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## Partnership in education: A parental view of art schools under pandemic constraints

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### Abstract

**Research objectives and problem(s):** The aim of the study was to present the parental perspective on the partnership between art schools and families during remote education in the COVID-19 pandemic, based on a four-dimensional model of educational partnership (cognitive, volitional, emotional, and behavioral). The main research problem concerned the nature of this partnership emerging from parents' assessments.

**Research methods:** A diagnostic survey was conducted among 461 parents of students attending art schools—music and visual arts institutions. The research instrument was an author-developed questionnaire grounded in the theoretical partnership model and validated using the VREP expert procedure. Statistical analyses (Mann–Whitney U test, Spearman's rho, and Friedman's ANOVA) were applied to assess levels of partnership and to compare different types of art schools.

**Process of argumentation:** The article outlines the adopted theoretical framework of educational partnership, presents the methodological assumptions, and subsequently analyzes differences across the defined partnership dimensions in various types of art schools. The findings are interpreted in relation to national and international research on education during the pandemic.

**Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences:** Parents perceived the partnership between art schools and families as incomplete and uneven across the dimensions. The behavioral and cognitive dimensions received the highest ratings, whereas the emotional and volitional dimensions were rated as the weakest.

### Keywords:

educational  
partnership,  
art school,  
remote education,  
COVID-19 pandemic,  
parents.

Significant differences were identified between music and visual arts schools. The findings reveal structural shortcomings in emotional support and collaboration mechanisms under crisis conditions, thereby contributing to knowledge on school–family relations and addressing a gap in research on art education.

**Conclusions and recommendations:** The results indicate a need to strengthen the emotional and volitional aspects of school–family collaboration, particularly in crisis situations. The study underscores the importance of further research into the relational and organizational factors shaping partnerships in crisis contexts, with particular attention to art schools.

## Introduction

Thinking in terms of trends may be insufficient when examining the experience of a crisis that encompassed all spheres of life on a global scale, as was undoubtedly the case with the COVID-19 pandemic. In support of this argument, it is worth recalling, for example, the theory of the tripartite structure of ritual—particularly the transitional phase in processes of social transformation referred to by anthropologists A. van Gennep and Victor Turner as *liminality* (Turner, 2010). This phase resembles a suspension between what has been and what is beginning to emerge and is characterized by ambiguity, uncertainty, and anxiety. Although two years have passed since students returned to in-person schooling, the consequences of the changes introduced and the solutions implemented during the pandemic are still being felt in what is conventionally referred to as the post-pandemic period (e.g., Global Commission for Post-Pandemic Policy). Describing such transitional states and identifying their key features is important not only for organizing and understanding the period of isolation, social distancing, and misinformation, but also for planning future-oriented educational practice.

The rapid changes associated with lockdown had a significant impact on psychosocial functioning, affecting the psychological well-being of a large portion of the population. In implementing remote—and later hybrid—education, Polish schools were required to rapidly create safe learning conditions, enhance teachers' and students' competence in using various technological tools, applications, and communication platforms,

and ensure appropriate standards of educational and therapeutic support for students with diverse educational needs. Against this backdrop, an additional challenge emerged: the relationship among schools or teachers, students, and parents or family homes in educational partnerships.

The literature employs various terms to describe relationships between schools and parents, including *collaboration*, *cooperation*, and *partnership*. Many practitioners—both parents and teachers—as well as researchers treat these concepts, or at least some of them, as interchangeable (Łobocki, 1985; Segiet, 1999; Winiarski, 1975). According to Barbara Lulek (2008), this lack of clarity may contribute to misunderstandings that affect school practice. Jan Szczepański (1978) defines partnership as a relationship between individuals or groups, or between an institution and an individual, which is regulated by custom, often in a formalized manner, and established in order to achieve a specific, shared goal. As the author emphasizes, such a relationship is voluntary and based on the assumption of equality between the parties. Krzysztof Polak (2011) highlights that partnership is a complex construct that encounters numerous obstacles, such as intolerance, manipulative tendencies, and reluctance to recognize the other party as an equal. In the implementation of partnership, action is considered key; according to Maria Mendel (2000), it is action that shapes partnerships and gives them a collaborative character. The necessary conditions for educational partnerships arise from relationships that are characterized by acceptance of the other party, mutual trust, shared goals and values, goodwill, support, and the mutual sharing of successes and failures (Radziewicz, 1979).

