

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF WOMEN'S PARENTAL BURNOUT

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to present results of the study of psychological factors of women's parental burnout (PB), in particular its connection with features of parental attitude and nature of the family system.

The study surveyed 120 women who had at least one (47.2%), two (37%) and three (11%) minor children living with them permanently. The age of mothers ranges from 18 to 48 years, and the age of children from 2 months to 17 years.

The study of PB was performed using the following methods: Parental Burnout Assessment (M.Mikolajczak, I.Roskam), FACES 3 (D.Olson), Parental Attitudes Questionnaire (A. Varga, V. Stolin), Beck Depression Inventory (A.Beck), Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (M.Rosenberg).

The survey was conducted using the open platform Google Forms, where the questionnaire was posted. The link was distributed via the Internet, including the social network Facebook, between April, 7 and November, 1, 2021.

The results of statistical analyzes showed that the number of women with the syndrome does not exceed 10%, ie the total number of Ukrainian women with burnout is twice as high as in Europe and the United States (Roskam et al., 2018). 24% have an average level, almost 12% of respondents have a low level and more than 56% of surveyed women are characterized by a lack of PB.

It is statistically established that there are significant links between parental burnout among women and the features of parental attitude towards the child, in particular, the dimensions of parental attitudes such as "symbiosis" and "infantilization" were found to be significant predictors of burnout according to regression analysis. The merger of mother and child, the absence of psychological boundaries and the promotion of infantilization of the child are defined as the factors of family upbringing, which are predictors of parental burnout of women. The results also show that the closer the relationship between family members, the lower the burnout level, as a woman in such a family receives much more support, help and understanding. The age of the mother does not play a significant role in the formation of the syndrome, but the younger the child, the higher the level of burn out in the mother, which corresponds to the results of similar cross-cultural studies (Roskam et al., 2021).

Key words: parental burnout, parental attitude, burnout factors, parenting.

Наталія Булатевич, Ольга Ориняк. Психологічні чинники батьківського вигорання жінок

Метою статті є представлення результатів дослідження психологічних чинників батьківського вигорання жінок (БВ), зокрема його зв'язку з особливостями батьківського ставлення та характером сімейної системи.

У дослідженні взяло участь 120 жінок, які мали принаймні одну (47,2%), двос (37%) та трое (11%) неповнолітніх дітей, проживаючих з ними постійно. Вік матерів коливається від 18 до 48 років, а вік дітей від 2 місяців до 17 років.

Дослідження батьківського вигорання проводилось за допомогою наступних методик: «Оцінка батьківського вигорання» (М.Миколайчак, І.Роскам), FACES 3 (Д.Олсон), «Опитувальник батьківського ставлення» (А. Варга, В. Столін).

Опитування проводилося за допомогою відкритої платформи Google Forms, де був розміщений опитувальник. Посилання розповсюджувалося через Інтернет, зокрема через соціальну мережу Facebook в період між 7 квітня та 1 листопада 2021 р.

Результати статистичного аналізу показали, що кількість жінок, які мають синдром, не перевищує 10%, тобто загальна кількість українських жінок з вигоранням вдвічі більша, ніж в Європі та США (Roskam et al., 2018). 24% мають середній рівень, у майже 12% респонденток зареєстровано низький рівень і понад 56% опитуваних жінок характеризуються відсутністю батьківського вигорання.

Статистично встановлено, що існують значущі позитивні зв'язки між батьківським вигоранням у жінок та особливостями батьківського ставлення до дитини, зокрема значущими предикторами вигорання за результатами регресійного аналізу виявились такі виміри батьківських установок, як «симбіоз» та «інфантилізація». Злиття матері з дитиною, відсутність психологічних кордонів та сприяння інфантилізації дитини - чинники сімейного виховання, які виступають предикторами батьківського вигорання жінок. Представлені результати також свідчать про те, що чим більш тісний зв'язок між членами сім'ї, тим нижчий показник вигорання, адже жінка в такій сім'ї отримує значно більше підтримки, допомоги та розуміння. Вік матері не відіграє істотної ролі у формуванні синдрому, проте чим молодша дитина, тим вищий рівень вигорання у матері, що відповідає результатам аналогічних крос-культурних досліджень (Roskam et al., 2021).

Ключові слова: батьківське вигорання, батьківське ставлення, чинники вигорання, батьківство.

