we want, they rest. I don't have to worry about "profitability", no educational responsibilities, no constraints. As a result, I almost never get angry. In fact, I'm much cooler as a grandfather than as a father".

Several studies have indicated that there are some benefits associated with the extended family systems such as the one illustrated above. These include (a) a degree of responsibility for child care, including transmission of cultural values by significant others such as uncles, aunts, and older children in the family (Degbey, 2012); (b) a greater sense of economic, social, and psychological security to all its members (Adinlofu, 2009); (c) provision for the early care and training of children by many family members (Degbey, 2012). According to Amos (2013), the extended family arrangement is a strong parenting tool as it also helps the developing child to grow to be a respectful, responsible, and supportive member of the family later in life.

3 | THE CHANGING AFRICAN FAMILY STRUCTURE

The extended family, as described above, has been undergoing tremendous changes (Erny, 2001; Makiwane, 2017). These changes that are often disruptive in nature, are a result of a number of factors such as modernization and globalization. According to Kula-Kim (2010), as the traditional family modernizes, it tends more and more to become nuclearized. As a result, the relationships between parents and their children is disrupted (Kuyu, 2005). The parents are said to be the only or essentially the potential providers of family support to the child. The family finds itself primarily composed of the biological parents and children, and sometimes grandparents. In this new family structure, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and elder siblings no longer play a parental role that they used to play in the extended family.

With the nuclear family increasingly replacing the extended family in many African communities, the biological parents become the main if not the only providers of family support to the child. However, the difficult socioeconomic context can unbalance the accomplishment of this task; difficult living conditions can compromise the parents' ability to support their children (Evans, Matola, & Nyeko, 2011). Thus, in the face of current socioeconomic constraints, parenting relationships are changing, leading to a restriction of the space for parenting that is now being redefined. The difficulties of life and survival of households, domestic conflicts, household dislocation, parental resignation, loss of parental authority, demographic growth, and shortcomings in state structures for the protection of children, adolescents and even adults, often described in the literature, become critical factors of parental vulnerability that need to be explored, particularly in the African context.

4 | PARENTAL BURNOUT IN AFRICAN SOCIETY

We note that several studies conducted mostly in Europe have shown that parental burnout may lead to a number of health-related problems. These include sleep disturbance (Ekstedt, Söderström, & Åkerstedt, 2009), addictions to drugs, games, and work (Ahola et al., 2006), as well as irritability and anger (Ersoy-Kart, 2009). A recent study by Brianda, Roskam, and Mikolajczak (2020) showed that there were higher levels of hair cortisol concentration (HCC) in parents with parental burnout when compared to controls. This lends support to previous studies that have linked HCC to a variety of chronic stress conditions. Other studies have associated parental burnout with marital difficulties (Mikolajczak, Brianda, Avalosse, & Roskam, 2018), depression, suicidal ideation, and urgency to run away (Mikolajczak et al., 2019). According to Lindström, Aman, and Norberg (2011), parental burnout varies according to factors such as gender, with mothers showing higher levels of parental burnout when compared to fathers (Roskam & Mikolajczak, 2020). Nomaguchi and Brown (2011) have found a correlation between parental burnout and age of the parents, with younger parents likely to present more parental stress due to lack of resources and experience. For Skreden et al. (2012), a higher number of children in a family is likely to lead to increased social isolation in mothers. Other studies have found that parental burnout is likely to have negative consequences such as neglect and violence toward the child (Mikolajczak et al., 2019; Mikolajczak et al., 2018).

In the African context, there are hardly any studies on parental burnout. Instead, there are few studies that have found evidence of parental stress in parents raising children with disabilities and life-threatening conditions. For example, in a study conducted in a tertiary hospital in South-Western Nigeria, Essan et al. (2017), found that there were significant levels of distress and especially parental distress, among parents of children with clubfoot.

In another study by Musabirema, Brysiewicz, and Chipps (2015), it was found that parents experienced stress from having their infants cared for in a neonatal intensive care unit. In addition, the study found that parents' age, educational level, occupation, and infant birth weight were associated with parental stress. Available evidence suggests that there is a need for more studies on parental burnout, starting with the validation of psychometric instruments to assess these experiences in the African communities.