An educational partnership, defined as an association of actors pursuing a common goal through joint activities, may take several forms. According to Mendel, it can be a type of partnership in which participants pursue shared educational objectives; a form of relationship involving mutual influence; or a type of community bound by a shared sense of purpose (Mendel, 2009). The basis of a partnership understood in this way is recognition of, and commitment to, cooperation for the common good—namely, the well-being of students and pupils. Such a focus stimulates innovative ideas and can generate satisfaction derived

from working together for the benefit of the child. The concept of educational partnership as defined by Mendel (2009) is also characterized by a broad perspective that emphasizes cooperation with the local community. This type of cooperation, which constitutes an integral part of the functioning and activities of art schools, had to be suspended during the lockdown period.

When identifying the most important features of educational partnerships, it is important to emphasize the equal rights and responsibilities of partners in decision-making and to acknowledge the creative role of all parties involved. A partnership based on active involvement allows for the joint determination of tasks, while its implementation relies on mutual trust, acceptance, loyalty, and the free flow of information (Lulek, 2008). Some researchers distinguish between different forms of parental activation, such as involvement understood as carrying out activities assigned by teachers, and spontaneous parental engagement, defined as actions arising from parents' internal motivation (Ferlazzo, 2011). In this view, engagement is regarded as the most desirable form of participation.

In the spring of 2020, approximately 85,000 students attending art schools in Poland (music, visual arts, and ballet) joined nearly 1.5 billion of their peers in more than 190 countries worldwide (United Nations, 2020) in transitioning to remote learning. Within a few weeks of the introduction of lockdown measures, the first reports and academic studies on education during the pandemic began to appear. Both in Poland and internationally, scholars drew attention to the key role of parents in the educational reality during the pandemic (Bubb & Jones, 2020; Di Pietro et al., 2020; Ho et al., 2021; Kostelecká, Komárková, Novotná, 2021; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021; Mußél & Kondratjuk, 2020; Trzcińska-Król, 2020; Wai-Cook, 2020; Wiatr, 2023).

These reports took into account the specific characteristics of the functioning of art schools (Weiner, 2021). In some of these institutions, so-called afternoon music schools, children and adolescents learn and develop their interests or prepare for a future career in music. In others, including general music schools, general ballet schools, and artistic vocational secondary schools, professional artistic training is conducted

alongside compulsory general education. Mandatory remote learning placed parents of art school students in a particular role for which they were neither prepared nor could have anticipated when selecting an educational pathway for their children. The nature of the partnership between art schools and parents of students attending these institutions constitutes the subject of this article and fills the previous gap in the academic literature.

## Methodology

The aim of the study was to present the parents' perspective on the school–family partnership during remote education in the COVID-19 pandemic, based on an adopted model of educational partnership encompassing cognitive, volitional, emotional, and behavioral dimensions.

The main research question was as follows: *What view of the school–family partnership emerges from parents' assessments of its individual dimensions during remote education in the COVID-19 pandemic?*

The study employed a diagnostic survey method using an author-designed questionnaire based on the adopted model of educational partnership. Each of the four dimensions (cognitive, emotional, volitional, and behavioral) was represented by five items rated on a 0–4 scale. Content validity was assessed by six expert reviewers using the VREP (Survey/Interview Validation Rubric for Expert Panel; Marilyn K. Simon & Jacquelyn White), and all items achieved acceptable content validity index (CVI) values of at least 0.75 (Polit & Beck, 2006). Consequently, all items were retained. Dimension scores were calculated as the mean of the items assigned to each dimension.

The detailed research questions referred to the defined dimensions of educational partnership: cognitive (cooperation between the school and parents; the school's organizational and substantive preparation for remote education; the amount of students' free time during remote learning); volitional (the extent to which the needs of students and parents were met; the necessity of parental support in remote learning);

emotional (art school students' motivation to learn during remote education and its dynamics); and behavioral (the workload of students and parents, assigned tasks, teaching methods used by teachers and schools, and assessment practices during remote education).