Introduction

From time immemorial raising children has been a joint effort of extended families, communities and even employees. Today the situation has changed, caring for a child often becomes the sole work of mothers, which increases the load on the weakened body after childbirth many times over. The cause of this phenomenon is a number of different factors: socio-economic, demographic, individual and psychological. Studies by scientists in more than 40 countries have shown that parental burnout is more common in individualistic countries (Roskam et al., 2021). The need to maintain the psychological health of the younger generation and the integrity of the family system encourages the study of parental burnout. The interest of our study was to find psychological factors that could significantly affect the occurrence of the syndrome among women.

Parent burnout is a unique syndrome that is empirically different from burnout, parental stress or depression (Lebert-Charron, Dorard, Boujut, & Wendland, 2018).

Most importantly parental burnout significantly exacerbates parental neglect and violence against children. Therefore, the impact of parental burnout on parental behavior requires special attention, as neglect and violence have widespread long-term consequences for children's development - from chronic illness, disability, PTSD, cardiovascular disease to mental illness or even suicide. In the treatment of parental burnout, child neglect and violence are reduced in proportion to the reduction in burnout symptoms in parents (Mikolajczak, Brianda, Avalosse, & Roskam, 2018). In our work we pay special attention to the functioning of the family as a factor in the emergence of the phenomenon under study. The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between the characteristics of the family system and the parental attitude of women with parental burnout.

The study also aims to facilitate the further identification of previous risk factors for parental burnout in order to inform about prevention and intervention methods.

Theoretical background

In the scientific community the burnout syndrome has been known since the second half of the twentieth century. One of the first researchers of this phenomenon in the context of professional activity are G.J. Freudenberger, C. Maslach, S. Jackson (Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Freudenberger, 1985). Among the domestic authors who have dedicated their work to this topic are N. Bulatevych, K. Malysheva, L. Karamushka and others. (Bulatevych, 2007). Parental burnout became the main theme in the works of G. Procaccini, E. Lenstrom, D. Pelsma. In particular G. Procaccini defined the phenomenon of parental burnout as an increase in physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion resulting from a combination of severe chronic stress and the acceptance of low personal growth and autonomy (Procaccini, 1983).

In the early 2000s, a new stage in the history of the study of PB began. Since then it has been studied in the United States (Weiss, 2002), Sweden (Norberg, 2007; Lindstrom, Aman, & Norberg, 2010), France (Le Vigourouxet, 2017), Belgium (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018) and other countries. In December 2019, Belgium hosted the First International Conference on Parental Burnout. According to the latest data the phenomenon of PB is studied in more than 42 countries and studies show a sharp change in the prevalence of the syndrome depending on the culture. Individualistic cultures, in particular, have shown a higher prevalence and average level of PB (Roskam, 2021).

In contrast to the structure of burnout proposed by C. Maslach, which included three stages of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced sense of achievement, modern scientists with factor analysis have formed another dimension different from all structures - contrast with the previous parent "Me" (Mikolajczak, Brianda, & Roskam, 2018).

Some identified sources of the syndrome often indicate the genetic nature of the predisposition to its occurrence, others - the socio-demographic reasons and modern lifestyle. Survey results show that burnout of parents, as well as burnout at work, is associated with depressive symptoms, addictions, sleep disorders and conflicts in the couple. However, it is common among the authors to believe that the reason is high expectations and the feeling that one role (parenthood) will meet all needs. Raising

children is a situational stressor that forces women to adapt and expend life energy constantly. Finding a resource for energy recovery is a challenge, so unfortunately, the circumstances of parenthood do not in themselves lead to the usual coping strategies that could help overcome stress. There are stressors in the stressor, which increase the chances of exhaustion and burnout, even in mothers with moderate attitudes and expectations. Among the factors of parental burnout, various authors highlight the following: perfectionism (Kawamoto, Furutani & Alimardani, 2018), low level of emotional intelligence, negative experience of self-upbringing, countless parental responsibilities and lack of support (both externally and from a partner) (Mikolajczak, 2018).

Investigating the problem of women's PB, scientists consider the sources, causes and consequences of its occurrence. However, factors related to parental attitudes and the nature of the family system remain poorly understood. In this regard, there is a need to adapt the existing diagnostic tool for the Ukrainian sample. In our opinion, important factors of BV in women are both internal (individual psychological, physiological, need, stress) and external factors (socio-cultural, demographic, stressor). Styles of upbringing through the prism of age periodization of childhood as psychological factors of BV are analyzed separately.

Studying the problem of women's BV, scientists consider various sources, causes and consequences. However, factors related to parental attitudes and the nature of the family system remain poorly understood. In this regard, there is a need to adapt the existing diagnostic tool for the Ukrainian sample.

