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The emergence and growth of parental burnout research: a bibliometric analysis

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Abstract
Despite the growing body of literature, no comprehensive bibliometric analysis has systematically mapped the evolution and structure of parental burnout research. This study analyzes publication trends, conceptual structure, intellectual foundations, and social networks in parental burnout research. A bibliometric analysis was conducted on 307 research articles retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection (1989–2025). Data were analyzed in R using the Bibliometrix package, with RStudio as the integrated development environment and VOSviewer for visualization, employing performance analysis and science mapping techniques, including co-citation, co-authorship, and authors' keyword co-occurrence analyses. The results indicate a marked growth in parental burnout research since the mid-to-late 2010s, with an annual growth rate of 12.82%, reflecting the field's rapid expansion following conceptual clarification and measurement consolidation. Isabelle Roskam and Moïra Mikolajczak emerged as the most influential authors. Thematic analyses identified a multidimensional research landscape encompassing core topics such as parental burnout, parenting stress, mental health, and family functioning, alongside context-specific themes including COVID-19, child abuse and neglect, autism, coparenting, social support, emotion regulation, perfectionism, resilience, and work–family conflict. Co-authorship network analysis demonstrated global collaboration, with Belgium, the USA, China, Poland, Taiwan, Turkey and France as the most active contributors. The results of the present study indicate a shift toward a multilevel perspective integrating individual vulnerabilities, relational dynamics, parenting practices, and broader social and contextual conditions. By clarifying the structure and trajectory of the literature, this study provides a systematic, data-driven foundation for future research on parental burnout.

Keywords Parental burnout · Bibliometric analysis · Performance analysis · Science mapping

Introduction

Parenting is a role that entails long-term responsibilities, intensive emotional, physical, and cognitive effort, and continuous adaptation. Under certain conditions, these demands may accumulate and evolve into a chronic burden and stress that exceed individuals' functional capacity. In response to efforts aimed at explaining this cumulative load and stress, understanding their consequences, and examining the associated individual and societal factors, the concept of parental burnout has emerged and has become a central conceptual framework in fields such as family studies, psychology, public health, and child development.

Parental burnout is a chronic, multidimensional syndrome that arises when prolonged exposure to parenting stress and parenting-specific demands consistently exceed parental resources. It is characterized by overwhelming exhaustion in the parenting role, emotional distancing from one's child, loss of pleasure and efficacy in the parental role, and a contrast with one's former or ideal parental self. Although it is related to parenting stress, job burnout, and depression, parental burnout constitutes a distinct construct that cannot be reduced to these phenomena and is shaped by contextual dynamics specific to the parenting role (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018; Mikolajczak et al., 2020; Roskam et al., 2017, 2018).

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The historical development and emergence of the parental burnout literature

Although parenting-specific experiences of exhaustion were described as early as the 1980s under the term *parent burnout* (Procaccini & Kiefaver, 1983), parental burnout had not yet been conceptually differentiated at that time. Accordingly, parenting-related strains were predominantly examined within the framework of parenting stress (Abidin, 1992), through approaches grounded in depressive symptomatology to explain parental functioning (Lovejoy et al., 2000), or by adapting general or job burnout models to the parenting role (Levy-Shiff, 1999; Pelsma et al., 1989). The conceptual differentiation and systematic measurement of parental burnout as a parenting-specific, multidimensional syndrome, however, have emerged during the 2010s.

During the early-to-mid-2010s, studies focusing particularly on parents of children with chronic illnesses or serious health conditions examined prolonged parental strain through the lens of burnout, yet continued to rely on general stress and burnout models. Although these studies can be regarded as foundational to the parental burnout literature, they conceptualized parental burnout primarily as psychological exhaustion resulting from long-term caregiving burden and chronic stress in parents, and employed measurement tools derived from job or general burnout frameworks (Lindström et al., 2011; Norberg, 2007, 2010; Norberg et al., 2014). In this context, Roskam et al. (2017) represent a major turning point in the parental burnout literature. This study was the first to conceptualize and operationalize parental burnout, at both theoretical and measurement levels, as a parenting-specific syndrome that is distinguishable from job burnout, parenting stress, and depression. Parental burnout was defined along three core dimensions: intense emotional exhaustion in the parenting role, emotional distancing from one's child, and a decrease in perceived pleasure and efficacy in parenting role. Notably, the proposal of emotional distancing—rather than depersonalization, as emphasized in job burnout—enabled the development of a burnout construct tailored to the parenting context. Through the development of the Parental Burnout Inventory (PBI), parental burnout was, for the first time, assessed using a valid and reliable measurement instrument.

Following the clarification of the conceptual boundaries of parental burnout with Roskam et al. (2017), the literature entered a developmental phase in which the structure of this syndrome was examined in greater depth and refined both measurement-wise and theoretically. In this context, the Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA) was developed using an inductive approach grounded in parents' subjective experiences and re-conceptualized parental burnout accordingly. The PBA proposed a four-dimensional structure encompassing emotional exhaustion in the parenting role, emotional distancing from one's child, a contrast with one's former parental self, and a sense of being fed up with the parenting role (Roskam et al., 2018).

Alongside these advances in the measurement of parental burnout, Mikolajczak and Roskam (2018) proposed the Balance Between Risks and Resources (BR^2) model as a theoretical framework to explain parental burnout. According to this model, parental burnout emerges when demands (risk factors) outweigh available resources (protection factors), resulting in a state of imbalance. Empirical studies conducted in line with this framework (Mikolajczak et al., 2018a, 2018b) have demonstrated that parental burnout is not confined to disadvantaged or high-risk families; rather, it may occur across diverse sociodemographic contexts whenever the balance between risks and resources is disrupted.

The growth and thematic expansion of the parental burnout literature

Following conceptual clarification and measurement advances, the literature entered a phase of rapid growth and thematic expansion. Both the PBI and the PBA were adapted and validated across numerous cultural contexts, establishing parental burnout as a globally measurable phenomenon (Arikan et al., 2020; Aunola et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2020; Furutani et al., 2020; Kawamoto et al., 2018; Matias et al., 2020; Mousavi et al., 2020; Roskam et al., 2018; Szczygieł et al., 2020; Van Bakel et al., 2018). Especially after 2020, the literature expanded quantitatively and thematically, with increasing attention to diverse cultural settings, longitudinal outcomes, and intervention studies (Mikolajczak et al., 2023; Ren et al., 2024; Urbanowicz et al., 2026). The COVID-19 pandemic functioned as a critical external stressor that intensified parental demands and accelerated scholarly attention to parental burnout (Aguiar et al., 2021; Kerr et al., 2021; Sorkkila & Aunola, 2022; Van Bakel et al., 2022).

Studies focusing on individual factors have shown that parental burnout is not merely a consequence of external parenting demands; rather, it is closely linked to how parents perceive, regulate, and internalize these demands. Research has identified high neuroticism, socially prescribed perfectionism, and discrepancy as risk factors for parental burnout, whereas emotional intelligence and emotion regulation capacity have been shown to function as protective resources that buffer against these risks (Le Vigouroux et al., 2017; Le Vigouroux & Scola, 2018; Lin et al., 2021, 2022, 2025).

At the relational and contextual level, coparenting quality, social support, family routines, and cultural norms have emerged as key determinants shaping parental burnout risk

(Lebert-Charron et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2022; Mikolajczak et al., 2018a; Nguyen et al., 2025; Roskam et al., 2021,2024; Taştekin et al., 2025; Tracchegiani & Carone, 2025). Socioeconomic stressors and structural inequalities further intensify this risk, particularly in contexts with limited supportive resources (Kerr et al., 2021; Roskam et al., 2022a). Studies that examine parental burnout within the context of social norms and internalized expectations have demonstrated that factors such as perfectionism, pressure to be a "perfect mother," intensive mothering ideologies, socially prescribed perfectionism, and gender-based parenting norms constitute significant risk factors for parental burnout (Lin & Szczygiel, 2022a; Meeussen & Van Laar, 2018; Roskam & Mikolajczak, 2020; Sorkkila & Aunola, 2020). Cross-cultural research has further shown that parental burnout is more prevalent in individualistic societies, a pattern associated with high expectations regarding the parental self, limited task sharing, and the individualization of parenting (Lin & Szczygiel, 2022b; Roskam et al., 2021,2024). Issues such as gender equality, the distribution of parenting responsibilities, and cultural values have thus emerged as key contextual determinants of parental burnout in the literature (de Santis et al., 2025; Roskam et al., 2022b).