The survey—an anonymous online questionnaire—was conducted between March and June 2020 among parents of students attending all types of art schools in the Lubelskie Voivodeship (exhaustive survey, purposive sampling). A total of 461 respondents participated, including 24.9% parents of students attending visual arts schools (upper-secondary level, combining artistic and general education) and 75.1% parents of students enrolled in music schools (general music schools combining artistic and general education, as well as afternoon schools offering music education only).

For the interpretation of the collected data, the concept of educational partnership as defined by Polak (2011) was adopted. According to this framework, full partnership (between parents and schools, and between parents and teachers) is possible through the integration of all four dimensions: cognitive, volitional, emotional, and behavioral. The cognitive dimension is realized through understanding the aims and arguments of the partner and through the ability to view a situation from multiple perspectives, allowing participants to move beyond their own viewpoints and consider those of others. The volitional dimension refers to the willingness to provide mutual support, particularly in difficult situations, and to base the relationship on full trust. The emotional dimension is a prerequisite for conflict resolution and enables compromise, as it is built on positive emotions, especially kindness. The final behavioral dimension concerns the concrete actions undertaken by the partners.

In order to answer the research questions, statistical analyses were carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 29. These included basic descriptive statistics, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, the Mann–Whitney U test, Spearman's rho correlation analysis, and Friedman's ANOVA test. The level of statistical significance was set at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .



## A parental image of educational partnership

Basic descriptive statistics were used to present the overall picture of educational partnership among parents (N = 461), covering all theoretically defined dimensions. During the operationalization of variables, indicators were established in the form of scores obtained for each dimension. These scores were calculated as the mean of the items assigned to each dimension, with all items weighted equally. Each item was scored on a scale from 0 to 4, with 4 representing the highest possible score. Consequently, the overall level of educational partnership was calculated as the sum of the mean scores across the individual dimensions, in accordance with the adopted theoretical model of educational partnership.

**Table 1. The image of educational partnership – Total sample**

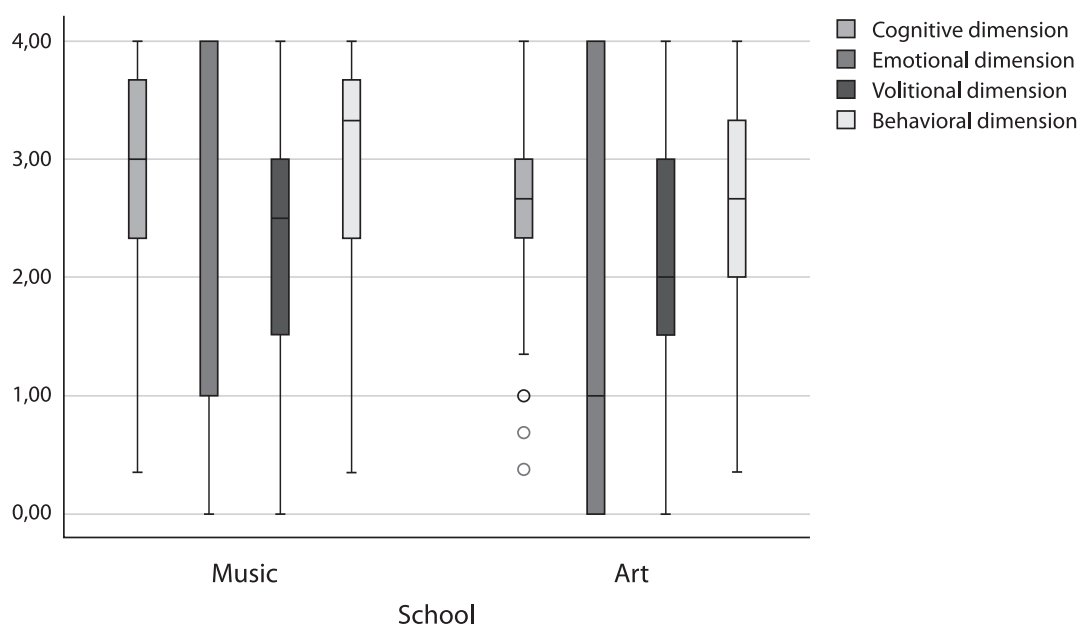
Dependent variable	<i>M</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Sk.</i>	<i>Kurt.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>p</i>
Author-designed tool									
Cognitive dimension	2.77	3.00	0.85	-0.56	-0.26	0.33	4.00	0.15	<0.001
Emotional dimension	1.86	1.00	1.66	0.35	-1.61	0.00	4.00	0.29	<0.001
Volitional dimension	2.18	2.00	1.06	-0.17	-0.98	0.00	4.00	0.14	<0.001
Behavioral dimension	2.89	3.00	0.93	-0.72	-0.41	0.33	4.00	0.19	<0.001
Educational partnership – overall score	9.71	9.83	3.30	-0.22	-0.70	1.33	16.00	0.07	<0.001