5 | THE CURRENT STUDY

The aim of the current study was to examine the validity of the PBA when administered to parents in selected African countries. We assumed that the initial four-factor structure of the PBA outlined by Roskam et al. (2018) would fit the data obtained in African samples, with 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, Sorkkila, & Tolvanen, 2020), we further expected that a second-order factor model capturing a total Parental Burnout latent variable would also fit the data. We then tested the relations between the PBA and other variables that are expected to be related or unrelated to it based on previous findings, that is, gender, number of children, family types, educational level, and whether or not the parents had a paid professional activity. Based on previous research, we expected higher parental burnout for mothers when compared to fathers (Roskam & Mikolajczak, 2020) but low correlations between parental burnout and other sociodemographic characteristics (Le Vigouroux & Scola, 2018; Lebert, Dorard, Boujut, & Wendland, 2018; Mikolajczak et al., 2018). As a final aim, we explored the mean differences in parental burnout across the four African countries participating. Because this is the very first study on parental burnout considering several African countries, we did not make any prediction about the results of these comparisons.

6 | METHOD

6.1 | Sample

Data were collected from a sample of 738 parents (48.8% mothers) from African countries, that is, 187 (25.3%) from Burundi, 208 (28.2%) parents from Cameroon, 240 (32.5%) from Rwanda, and 103 (14%) from Togo. The participants' ages ranged from 17 to 75 ($M_{\text{Age}} = 38.14$; $SD = 9.63$). Seventy-four percent of participants were raising their child(ren) with a partner who was the other biological parent (two-parent family), 17.1 % were single parents, 0.1 % were in a multigenerational family, 1.6% were in a step-family, 3.3% were in a polygamous family, and less than 2% did not report the information. Overall, the participants had from 1 to 25 children (either biological or living in their household). The youngest child's age ranged from 0 to 33 years ($M_{\text{Age}} = 5.40$; $SD = 5.92$), and that of the oldest from 0 to 54 years ($M_{\text{Age}} = 13.27$; $SD = 9.05$). The parents spent 0 to 24 hrs per day with their child(ren) ($M_{\text{Hours}} = 7.21$, $SD = 5.66$). Fifty-nine percent of the parents lived in an average neighborhood (i.e., relative to socioeconomic status), while the remaining participants either lived in a relatively disadvantaged neighborhood (18.7%) or in a relatively prosperous neighborhood (18.2%), and 3.8% did not report this information. The number of successfully completed school years from the age of 6 was 12.95 on average ($SD = 4.66$). Seventy-five percent of the parents had a paid professional activity. On average, 1.49 ($SD = 0.96$) women and 1.15 man ($SD = 0.99$) were living in the household caring for the

children on a daily basis. Based on the above demographic characteristics of the participants from the four African countries, it is evident that the sample represents mainly a literate, secondary school graduate, professional, and urban population.

6.2 | Procedure

The current study was conducted as part of the International Investigation of Parental Burnout, a consortium of researchers from 40 countries around the world led by Isabelle Roskam and Moïra Mikolajczak at *UCLouvain* in Belgium. The procedure of data collection in each country involved is described in Table 1. Parents were eligible to participate in the study only if they had (at least) one child still living at home. There was no cutoff regarding child age. And some of them were adult children but still living at home. The informed consent they signed allowed participants to withdraw at any stage without having to justify their reason for doing so. They were also assured that data would remain anonymous.

6.3 | Measures

Sociodemographics. Participants were asked about their age, gender, number of children, age of the youngest and the oldest child, nationality, marital status (single, cohabiting, married, divorced, widowed), type of family (single-parent, living with the father/mother of the children, step-family, polygamous), number of women and men in the household taking care of children on a daily basis, level of education, whether or not the parents had a paid professional activity, number of hours spent with the children on a daily basis, neighborhood (disadvantaged, average, prosperous).