Research indicates that parental burnout has serious, multilayered consequences for children and the family system. At the parental level, parental burnout is associated with depressive symptoms, anxiety, reduced life satisfaction, intense guilt, sleep problems, and a distinctive clinical profile characterized particularly by thoughts of escaping from parenting, suicidal escape ideation, and parenthood regret (Mikolajczak et al., 2021, 2023; Ren et al., 2024; Piotrowski et al., 2025a; Roskam et al., 2025). Importantly, associations between parental burnout and severe outcomes—most notably parental neglect and parent-to-child violence—remain robust even after controlling for job burnout and depressive symptoms, underscoring parental burnout as a clinically specific and high-risk syndrome (Mikolajczak et al., 2018b, 2019). These internal strains are reflected in parenting behaviors, with parents experiencing parental burnout more frequently displaying emotional distancing, harsh discipline, psychological control, and reductions in positive parenting behaviors (Woine et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023), which constitute the primary transmission mechanisms through which parental burnout affects children. Accordingly, parental burnout has been linked to externalizing and internalizing behavior problems and psychological adjustment difficulties in children and adolescents, as well as to more specific developmental outcomes such as academic burnout and digital behaviors (e.g., phubbing) (Chen et al., 2022; Guo et al., 2024; Woine et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2025). Importantly, these associations are neither linear nor inevitable; rather, the extent to which parental burnout is transmitted to children is shaped by parenting behaviors, parental individual traits (e.g., attachment-related vulnerabilities), adolescents' psychological resources, and the broader relational context (Schittek et al., 2025; Woine et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2025). Finally, parental burnout has also been shown to negatively affect coparenting and partner relationships and overall family functioning, contributing to a cyclical intensification of family stress (Lebert-Charron et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2025), and should be examined within the broader context of gender roles and parenting socialization (Roskam & Mikolajczak, 2020).

Taken together, the literature indicates that parental burnout is not a transient form of parenting fatigue but a multidimensional risk condition affecting parental functioning, child development, and the family systems, while remaining amenable to intervention under appropriate conditions. Indeed, group-based and randomized controlled intervention studies have demonstrated that the psychological, behavioral, and relational consequences of parental burnout can be reduced, thereby establishing parental burnout as a preventable and treatable phenomenon (Brianda et al., 2020; Piotrowski et al., 2025b; Urbanowicz et al., 2026).

Current study

Despite the rapid growth and thematic diversification of parental burnout research, there remains a need to systematically map the intellectual, conceptual, and social structures of the field in order to better understand its overall trajectory and identify future research directions. While several narrative and systematic reviews have contributed valuable syntheses (Mikolajczak et al., 2023; Ren et al., 2024), no comprehensive bibliometric analysis has yet provided a quantitative and integrative assessment of publication trends, collaborative networks, and thematic evolution in parental burnout research.

Bibliometric analysis offers a data-driven approach to examining the emergence, development, and scholarly impact of a research field by analyzing publication outputs, citation patterns, co-authorship networks, and thematic structures (Broadus, 1987; Donthu et al., 2021; Mukherjee et al., 2022; Pritchard, 1969). Unlike traditional literature reviews, bibliometric methods enable the identification of influential scholars, dominant research themes, and emerging areas of inquiry through objective and reproducible techniques.

Accordingly, the current study conducts a bibliometric analysis of parental burnout research published between 1989 and 2025 using data retrieved from the Web of Science (WoS) database. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the publication trends in parental burnout research over time, and which studies, authors, and journals have had the greatest impact in the field?
2. How has the intellectual and conceptual structure of parental burnout research evolved, as reflected in co-citation and keyword co-occurrence patterns?
3. What does the global collaboration network in parental burnout research look like in terms of countries and authors?
4. Which research themes are emerging or declining, and what potential directions for future research can be identified?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and systematic overview of the parental burnout research and to offer a robust foundation for future theoretical and empirical work in the field.

Method

This study employs a bibliometric analysis to examine the emergence and growth of research on parental burnout. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method that evaluates the scientific output of a specific research domain by analyzing publication trends, citation patterns, keyword co-occurrences, and collaboration networks. This approach enables the identification of key contributors, influential works, and emerging themes within the field (Broadus, 1987; Donthu et al., 2021; Mukherjee et al., 2022; Pritchard, 1969).

Data collection

In this study, the data collection process was carried out in three stages. First, comprehensive searches were conducted in both the WoS Core Collection and Scopus databases. In the second stage, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, duplicate records were removed, and the eligible studies from each database were identified. In the third stage, the integration of the two databases was evaluated; however, due to technical incompatibilities in the Scopus records, the analysis proceeded using only the WoS dataset. The final sample consisted of 307 WoS records, which were subsequently analyzed (see Appendix A). All records were exported in Plain Text format, as recommended by the developers of Bibliometrix (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). The overall data collection, screening, and selection process is illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram (Page et al., 2021) presented in Fig. 1.

The search was carried out on November 6, 2025, covering all years up to this date, using the following keywords (covering titles, abstracts, author keywords, and keyword plus):

- "parent burnout" OR "parenting burnout" OR "burnout in parents" OR "burnout in mothers" OR "burnout in fathers" OR "parental burnout" OR "parent exhaustion" OR "parental exhaustion" OR "mother burnout" OR "father burnout" OR "mother exhaustion" OR "father exhaustion" OR "exhausted parents" OR "exhausted mothers" OR "exhausted fathers" OR "maternal burnout" OR "paternal burnout" OR "caregiver burnout".

Studies were included if they:

- Were published in English.
- Were peer-reviewed empirical journal articles indexed in SSCI, SCI-E, or ESCI (indexing criteria applied only to WoS records).
- Were published as full research articles or early-access versions of such articles.
- Explicitly focused on parental burnout as a primary or central construct.
- Used empirical methods and primary data to investigate parental burnout, including quantitative studies employing validated scales, and qualitative studies exploring parents' lived experiences of parental burnout.

Studies were excluded if they:

- Were books, book chapters, conference proceedings, letters, corrections, editorial materials, or other non–peer-reviewed publications.
- Were dissertations or theses (not indexed as peer-reviewed journal articles).
- Did not empirically investigate parental burnout as a primary construct or as a central measured variable.
- Investigated other types of burnout (e.g., occupational, caregiver, student) in samples that did not involve parents (e.g., employees, professional caregivers, elderly caregivers, nurses, teachers, university students).
- Did not use primary data (e.g., conceptual papers, theoretical reviews, commentaries).
- Focused on topics entirely unrelated to parental burnout or any burnout construct.
- Were published in languages other than English.

As shown in Fig. 1, a search was conducted in the WoS database using predefined keywords, yielding 575 records prior to screening. Records were initially screened according to the exclusion criteria related to publication type (e.g., book chapters, editorials, letters; $n=94$) and language (non-English publications; $n=14$), which were removed at this stage. From the remaining

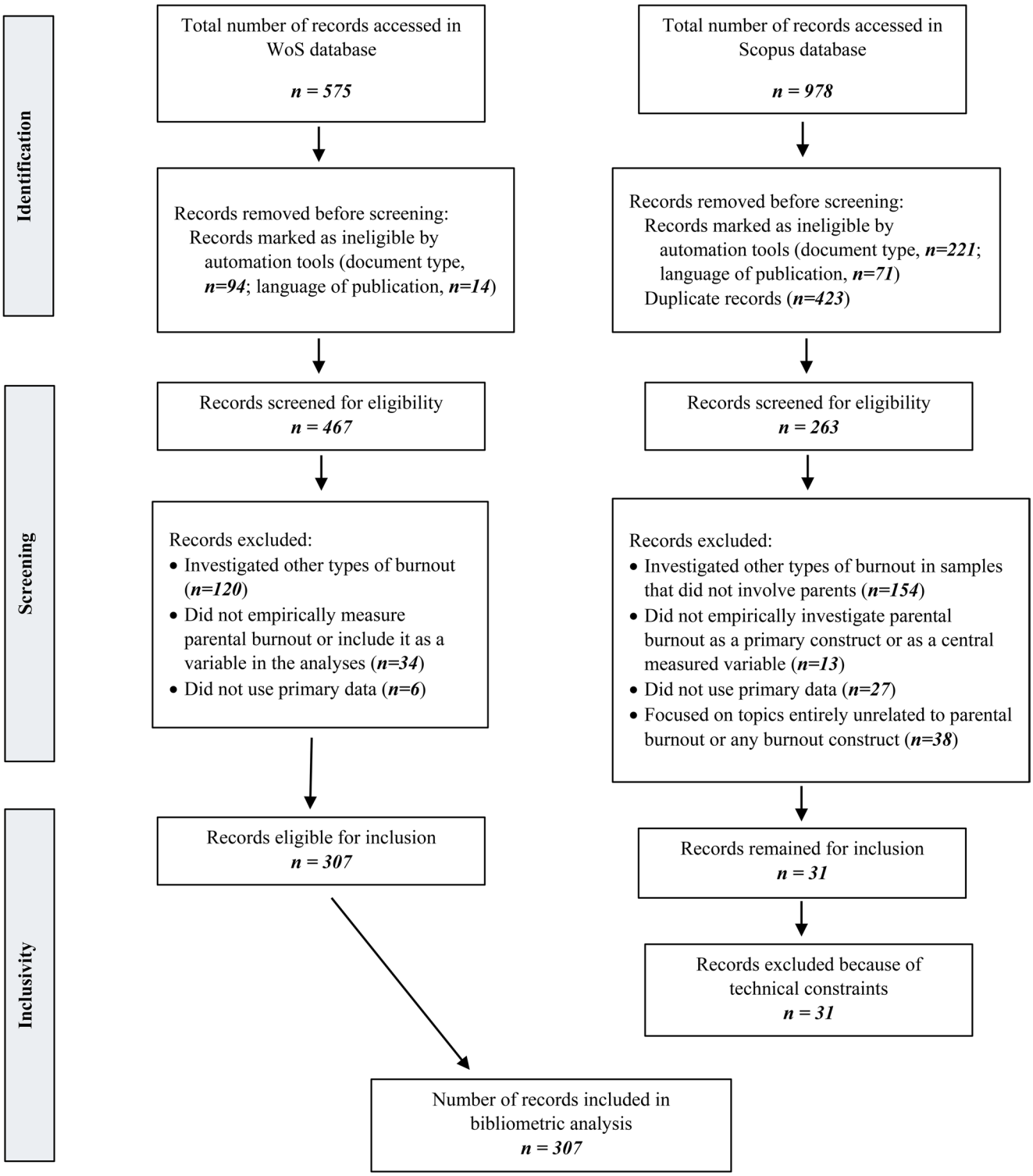


Fig. 1 Data Collection Process

467 records, the full set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, resulting in 307 eligible studies. To ensure broader coverage of the parental burnout literature, another search was conducted in the Scopus database using the same search strategy, which initially retrieved 978 records. Records were initially screened according to the exclusion criteria related to publication type (e.g., book chapters, editorials, letters; n=221) and language (non-English publications; n=71), which were removed at this stage. Remaining 686 records were then examined for duplication against the WoS dataset using RStudio, and

423 duplicate records were removed. From the remaining 263 Scopus records, the full set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, resulting in 31 eligible studies.

