

# PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP AND TEACHERS' WELL-BEING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES



Annalisa Soncini<sup>1</sup>, Emilio Paolo Visintin<sup>2</sup>,  
Maria Cristina Matteucci<sup>3</sup>, Stijn Van Petegem<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Université Libre de Bruxelles – Belgium

<sup>2</sup>Università di Ferrara – Italia

<sup>3</sup>Università di Bologna – Italia



ULB

fnrs  
LA LIBERTÉ DE CHERCHER

SAFE SORRY

# SAFE SORRY



[www.safesorry.be](http://www.safesorry.be)

## Being parents nowadays *Determinants of Overprotection*

- Social pressures
- Economic pressures
- Threat perceptions
- Gender roles

Lamprianidou et al. (2025)  
Mathij et al. (2025)  
Van Petegem et al. (2024)  
Venard et al. (2024)



## Why the focus on teachers?



"But enough about my son. Let's talk about you."

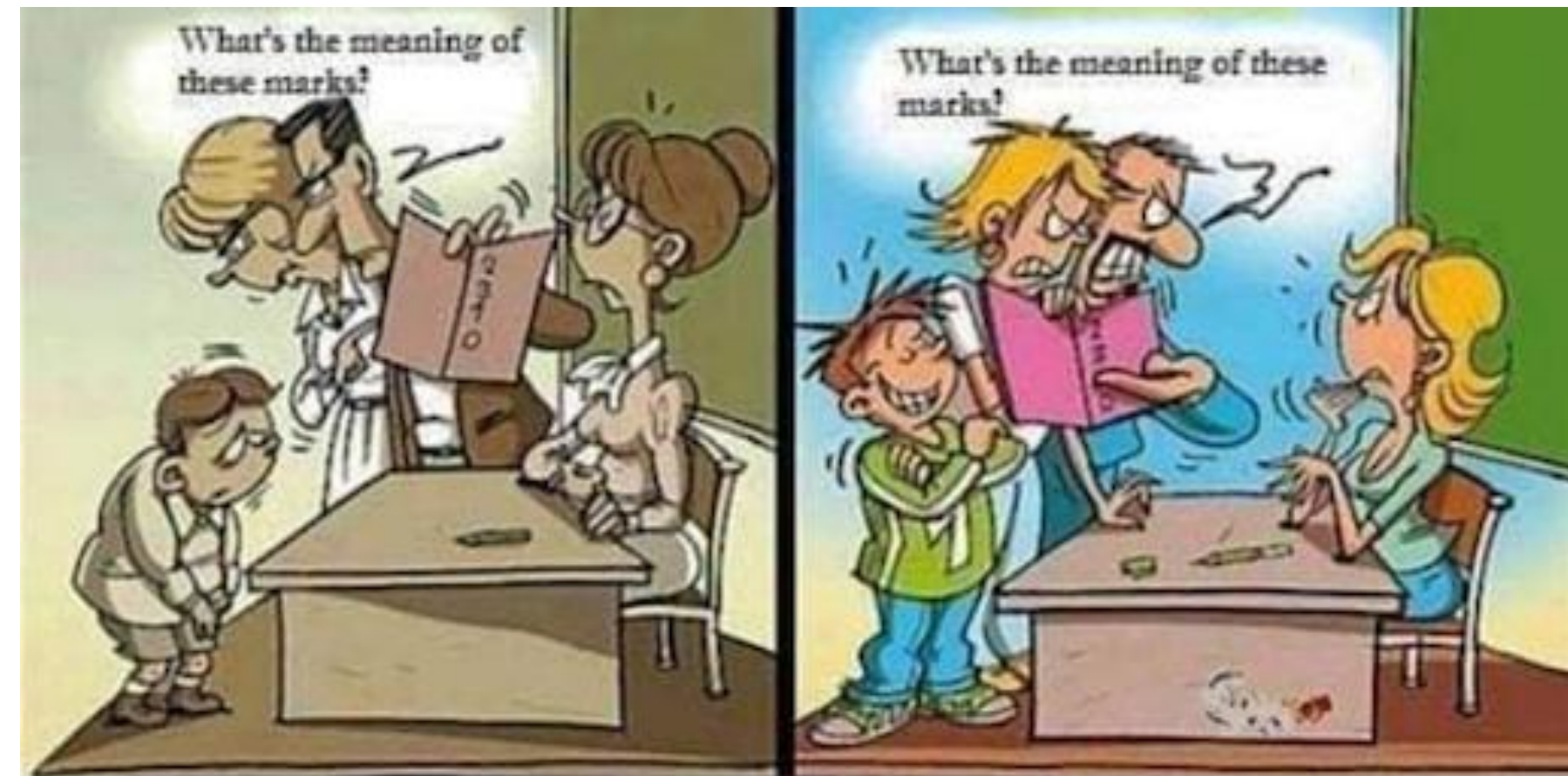


## PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

Teachers' perceptions of parents **influence their behaviours** towards **the students** and the **parents** (Stormont et al., 2013; Zaulaf et al., 2019).

**Positive** relationships → Collaboration, connection, goal alignment (Minke et al., 2014).

**Negative** relationships → Mismatched pedagogical expectations, difficulties in being recognised as professionals (Leenders et al., 2019; Meehan & Meehan, 2018).





## Teachers claim social media makes parents more aggressive

Nicola Woolcock

Saturday August 29 2015, 1.01am BST, The Times



News > Education > Education News