Parental burnout was assessed with the Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA; Roskam, Brianda, & Mikolajczak, 2018), a 23-item self-report. The PBA consists of four subscales: Emotional Exhaustion in Parental Role (EX) (nine items; e.g., *I feel completely run down by my role as a parent*), Contrast in Parental Self (CO) (six items; e.g., *I'm no longer proud of myself as a parent*), Feelings of Being Fed Up (FU) (five items; e.g., *I can't stand my role as father/mother any more*), and Emotional Distancing (ED) (three items; e.g., *I do what I'm supposed to do for my child(ren), but nothing more*). Items are rated on 7-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), every day (6). The scores of each subscale and of the global score are computed by summing the scores of the items. In the initial validation study conducted with French- and English-speaking parents, Cronbach's alphas were .93, .93, .90, and .81 for the four subscales (EX, CO, FU, ED, respectively) and .96 for the global score (i.e., the sum score of all PBA items) (Roskam et al., 2018).

6.4 | Data analyses

We first performed a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to examine to what extent the African data fit with the initial measurement model (Roskam et al., 2018), that is, four interrelated factors: Emotional Exhaustion (nine items), Contrast (six items), Feelings of Being Fed Up (five items) and Emotional Distancing (three items). We also tested whether the data would fit with a second-order factor model that has been found in other countries (e.g., Finland: Aunola et al., 2020) and makes sense theoretically speaking: four first-order factors underlined by a second-order factor: Parental burnout. With respect to

TABLE 1 Data collection procedure in each country

	Ethics approval	Language survey	Sampling procedure	Location of data collection	Survey type (% paper pencil/online)	Response rate (%)	Attrition rate (%)	Period of data collection
Burundi	Not requested	French	Stratified	Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura rural, Bururi, and Rutana	100/0	Not applicable	0	March–April 2020
Cameroun	Yes	French	Convenience	Yaounde	100/0	61	11	December 2017–April 2018
Rwanda	Not requested	French (44%)						
English (56%)	Snowball and convenience	Undefined	42/58	90 (for paper pencil version)	Not available	June–July 2019		
Togo	Not requested	French	Convenience	Tsévié, Lomé	90/10	50	33	January 2017–February 2018

distributional features of the PBA items, skewness and kurtoses indicated that they displayed deviations from normality. Conceptually, these deviations from normality make sense: burnout is not expected to be normally distributed in the population. Therefore, the estimation method used was Diagonally Weighted Least Squares with asymptotic covariance and polychoric correlation matrices. We used several Goodness-of-Fit Indices (GFIs) to determine the acceptability of the models: Satorra–Bentler scaled chi-square statistics ($S-B\chi^2$; Satorra & Bentler, 1994), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the GFI. For CFI and GFI, values close to .90 or greater are acceptable to good. RMSEA and SRMR should preferably be less than or equal to .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). We conducted these analyses in the LISREL software (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2012).

Second, we computed the internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) of the four scale scores (based on the initial factor structure, Roskam et al., 2018) and the total score of the PBA, first on the total sample and then separately for the mothers and the fathers. With regard to the relation between the PBA and other variables, we computed correlations between the PBA and the mean scores of the ordinal/continuous variables, that is, age, educational level, number of children, age of the youngest and the oldest child, number of women and men in the household, neighborhood, and number of hours spent with children. We also computed one-way ANOVAS to test mean differences for categorical variables (i.e., gender, having a paid professional activity, and family type). Finally, we explored mean differences between the four African countries with one-way ANOVAS followed by post hoc analyses.

7 | RESULTS

7.1 | Confirmatory factor analyses

In terms of model fit to the data for the first-order model, the chi-square test was significant, $S-B\chi^2(224) = 1033.72$ ($p < .001$), indicating possible discrepancies or misfit. 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, GFI = .98, RMSEA = .070; 90% CI, [.066, .075], and SRMR = .078.

The CFA revealed that all the estimated factor loadings were statistically significant at $p < .001$. As displayed in Table 2, the standardized factor loadings ranged from .44 to .92. Correlations between the four latent factors were 0.91 (Emotional Exhaustion and Contrast with previous parental self), 0.98 (Emotional Exhaustion and Feelings of Being Fed Up), 0.96 (Emotional Exhaustion and Emotional Distancing), 0.96 (Contrast with previous parental self and Feelings of Being Fed Up), 0.90 (Contrast with previous parental self and Emotional Distancing), and 0.94 (Feelings of Being Fed Up and Emotional Distancing).

