

**ATTITUDES AND USE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT
A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN**

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FOREWORD

Four years ago I went to Cape Town, South Africa. The country made a strong impression on me from the moment I put my foot on its earth. With its stunning nature, beautiful people and intriguing culture, I fell in love. Another side of the country was its poverty and violence, which also made an impression on me. Early on I felt like I wanted “to do something”. The most innocent and vulnerable participants in this society are the children. This thesis is for them. It is a step in the direction of trying to make the world a safer place for our children.

This thesis would never have come to its existence if it wouldn't have been for some people.

First and foremost, I would like to direct a big thank to the participants in this study, for so generously sharing your stories with us.

A big thank you also to my supervisor, Anne Inger Helmen Borge, who gave me insightful input throughout the journey. To my co-supervisor, Shahnaaz Suffla, for giving me guidance, both regarding the South African context and qualitative research. Åshild Slettebo, for helping me with the analysis. Daksha Kassan, for taking the time to share the legal side regarding corporal punishment in South Africa. Live Hareide, for your support both academically and as a friend. Sofia Svensson, to get the whole thing started. My parents, for always giving me your unconditional support. And to Regan Christmas, for being my rock through the whole process.

Oslo, April 2007

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SUMMARY

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The presenting problem in this thesis is the attitudes South African women have towards corporal punishment, how they use corporal punishment, and how attitude and behaviour correlate. The thesis is based on an independent study, where semi-structured qualitative interviews were utilized to gain more insight into the presented problem. The analysis was rooted in previous research on corporal punishment, the South African context, and in theory regarding attitudes.

The study consisted of five women between the ages of 30-40 years old. They were all black, Xhosa-speaking, had a low socio-economic status, with a maximum of 9 years education. They all lived in a township outside Cape Town. Four of the five participants had children, one did not.

Through the analysis of the interviews four topics came forward that appear important regarding corporal punishment in South Africa. Firstly, it seems essential that a clear definition of corporal punishment is established, as the participants in this study both expressed contradicting attitudes and behaviour, depending on age of the child and severity of the corporal punishment. Secondly, there was sometimes a discrepancy between attitude and behaviour among the participants. This discrepancy indicates that attitude towards, and use of, corporal punishment appear to present itself somewhat independently. This would be important to consider in work regarding abandonment of corporal punishment. Variance within the group became apparent as a third theme, both regarding attitude and behaviour. Even if the group of participants shared a number of variables believed to influence use and attitude towards corporal punishment, they still differed both in attitude and use of corporal punishment, proposing a need to not pre-assume similarities. Level of reflection, as the fourth theme, appeared to correlate with frequency and severity levels of corporal punishment among the participants.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1.
1.2 Definition.....	1.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	2.
2.1 Two opposing perspectives.....	2.
2.2 International research.....	3.
2.3 Moderating variables.....	3.
2.3.1 Normativeness.....	4.
2.3.2 Ethnicity.....	4.
2.3.3 Attitudes.....	5.
2.4 Abandonment of corporal punishment in eleven countries.....	6.
2.5 Corporal punishment in South Africa.....	7.
2.5.1 Abandonment of corporal punishment in South Africa.....	7.
2.5.2 Prevalence.....	8.
2.6 Attitude and behaviour.....	8.
2.7 Focus of the study.....	9.
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	10.
3.1 Aims.....	10.
3.2 Participants.....	10.
3.3 Design.....	11.
3.4 Procedure.....	11.
3.5 Data analysis.....	12.
3.6 Ethical considerations.....	12.
4. RESULTS.....	13.
4.1 Attitude and behaviour.....	13.
4.1.1 Conflicting information.....	15.
4.2 Correlation between attitude and behaviour.....	19.
4.2.1 Discrepancy between attitude and behaviour.....	21.
4.2.2 Underlying variables.....	21.
4.2.3 Attitude, behaviour and norm.....	23.
4.3 Difference within the group.....	24.
4.3.1 Division of the population.....	24.
4.4 Level of reflection.....	25.
4.5 Summary of research findings.....	27.
4.5.1 What is the participants' attitude towards corporal punishment?.....	27.
4.5.2 Does the participant use corporal punishment, and in what way?.....	27.
4.5.3 Does the attitude and behaviour correlate.....	27.
5. DISCUSSION.....	29.
5.1 Implications.....	29.
5.1.1 Definition of corporal punishment.....	29.
5.1.2 Difference between attitude and behaviour.....	29.
5.1.3 Variance within the group.....	29.
5.1.4 Level of reflection.....	30.
5.2 Strength and limitations.....	30.
5.2.1 Qualitative research methods.....	30.
5.2.2 Culture.....	31.
5.2.3 Language.....	31.
5.3 Recommendations for future research.....	32.
6. CONCLUSION.....	33.