## Parents opt for 'aggressive' behaviour towards teachers in bid to raise complaints, watchdog finds

Children are modelling their parents' 'abusive' manner, Ofsted report reveals

Eleanor Busby Education Correspondent • Monday 22 July 2019 07:17 BST • Comments



## Docenti sviliti e genitori in cattedra, il paradosso della scuola al contrario

Il ruolo degli insegnanti non è più riconosciuto: il 7% di mamme e papà litiga ai colloqui. La denuncia del sindacato: «Sono troppo protettivi e vogliono che ci adeguiamo ai figli»



flavia amabile

15 Febbraio 2018 | Modificato il: 15 Febbraio 2018 | 3 minuti di lettura

## Le problème du "parent roi" inquiète de plus en plus les professeurs

Par peur, par déni ou par volonté de contrôle, des pères et des mères se mêlent de tout à l'école. Cela va de la place en classe, aux dates de contrôles en passant par la nourriture.

TEACHERS' OCCUPATIONAL WELL-BEING

Parents perceived as job demands or job resources

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**RQ1:** How do teachers perceive their relationship with parents nowadays?

**RQ2:** How do teachers reflect on the possible consequences of parent-teacher relationships on their well-being?

# PARTICIPANTS

## 8 PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

$M_{age} = 46$ ,  $SD = 7.6$ , All women

## 7 MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

$M_{age} = 40.8$ ,  $SD = 10.1$ , 4 women

## 8 SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

$M_{age} = 45.9$ ,  $SD = 9.6$ , 4 women

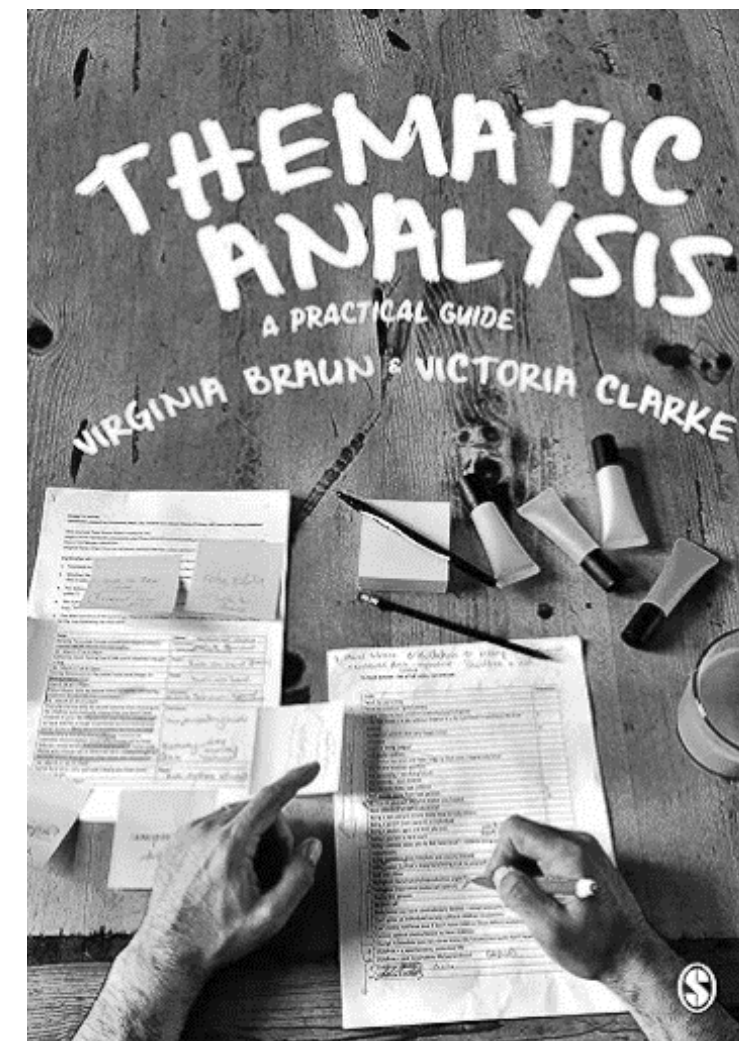
**Years of experience** overall sample 3-32 years