Likewise, considering the high correlations between the four factors and the theoretical conceptualization of parental burnout, we tested a second-order model with the four factors as first-order factor and "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 $S-B\chi^2(226) = 1049.76$ ($p < .001$), CFI = .98, GFI = .98, RMSEA = .071; 90% CI, [.066, .075], and SRMR = .078. These results supported the structural validity of both the first- and second-order factor internal structure of the PBA among African parents. Although the second-order model fit was not significantly better than the first model, the model encompassing a second-order model suggests that the four first-order factors are consistent with a latent concept that can be labeled "Parental Burnout" which provides support to the use of a total score.

TABLE 2 Standardized regression weights from CFA in African sample

			EX	CO	FU	ED
EX2	32	I have the sense that I'm really worn out as a parent	.84			
EX4	33	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	.77			
EX5	50	I find it exhausting just thinking of everything I have to do for my child(ren)	.77			
EX7	40	My role as a parent uses up all my resources	.92			
EX1	18	I feel completely run down by my role as a parent	.71			
EX3	2	I'm so tired out by my role as a parent that sleeping doesn't seem like enough	.58			
EX9	58	I'm in survival mode in my role as a parent	.47			
EX6	19	I have zero energy for looking after my child(ren)	.76			
EX8	31	I have the impression that I'm looking after my child(ren) on autopilot	.55			
FU1	27	I can't stand my role as father/mother any more		.87		
FU3	29	I feel like I can't take any more as a parent		.62		
FU2	42	I can't take being a parent any more		.92		
FU4	35	I feel like I can't cope as a parent		.49		
FU5	34	I don't enjoy being with my child(ren)		.79		
ED1	38	I do what I'm supposed to do for my child(ren), but nothing more			.44	
ED2	53	Outside the usual routines (lifts in the car, bedtime, meals), I'm no longer able to make an effort for my child(ren)			.70	
ED3	49	I'm no longer able to show my child(ren) how much I love them			.78	
CO4	47	I'm no longer proud of myself as a parent				.82
CO3	45	I'm ashamed of the parent that I've become				.88
CO2	37	I tell myself that I'm no longer the parent I used to be				.79
CO5	48	I have the impression that I'm not myself any more when I'm interacting with my child(ren)				.75
CO1	22	I don't think I'm the good father/mother that I used to be to my child(ren)				.80
CO6	16	I feel as though I've lost my direction as a dad/mum				.82

Abbreviations: EX, Exhaustion in Parental Role; CO, Contrast in Parental Self, FU, Feelings of Being Fed Up; ED, Emotional Distancing.

7.2 | Internal consistency

Cronbach's alphas computed for the African parents were good for two subscales with respectively: $\alpha = .81$ (.80 for fathers and .81 for mothers) for Emotional Exhaustion, $\alpha = .84$ (.84 for fathers and .84 for mothers) for Contrast with previous parental self. For the Feelings of Being Fed Up subscale, Cronbach's alpha was just below the usual threshold with .67 (.70 for fathers and .65 for mothers) and improved by removing one item for mothers