REFERENCES.....34.
APPENDIX 1.....38.

1. INTRODUCTION

Corporal punishment is a common form of child disciplining in South Africa. Approximately 57% of parents in South Africa report having used it (Dawes, Kropiwnicki, Kafaar & Richter, 2005). A vast amount of research is however pointing at several negative outcomes associated with its use (Gershoff, 2002; Grogan-Kaylor, 2004; Strauss, 2000). This growing body of research, indicating negative effects, has been part of creating a worldwide trend towards the abolishment of corporal punishment. This has also been the case in South Africa. It was abandoned in schools in 1996, and the question as to whether corporal punishment should be completely forbidden remains under discussion, being a topic that generates heated debates in the parliament.

Even if the knowledge of corporal punishment is expanding, there are several queries left to be answered. There are only a small number of studies done on corporal punishment in South Africa to this date (Dawes et al., 2005). Outcomes associated with the use are almost exclusively based on research in western societies (Ripoll-Nunez & Rohner, 2006) Recent studies from other places of the world indicates that the use and outcome appear to be different depending on the cultural setting (Landsford, Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 2004). With a very limited knowledge regarding corporal punishment in South Africa, the need of more information specific to the South African context is required, regardless of whether one aspires to abandon or maintain corporal punishment as a method of child rearing. The aim of this study was therefore to gain more knowledge about corporal punishment in South Africa.

1.2 Definitions

Within this text, corporal punishment and physical punishment are used interchangeably, each referring to the direct or indirect infliction of physical discomfort or pain on a youth by a parent, usually in the purpose of stopping a youth's unwanted behaviour, or because the youth has failed to do something (Rohner, 2005). In the interviews, corporal punishment was introduced by the interviewer as "physical punishment, such as slap, punch or a hiding (South African term for beating), to try and make your child behave". The meaning that different participants attributed to the word corporal punishment was further explored in the interviews.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Before focusing on the study itself, the section that follows provides a brief overview of the research field on corporal punishment.

Corporal punishment is a common form for childrearing. Parents in more than 75% of the world's societies use corporal punishment at least occasionally, though it is seldom the major form of discipline being used (Ripoll-Nunez & Rohner, 2006). There have been a raising number of studies on corporal punishment. Several negative outcomes have been associated with its use, such as low empathy (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998), hostile, aggressive and oppositional tendencies, and severe depression in childhood (Frias-Armenta, 2002), and violence and criminality in adulthood (Swinford, DeMaris, Cernkovich & Giordano, 2000). A closer look at the research field, however, makes the picture more complex.

2.1. Two opposing perspectives

The debate, whether caregivers should be using corporal punishment or not, has polarized the opinion both among the public and among social scientists, and emerged into two opposing perspectives (Ripoll-Nunez & Rohner, 2006). The first perspective is the “anticorporal punishment view”, stating that a significant amount of empirical evidence suggests that corporal punishment has negative consequences for children (Gershoff, 2002; Holden, 2002). Their definitions often include a wide range of different forms of corporal punishment, from mild to very severe levels. Empirical findings with this wide definition often report strong links between corporal punishment and negative outcome.

The second perspective argues that mild or moderate forms of corporal punishment-especially in loving families- may not have negative consequences, and may even under some conditions have beneficial effects (Larzelere, 2000; Paolucci & Violato, 2004). Researchers, who argue that mild or moderate forms of corporal punishment may not be harmful, distinguish between moderate and more severe forms of corporal punishment. Less negative outcomes have been identified when this distinction has been made.