Following screening, the integration of WoS and Scopus datasets was considered. However, Scopus export formats do not provide reference information in a structure compatible with bibliometric analysis tools, and attempts to manually standardize these records resulted in persistent incompatibilities. Given these technical constraints (e.g., format discrepancies, missing reference fields) and the limited number of eligible Scopus records (n=31), the final dataset was constructed solely from the 307 WoS studies. WoS offers extensive coverage of high-impact journals, ensuring the robustness of the findings. It is also widely preferred in bibliometric research due to its refined citation metrics and historical indexing depth (Archambault et al., 2006). Consistent with these advantages, relying on WoS alone provided a structurally coherent and methodologically reliable dataset. This approach aligns with established recommendations in bibliometric methodology, which advise using a single, fully compatible database when multi-database integration may compromise data integrity (Dagli et al., 2025).

Data analysis

The analysis was conducted in R using the Bibliometrix package (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), with RStudio, (version 2025.09.02+418) as the integrated development environment, and VOSviewer for network visualization (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). While various bibliometric data analysis tools exist (e.g., BibExcel, CiteSpace II, SciMat), Bibliometrix was chosen for its comprehensive and systematic functionalities within a single package, and VOSviewer was chosen for its visualization utilities.

This study follows a two-step bibliometric approach as performance analysis and science mapping. *Performance analysis* enables researchers to evaluate publication trends and impact metrics, including annual publication trends, most influential journals, authors, countries, and citation analysis per paper. *Science mapping* techniques, including co-occurrence analysis (author keywords), thematic evaluation of author keywords, and collaboration network analysis (authors and countries) enable to identify the conceptual, intellectual, and social structures within the interested research field (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021).

Results

Descriptive characteristics

Table 1 provides the main descriptive information about the data. The bibliometric analysis of parental burnout research spans the period 1989–2025, with a total of 307 publications from 138 different journals.

Table 1 Main Information About Data

Timespan of publications	1989–2025
Number of sources (Journals)	138
Number of publications	307
article	279
early access	28
Annual growth rate (%)	12.82
Average age of publications	3.47
Number of citations	9.978
Average citations per publication	18.48
Authors	932
Number of author's keywords	664
Authors of single-authored publications	6
Single-authored publications	8
Co-authors per publication	5.28
International co-authorships (%)	27.69

The annual growth rate of research in this field is 12.82%, indicating a steady increase in academic interest. The average age of the publications is 3.47 years, highlighting the field's recent and dynamic nature. The dataset contains a total of 9.978 citations, with an average of 18.48 citations per publication, demonstrating a strong academic impact. Regarding authorship patterns, a total of 932 authors contributed to the field. The average number of co-authors per publication is 5.28, suggesting a high level of research collaboration. Additionally, 27.69% of publications involve international co-authorship (refers to publications co-written by authors affiliated with institutions in at least two different countries), indicating the global nature of parental burnout research.

Performance analysis

Distribution of annual scientific production on parental burnout research is examined within the performance analysis. Results showed that the research output remained relatively low until 2017, after which a sharp increase was observed (1989=1, 1999=1, 2007=1, 2009=1, 2010=1, 2011=1, 2014=1, 2016=2, 2017=4, 2018=12, 2019=4, 2020=12, 2021=22, 2022=40, 2023=68, 2024=59, 2025-*until November 6*=77). This aligns with the growing awareness of parental burnout as a distinct psychological construct.

Table 2 identifies the most productive authors in parental burnout research. Isabelle Roskam and Moïra Mikolajczak are the leading scholars, with 53 and 52 publications, respectively. Their contributions are also reflected in citation impact, with Roskam (2.544 citations, H-index=21) and Mikolajczak (2.499 citations,

Table 2 Most Impactful Authors on Parental Burnout Research

No	Authors	Production Year Start	Number of Publications	All Citations	H-index
1	Roskam, I.	2017	53	2.544	21
2	Mikolajczak, M.	2017	52	2.499	20
3	Aunola, K.	2020	14	515	9
4	Sorkkila, M.	2020	13	514	9
5	Szczygiel, D.	2021	15	393	9
6	Gross, J.J.	2019	9	690	8
7	Le Vigouroux, S.	2017	10	421	8
8	Li, Y.X.	2020	12	202	8
9	Lin, G.X.	2021	11	360	8
10	Wang, W.	2020	13	202	8

H-index = 20) emerging as the most influential figures in the field. Other notable contributors include Kaisa Aunola, Matilda Sorkkila, and Dominika Szczygiel, each with over 10 publications.

Table 3 presents the most influential publications in the parental burnout literature based on local and global citation counts, indicating that the field is largely shaped by foundational theoretical and empirical work led by Mikolajczak, Roskam, and colleagues. The most cited article is the 2018 Frontiers in Psychology paper introducing the Balance Between Risks and Resources (BR²) framework (185 LC; 259 GC), followed by the 2019 Clinical Psychological Science article by Mikolajczak, Gross, and Roskam (177 LC; 281 GC), which provides a conceptual clarification of parental burnout.

Empirical studies addressing consequences, measurement, and correlates of parental burnout also rank prominently. Key contributions include the 2018 Child Abuse & Neglect article on neglect and violence (170 LC; 255 GC), the 2017 Frontiers in Psychology paper introducing the Parental Burnout Inventory (155 LC; 242 GC), and the 2018 Journal of Child and Family Studies article identifying sociodemographic, psychological, and family-related correlates (146 LC; 263 GC).

More recent influential works include the large-scale cross-cultural comparison published in Affective Science (2021), which has accrued 133 local and 188 global citations, as well as measurement-focused studies such as the 2018 development of the Parental Burnout Assessment (108 LC; 137 GC). Studies examining specific risk factors (e.g., socially prescribed perfectionism) and subgroup differences (e.g., gender differences in antecedents and consequences) also appear among the top-cited publications.

The Table 3 further includes one of the earliest articles in the dataset, Lindström et al.'s 2011 publication in Acta Paediatrica (74 LC; 158 GC), indicating that early clinical

Table 3 The Most-Cited Publications on Parental Burnout Research

No	Authors	Year	Journal	LC	GC	Title
1	Moïra Mikolajczak, Isabelle Roskam	2018	Frontiers in Psychology	185	259	A Theoretical and Clinical Framework for Parental Burnout: The Balance Between Risks and Resources (BR2).
2	Moïra Mikolajczak, James J. Gross, Isabelle Roskam	2019	Clinical Psychological Science	177	281	Parental burnout: What is it, and why does it matter?
3	Moïra Mikolajczak, Maria Elena Brianda, Hervé Avalosse, Isabelle Roskam	2018	Child Abuse & Neglect	170	255	Consequences of parental burnout: Its specific effect on child neglect and violence.
4	Isabelle Roskam, Marie-Emilie Raes, Moïra Mikolajczak	2017	Frontiers in Psychology	155	242	Exhausted parents: Development and preliminary validation of the parental burnout inventory.
5	Moïra Mikolajczak, Marie-Emilie Raes, Hervé Avalosse, Isabelle Roskam	2018	Journal of Child and Family Studies	146	263	Exhausted parents: Sociodemographic, child-related, parent-related, parenting and family-functioning correlates of parental burnout.
6	Isabelle Roskam, Joyce Aguiar, Ege Akgun, Gizem Arikan, Mariana Artavia, Hervé Avalosse, …, Moïra Mikolajczak	2021	Affective Science	133	188	Parental Burnout Around the Globe: A 42-Country Study.
7	Isabelle Roskam, Maria Elena Brianda, Moïra Mikolajczak	2018	Frontiers in Psychology	108	137	A step forward in the conceptualization and measurement of parental burnout: The Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA).
8	Matilda Sorkkila, Kaisa Aunola	2020	Journal of Child and Family Studies	88	128	Risk factors for parental burnout among Finnish parents: The role of socially prescribed perfectionism.
9	Isabelle Roskam, Moïra Mikolajczak	2020	Sex Roles	75	105	Gender differences in the nature, antecedents and consequences of parental burnout.
10	Caisa Lindström, Jan Åman, Annika Lindahl Norberg	2011	Acta Paediatrica	74	158	Parental burnout in relation to sociodemographic, psychosocial and personality factors as well as disease duration and glycaemic control in children with Type 1 diabetes mellitus.