$M = 19.1$ ,  $SD = 9.4$

# DATA ANALYSIS

## Reflexive thematic analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2020; 2021)

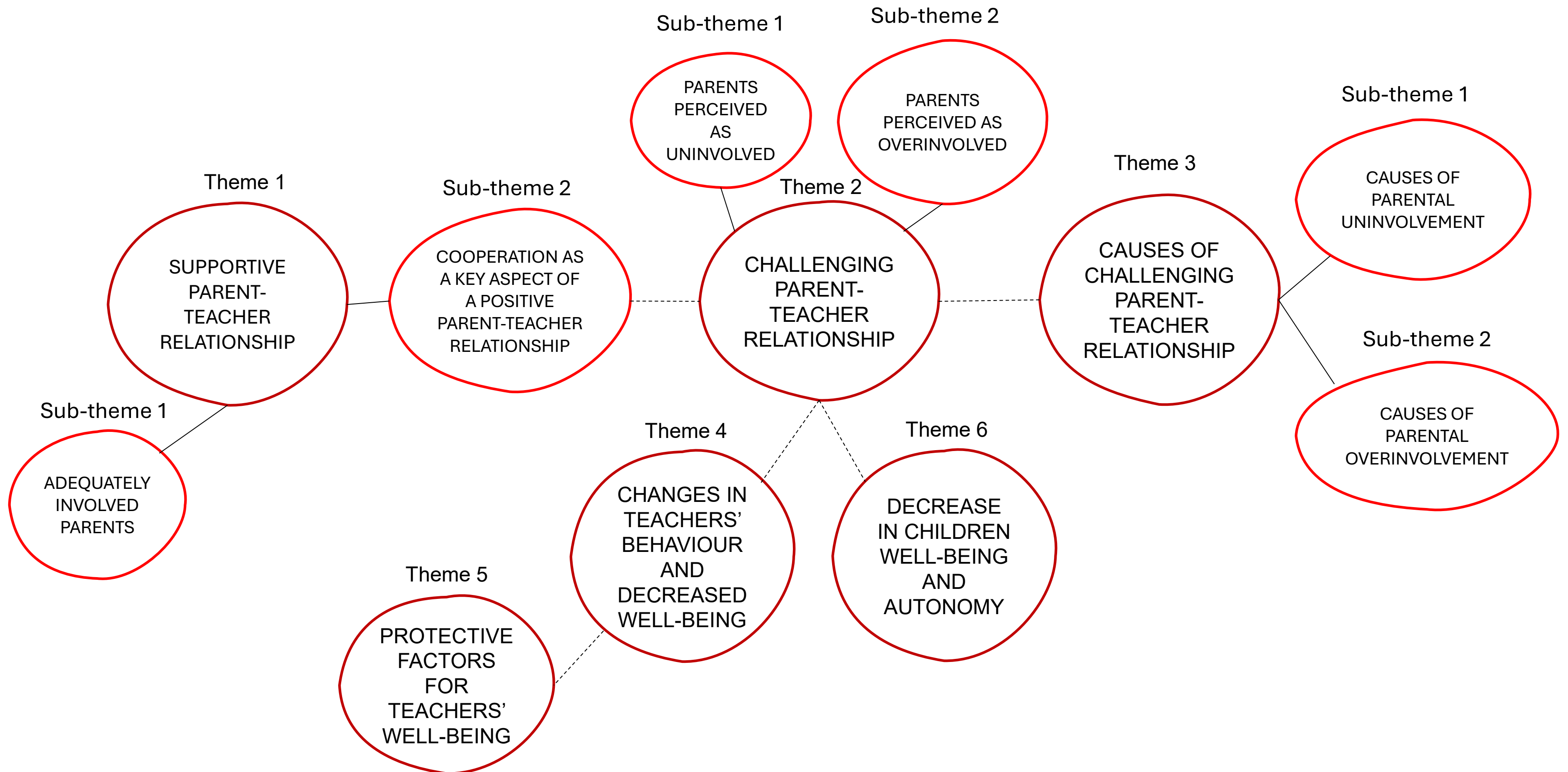


**Identifying patterns** in the dataset

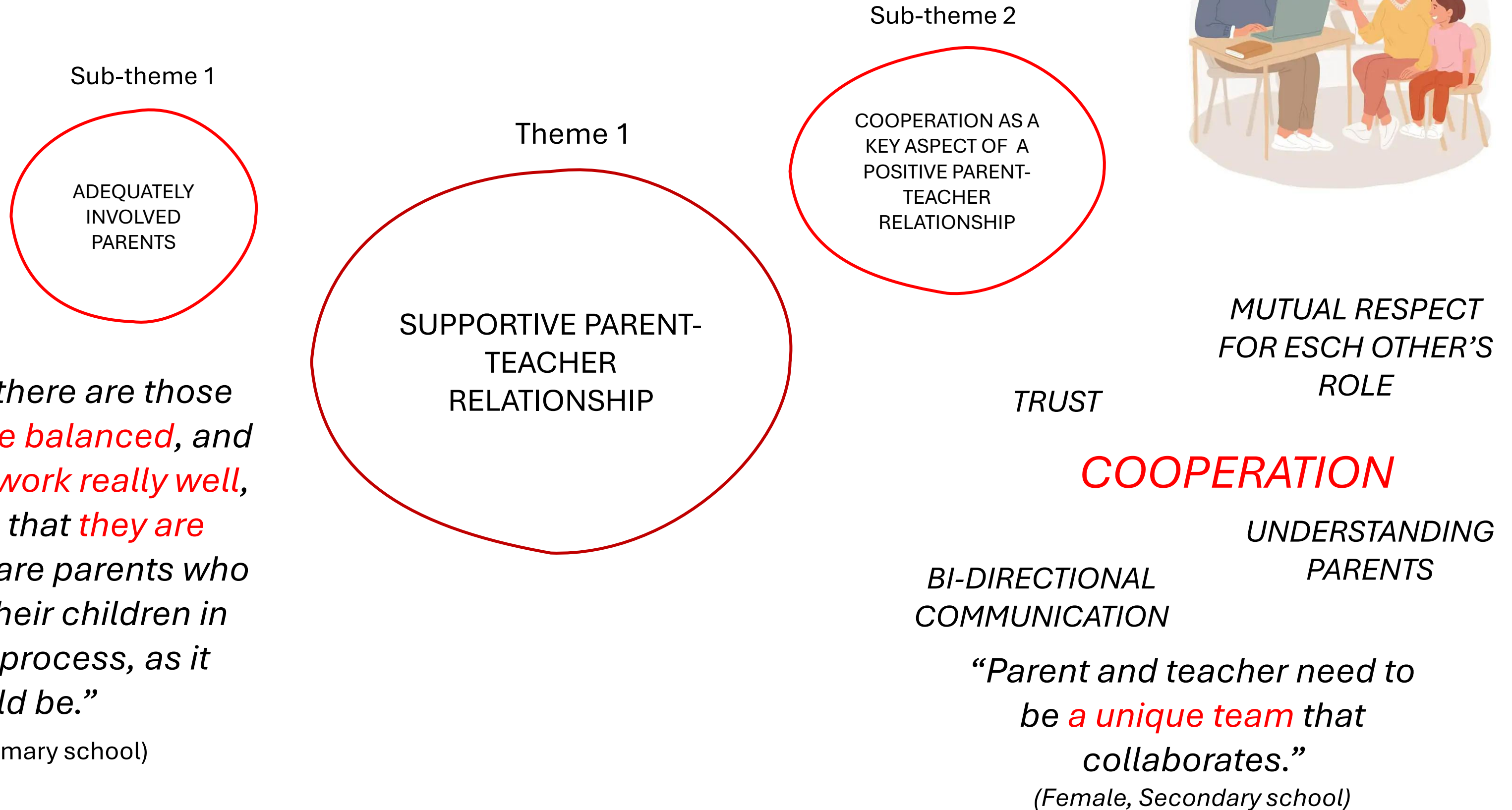
**Inductive** coding strategy

**Semantic** meaning of the