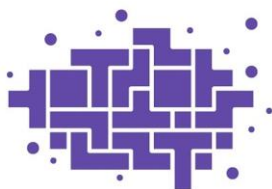


"Wake up and think of the children! "
**Ambivalent relationship between motherhood,
femininity, and anti-vaccination**

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PROJEKTI

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- Worrying is the growing tendency to refuse to vaccinate children, based on both fears of the harmful side effects of vaccines and the argument that diseases can be overcome by various other - "alternative" - means
- Existing studies show that "vast majority" of people commenting, sharing and liking anti-vaccination information on Facebook are women. Therefore, it is essential to comprehend, how notions about femininity and motherhood relate to decisions about vaccination
- Study explores the ambivalent relationship between the dominant discourse of "intensive mothering", femininity and the "anti-vaccination" movement: the connection between gender roles, imposed by a patriarchal society, and the "antivaxx" movement

Theoretical background and relevant empirical studies

- *Alternative medicine, anti-vaccination, and femininity*

Alternative medicine and esoteric well-being is often assumed to be attractive to women because it is coherent with normative femininity legitimizing the traditional notion that women are socialized to embody in their care-giving. Recommending against vaccination is common amongst esoteric well-being practitioners.

- *“Intensive mothering”*

Reinforcing traditional gender roles and providing undivided attention to child, in order to ensure the best possible environment for his/her development.

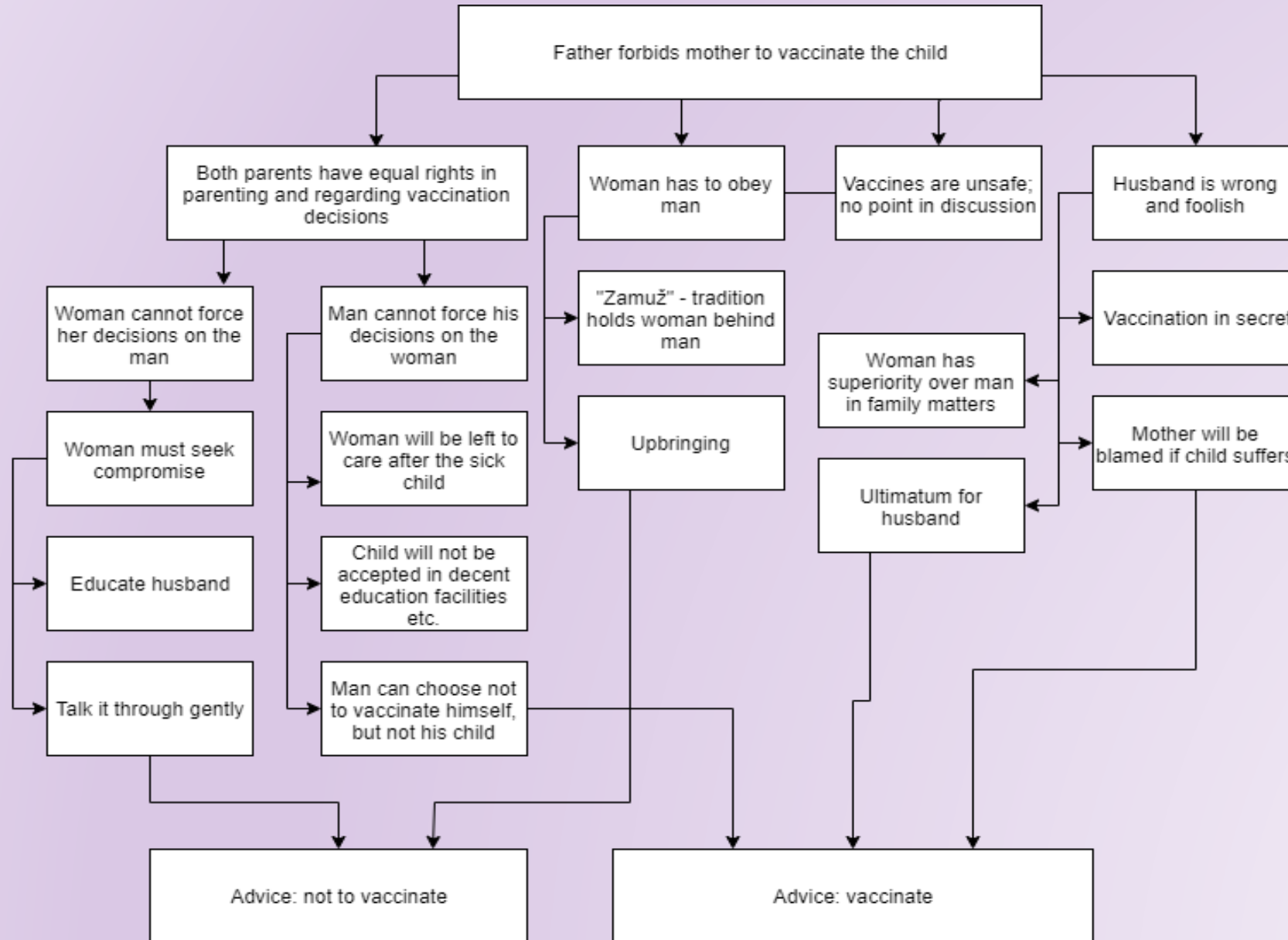
- *Mothers and social media*

The everyday life of contemporary mothers is closely bound to social media, which in recent years have become platforms for digital diaries, “safe spaces” for social support, and even forums for those unanswered questions that usually are directed towards medical specialists.