LC: Local Citation, GC: Global Citation

research on parental exhaustion contributed to the empirical foundations of the field.

Overall, citation patterns show that the most influential publications primarily focus on theoretical frameworks, measurement development, cross-cultural evidence, and the consequences and correlates of parental burnout, with early clinical work serving as a historical anchor for subsequent conceptual development.

The most relevant journals in parental burnout research include Frontiers in Psychology (n=29), Current Psychology (n=20), Journal of Child and Family Studies (n=19), Family Journal (n=11), Journal of Family Psychology (n=10), Family Relations (n=7), Personality and Individual Differences (n=7), International Journal of Environmental and Public Health Research (n=6), Behavioral Sciences (n=5), and Child Abuse & Neglect (n=5). These numbers represent the total count of parental burnout-related articles published in each journal. These journals serve as primary publication outlets for parental burnout research.

The publication output by country, calculated using a document-level counting approach (i.e., each country is counted once per article regardless of the number of affiliated authors), indicates that Europe dominates parental burnout research, with Belgium (n=73), Poland (n=28), Turkey (n=25), France (n=23), Netherlands (n=20), Finland (n=16), Italy (n=13), Sweden (n=12), Switzerland (n=10), Portugal (n=10), Germany (n=8), Spain (n=7), Austria (n=5), Romania (n=5) and among the leading contributors, followed closely by China (n=68), the USA (n=49), Chile (n=12), Israel (n=12), Vietnam (n=12), Iran (n=11), England (n=9), Canada (n=7), Australia (n=7), Peru (n=7), and Russia (n=7).

Science mapping

The science mapping analysis was conducted to examine both the conceptual and social structure of the parental burnout literature. The conceptual structure was explored using author keywords and included three complementary approaches: a keyword co-occurrence analysis to identify connections between key concepts, a thematic network analysis to examine themes based on their centrality (relevance to the field) and density (internal development), and a trend topic analysis to map the temporal evolution of major research themes in parental burnout studies. The social structure of the field was investigated through analyses of co-authorship collaborations and country-level collaboration networks, highlighting patterns of scholarly interaction and regional research linkages. In all science mapping visualizations, node size represents publication/frequency volume, while link thickness indicates the strength of collaboration or association between nodes.

Conceptual Structure

The co-occurrence network analysis in Fig. 2 illustrates the connections between key concepts in parental burnout research. The keywords included in this analysis are author-provided keywords from the publications in this study's sample. The color-coded clusters highlight thematic groupings, representing different research areas within parental burnout.

The keyword co-occurrence analysis indicates that parental burnout research is structured around several closely interconnected thematic domains. The network is centered on *parental burnout* (f=197), which is the most frequent and structurally central keyword, co-occurring with a wide range of parenting-related, psychological, child-focused, methodological, and contextual terms.

At the core of the network, parental burnout most frequently co-occurs with keywords related to parenting stressors and family system processes, including *parenting stress* (f=27), *coparenting* (f=16), *family functioning* (f=10), *work–family conflict* (f=9), and *parent–child relationship* (f=6). In addition, *COVID-19* (f=49) appears as a highly frequent keyword, indicating substantial attention to pandemic-related stressors.

A second prominent domain reflects general psychological health and well-being, with frequent co-occurrences such as *burnout* (f=47), *stress* (f=20), *mental health* (f=11), *perfectionism* (f=13), and *quality of life* (f=5). Strong links are also observed with child-related developmental and clinical contexts, including *autism* (f=15), *depression* (f=14), *emotion regulation* (f=13), *anxiety* (f=7), and *adolescents* (f=6). The presence of *maternal burnout* (f=7) and *longitudinal* (f=5) further indicates attention to maternal experiences and temporal dynamics.

Another set of frequently linked keywords highlights resources and supportive factors, including *social support* (f=14), *resilience* (f=11), *self-compassion* (f=6), *coping strategies* (f=3), and *mindfulness* (f=3), particularly in studies focusing on *mothers* (f=14) and *parents of children with special needs* (f=4).

Keywords related to core burnout dimensions and individual characteristics form another domain, with *exhaustion* (f=30) among the most frequent terms, alongside *parental competence* (f=6), *neuroticism* (f=3), *parental psychological flexibility* (f=3), and *psychopathology* (f=3). The keyword *fathers* (f=7) appears less frequently, indicating a smaller but identifiable body of father-focused research.

Methodological terms constitute a distinct area within the network, including *validity* (f=10), *reliability* (f=6), *psychometric* (f=6), *questionnaire* (f=4), and *translation* (f=4), reflecting substantial work on measurement development, adaptation, and validation.

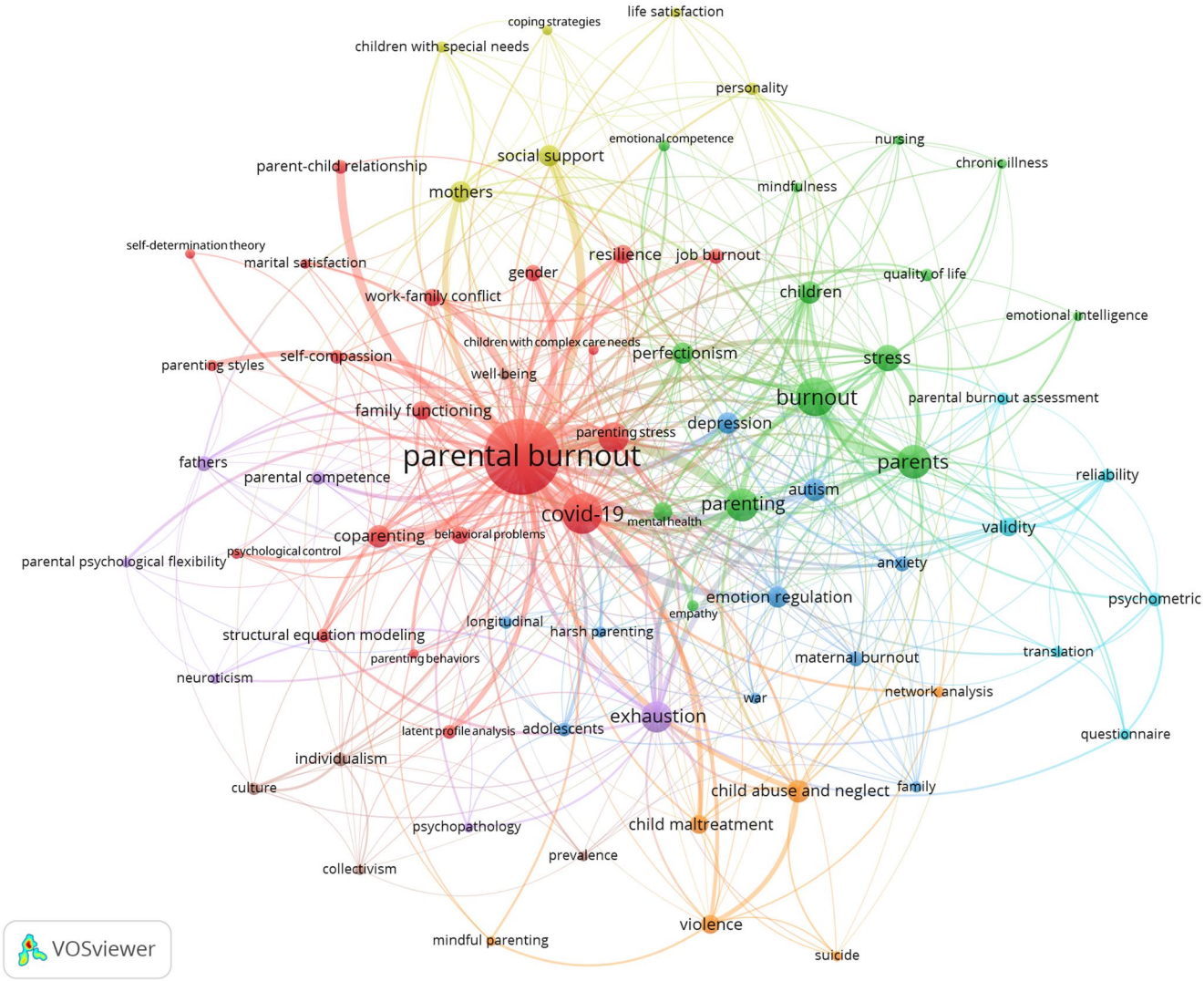


Fig. 2 Co-occurrence Network of the Author Keywords

Finally, the network includes keywords related to societal, cultural, and high-risk contexts, such as *culture* (f = 5), *individualism* (f = 6), *collectivism* (f = 3), *prevalence* (f = 3), as well as *child abuse and neglect* (f = 15), *violence* (f = 10), and *suicide* (f = 3), indicating that parental burnout is examined in relation to both macro-level cultural factors and severe adverse outcomes.

The thematic map (Fig. 3) depicts the conceptual structure of the parental burnout literature by positioning author keywords according to centrality (relevance to the field) and density (internal development), yielding four thematic clusters: Motor Themes (high centrality–high density), Niche Themes (low centrality–high density), Basic Themes (high centrality–low density), and Emerging/Declining Themes (low centrality–low density).