Methodology

Sample. 120 Ukrainian mothers who had at least one (47.2%), two (37%) and three (11%) minor children living with them permanently. All participants live in Ukraine: in large cities with a population of over 500 thousand people - 63% of respondents, 29.1% - in small towns, 7.9% - in rural areas. The age of mothers ranges from 18 to 48 years, and the age of children from 2 months to 17 years. Only 92.1% of them lived in a nuclear family, 7.9% lived in a single-parent family. Only 91.4% of all participants had higher or incomplete higher education, 5.5% had secondary professional, 1.6% secondary, 1.6% - incomplete secondary education.

To study the psychological factors of PB, the method of "Parental Attitude Questionnaire" by A. Varga & V. Stolin (Lavrentyeva, 2004) was used, which includes 61 questions, and the results are expressed in 5 scales: "acceptance-rejection" (integral emotional attitude to the child), "Symbiosis" (lack of distance), "authoritarian hypersocialization" (control over the child), "cooperation" (socially desirable image of parental attitude) and "little loser" (attitude to the child's failures).

"Parental Burnout Assessment" by M. Mykolajczak, I. Roskam (Roskam, Brianda & Mikolajczak, 2018), is a tool for analyzing parental burnout, which includes 23 questions and allows to assess its overall level and phenomenology of manifestation using 4 scales: exhaustion of parental role (feeling that parenting requires too much participation, the role of parents is considered emotionally exhausting); contrast with the previous parental "Me" (the feeling that the parents have become worse compared to the past; shame for fatherhood); feeling fed up of the parental role (lack of pleasure from

the time spent with their children; not maintaining the role of parents); emotional distancing from their children. The α -Cronbach coefficient of the Ukrainian-language version of the questionnaire in this study is 0.97. The α -Cronbach coefficient of individual scales: 0.67 (emotional distancing); 0.92 (contrast with previous parental self); 0.9 (feeling tired from the parental role), 0.95 (emotional exhaustion from the parental role).

<i>1.Internal factors</i>	<i>2.External factors</i>
<p>Individual-psychological: use of time, self-suggestion, attitudes about money, own parents, feelings of guilt; The "7 Deadly Sins of Fatherhood": Pride, Pride, Anger, Laziness, Envy, Eating, Greed, Perfectionism, Low Emotional Intelligence.</p> <p>Stressors: self-criticism, memories, self-identification, ideas about the future.</p> <p>Physiological: heredity, biological rhythms and cycles, nutrition, physical activity and sports, recreation, congenital and genetic factors.</p> <p>"Needs": high need of success and acceptance, the need of attention, the need of approval.</p>	<p>Socio-psychological: work, money, family, time, cultural norms, expectations (stressors).</p> <p>Demographics: age, education, place of residence, marital status, number of children.</p> <p>Stressor in stressor: uncontrolled responsibility, competition with gadgets, free sex and drugs, economic.</p>
	<i>3.Parental style</i>
	<p>Controller</p> <p>Developer</p>

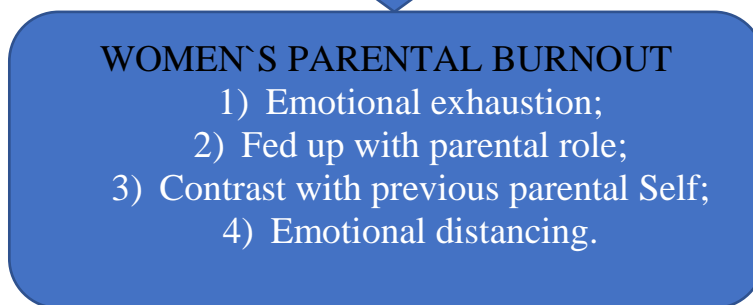


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of psychological factors of women`s parental burnout

Research methods. Also it was used Olson's FACES-3 test (Eidemiller, Dobryakov & Nikolskaya, 2006), which is widely used to diagnose family cohesion (the degree of emotional connection, with minimal - family members are autonomous and distant from each other) and the level of family adaptation (how the family system can change under under the influence of stressors). 20 questions are rated by respondents on a 5-point scale. This technique allowed us to perform a comparative analysis and identify the relationships between the type of family structure, the level of satisfaction with family life and burnout rates in women.