Both perspectives agree that use of severe and frequent punishment should not be the primary form of parental disciplining and that it might be harmful. The disagreement concerns use of mild or moderate levels of corporal punishment (Ripoll-Nunez & Rohner, 2006). This

difference in definition makes it hard to draw any firm conclusions on the effects of corporal punishment based on previous research.

2.2 International research

It appears from major reviews on research on corporal punishment (for further information see reviews by Gershoff, 2002; Paolucci & Violato, 2004; Ripoll-Nunez & Rohner, 2006), that researchers can only draw a few definitive conclusion about the effects of corporal punishment. Before more definitive conclusions can be drawn, there is a clear need for conceptual and methodological issues related to research to be addressed. Common methodological problems include lack of distinction, as already mentioned, between abusive and ordinary corporal punishment, cross-sectional instead of longitudinal studies, lack of control for important third variables, and/or inattention to possible moderating impacts on socioeconomic status, ethnicity and parental warmth (Baumrind, Larzelere & Cowan, 2002; Holden, 2002; Parke, 2002). However, use of corporal punishment is a childrearing strategy that is associated with several negative outcomes. It causes the highest risk of resulting in physical pain, causing higher levels of aggression, anxiety and externalizing problems (Hyman & Snook, 1999; Paloucci & Violato, 2005). Compared to other strategies, such as praise and time-out, corporal punishment has the smallest lasting positive impact on behaviour (Hyman & Snook, 1999).

2.3 Moderating variables

Furthermore, there seems to be several moderating variables affecting the use and outcome of corporal punishment. Moderating variables have often been overlooked in the study of corporal punishment; at the same time, when there is attention to them, the effects of corporal punishment appear to be affected. The constellation of attitudes, cultural norms and values that dominate a certain social group tend to shape the meanings attributed to parental disciplinary techniques (Gershoff, 2002). How corporal punishment is being used and how meaning is perceived appears sometimes to mediate outcome of corporal punishment, based on the norms of the society (Gershoff, 2002). Effects of moderating variables have only just begun to be examined in the field of corporal punishment. No such studies have been done in South Africa so far. Normativeness, ethnicity and attitudes all seem to have a moderating effect on use and consequences of corporal punishment, and are further explored. They are closely linked to each other, but are here explored separately.

2.3.1. Normativeness

A study by Lansford and colleagues (2005) looked at the normativeness as a moderator on children's adjustment to physical disciplining. The study, which consisted of interviews conducted in China, India, Italy, Kenya, the Philippines and Thailand, looked at how normativeness was associated with the effects of corporal punishment. They found a higher degree of negative consequences associated with corporal punishment in cultures where it was less accepted (not being a normative behaviour). Countries with the lowest use of physical discipline showed the strongest association between mothers' use and children's behavioural problems. In all countries, use of physical punishment was associated with aggression and anxiety no matter the degree of normativeness (Lansford et al., 2005). This study indicates that in cultures where the use of corporal punishment is an accepted form of disciplining, less negative consequences might be associated with its use. There is not necessarily a linear correlation between perceived normativeness and the consequences of corporal punishment. Results from this study indicate however, that perceived normativeness in a culture appears to have an effect on the consequences corporal punishment will have on the child. Research on corporal punishment in South Africa indicate that the use is widely accepted, suggesting a positive norm towards its use (Dawes et al., 2005).

2.3.2. Ethnicity

Another moderating variable that seems to affect the outcome of corporal punishment is ethnicity. A growing body of research shows that in low- and middle-income families in America, mild or moderate forms of corporal punishment is not by itself predictive of internalizing or externalizing problems in children (Baumrind, 2003 in Ispa & Halgunseth, 2004; Lansford, Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 2004). Studies based on African American samples provide especially consistent evidence of benign or even beneficial consequences when corporal punishment is combined with warmth (Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates & Pettit 1996; Gunnoe & Marimer, 1997). A study by Deater-Deckard et al. (1996) found that "harsh" physical discipline was more prevalent among African American families than in European American families, yet it did not cause the aggressive, externalizing behaviours in African American children as it did in the European American children. The authors suggested that perhaps African American children do not perceive their parent's disciplinary behaviour as lacking in warmth, as do the European American children; and therefore, the African American children do not experience the harmful effects of the physical punishment.