According to the adopted assumptions, a fully developed educational partnership would approach a maximum value of 16 points. The obtained result—9.71 points falls considerably below this benchmark. When converted to a percentage scale (60.7%), this score corresponds to a *sufficient* level. Parents' assessments varied across the different dimensions of partnership. The behavioral dimension received the highest rating, with a mean score of 2.89 points (72.2%), followed by the cognitive dimension at 2.77 points (69.3%), the volitional dimension at 2.18 points (54.5%), and the emotional dimension, which received the lowest rating at 1.86 points (46.5%). Because the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated

that all distributions differed significantly from normality ( $p < 0.001$ ), non-parametric tests were applied in subsequent analyses.

The respondents were divided into two groups based on whether their child or children attended a music school or a visual arts school. Accordingly, differences in parents' perceptions of educational partnership were examined.

**Figure 1. The image of educational partnership by type of art school (music vs. visual arts)**



The analysis revealed statistically significant differences between parents from the two types of schools only with respect to two dimensions of educational partnership: the cognitive dimension ( $p = 0.035$ ) and the behavioral dimension ( $p < 0.001$ ). In both cases, the difference was found to be in favor of music schools. With regard to the remaining dimensions, parents' perceptions of the school–family partnership can therefore be considered comparable.

For both the theoretical and empirical representations of educational partnership, it was considered important to analyze the interrelationships among the individual dimensions.



**Table 2. Relationships between the dimensions  
of educational partnership – Total sample**

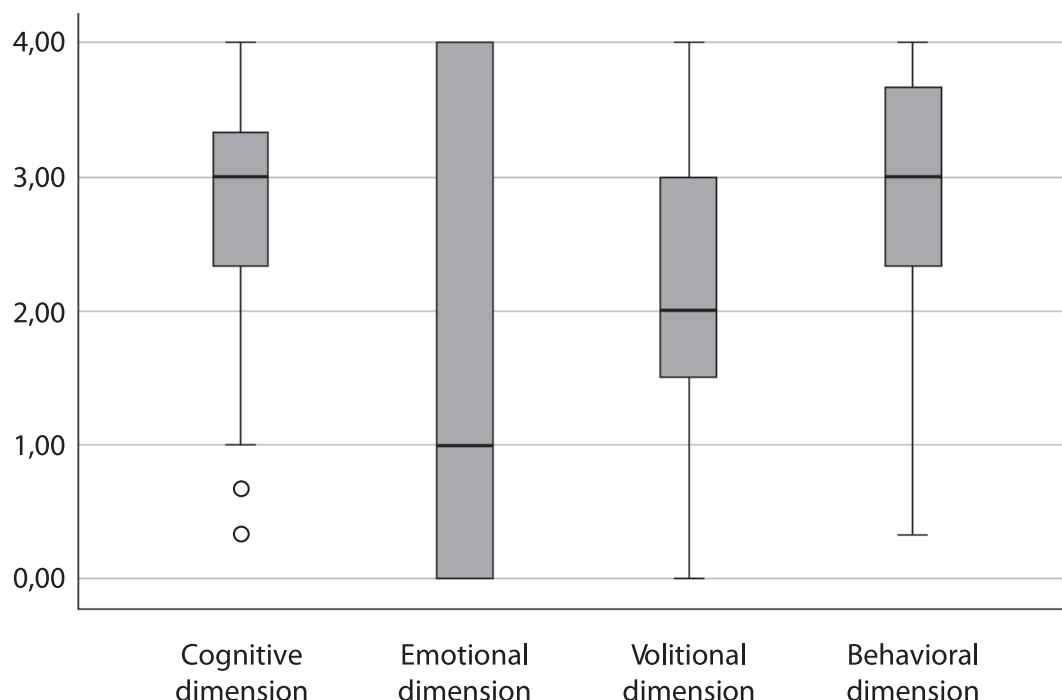
Variable		1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Cognitive dimension	Spearman's <i>rho</i>	-			
	significance				
2. Emotional dimension	Spearman's <i>rho</i>	0.35	-		
	significance	<0.001			
3. Volitional dimension	Spearman's <i>rho</i>	0.44	0.22	-	
	significance	<0.001	<0.001		
4. Behavioral dimension	Spearman's <i>rho</i>	0.63	0.37	0.38	-
	significance	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	
5. Educational partnership – overall result	Spearman's <i>rho</i>	0.74	0.77	0.64	0.74
	significance	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