Results

The connection between burnout and the peculiarities of parental attitudes. The generalized results of the empirical analysis of the indicators of the questionnaire scales allowed to trace the connections between the peculiarities of the parents' attitude of the mothers towards their youngest child and the degree of burnout. As shown in Table 1, significant dimensions of parental burnout are related to parental attitudes such as "symbiosis" and "infantilization". "Symbiosis" in relation to the child is described as the desire of parents to be one with the child, to meet his needs, to protect him from troubles and difficulties, accompanied by a feeling of constant background anxiety for the child, his experience as small and defenseless. Thus, we have significant positive relationships between the degree of symbiotic expression and the manifestation of burnout among mothers: with indicators of "exhaustion" ($p \leq 0.01$), "contrast with the previous image of parental "Me" ($p \leq 0.01$), "feeling fed up with parental role" ($p \leq 0.01$), "emotional distancing from the child" ($p \leq 0.01$), as well as the overall burnout rate ($p \leq 0.01$).

Table 1

Correlation between burnout measurements and parental attitude, child's age (N = 120)

	Age of a child	Acceptance - neglect	Symbiosis	Cooperation (socially desirable behavior)	Authoritative control (hyperprotection)	"Little Loser" (infantilization)
Exhaustion of parental role	-,362**	-,057	,280**	-,062	,139	,379**
Contrast with previous parental "Me"	-,201*	-,003	,392**	,070	,233**	,392**
Feeling Fed up with parental role	-,260**	-,003	,274**	-,096	,200*	,384**
Emotional distancing	-,194*	-,012	,354**	,054	,155	,502**
PBA	-,256**	-,039	,410**	-,062	,242*	,486**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

We also have significant positive relationships between the manifestation of infantilization in relation to the child and with indicators of "exhaustion" ($p \leq 0.01$), "contrast with the previous image of the parental "Me" ($p \leq 0.01$), "feeling Fed up with parental role" ($p \leq 0.01$), "emotional distancing from the child" ($p \leq 0.01$), as well as the overall burnout rate ($p \leq 0.01$).

Hyperprotection in the attitude of mothers to children is significantly related to the overall rate of parental burnout ($p \leq 0.01$) and its individual dimensions: "contrast with the previous image of the parental "Me" ($p \leq 0.01$) and "feeling Fed up with parental role" ($p \leq 0.01$).

There is also a significant positive relationship between all indicators of burnout and the type of "little loser" attitude, which indicates the neglect of emotional and psychological health of children. Interesting is the significant interdependence between the "symbiosis" style (OBS) and "emotional distancing" (PBA), which confirms the idea that establishing healthy psychological boundaries with the child is especially important to prevent PB.

The data obtained on the relationship between burnout and the type of parental attitude show inverse correlations between the level of burnout and the age of the child. We conclude that mothers raising young children have a higher level of overall burnout and all four manifestations.

The relationship between burnout and the characteristics of the family system. Correlation analysis of the FACES 3 and Parental Burnout Questionnaire scales revealed that the values of the "cohesion" scale were significantly related to the "parental depletion" scales ($p \leq 0.01$), "contrast to the previous parental "Me" ($p \leq 0.01$), "avoidance of parental role" ($p \leq 0.05$), "distancing" ($p \leq 0.01$), and the "adaptation" scale has a weak but significant relationship with the "emotional distancing" scale ($p \leq 0.01$) are presented in table 2.

Table 2

Correlation between burnout measurements and FACES scales 3 (N = 120)

	PBA	Exhaustion of parental role	Contrast with previous parental "Me"	Feeling Fed up with parental role	Emotional distancing
Cohesion	-,218*	-,266**	-,229**	-,301**	-,303**
Adaptation	-,174	-,174	-,160	-,172	-,197*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The presented results show the inverse dependence of burnout cohesion, which suggests that the closer the relationship between family members, the lower the burnout rate, because the mother in such a family receives much more support, help and understanding.

We conducted a comparative analysis of the level of burnout among women from different types of families. Analysis of family types according to the criterion of adaptation revealed that 93.7% of the interviewed women rated their families as

“flexible” or “chaotic”. Therefore, a further comparative analysis of the parental burnout was conducted between these groups (Table 3). One family was included in the “rigid” group, and seven families were classified as “structural”.