In the Basic Themes quadrant, parental burnout, parenting stress, coparenting, and COVID-19 constitute a highly central cluster that forms the conceptual backbone of the field by linking parental burnout to everyday parenting demands and contextual stressors. Closely related foundational themes—such as burnout, parents, exhaustion, and children—also appear in this quadrant, alongside parental mental health topics (e.g., depression, anxiety, maternal burnout), which are highly relevant but show comparatively lower internal cohesion.

The Motor Themes quadrant is dominated by a well-developed cluster centered on child abuse and neglect, child maltreatment, violence, and longitudinal research, indicating a conceptually mature and strongly interconnected research line. Themes related to parenting processes and psychological functioning—parenting, stress, perfectionism, and emotional competence—are also located here, near the boundary with Niche Themes, suggesting that they are highly relevant, well developed, and function as bridging

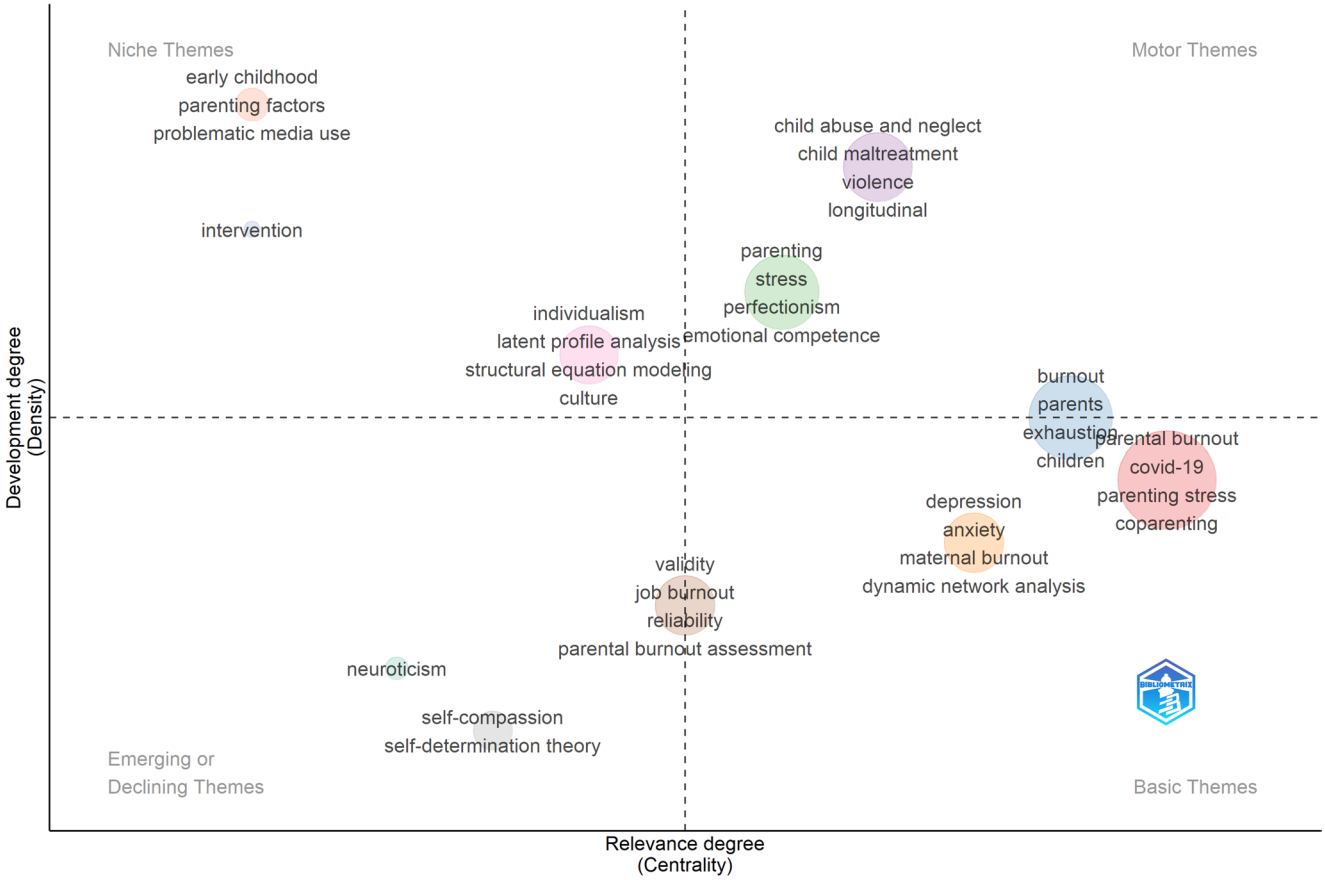


Fig. 3 Thematic Network of the Author Keywords

themes between core parental burnout research and adjacent psychological domains.

Within the Niche Themes quadrant, early childhood, parenting factors, problematic media use, and intervention-oriented research appear as well-developed but less central areas. Methodological and contextual themes such as individualism, latent profile analysis, structural equation modeling, and culture are positioned closer to the thematic center and the Motor Themes boundary, indicating increasing relevance and potential integration into the core literature.

Finally, measurement-related themes—including validity, reliability, parental burnout assessment, and job burnout—are located between the Emerging/Declining and Basic Themes quadrants. This intermediate placement suggests a transitional status: these topics are methodologically important and broadly relevant but have not yet formed a densely developed cluster, reflecting ongoing consolidation rather than decline. Neuroticism, self-compassion, and self-determination theory also fall within this quadrant, indicating that these themes are either emerging or declining.

Building on the thematic analysis, a trend topic analysis was performed on author keywords as part of the conceptual analysis, mapping the evolution of key research themes in parental burnout studies over time. By analyzing author keywords, this approach identifies emerging topics, shifts in research focus, and recent areas of interest within the field.

Trend topics analysis reveals clear temporal patterns in the prominence of key terms within the parental burnout literature between 2017 and 2025. Core parenting-related concepts—including parenting, parents, stress, exhaustion, and burnout—appear early in this period and remain consistently visible across successive years, indicating their sustained centrality in the field. Notably, the term parental burnout shows a pronounced increase in frequency after 2020 and reaches its highest prominence in the most recent years, accompanied by a parallel rise in related concepts such as parenting stress and coparenting.

The emergence of COVID-19 is confined to a relatively short time span and temporally overlaps with the period during which parental burnout becomes more prominent, reflecting a clustering of research output around pandemic-related stressors. In addition, several topics—including autism, social support, resilience, work–family conflict, quality of life, harsh parenting, and longitudinal approaches—gain visibility primarily in later years, suggesting a broadening of research interests over time. By contrast, terms such as

chronic illness, questionnaire, psychometric, and suicide appear earlier or with lower overall frequency and display more limited continuity across the observed period.

Social Structure

The co-authorship network analysis in Fig. 4 depicts the collaborative structure of parental burnout research, identifying key authors, central collaboration patterns, and international linkages. The network is organized around a clearly defined central collaboration core, surrounded by multiple regionally clustered author groups with varying degrees of external connectivity.

Moïra Mikolajczak and Isabelle Roskam occupy the most central positions in the network, as indicated by their large node sizes and high connectivity, reflecting both high publication output and strong collaborative influence. They anchor a cohesive European research hub together with frequent collaborators such as Bart Soenens, Maria Elena Brianda, Rebecca Shankland, and Alice Schittek, forming a dense and stable co-authorship cluster. A closely connected subgroup comprising Dorota Szczygieł, Konrad Piotrowski, and Gao-Xian Lin is positioned adjacent to the central core, indicating strong collaborative ties and an emerging interface linking researchers from Central/Eastern Europe and Asia to the core network.

Beyond the central hub, several tightly connected regional collaboration clusters are evident. A French-speaking cluster—comprising Sarah Le Vigouroux, Astrid Lebert-Charron, Raquel Sanchez-Rodriguez, Natalene Sejourne, Jacqueline Wendland, and Celine Scola—forms a cohesive regional structure centered in France and neighboring contexts. A compact Chinese research cluster, including Wei Wang, Yongxin Li, Tingting Song, Yimin Li, Shengnan Wang, and Shen Chen, is characterized by strong internal collaboration and emerging connections to the central core.

Cross-regional collaboration patterns are also observed. A distinct group linking Maria Pia Santelices, Maria Josefina Escobar, and Daniela Oyarce-Cadiz from Chile with Hedwig Johanna Antonia van Bakel from the Netherlands reflects collaborative ties between Latin American and European researchers.

Several smaller clusters and dyadic collaborations are located at the network periphery, including a Nordic collaboration between Kaisa Aunola and Matilda Sorkkila and a small cluster linking Annelise M. Blanchard, Alexandre Heeren, and Margaret L. Kerr. These groups display strong internal ties but limited external connections.