Methodology and data

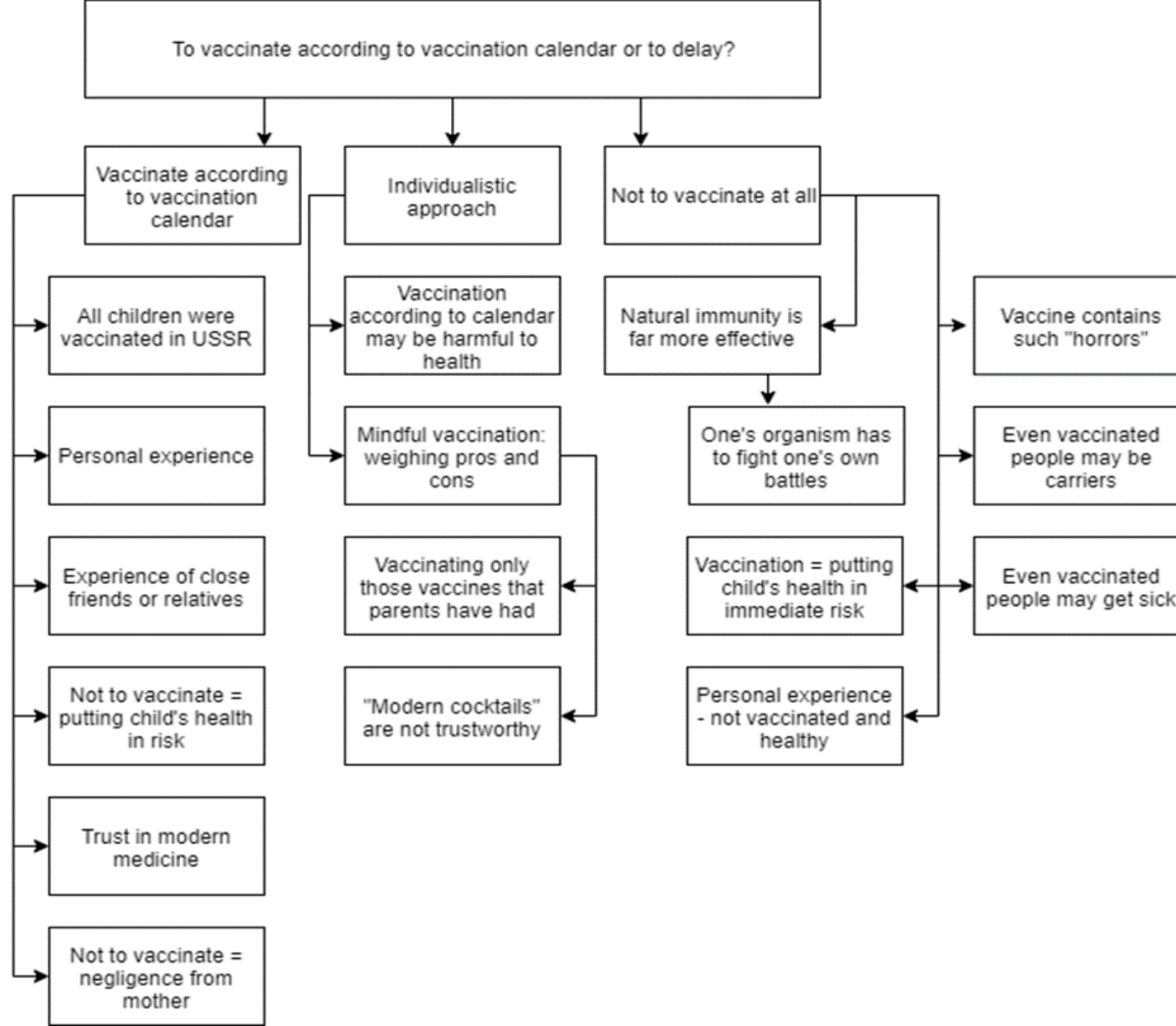
- Research employs discourse analysis and netnography approach to Facebook threads that are discussing arguments concerning vaccination of children
- Analysis of two Facebook groups “Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums” [Sympathetic Mothers’ forum] and “Vakcīnrealitāte Latvijā” [Vaccine reality in Latvia] is carried out for period of eight months (October, 2020 – May 2021)
 - detail attention was brought to three posts