Table 3

The results of the analysis of differences in the severity of burnout in families with different types of adaptation

Type of family system	Flexible n = 51 (middle rank)	Chaotic n = 68 (middle rank)	Statistics U Manna - Whitne y	Statistics W Wilcox on
Burnout scale				
Exhaustion of parental role	63,93	57,05	1533,5	3879,5
Contrast with previous parental “Me”	62,73	57,96	1595	3941
Feeling Fed up with parental role	63,88	57,09	1536	3882
Emotional distancing	65,74	53,02	1288	3449*
PBA	53,73	49,06	1124,5	2894,5

* $p < .05$

According to the parameter of cohesion, 3 types of families were found in our sample: separated, separated and connected. A comparative analysis of parental burnout level is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

The results of the analysis of differences in the severity of burnout in families that differ in the type of cohesion

Type of family system	Scattered n = 28 (middle rank)	Divided n = 55 (middle rank)	Bounded n = 44 (middle rank)	Statistics of Kruskal Wallace (xi-square)
Burnout scale				
Exhaustion of parental role	67,86	67,58	57,07	2,391
Contrast with previous parental “Me”	75,50	61,07	60,34	3,542
Feeling Fed up with parental role	69,52	65,58	58,51	1,723
Emotional distancing	67,94	68,93	49,72	7,988*
PBA	57,88	55,83	46,72	2,601

* $p < .05$

The comparative analysis allows us to draw the following conclusions:

1) indicators on the scale of "emotional distancing" are significantly higher in families with a chaotic type of structure, which indicates dysfunction of the family

system and long distance, alienation of mother from child in chaotic families, and probably high burnout;

2) non-parametric dependent indicators showed that "emotional distancing" is much more common in families of separated type, which, although it belongs to the moderately balanced type, but indicate a significant psychological distance between family members.

Thus, we can conclude that according to the Faces 3 method, mothers whose families have the characteristics of divided cohesion and chaotic adaptation are most likely to suffer from such a manifestation of burnout as "emotional distancing".

Regression analysis using stepwise selection, in which parameters of parental attitude, features of the family system, and the age of the youngest (or only) child were taken into account as potential predictors of burnout, allowed us to build a linear regression model that represents the main predictors of parental burnout. The results are presented in table 5.

Table 5

Regression models of the predictors of burnout

Components of the regression equation	Non-st. Coeff.	Stand. Err.	Stand. coef. (beta)	Adj. R-square	t-test	CI	
Model 1				,229***			
Constant	27,11				9,23***	21,28	32,94
Infantilization	19,26	,49	,486		5,65***	12,50	26,02
Model 2				,319***			
Constant	39,79				9,23*	31,24	48,34
Infantilization	20,58	,52	,520		6,39***	14,19	26,97
The age of the child	-2,59	-,31	-,312		-3,83***	-3,93	-1,25
Model 3				,344***			
Constant	19,12				1,85	-1,37	39,61
Infantilization	16,63	,42	,420		4,57	9,41	23,85
The age of the child	-2,48	-,30	-,298		-3,73	-3,80	-1,16
Symbiosis	6,68	,20	,200		2,19	,64	12,72

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

However, it can be assumed that certain parameters (“little loser (Infantilization)” and “symbiosis”) are the most significant characteristics of parental attitudes in explaining the high level of parental burnout. “Little Loser” reflects the peculiarities of perception and understanding of parents by the child. At high values, parents have a desire to infantilize, to impose on him personal and social incapacity. That is, the mother sees the child younger than his age. The interests, hobbies, thoughts and feelings of the child seem to her childish, frivolous. The child seems unadapted, unsuccessful,

open to bad influences. The mother does not trust her child, points to her failure and incompetence. In this regard, she tries to protect the child from the difficulties of life and strictly control its actions. "Symbiosis" reflects the interpersonal distance in communication with the child. With high scores on this scale, it can be assumed that the mother seeks these symbiotic relationships with the child to protect it from the difficulties and troubles of life. She is constantly anxious for a child who seems small and defenseless.

The indicator R-square suggests the presence of significant factors of parental burnout, not taken into account in the theoretical model of the study, and which are likely to go beyond family factors. However, the obtained model has a very serious explanatory possibility, it is our styles of raising children that can lead mothers to parental burnout. That is, the greater the fusion of mother and child, the higher the level of infantilization, the higher the level of burnout among women.