data (essentialist/realist approach)

# OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS

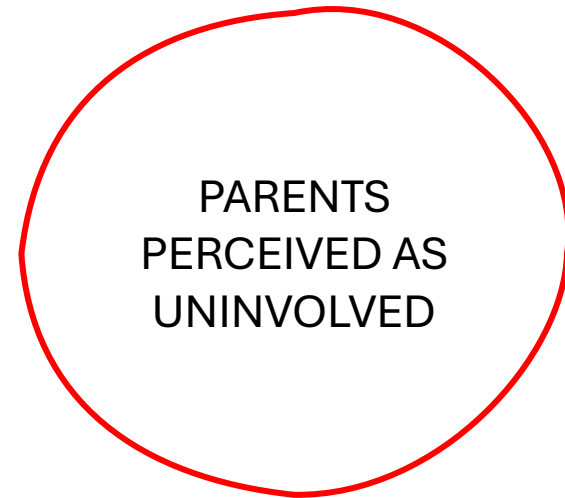


**RQ1: HOW DO TEACHERS PERCEIVE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS NOWADAYS?**



# RQ1: HOW DO TEACHERS PERCEIVE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS NOWADAYS?

Sub-theme 1



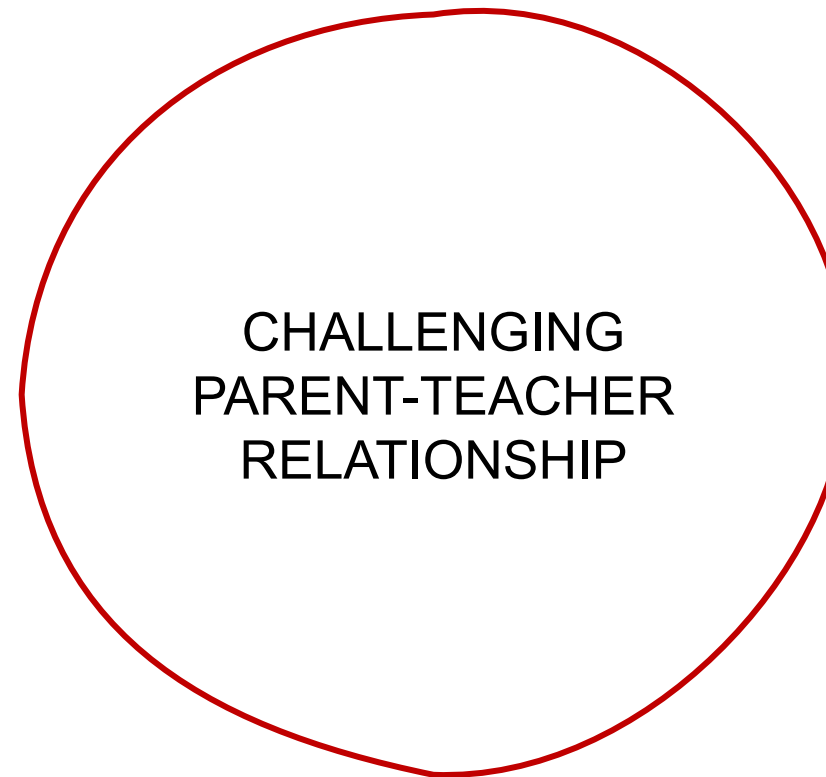
**ABSENT AND NOT  
INTERESTED PARENTS**

THE APPLE DOESN'T FALL FAR FROM THE TREE



*"All this important talk about Will and his poor grades is nice and all, but if you'll excuse me I have a paused video game at home that I need to tend to."*