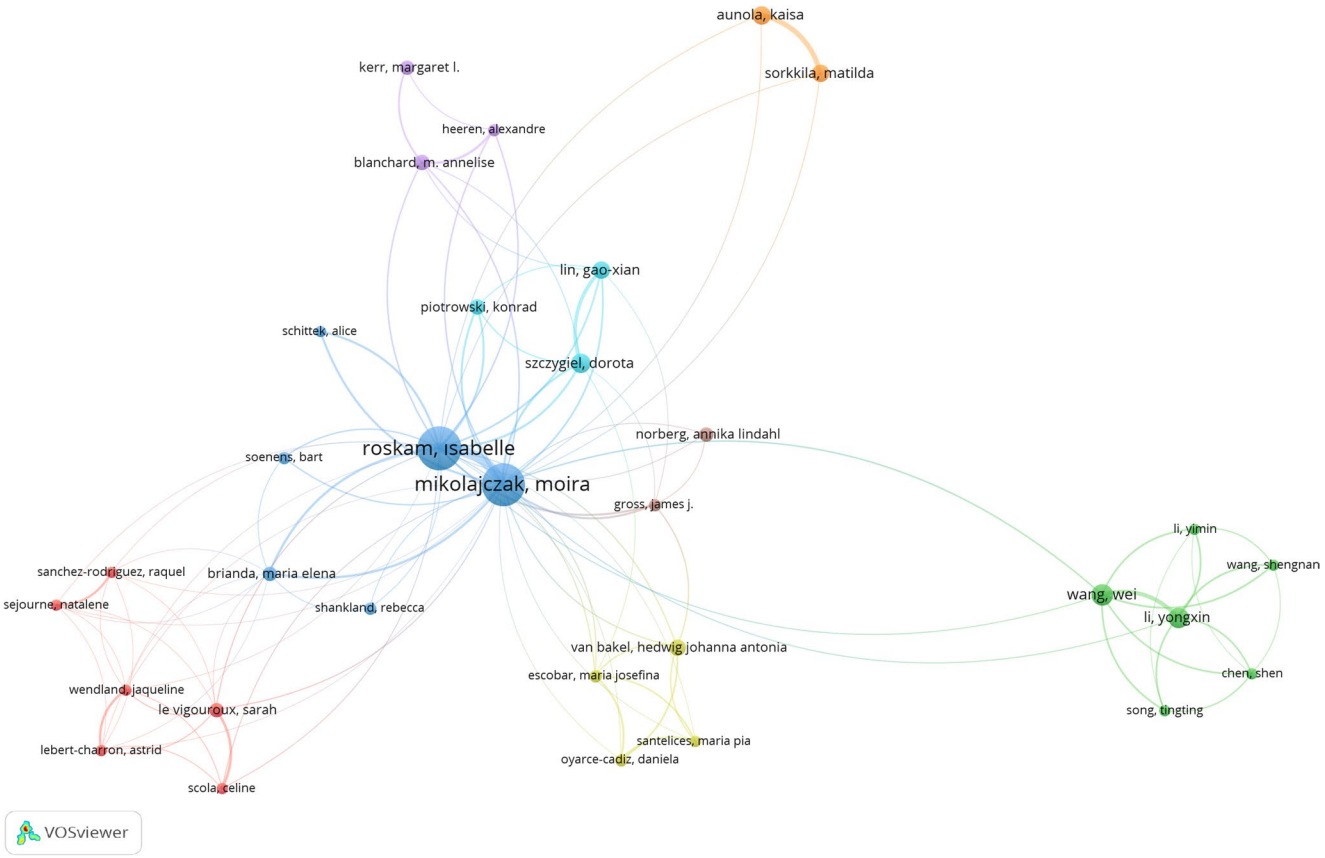


Fig. 4 Co-authorship Network Visualization

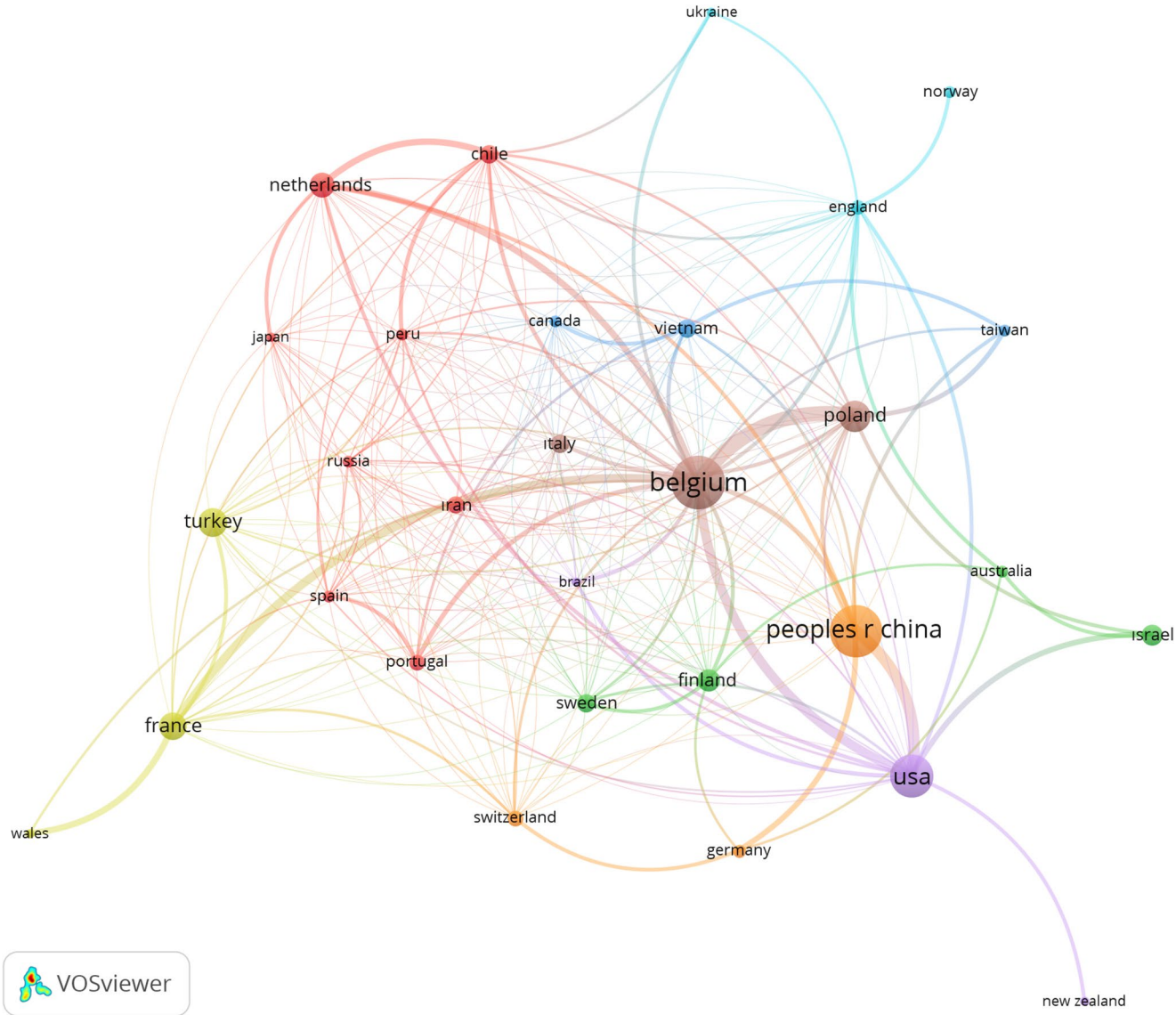


Fig. 5 Collaboration Network Visualization of the Countries Based on the Authorship

Differentiated author roles are evident within the network. James J. Gross maintains multiple direct links with the central European core, positioning him as an internationally connected author within the main collaboration structure, whereas Annika Lindahl Norberg occupies a more peripheral position, reflecting contributions through a largely independent research trajectory.

The country collaboration network in Fig. 5 depicts the international structure of research partnerships in the parental burnout literature and is characterized by dense cross-national connectivity, with several countries occupying structurally central positions linking multiple regional collaboration groups.

Belgium emerges as the most prominent and highly connected country, maintaining strong collaborative ties across Europe, Asia, and the Americas and functioning as a key international collaboration hub. Italy and Poland are positioned close to Belgium, forming a tightly interconnected group with frequent mutual collaborations.

Surrounding this central core, several regional collaboration patterns are evident. A cluster including Chile, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Peru, Iran, Japan, and Russia shows dense internal connectivity and multiple links to the central core, indicating integration into broader international research networks. Another cohesive group comprises Australia, Finland, Sweden, and Israel, characterized by strong internal ties and consistent connections to other parts of the network. Similarly, Canada, Taiwan, and Vietnam form a compact collaboration group with multiple links extending toward central European countries.

Smaller but well-defined collaboration clusters are also observed. France, Turkey, and Wales form a distinct subgroup with strong bilateral ties, while England, Norway, and Ukraine constitute another connected cluster. In addition, Germany, the People's Republic of China, and Switzerland form a collaboration triangle marked by strong mutual links, particularly between China and Germany. The United States, Brazil, and New Zealand represent another identifiable grouping, with the United States displaying multiple international connections and functioning as a key node linking transcontinental collaborations. Although some countries appear more peripherally positioned, most are connected to the network through at least one strong international partnership.

Discussion

The present bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the emergence, growth, and thematic evolution of parental burnout research from 1989 to 2025. Beyond documenting a rapid quantitative expansion—particularly after 2017—this study offers a structural interpretation of how the field has evolved conceptually, intellectually, and socially. By situating publication trends, thematic clusters, and collaboration patterns within the theoretical framework of parental burnout, the findings illuminate not only where the field has been, but also how and why its current research priorities have taken shape. Notably, the social structure of the literature reveals dense international author- and country-level collaboration networks, indicating that parental burnout has developed as a research domain particularly well suited for cross-cultural and comparative inquiry. Such extensive international collaboration may facilitate the examination of parental burnout across diverse cultural, social, and policy contexts, thereby strengthening the field's external validity and theoretical generalizability.