Findings



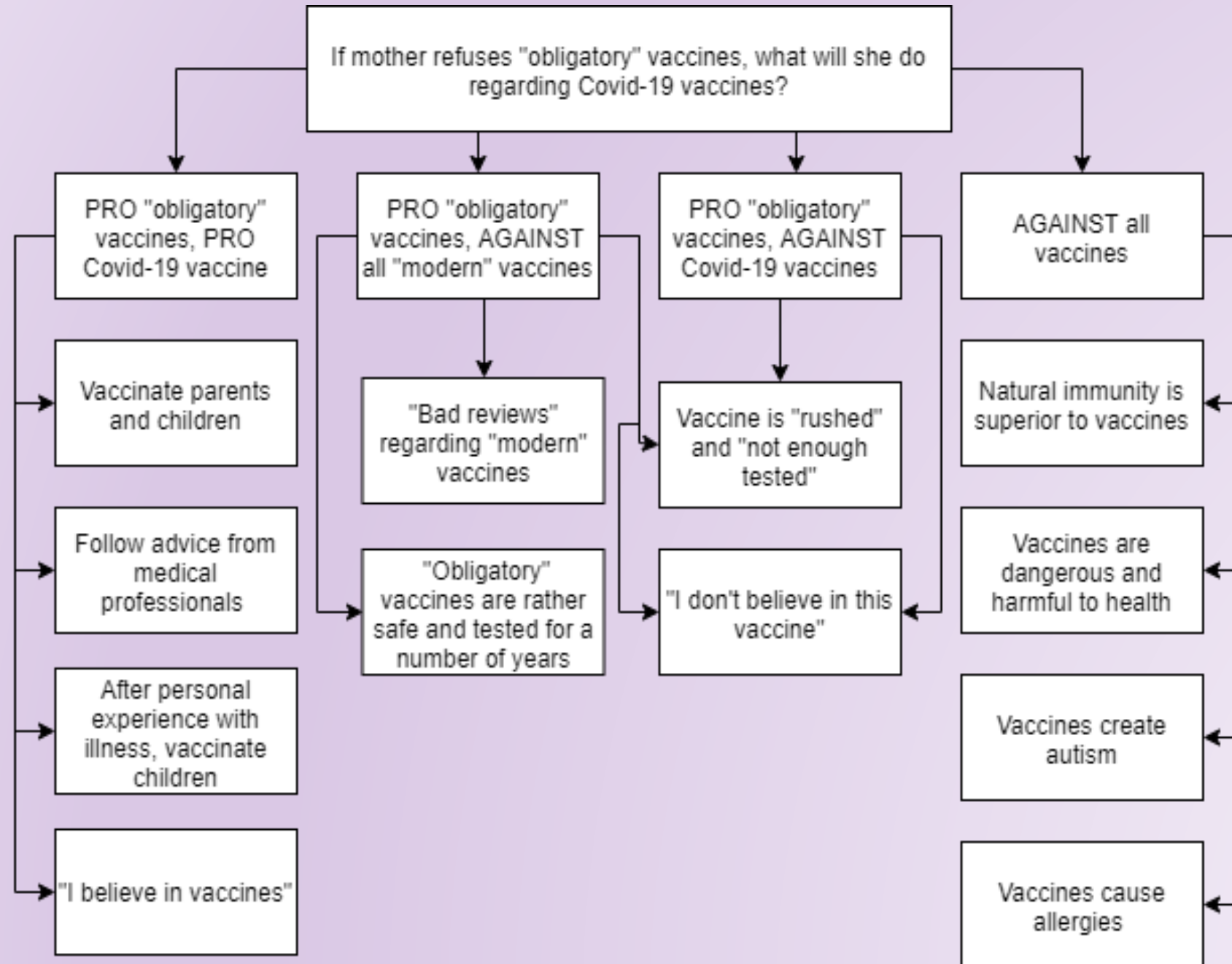
- Post and further thread of comments on exploring a situation, where the father and husband prohibits mother to vaccinate their children

Findings



- Post and further thread of comments on contemplating the pros and cons of vaccination according to the official calendar, set by medical professionals and institutions

Findings



- Post and further thread of comments on asking women opposed to vaccinating to explain their choices regarding vaccination against Covid-19

Discussion

- The evidence of the reproduction of “intensive mothering” discourse in the posts and comments is visible;
- The patriarchal concept of motherhood is used to influence decisions in favor against the vaccination;
 - Study reveals a strong anti-vaccination discourse on social media targeting mothers using notions of traditional femininity, idealized motherhood, and visions of ‘natural’ immunity to paint vaccination as a poor choice for a responsible mother

Thank you!

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