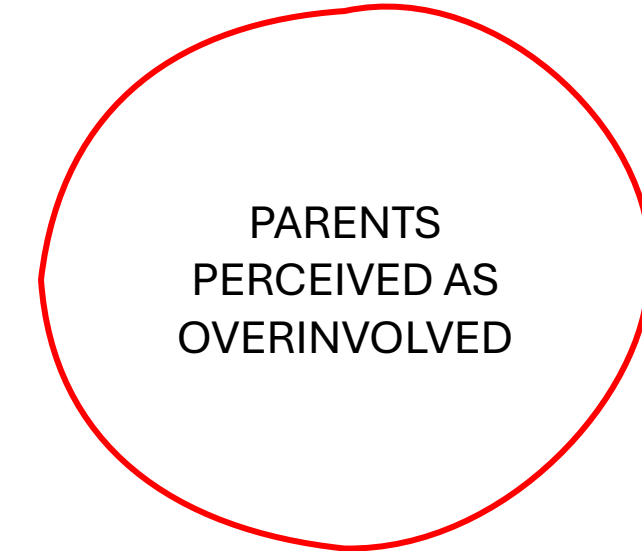
Theme 2



*"The problems arrive when there is a **lack of common goals**, and this lack of collaboration becomes explicit either when it is **difficult to reach parents** or when they **go beyond their role** in the school becoming **too involved**"*

(Female, primary school)

Sub-theme 2



## RQ1: HOW DO TEACHERS PERCEIVE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS NOWADAYS?

### **PARENTS WITH TOO HIGH ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS**

*“The student has not studied, and they know it and accept the negative grade. But then there are **expectations from the family**, and the **parents would like a higher result** and they come to the school to meet with you and discuss the bad grade.”* (Female, Secondary school)

### **PARENTS WHO PROTECT THEIR CHILDREN IN THE FACE OF PROBLEMS**

*“There is this tendency of parents to **make their children’s lives as easy as possible**, to **simplify their experience**, to **remove difficulties** and even prevent difficulties [...] Things should all go very well. If they do not go well, we change the teacher because they shout, we change the classmates because they disturb...”* (Female, Middle school)

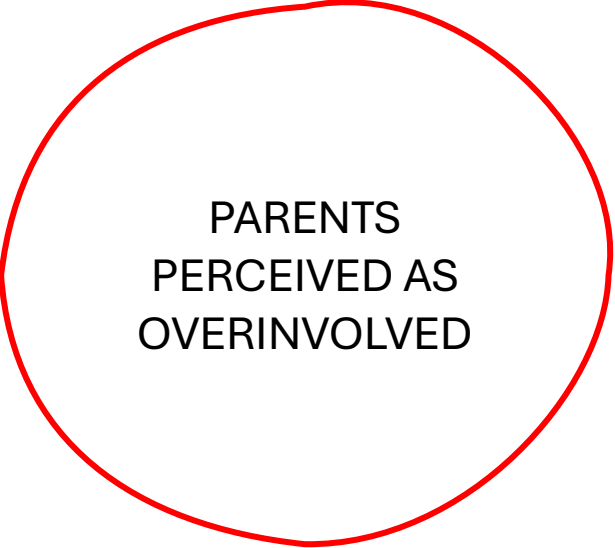
### **PARENTS WHO JUSTIFY THEIR CHILDREN**

*“Parents always tend to **justify their children** instead of seeing if there is actually a problem. They say, ‘It is not his fault, it is the classmate’s fault who disturbed my son...’. The justifications parents can find are endless.”* (Female, Primary school)

### **PARENTS WHO CRITICISE THE TEACHERS AND DO NOT RESPECT THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL**

*“There are the **parents** whom we call '**missing teachers**' because they would like to take over without having any experience about teaching and who are capable of criticising an activity, anything, without knowing where the teacher would like to go with that activity.”* (Female, Primary school)