Thus, according to the results of empirical research, the empirical model of parental burnout can be graphically represented as follows, Fig.2:

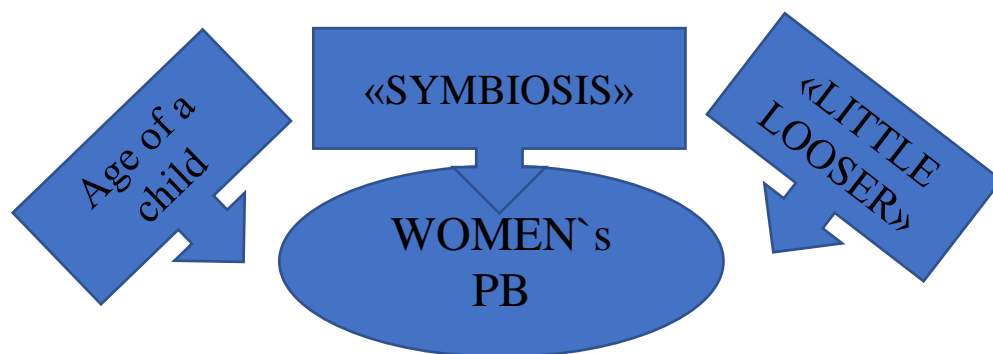


Figure 2. Empirical model of women's parental burnout
Discussion

The results of the study, which cover both socio-demographic (mother's age, child's age, level of education, number of minor children living with their mother) and psychological (features of parental attitudes, the nature of the family system), are to some extent intertwined with the study, the main topic of which is the personality of burned-out parents (Le Vigouroux, Scola, 2018). This study proves that PB manifests itself in the interaction between parents and their children, and because it is a dynamic relationship, they involve mutual influence, so it is important to take into account the demographic and characteristics of children. The results of a study (Le Vigouroux, Scola, Raes, Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2017) confirmed the usefulness of this approach, as the personality of the parents explained 42.3% of the variance of parental burnout and the personality of the child 13.8% (Le Vigouroux and Scola, 2018). In our study, we empirically investigated and illustrated that it is the peculiarities of parental attitudes toward the child (infantilization and symbiosis) significantly influence the formation of parental burnout syndrome.

The demographic results of our study, which show that maternal age does not play a significant role in the formation of the syndrome, in contrast to the age of the child

(the younger the child, the higher the level of burnout in the mother), corresponds to similar cross-cultural studies (Roskam et al., 2021).

Recent studies have linked the provocation of this syndrome to the accumulation of demographic, situational and dispositional risk factors (Lindström, Åman & Norberg, 2011; Mikolajczak, Brianda, Avalosse & Roskam, 2018; Roskam, Raes & Mikolajczak, 2017). The situational factor highlighted in both of these studies was a dysfunctional family circle, and, in particular, dissatisfaction with marital relationships. The findings of this study are closely intertwined with the results of our study, which found significant positive links between parental burnout and cohesion characteristics (emotional ties, family boundaries, decision-making, time, friends, interests, and leisure).

Conclusion

As a result of research work, a theoretical analysis of the literature was carried out and a conceptual model was formed, which shows the broad influence of both individual psychological (internal) and socio-demographic (external) psychological factors on parental burnout.

The results of statistical analyzes showed that the level of women with the syndrome does not exceed 10%, slightly more respondents suffer from moderate and low burnout, ie the total number of women with burnout is twice as high as in Europe and the United States.

The influence of the peculiarities of parental attitude on the formation of the syndrome in women is revealed and statistically proved. Significant links with parental burnout have dimensions of parental attitudes such as "symbiosis" and "infantilization." "Symbiosis" in relation to the child is described as the desire of parents to be one with the child, to meet his needs, to protect him from troubles and difficulties, accompanied by feelings of constant anxiety for the child, experiencing him as small and defenseless. There is also a significant positive relationship between all indicators of burnout and the type of "little loser" attitude, which indicates the neglect of emotional and psychological health of children. The data obtained on the relationship between burnout and the type of parental attitude show that mothers who raise young children have a higher level of overall burnout and all four manifestations.

The presented results of the analysis of the parameters of family cohesion and adaptation indicate the inverse dependence of cohesion indicators with burnout, which suggests that the closer the relationship between family members, the lower the burnout rate, because the mother in such a family receives much more support, help and understanding.

Comparative analysis has shown that the number of children living with their mother is not related to a woman's burnout, but the age of the youngest child correlates with burnout. In this case, the smaller the youngest child, the higher the level of burnout. At the same time, married and single women suffer from burnout to approximately the same extent, the highest was among women who are actually married.

The empirical model of psychological factors of burnout included several predictors, including two parameters of the mother's parental attitude ("symbiosis" and

"infantilization (little loser)" and the age of the child. The prospect of further research is to search for other predictors of burnout in mothers and to develop psychological assistance measures on this basis.

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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