

# Maternal Borderline Personality Disorder's Effects on Child Health and Development



Mei Timpson  
Department of Health and Society, University of Toronto Scarborough

## RESULTS CONTINUED

## INTRODUCTION

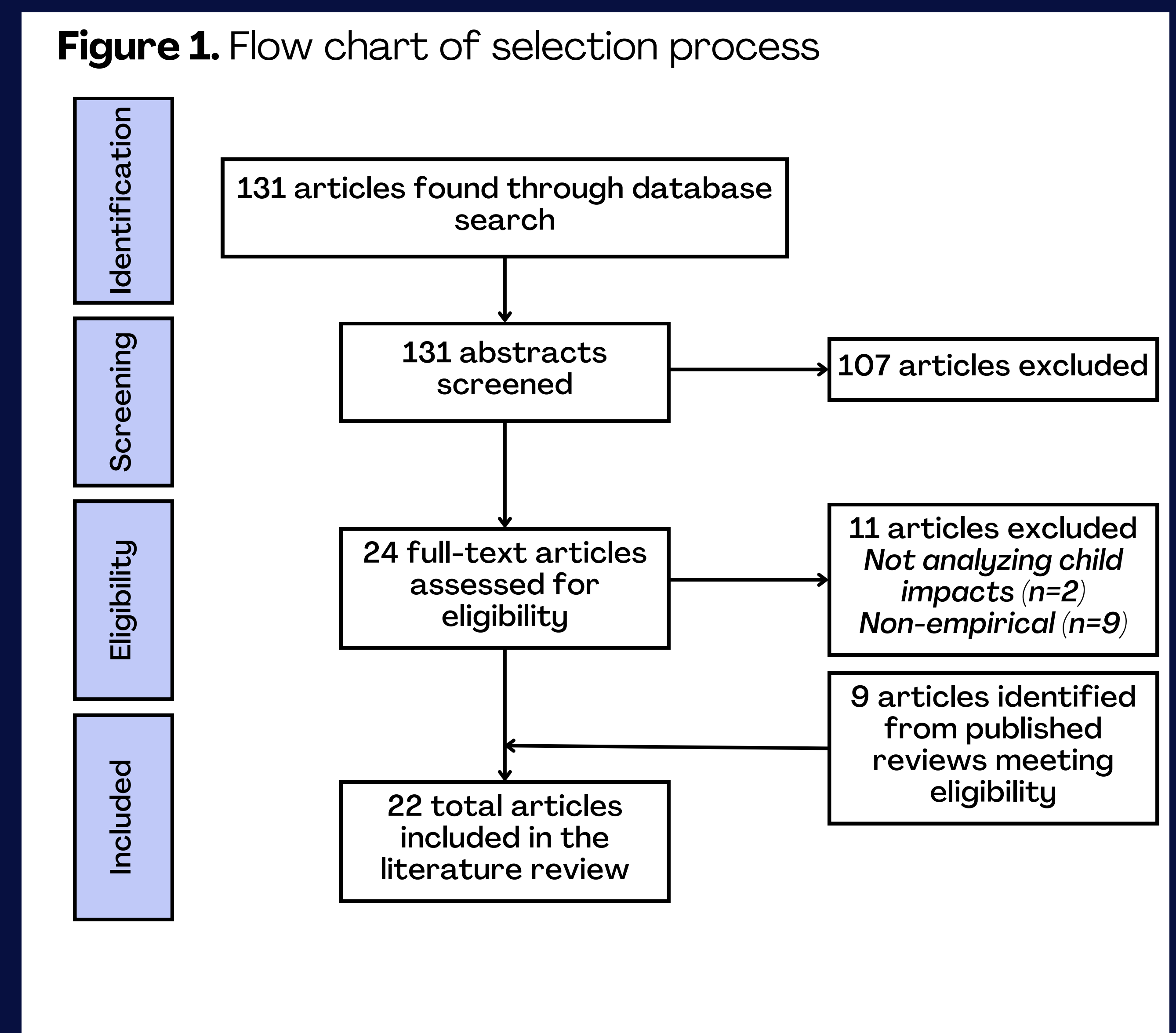
- Borderline personality disorder (BPD), characterized by extreme issues with relationships, identity, and emotions, is the most common personality disorder.<sup>1,2</sup>
- BPD's personality issues resemble important personality-building periods in child development.<sup>3</sup>
- There lacks reviews within the past five years analyzing how maternal BPD may affect child health and development.<sup>4-6</sup>

## OBJECTIVES

- **Literature review:** combine findings from empirical research published between 2013 and 2023 that investigated maternal BPD's effects on child health and development
- **Proposal** of interventions and future research