The analysis identified positive, statistically significant, and strong correlations between all dimensions of educational partnership and the overall partnership score. This finding indicates that all theoretically defined dimensions are essential for explaining the overall construct of educational partnership.

When comparing art schools and music schools, the interrelationships among the dimensions of educational partnership differ. In music schools, the relationship between the cognitive and behavioral dimensions appears to play the most prominent role in explaining parents' perceptions of educational partnership ( $r_s = 0.65$ ), relative to other correlations. In art schools, however, this relationship is weaker ( $r_s = 0.49$ ). Notably, in parents' perceptions of partnerships in art schools, the emotional dimension shows no correlation with the other dimensions, emerging as a distinct component, while simultaneously exhibiting the strongest association with the overall partnership image ( $r_s = 0.75$ ).

Subsequently, differences among the dimensions of educational partnership in art schools were examined. Analysis of variance revealed statistically significant, though weak, differences between the individual dimensions ( $p < 0.001$ ;  $W = 0.15$  in Friedman's ANOVA).

**Chart 2. Levels of educational partnership dimensions  
in the group of art school students – Total**



The pairwise comparison test (Dunn–Bonferroni post hoc), conducted as a subsequent step in the analysis of variance, showed that the cognitive and behavioral dimensions—which did not differ significantly from each other ( $p = 1$ )—differed significantly from the remaining dimensions ( $p < 0.001$ ) in the entire group of parents studied (Chart 2).

## Discussion of the results

Parents, as the closest adults in their children’s environment, are also their natural role models for behavior and for coping with various situations, including the most challenging ones. During the lockdown period, the amount of time that parents and children spent together increased substantially. According to survey data, 80% of parents in German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland) supported governmental decisions to close schools; at the same time, more than

30% expressed concern that children's academic performance might decline as a result (Śliwerski, 2022).

The research conducted during the period of social isolation presented in this article portrays the relationship between schools and families (parents and students) as a full-scale educational partnership covering all of its dimensions, each of which contributed differently to the characteristics observed in various types of art schools. Nevertheless, parents' overall perceptions of their partnership with schools appear far from ideal.

The highest scores were recorded for the behavioral dimension, indicating a satisfactory assessment of teacher-related practices, including instructional methods, approaches to assessment, and the amount of homework assigned. In the context of art schools, such tasks mainly involve specialized activities, such as vocal exercises, instrumental practice, or studio-based classes in painting, drawing, sculpture, graphic design, and related fields. The strong emphasis on this dimension suggests a high level of parental trust in teachers' professional competence. This was particularly evident in music schools, where learning to play an instrument usually involves individualized instruction between teacher and student, whereas this model is not commonly found in visual arts schools. Such an organization of the educational process undoubtedly fosters closer relationships among students, teachers, schools, and families.

Slightly greater reservations emerged with regard to the cognitive dimension. Parents pointed to an insufficient level of partnership in terms of the school's organizational and substantive readiness to cooperate. They also expressed concern about changes in the structure of their children's free time, which became dominated by remote learning. Numerous reports from this period confirm that the amount of time children and adolescents spent in front of computers increased dramatically (Thierry et al., 2021; Thompson, Spencer, & Curtis, 2021). Parents in German-speaking countries most often indicated that their children were overburdened with an excessive number of activities (Śliwerski, 2022).