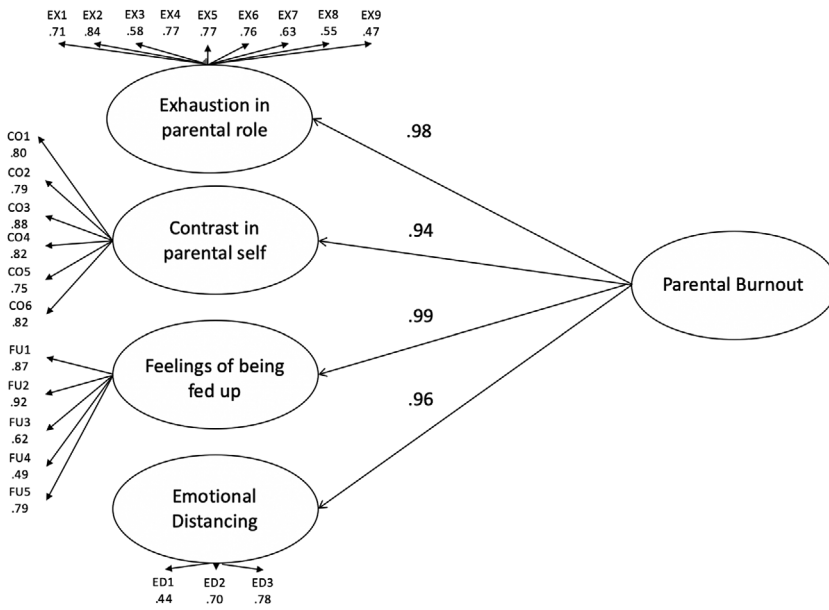


FIGURE 1 Results of the confirmatory factor analysis for the second-order factor model of the PBA

only ($\alpha = .75$) when the item FU4 (i.e., *I feel like I can't cope as a parent*, was removed). The Cronbach's alpha value for the Emotional Distancing subscale was .50 (.53 for fathers and .48 for mothers) and could not be improved by item removing because the scale only contains three items. Alpha was below the threshold but somewhat improved ($\alpha = .64$) when item ED1, that is, *I do what I'm supposed to do for my child(ren), but nothing more*, was removed for fathers and mothers. Reliability for the total score of the PBA was high, $\alpha = .91$ (.91 for fathers and .91 for mothers).

7.3 | Relations with other variables

As shown in a previous study on the antecedents of parental burnout (Mikolajczak, Raes, Avalosse, & Roskam, 2018), the bivariate relations between parental burnout and sociodemographic variables are somewhat low. Correlation coefficients are displayed in Table 3. However, we found significant association between parental burnout and education level, the number of children in the household, neighborhood, and the number of hours spent with children. While a high number of children in the household was found to be a risk factor, a high educational level, living in a prosperous neighborhood, and spending hours with children, play a protective role.

We also compared the mean level of parental burnout according to gender (see Table 4). Contrary to what was found in previous research (Roskam & Mikolajczak, in press, 2020), we did not find significant differences between mothers and fathers, either in the total score or in the four subscales. With regard to the types of family, we found no significant differences between two-parent, single-parent, step-, and polygamous families. Finally, we found differences between parents with a paid professional activity and those without for all PBA scores, except Emotional Distancing. As had been shown previously (Mikolajczak et al., 2018), parents with a paid professional activity displayed lower levels of parental burnout, $F(1, 736) = 11.15, p = .001$. They were less exhausted, $F(1, 736) = 10.55, p = .001$,

TABLE 3 Correlations between the PBA and sociodemographic variables

	PBA	EX	CO	FU	ED
Age	-.06	-.07	.02	-.04	-.04
Educational level	-.22***	-.21***	-.08*	-.24***	-.20***
Number of children	.10**	.10**	.08*	.08*	.08*
Age of the youngest	.02	-.01	.07	.07	.03
Age of the oldest	.02	.01	.04	.03	.02
Number of women	.08*	.07	.07	.10**	.09*
Number of men	.03	.02	.04	.04	.04
Hours spent with children	-.07*	-.04	-.08*	-.03	-.09*
Neighborhood	-.11**	-.11**	-.19***	-.02	-.08*

Abbreviations: PBA, total score of the PBA; EX, Exhaustion in Parental Role; CO, Contrast in Parental Self; FU, Feelings of Being Fed Up; ED, Emotional Distancing.

*** $p < .001$.

** $p < .01$.

* $p < .05$.

they reported less contrast with their previous parental self, $F(1, 736) = 13.36$, $p < .001$, and reported less feelings of being fed up, $F(1, 736) = 7.15$, $p = .008$. Descriptive statistics are given in Table 4.

Finally, we found mean differences between the four African countries for the four subscales and the parental burnout total score. A very coherent pattern of results emerged with Burundi and Rwanda scoring higher than both Cameroon and Togo for Emotional Exhaustion, Feelings of Being Fed Up, Emotional Distancing, and the Parental Burnout total score. With regard to Contrast with previous parental self, Burundi displayed higher mean level than the three other African countries. Descriptive statistics and the results of mean comparisons are provided in Table 5.