Sub-theme 2



PARENTS  
PERCEIVED AS  
OVERINVOLVED

**RQ2: HOW DO TEACHERS REFLECT ON THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS ON THEIR WELL-BEING?**

Theme 4



**BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES WITH STUDENTS**

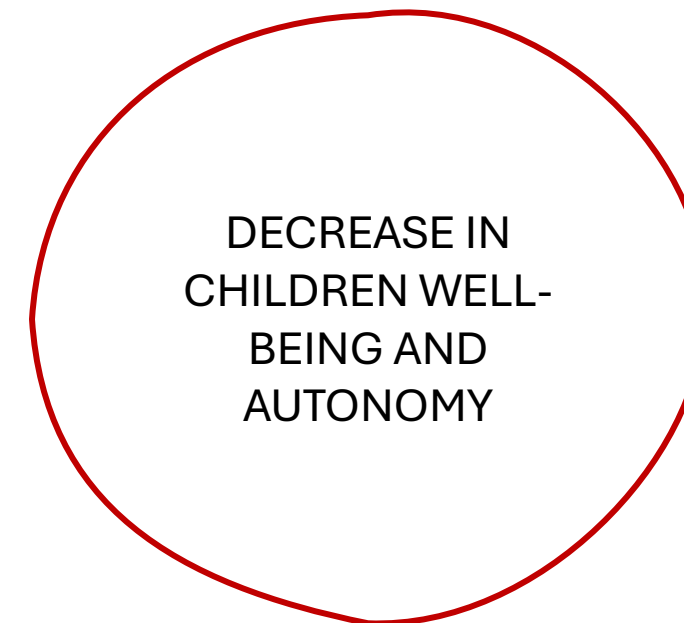
**INCREASED TEACHERS' STRESS**

**SENSE OF HEAVINESS IN DEALING WITH PARENTS**

**QUESTIONING YOUR PROFESSIONALITY AS A TEACHER**

*“Difficult relationship with parents is something that can **really break some people down** in the long run.”*  
(Female, Secondary school)

Theme 6



**INCREASED PERFORMANCE  
ANXIETY**

**DECREASED CHILDREN AUTONOMY**

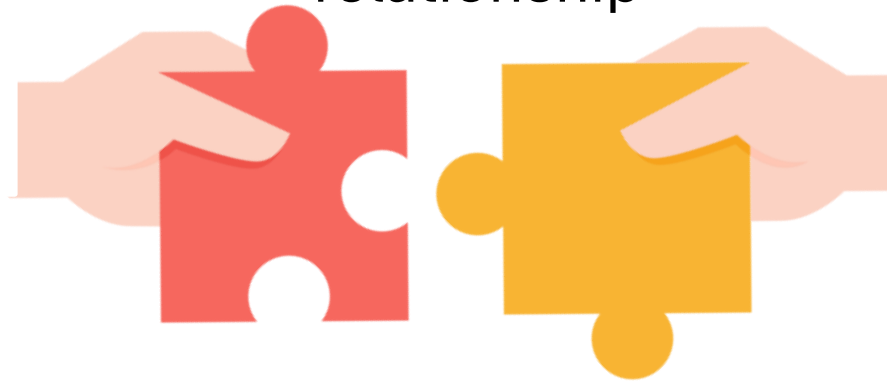
**CHILDREN FEEL ABANDONED**

*“**Children should be as autonomous as possible**, and I don't see that. I see a worsening from this point of view, from year to year... **a lack of ability to take responsibility for school life on the part of the students themselves**. [...]. **Some students really have a great need for autonomy and independence**, which is being held back by their parents for fear of losing them.”*  
(Female, Secondary school)

# DISCUSSION

## COOPERATION

Key aspect for a positive  
parent-teacher  
relationship



## BREAKING THE COOPERATION

### OVERINVOLVED PARENTS

#### OVERPROTECTION

Anxious overprotection  
(Parents' premature problem-solving and  
infantilisation)

Ego-enanching overprotection  
(Excessive praise, external attribution of  
failure)

(Holmbeck et al., 2002)

#### OVER-EVALUATION

(Brummelman et al., 2015)

## CONSEQUENCES

### Teachers

Feeling **exhausted**,  
**overwhelmed** and **uncomfortable**.  
Stress and burnout syndrome-related  
symtoms  
(Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016)

### Students

Increased students' **anxiety** and  
decreases in students' **autonomy**  
(Mathijs et al., 2024; Van Petegem et al., 2021)

# SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICES

## TRAINING

to foster effective cooperation with parents

Increasing teachers' communication strategies

Increase awareness of the challenges parents are facing nowadays

Raising awareness of their own potential biases and stereotypes about parents

## SUPPORT

to promote teachers' well-being

School psychologists

Early career teachers

Regulating school features

Creating Parent-Teacher Associations

Considering **teachers'**  
**perspectives** and  
focusing on the **quantity**  
**and quality** of parental  
involvement



PARENT-TEACHER  
RELATIONSHIP AND ITS  
EFFECT ON TEACHERS'  
WELL-BEING:  
A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON  
TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES



Annalisa Soncini<sup>1</sup>, Emilio Paolo Visintin<sup>2</sup>,  
Maria Cristina Matteucci<sup>3</sup>, Stijn Van Petegem<sup>1</sup>



*THANK YOU!*

ULB

fnrs  
LA LIBERTÉ DE CHERCHER

SAFE SORRY