Surveys of parents of art school students revealed an unsatisfactory level of partnership with respect to the school's readiness to support families in a new and challenging situation. Parents attempted to compensate

for shortcomings in meeting students' needs by providing or organizing learning support themselves. The subject matter they were required to address (e.g., music notation or graphic design) often proved too demanding, leading to a sense of helplessness. The compensatory role assumed by parents during the pandemic is documented in numerous studies (e.g., Girard & Prado, 2022; Krents et al., 2020), which report increased parental involvement in children's learning, including creating learning conditions at home, explaining content, monitoring academic progress, and motivating children to learn (Bhamani et al., 2020; Bubb & Jones, 2020; Budhrani et al., 2021; Parczewska, 2021). This role was particularly challenging, as parents were required to balance professional responsibilities with increased caregiving and educational demands (Budhrani et al., 2021).

The emotional dimension of the partnership in art schools was rated by parents as the weakest component of the partnership. This assessment is partly attributable to the fact that the emotional functioning of children and adolescents was most strongly affected during the pandemic, which, among other consequences, led to changes in learning motivation. The distinctive nature of art schools, which require appropriate physical conditions and materials for practical workshops that could not be provided in most homes during the pandemic, caused frustration among parents. Combined with prolonged social isolation, this frustration affected the emotional climate of entire families and significantly undermined young people's motivation to learn. For parents of art students, the emotional dimension thus became a decisive factor in evaluating the overall level of partnership in schools.

The above conclusions are supported by a research report based on a representative sample of Czech parents, which indicates that nearly 30% of children developed symptoms of moderate to severe depression and anxiety during the pandemic. Other reports show that motivating students to complete school tasks was the most difficult challenge for almost 30% of parents surveyed in German-speaking countries during this period (Śliwerski, 2022). It has also been noted that parental support may have been the most important factor protecting students' mental health

during the pandemic (Fidelus, 2022; Matulessy et al., 2021). Researchers emphasize that although parents were highly motivated, they were often unable to provide sufficiently comprehensive support for their children (Scarpellini et al., 2021).

The internally complex structure of parental images of educational partnership across different types of art schools revealed hidden patterns and assumptions underlying the hastily implemented solutions. Schools' lack of organizational and substantive readiness to support students and parents, including efforts to foster positive emotions and seek compromise, prevented parents from perceiving this relationship as a partnership. The pandemic, which confronted Polish schools with unprecedented challenges and difficulties, exposed persistent problems related to participation and democratization in cooperation with parents.

### **Conclusion and limitations of the study**

The diverse and multidimensional parental image of educational partnership must be understood in the context of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted the centralized and hierarchical structures characteristic of Polish schools (Śliwerski, 2022). This temporary disruption created an opportunity to redefine the categories of partnership and engagement in line with conceptions of rapid school change—an opportunity that, as the findings indicate, was ultimately not realized.

The parents' view of the school–family relationship, seen as incorporating an element of mutual recognition, revealed the needs and expectations of families toward schools operating under new and unprecedented conditions. The pandemic exposed limited space and a lack of institutional readiness for active, cooperative interaction. At the same time, more advanced forms of participation become possible only when parents feel respected by the school and perceive that their perspectives and values are taken into account (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

The study showed that parents perceived the school–family partnership during remote education as incomplete and uneven across its

dimensions. The behavioral and cognitive dimensions received the highest ratings, while the emotional dimension emerged as the weakest element of cooperation. Significant differences were also observed between music and visual arts schools, with parents of music school students reporting higher levels of partnership. These findings point to the need to strengthen the emotional and supportive aspects of collaboration with families, particularly in crisis situations.

Comparable conclusions emerge from international studies on music education during the pandemic. Research conducted in music schools and conservatories in Spain and Germany indicates difficulties related to limited technological preparedness, reduced opportunities for practical instruction, and increased parental burden. These challenges mirror the organizational and cognitive issues identified in the present study (Calderón-Garrido et al., 2021). International research also confirms declines in student motivation and emotional well-being, alongside teachers' limited capacity to provide adequate support. These findings are consistent with the low ratings observed for the emotional and volitional dimensions of partnership (Spahn et al., 2022). Global literature reviews further indicate that the pandemic has had a particularly disruptive impact on music education worldwide, underscoring the urgent need to rebuild the relational and emotional foundations of school–family collaboration (Stramkale, 2022).

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