One of the most salient patterns emerging from the analysis is the sharp increase in publication output following 2017, coinciding with the conceptual clarification and measurement consolidation of parental burnout. The introduction of parenting-specific assessment tools (Roskam et al., 2017, 2018) and the articulation of the BR² model (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018) appear to have functioned as pivotal turning points, enabling parental burnout to be conceptualized as a distinct and theoretically coherent syndrome rather than a derivative of parenting stress, job burnout, or depressive symptomatology (Mikolajczak et al., 2020, 2021). The prominence of foundational theoretical and measurement-oriented publications among the most cited works further suggests that the field's expansion has been driven not merely by empirical accumulation, but by the establishment of a shared conceptual language. Consistent with this development, the bibliometric patterns indicate that the BR² framework (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018) has become the organizing backbone of parental burnout research. The co-occurrence of keywords reflecting parenting demands—such as stress, parenting stress, work–family conflict, COVID-19, and children with special needs/complex care needs—alongside those representing resources—such as coparenting, social support, emotional competence, mindfulness, mindful parenting, and resilience—points to an increasing alignment with a dynamic balance perspective. Rather than framing parental burnout as a linear consequence of stress exposure, contemporary research increasingly conceptualizes it as the result of sustained disequilibrium between demands and available resources.

Importantly, this consolidation of the BR² framework has also provided a coherent foundation for the development of intervention approaches targeting parental burnout. The alignment between risk–resource themes identified in the bibliometric maps and the targets of recent intervention studies suggests that the field has begun to translate its theoretical insights into applied strategies. Group-based psychological interventions grounded in stress management, mindfulness, and relational support have demonstrated meaningful reductions in parental burnout severity compared to control or waiting-list conditions (Brianda et al., 2020; Urbanowicz et al., 2023, 2026). Notably, some interventions have shown effects extending beyond self-reported outcomes, including reductions in parental neglect, violence, and biological indicators of chronic stress (Brianda et al., 2020; Bayot et al., 2024). Taken together, these findings suggest that the bibliometric prominence of BR²-related constructs reflects not only conceptual maturation but also growing potential for theory-driven intervention development. Future research may further advance this line of work by developing and rigorously evaluating theory-driven interventions grounded in the BR² framework across diverse cultural contexts and family structures.

At the same time, the historical trajectory of the literature reveals a meaningful conceptual shift. Prior to the formal definition of parental burnout as a distinct syndrome by Roskam et al. (2017, 2018), burnout-like experiences among parents were predominantly examined in contexts characterized by exceptionally high caregiving and psychological burden, most notably among parents of children with chronic or severe health conditions (Lindström et al., 2011; Norberg, 2007, 2010; Norberg et al., 2014). Following the articulation of parental burnout as a syndrome rooted in risk–resource imbalance (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018; Roskam et al., 2017, 2018), the scope of the literature broadened to emphasize that any parent exposed to sustained imbalance may be at risk. Nevertheless, the continued

prominence of keywords such as autism and children with special needs/complex care needs suggests that parents facing elevated and enduring caregiving demands remain important to the field, indicating that clinically or developmentally sensitive parenting contexts continue to play a disproportionate role in shaping both empirical inquiry and theoretical refinement. While these populations provide critical insights for testing and refining theoretical models, the findings of this bibliometric study also point to other high-risk yet understudied groups that may warrant attention. For example, parents of preterm infants are widely recognized as vulnerable in terms of parenting stress (Taştekin & Bayhan, 2023, 2025), yet they remain largely absent from the parental burnout literature. Extending research to such groups may contribute to a more differentiated understanding of how specific caregiving trajectories intersect with burnout risk. Examining parental burnout across a broader range of high-demand caregiving contexts in future research may help clarify how distinct caregiving trajectories shape burnout risk and resource dynamics.

Beyond this expansion in scope, the findings also refine interpretations that attribute the evolution of the literature primarily to individual differences in vulnerability. Although individual-level constructs—such as perfectionism, neuroticism, and emotion regulation—remain prominent, the thematic structure of the field clearly reflects a shift toward relational, familial, and contextual explanations. The increasing centrality of coparenting, family functioning, resilience, and social support indicates that researchers are no longer asking solely who is vulnerable to parental burnout, but under what relational and contextual conditions vulnerability emerges. Within the BR² framework, individual characteristics constitute only one component of a broader risk–resource balance embedded in family systems (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018), where partner coordination, shared responsibility, and relational support can either buffer or exacerbate chronic parenting demands (Lebert-Charron et al., 2022; Tracchegiani & Carone, 2025). Accordingly, parental burnout is increasingly conceptualized as a family-level risk condition rather than an isolated individual experience. Future research may further advance this perspective by examining parental burnout through family-system and dyadic research designs that capture relational processes, coparenting dynamics, and shared caregiving responsibilities over time.

The parental burnout literature increasingly points to parenting practices as a critical mechanism linking parental exhaustion to child and family outcomes (Guo et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2021; Mikkonen et al., 2023; Woine et al., 2024). Consistent with this view, the author keywords co-occurrence map indicates that parenting-related keywords—such as parenting styles and parenting behaviors—cluster together with concepts including parent–child relationship, behavioral problems, resilience, and family functioning, suggesting that parenting practices are embedded within a broader relational and developmental context. Moreover, mindful parenting appears alongside child abuse and neglect, violence, and child maltreatment–related keywords, highlighting its relevance in discussions of both risk and protection within the parental burnout framework. Taken together, these patterns suggest that parenting practices constitute a central mechanism through which the effects of parental burnout are transmitted to children. Future research may therefore benefit from longitudinal and mechanism-focused designs that clarify how specific parenting practices mediate the association between parental burnout and child developmental outcomes.

When these insights are considered in relation to intervention research, parenting practices also emerge as a salient and modifiable target for reducing burnout-related risks. Intervention studies indicate that reductions in parental burnout are often accompanied by changes in parents' day-to-day interactions with their children, including improved emotional availability, reduced reactivity, and greater regulatory flexibility (Brianda et al., 2020; Bayot et al., 2024). Mindfulness- and compassion-based approaches appear particularly relevant, as they directly target mechanisms implicated in parental burnout, such as emotional depletion, self-criticism, and difficulty disengaging from chronic stress (Bayot et al., 2024; Urbanowicz et al., 2023). However, the present findings also underscore the importance of situating such practices within their broader cultural and normative contexts. Norms emphasizing constant positivity, emotional control, or ideals of "perfect" parenting—while often well-intentioned—may inadvertently intensify parental pressure and contribute to further imbalance (Lin et al., 2021, 2025). Effective interventions therefore conceptualize parenting practices not as rigid benchmarks to be continuously met, but as flexible resources that can be adapted to parents' contextual constraints and fluctuating capacities, consistent with the BR² model. Greater attention to culturally embedded parenting norms and expectations in future research may help clarify how these factors shape both the effectiveness of burnout interventions and parents' capacity to translate adaptive parenting practices into daily family life.

Within this broader focus on parenting practices, the identification of problematic media use as a niche theme points to an emerging and comparatively underexplored dimension of parental burnout research. This pattern suggests growing interest in digital parenting as a specific domain in which parental exhaustion may shape everyday regulatory practices (Blanchard et al., 2023; Gillis & Roskam, 2019), such as monitoring, limit-setting, and co-use of digital media, as well as children's and adolescents' technology-mediated

interaction patterns (e.g., problematic smartphone use and phubbing; Zhang et al., 2023). At the same time, managing children's media use in digitally saturated environments may itself constitute an additional parenting demand, potentially contributing to sustained risk–resource imbalances. As such, problematic media use can be understood not as a separate theme, but as a contemporary extension of parenting practices through which parental burnout may intersect with children's developmental contexts. Future research may therefore benefit from examining the bidirectional relationships between parental burnout and digital parenting practices, particularly in relation to how technology-mediated environments shape both parenting demands and child developmental outcomes.

Developmental timing also emerges as an important consideration in the present study. The findings indicate that parents of infants, toddlers, and young children are relatively underrepresented in the parental burnout literature, despite the intensity of caregiving demands characteristic of early developmental periods. The identification of early childhood as a niche theme suggests growing interest in this area and highlights opportunities for prevention-oriented research. Studying parental burnout during early developmental stages may facilitate earlier identification of risk and support a shift from remediation toward early or preemptive intervention, aimed at strengthening parental and relational resources before chronic exhaustion becomes entrenched. In this context, future research would also benefit from systematically examining which child characteristics may serve a protective role in the transmission of parental burnout, and whether such protective processes vary across developmental periods. Adopting a developmental perspective on potential child-level buffering factors may help clarify when and for whom parental burnout poses the greatest risk, thereby informing the timing and targets of prevention-oriented interventions.

In parallel, the co-occurrence of keywords related to global crises highlights the sensitivity of parental burnout research to broader contextual conditions. The prominence of COVID-19 reflects the pandemic's role in exposing parents worldwide to sustained and uncontrollable stressors, while the more recent appearance of war as a keyword points to increasing recognition of extreme environmental and societal disruptions as contexts in which parental burnout risk may intensify. These patterns underscore that parental burnout is shaped not only by family-level processes but also by macro-level conditions (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018; Ren et al., 2024). Investigating how large-scale societal disruptions and contextual stressors interact with family-level risk–resource dynamics in future research may further clarify how parental burnout unfolds across different cultural and policy contexts.