8 | DISCUSSION

The present study was a preliminary step to examine the psychometric properties of the PBA scores when administered to parents in selected African countries. We collected data from samples in four African countries (i.e., Burundi, Cameroon, Rwanda, and Togo). Regarding structural validity of the PBA scores, we replicated the initial factor structure with its four dimensions. We also provided support for the second-order factor model encompassing the four first-order factors and a second-order factor, that is, Parental Burnout.

However, to the extent that the article attempts to capture the particularities of the African parents, it is important to point out what is close to the initial PBA validation model but also what is different from it. Cultural specificities in the nature of parental burnout should be explored in future qualitative studies among African parents. Such a recommendation for future studies is grounded on the results of the internal consistency analyses. They showed that it was good for Emotional Exhaustion in Parental Role and Contrast in Parental Self, and acceptable for Feelings of Being Fed Up. However, the internal consistency of Emotional Distancing was quite low. This could be due to the number of items. But that could also be due to cultural specificities making it tricky for African parents to report that they feel emotionally distant from their children, and in particular for the mothers to say they do what they are supposed to do for their children but nothing more than that.

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 (<i>n</i> = 360) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Fathers (<i>n</i> = 378) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Two-parent family (<i>n</i> = 547) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Single-Parent family (<i>n</i> = 126) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Step-family (<i>n</i> = 12) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Polygamous (<i>n</i> = 24) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Yes (<i>n</i> = 555) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	No (<i>n</i> = 183) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
EX	11.59 (10.92)	11.48 (10.42)	10.93 (10.29)	12.58 (11.45)	14.00 (11.12)	15.75 (12.34)	10.81 (9.76)	13.74 (12.79)
CO	4.05 (6.42)	4.24 (6.34)	4.01 (6.15)	4.28 (7.17)	6.75 (6.81)	5.04 (8.14)	3.66 (5.44)	5.63 (8.48)
FU	4.66 (4.15)	4.45 (5.29)	4.25 (4.96)	5.13 (6.31)	6.00 (6.09)	6.40 (1.30)	4.25 (4.81)	5.46 (6.60)
ED	4.84 (4.18)	4.66 (4.15)	4.70 (4.12)	4.66 (4.61)	6.17 (4.61)	5.25 (4.87)	4.62 (3.97)	5.12 (4.68)
Total score	25.15 (23.86)	24.82 (23.05)	23.89 (22.36)	26.60 (26.23)	32.92 (24.39)	32.04 (29.16)	23.34 (20.45)	29.97 (30.28)

Abbreviations: EX, Exhaustion in Parental Role; CO, Contrast in Parental Self, FU, Feelings of Being Fed Up; ED, Emotional Distancing.

TABLE 5 Descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA results for parental burnout subscales and total score across African countries

	Range	Burundi (B) (n = 187)		Cameroon (C) (n = 208)		Rwanda (R) (n = 240)		Togo (T) (n = 103)		Total Sample (N = 738)		F	LSD post hoc
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
EX	0–54	13.86	12.91	9.09	8.49	13.34	10.12	8.07	9.50	11.54	10.67	$F(3, 737) = 13.15$, $p < .001$	B > C, T & R > C, T
CO	0–36	5.81	8.35	3.43	4.57	3.98	6.23	3.00	5.12	4.15	6.38	$F(3, 737) = 6.40$, $p < .001$	B > C, R, T
FU	0–30	5.54	6.82	2.89	3.86	5.93	4.87	2.91	4.54	4.55	6.82	$F(3, 737) = 18.67$, $p < .001$	B > C, T & R > C, T
ED	0–18	5.09	4.84	3.66	3.53	5.72	3.94	4.06	3.96	5.10	4.84	$F(3, 737) = 10.93$, $p < .001$	B > C, T & R > C, T
Global score	0–138	20.20	30.38	19.06	17.26	28.97	21.25	18.00	20.29	24.98	23.43	$F(3, 737) = 13.68$, $p < .001$	B > C, T & R > C, T