## METHODOLOGY

- Search was done on November 6th, 2023
- Keywords: "borderline personality disorder" AND ("child health" OR "child development") AND ("maternal" OR "mother" OR "father" OR "parent")
- Databases/sources: University of Toronto's LibrarySearch, PubMed, ProQuest, published reviews
- Inclusion criteria: peer-reviewed, published between 2013 and 2023, in English, discussion of parental BPD and its impacts on child health or development
  - Later addition: focus on maternal BPD, empirical
- Exclusion criteria: duplicate articles, not reporting findings about BPD



## RESULTS OF THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

- ### Emotional Development
1. Worse child emotional regulation.<sup>7-14</sup>
    - a. May be explained by maternal emotional dysregulation,<sup>8,14</sup> ill-equipped parenting,<sup>11</sup> or maternal emotional reactivity.<sup>8</sup>
  2. Mixed impacts on child's mood.<sup>7,14-16</sup>
- ### Social Development
1. Child attachment difficulties.<sup>7,16,19,20</sup>
    - a. Possibly explained by parenting style.<sup>19,20</sup>
  2. Disrupted mother-child relationships.<sup>15,19-21</sup>
    - a. Possibly affected by emotional functioning and child expectations of the relationship.<sup>21</sup>
  3. Lack of evidence for relationship issues in children.<sup>12,16,22</sup>

- ### Psychological Development
1. Mixed findings on child identity development.<sup>12,14,20-22</sup>
  2. Mixed findings on child mental disorder development.<sup>9,12,14,15,20,22-26</sup>
    - a. Child mental disorder development possibly explained by ill-equipped parenting, maternal emotional dysregulation, and poor mother-child relationship.<sup>25</sup>
- ### Physical Health
- Studies lack generalization and good designs.
    - Possible worse antenatal health, birth outcomes, use of child protective services, and child cortisol levels.<sup>18</sup>

## DISCUSSION

- Different findings than prior reviews
- Maternal BPD associated directly with worse emotion regulation mother-child relationships, child attachment, and child physical health, and indirectly with child emotional dysregulation.
  - May be explained by ill-equipped parenting or maternal emotional dysregulation
  - Implication: worse child health may be because mothers score higher on risk factors applicable to the general population.
- Recommendations
- Evidence-based treatments for mothers with BPD focused on parenting skills and BPD's symptoms
  - Interventions for the general population targeting ill-equipped parenting and emotional dysregulation.
  - Research on diverse populations and parental BPD's specific effects on children's psychological and physical development.
  - Research using methods assessing if maternal BPD occurs before poorer child outcomes.

## REFERENCES

1. Steele, R. R., Townsend, M. L., & Grenier, B. F. S. (2018). Parenting and personality disorder: An overview and meta-synthesis of systematic reviews. *PLoS One*, 13(10), e0223038. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0223038>

2. American Psychiatric Association. (2022). Personality disorders. In *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed., text rev.). <https://doi.org/10.1176/9780890424517.ch48>. Personality Disorders

3. Macfie, J., Kordziel, G., Mahan, R. M., & Kors, S. (2017). A mother's borderline personality disorder and her sensitivity, autonomy support, hostility, fearful/disoriented behavior, and role reversal with her young child. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 31(6), 721-737. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000289>

4. Elyan, J., Winer, C., Wika, D., Broome, M. R., & MacCullum, F. (2018). A systematic review of the parenting and outcomes experienced by offspring of mothers with borderline personality pathology: Potential mechanisms and clinical implications. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 47, 85-105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2018.04.002>

5. Florange, J. G., & Herpertz, S. C. (2016). Parenting in patients with borderline personality disorder, sequelae for the offspring and approaches to treatment and prevention. *Current Psychology Reports*, 23(9). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-019-0998-1>

6. Pettiford, L., Startup, H., Droscher, H., & Carwright-Hatton, S. (2015). Parenting in mothers with borderline personality disorder and impact on child outcomes: Evidence-Based Mental Health, 18(3), 67-75. <https://doi.org/10.1155/eb-2015-102650>

7. Apter, G., Denovitch, E., Geras, V., Valente, M., Geras, M. C., Gruber, M., Dominguez, S., & Tronick, E. (2017). The still-face: A greater challenge for infants of mothers with borderline personality disorder. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 31(2), 156-166. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000289>

8. Kiri, E. L., Kiri, E. J., Litzman, R. J., Eskin, T. D., Moore, S. A., & Tili, M. T. (2014). Emotion: Empirical contribution. Maternal borderline personality pathology and infant emotion regulation: Examining the influence of maternal emotion-related difficulties and infant attachment. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 28(1), 82-89. <https://doi.org/10.1521/pep.2014.28.1.82>