Despite parental burnout applies to both parents (Roskam & Mikolajczak, 2020), the findings reveal a continued dominance of mother-focused research, as reflected by keywords such as mothers and maternal burnout. Fathers remain comparatively underrepresented, an imbalance that is consequential given evidence suggesting that paternal burnout may follow distinct trajectories shaped by gendered parenting roles and socialization processes (Roskam & Mikolajczak, 2020). Expanding research on fathers' experiences may therefore deepen theoretical understanding and inform more inclusive, family-based approaches to assessment and intervention.

Finally, the bibliometric structure of the field provides insight into its readiness for evidence synthesis. Well-developed thematic clusters with high internal coherence appear particularly amenable to quantitative synthesis, whereas more fragmented or emerging domains may benefit from scoping or narrative reviews aimed at theory building. In this context, the prominence of keywords such as child abuse and neglect, COVID-19, coparenting, autism, social support, and mental health indicators (depression, anxiety, stress) suggests that these areas have reached sufficient empirical density to support systematic reviews and meta-analyses. Future research may therefore benefit from conducting systematic reviews and meta-analyses in these empirically dense domains in order to consolidate accumulated evidence and clarify the strength and consistency of associations within the parental burnout literature.

Taken together, these findings indicate that parental burnout research has evolved into a theoretically grounded, methodologically diverse, and increasingly applied field. By mapping its intellectual and conceptual architecture, the present study not only clarifies past and current trajectories but also delineates coherent directions for future research, synthesis, and intervention, thereby contributing to the continued maturation of the parental burnout literature. From a research perspective, the bibliometric patterns identified in the present study highlight several priorities for future investigation. In particular, expanding research across diverse caregiving contexts and developmental stages, further examining relational and family-level processes, and systematically addressing underrepresented populations—such as fathers and parents of infants and young children—may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of parental burnout dynamics. In addition, emerging domains, including digital parenting environments and the influence of broader societal disruptions, represent promising areas for future inquiry. Advancing the field will also require methodological diversification, including longitudinal, dyadic, and intervention-based research designs capable of clarifying causal mechanisms within the BR^2 framework. Finally, the identification of empirically dense thematic

clusters suggests growing opportunities for systematic reviews and meta-analyses that can consolidate existing evidence and further refine theoretical and applied knowledge in the parental burnout literature.

Limitations

Although this study provides valuable insights into the development of parental burnout research, some limitations should be noted.

First, the analysis was limited to publications indexed in the WoS Core Collection. Although this database is widely recognized for its coverage of high-impact and peer-reviewed research, the exclusion of Scopus-indexed publications may have resulted in the omission of some relevant studies. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as representative of trends within the WoS-indexed literature rather than the entirety of parental burnout research.

Second, only English-language publications were included in the analysis, which may introduce a language bias. Given that parental burnout is a globally relevant issue, excluding non-English studies may have led to the omission of important research published in other languages, particularly in regions where parental burnout may manifest differently due to cultural and societal variations.

Third, grey literature (e.g., dissertations, reports, and other non–peer-reviewed materials) was not included in the dataset. This decision was made to ensure that the analysis relied on peer-reviewed publications and standardized bibliographic records. Nevertheless, excluding grey literature may limit the comprehensiveness of the dataset and should therefore be considered a methodological limitation of the present study.

Finally, while Bibliometrix and VOSviewer offer powerful bibliometric analysis tools, differences in algorithmic approaches may affect network structures and thematic classifications. Future studies might explore alternative bibliometric software or hybrid methodologies to validate findings across different analytical frameworks.

Practice implications

The findings of the present bibliometric analysis offer several important implications for practice, particularly for professionals working with parents and families in clinical, educational, and community-based settings. First, the multilevel thematic structure of the parental burnout literature underscores that parental burnout should not be addressed solely as an individual psychological difficulty. Instead, practitioners are encouraged to adopt a holistic perspective that simultaneously considers individual, relational, and social-contextual factors shaping parents' risk–resource balance (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018; Mikolajczak et al., 2023).

At the individual level, interventions targeting emotional regulation, perfectionism, and stress management remain important, given the continued prominence of mental health–related constructs such as depression, anxiety, and stress in the literature (Mikolajczak et al., 2019). Psychoeducational programs that enhance parents' awareness of parental burnout as a distinct and legitimate condition (Roskam et al., 2017, 2018) may help reduce self-blame and normalize help-seeking behaviors. Importantly, framing parental burnout within a risk–resource imbalance perspective (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018) may support parents in identifying modifiable resources rather than perceiving exhaustion as personal failure.

Beyond individual-level interventions, the findings highlight parenting practices as a crucial target for practice-oriented approaches to parental burnout. Because burnout may compromise parents' capacity for sensitive, consistent, and emotionally available caregiving (Gillis & Roskam, 2019; Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018), parenting practices should be conceptualized not only as consequences of parental exhaustion but also as modifiable mechanisms (Taştekin et al., 2025) through which its impact on children can be reduced. In this regard, interventions that promote mindful and adaptive parenting—such as present-centered attention, emotional responsiveness, consistent routines, and non-harsh disciplinary strategies—may help disrupt pathways linking parental burnout to adverse child outcomes. From a preventive perspective, strengthening parenting practices may be particularly beneficial during early developmental periods and in high-demand caregiving contexts, especially when integrated with individual stress management and relational support.

At the relational level, the increasing centrality of coparenting and family functioning (Lebert-Charron et al., 2022; Tracchegiani & Carone, 2025) highlights the need for practice models that extend beyond the individual parent. Interventions aimed at strengthening coparenting quality, shared responsibility, and communication between caregivers may function as critical protective mechanisms against burnout. Family-based and couple-focused interventions may be particularly beneficial in redistributing parenting demands and enhancing perceived support, thereby reducing chronic exhaustion and emotional distancing.

At the social and contextual level, the prominence of social support, crisis-related themes (e.g., COVID-19), and high-demand caregiving contexts suggest that practitioners should attend closely to parents' broader environmental conditions (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018; Ren et al., 2024). Professionals working with families affected by contextual stressors—such as economic strain, health-related

caregiving demands, or large-scale societal crises—may need to prioritize resource-oriented approaches that connect families with formal and informal support systems. Community-based services, peer-support programs, and policy-level supports may play a crucial role in mitigating sustained risk–resource imbalances.

The findings also point to the importance of tailoring interventions to specific parenting contexts. Parents of children with special needs or other high-care demands appear prominently in the literature, indicating a need for targeted support models that acknowledge structurally elevated parenting demands. At the same time, the relative underrepresentation of parents of infants and young children suggests an opportunity for early preventive practices. Integrating parental burnout screening and support into early childhood services may enable earlier identification of risk and the implementation of preventive interventions before burnout becomes entrenched.

Overall, the present findings suggest that effective practice in the field of parental burnout is likely to require integrated, multilevel approaches that strengthen individual coping capacities, enhance relational resources, and address broader social and contextual constraints. Such comprehensive intervention strategies are well aligned with the current state of the literature and hold promise for reducing parental burnout and its adverse consequences for parents, children, and families.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis offers a macroscopic synthesis of parental burnout research, tracing the field's development from its early conceptual roots to its current status as a theoretically grounded and globally connected research domain. By mapping publication trends, thematic structures, and collaboration networks, the study clarifies how parental burnout has evolved from an extension of stress-related constructs into a distinct and coherent syndrome embedded within family systems and broader social contexts.

The findings indicate that the consolidation of parenting-specific measurement tools and the BR^2 framework marked a decisive turning point, enabling a shift from descriptive accounts of parental exhaustion toward multilevel, process-oriented explanations. Contemporary research increasingly conceptualizes parental burnout as the outcome of sustained risk–resource imbalances shaped by individual characteristics, relational dynamics, cultural norms, and contextual stressors, reflecting the field's growing theoretical integration.

At the same time, the conceptual landscape revealed by this analysis points to both areas of maturity and selective gaps. While clusters addressing severe outcomes, family processes, and intervention-related themes suggest readiness for synthesis, niche and emerging topics—such as early developmental periods, digital parenting, and underexplored caregiving contexts—highlight important directions for future research. These patterns underscore the need for integrative approaches that bridge developmental stages, family roles, and contemporary parenting environments.

Overall, by situating parental burnout within a systemic and context-sensitive framework, this study provides a structured foundation for advancing theory, guiding evidence-based intervention, and informing prevention efforts. In doing so, it contributes to the continued maturation of the parental burnout literature and clarifies where the field stands and where it is most productively positioned to move forward.

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Data availability The author(s) confirms that all data analyzed during this study are included in this submission and publicly available at the time of submission.

Declarations

Ethical approval statement This study did not involve human participants, and therefore, ethical approval was not required. The study was conducted in accordance with standard ethical research guidelines.

Informed consent statement This study does not involve human participants, and therefore, informed consent was not applicable.

This study does not involve human participants, and therefore, informed consent was not applicable. During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used Chat-GPT by Open-AI in order to improve the readability and use of existing language. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Conflicting interests The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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