Another support to the validity of the PBA among African parents came from the replication of the low correlations between parental burnout and sociodemographic characteristics (Le Vigouroux & Scola, 2018; Lebert et al., 2018; Mikolajczak et al., 2018). As in previous studies, parental burnout was not associated to the family type or to the number of caregivers in the household. And we found the same protective role played by having a paid professional activity for parents, just like in Western countries. This was explained in terms of Mikolajczak and Roskam's (2018) Balance between Risks and Resources theory which considered having a paid professional job as a parental stress alleviating factor. Unlike in previous studies however, we found a protective role of parents' educational level and no differences in the mean level of parental burnout for mothers and fathers. Though there are possibly many factors that could explain these gender similarities in parental burnout in the samples drawn from the four African countries, Ziehl (2001) has suggested that industrialization and urbanization may explain for these changing patterns in family dynamics. This explanation might also apply to our finding that there were no significant differences between two-parent, single-parent, step-, and polygamous families' parents in parental burnout even in African settings.

All together, the results found for the relations between the PBA and other variables stress the need for future research going deeper into the cultural specificities of parenting in Africa, in particular, which factors increase parental stress, which other alleviate it and how they are all working together to result in a chronic imbalance leading to parental burnout (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018). Another argument to stimulate research on parenting culture in Africa relies on the results of the comparisons between the four countries participating to the current research. We had no a priori hypotheses about these comparisons. The comparisons were driven by the fact that there is no single African parenting culture but rather, African parenting subcultures which can be more or less demanding for the parental role. We found a very coherent pattern of results where samples from Burundi and Rwanda scored systematically higher on three subscales (i.e., Emotional Exhaustion, Feelings of Being Fed Up, Emotional Distancing) and the Parental Burnout total score, when compared to Cameroon and Togo. The results suggest that there are some differences across African countries in terms of parenting culture and adherence to collectivist values (Amos, 2013; Brudevold-Newman et al., 2018; Degbey, 2012). It might therefore be interesting that future studies explore the extent to which these subcultures manifest in the African continent.

Whilst these preliminary findings from the limited datasets obtained in four African countries are encouraging, they must be interpreted with caution. First, the sample cannot be considered representative of the entire population in any of the four countries from which the sample for the present study was selected. Even more so, the sample is drawn from participants in only 4 out of the 54 African countries. Second, it is important to note Africa as a continent with many cultural and language differences that may likely influence the results of any study. Here we found mean differences between the four countries under consideration suggesting that specificities are at work. These results must however be considered as preliminary because measurement invariance across countries was not formally been estimated. Differences in the factorial structure of the PBA across countries would challenge the comparisons between countries. However, the sample size in each country prevented us from explicitly testing measurement invariance in the current study. Third, the low internal consistency of Emotional Distancing also pleads for further exploration of parental burnout among African parents through qualitative approaches such as interviews. Another avenue of research would be to consider more items to tap into emotional distancing. The qualitative approach would be beneficial to develop new items. Fourth, this preliminary psychometric evaluation study needs to be improved in particular by testing

the predictive validity of the PBA. Neglect and violence toward children as well as escape and suicidal ideations have been shown to be specific consequences of parental burnout (Mikolajczak et al., 2018; Mikolajczak et al., 2019). A next step in the psychometric evaluation process should be to test the prospective prediction of these specific consequences (and any other consequence which makes sense for African parents), by the PBA. Fifth, it must be acknowledged that the extremely high correlations found between the four dimensions of parental burnout, question the discriminant validity of the four subscales. This problem is however not specific to African parents but has been observed in other countries suggesting the existence of a unique construct of parental burnout around the world (Arikan, Üstündağ-Budak, Akün, Mikolajczak, & Roskam, 2020; Matias et al., 2020; Mousavi, Mikolajczak, & Roskam, 2020). Lastly, the different sampling procedures (i.e., stratified, convenience, and snowball) and survey methods (paper and pencil, and in some cases a mix of the two) used in the four countries mean that the results need to be interpreted with great caution. Despite the above limitations, it is our hope that the findings have generated interest that could lead to more country-specific, and continental studies on parental burnout.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data available on request from the authors

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