9. Kaufman, E. A., Puzis, S. E., Mead, K. C., Crowell, S. E., McEachern, A., & Beuschlag, A. (2017). Children's emotion regulation difficulties mediate the association between maternal borderline and antisocial symptoms and youth behavior problems over 1 year. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 31(2), 170-182. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000289>

10. Kiri, E. J., Viana, A. G., Tili, M. T., & Gratz, K. L. (2017). Emotion socialization strategies of mothers with borderline personality disorder symptoms: The role of maternal emotion regulation and interactions with infant temperament. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 31(3), 399-415. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000289>

11. Lee, A. H., O'Brien, J. R., Blinn, G., Lewis, J. K., & Zalewski, M. (2022). Supportive emotion socialization mitigates risk between maternal emotion regulation difficulties and preschooler emotion regulation. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 32, 824-832. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-022-02024-z>

12. Mahan, R. M., Kors, S. B., Simmons, M. L., & Macfie, J. (2018). Maternal psychological control, maternal borderline personality disorder, and adolescent borderline features. *Personality Disorders*, 9(4), 297-304. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000289>

13. Whalen, D. J., Kiri, E. J., Tili, M. T., Litzman, R. J., & Gratz, K. L. (2015). Maternal borderline personality disorder symptoms and convergence between observed and reported infant negative emotional expressions. *Personality Disorders*, 8(3), 229-238. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000118>

14. Zalewski, M., Mauer, N., Blinn, G., Lewis, J. K., & O'Brien, J. R. (2020). Relations of maternal borderline personality disorder features with preschooler executive functioning and theory of mind. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 34(4), 565-576. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000289>

15. Schneider, I., Fuchs, A., Herpertz, S. C., & Lohr, A. M. (2019). Microsocial analysis of dyadic interactions with toddlers and mothers with borderline personality disorder. *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, 26, 589-601. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00137-020-01546-9>

16. Wendland, J., Castellan, C., Duprez, A., Rabain, D., de Carmantrand, C., & Guenou, A. (2023). Borderline personality disorder in mothers, maternal sensitivity, and infant social withdrawal: A study on clinical dyads referred to perinatal mental health units. *Early Child Development and Care*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004490.2023.2266151>

17. Blankley, G., Galbraith, M., Spellen, M., Power, J., & Lewis, J. (2015). Borderline personality disorder in the perinatal period: Early infant and maternal outcomes. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 47(3), 688-692. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004857315580254>

18. O'Brien, J. R., Lewis, J. K., & Zalewski, M. (2020). Maternal emotion dysregulation and physiological concordance in mother-preschooler dyads. *Infant and Child Development*, 29(5), e2184. <https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.2184>

19. Lygnae-Ruoh, K., Riley, C., Patrick, M. P., & Hobson, R. P. (2019). Disrupted attachment behavior among infants of mothers with borderline personality disorder, depression, and no diagnosis. *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment*, 10(2), 183-172. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000312>

20. Macfie, J., Swain, S. A., Fitzpatrick, K. L., Watkins, C. D., & Rivas, E. M. (2014). Mothers with borderline personality and their young children: Adult attachment interviews, mother-child interactions, and children's narrative representations. *Development and Psychopathology*, 26(2), 559-551. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S095457941400001X>

21. Trone, R. D., Macfie, J., Spitzberg, B. M., & Kardes, G. (2017). Patterns of emotional availability between mothers and young children: Associations with risk factors for borderline personality disorder. *Infant and Child Development*, 27(1), e2046. <https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.2046>

22. Frankel-Washetter, M., Macfie, J., Strimpf, J. M., & Watkins, C. D. (2015). Effect of maternal autonomy and relatedness and borderline personality disorder on adolescent symptomatology. *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment*, 6(2), 152-160. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000109>

23. Baranov, S., Aldinger, M., Arens, E. A., Ulrich, I., Spitzer, C., Grabe, H. J., & Stoppack, M. (2013). Maternal transmission of borderline personality disorder symptoms in the community-based Greifswald Family Study. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 27(6), 806-819. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000109>

24. Corway, C. C., Hammen, C., & Brennan, P. A. (2015). Adolescent precursors of adult borderline personality pathology in a high-risk community sample. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 29(3), 316-333. <https://doi.org/10.1521/pep.2014.28.158>

25. Rathell, C., Shoppack, M., Aldinger, M., Ulrich, I., Grabe, H. J., & Baranov, S. (2014). Longitudinal transmission pathways of borderline personality disorder symptoms: From mother to child? *Psychopathology*, 47(1), 10-15. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000346557>

26. Stepp, S. D., Olin, T. M., Klein, D. N., Seeley, J. R., & Levinson, P. M. (2013). Unique influences of adolescent antecedents on adult borderline personality disorder features. *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment*, 4(3), 223-229. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000015>