Lansford and colleagues (2004) looked at the link between physical disciplining and later externalizing behaviour problems, as a moderator. In line with Deater-Deckard et al. (1996), they concluded that there are racial differences regarding the long-term effects of physical punishment and later externalizing behaviour problems. Different meaning seems to affect the manner in which parents use physical disciplining, the meaning children attach to the experience, and its effects on the adjustment of the child (Lansford et al., 2004).

The role of ethnicity is complex. On one hand it could be argued that African Americans are more likely to use corporal punishment compared to European Americans as a function from a heritage of slavery and oppression. Corporal punishment can be argued to be the most appropriate way of socialization in a society where misbehaviour would result in being sold or lynched (Ferrari, 2002). This would make sense in the South African society, where violence and corporal punishment has been the norm to control and discipline the people both under the slave- and in the apartheid era (Dawes et al., 2005).

The fact that corporal punishment seems to predict different outcomes in African American children compared to European American children indicates a need for sensitive descriptive data exploring underlying cognitions in the use of corporal punishment (Parke, 2002; Xu, Tung & Dunaway, 2000). These results also indicate the need for more studies on different ethnical groups, such as different ethnical groups in the South African population.

2.3.3. Attitudes

A third variable that seems to influence the use and outcome of corporal punishment is attitudes. Approval rates of corporal punishment appear to be higher among adolescents who had experienced this form of disciplining themselves (Deater-Deckard, Lansford, Dodge, Pettit & Bates, 2003). The findings suggest a linkage between exposures of physical disciplining and the development of positive attitudes towards this form of punishment.

In many countries cultural norms and attitudes regarding child discipline seems to filter into social policies and laws that govern and regulate parent-child relations (Ripoll-Nunez & Rohner, 2006). A study of Eisenstein (2004) undertook a cross-national comparison of attitudes and experiences regarding corporal punishment in the U.S. and Spain. This study indicates that cultural context is a very strong mediating variable in the development of

attitudes. Eisenstein's results suggest that change in the use of corporal punishment happens in generational cycles of cultural experience and attitude. A historical analysis show that Spain was as punitive as the U.S. Results from this study show that one generation who went through a cultural and legislative change, radically lowered its rates of abuse (Eisenstein, 2004). His results also suggest that those who experience corporal punishment themselves can still potentially grow to see it as outdated and ineffective, especially when a cultural change consider corporal punishment as outside the range of normal parental behaviour. Eisenstein's results suggest that attitudes affect the use of corporal punishment and that attitudes are influenced by context and are changeable.

Norm, ethnicity and attitude can all be argued to be strongly linked to each other. An ethnic group often share a norm, and the norm will probably influence the attitudes among an ethnic group. This could be an explanation to why they all seem to affect the use and outcome of corporal punishment. More research on the relation between these variables is however needed before a better understanding to this pattern can be reached.

2.4 Abandonment of corporal punishment in eleven countries

In recent decades there has been a widespread movement among demographic countries towards a ban of corporal punishment (Eisenstein, 2004). Beginning with Sweden in 1979, many countries have implemented laws forbidding the use of corporal punishment, either in school or at home, a progressive policy that is now seen as mostly beneficial by the Swedes (Durrant, 2003).

There are twelve countries to this date that have outlawed, by statute or court decision, all forms for corporal punishment. These are Sweden, Finland, Norway, Austria, Cyprus, Italy, Croatia, Latvia, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Israel and Germany. The purpose of this ruling has not been to criminalize behaviour but to change the public's opinion (Ripoll-Nunez & Rohner, 2006). Another group of countries has been making legal reforms to protect children from intrafamilial violence without ruling out all forms for corporal punishment. These countries are Switzerland, Poland, Spain, Scotland, Canada, Jamaica, New Zealand, Namibia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Republic of Ireland and Belgium. The international trend to legislate against corporal punishment has reached further support since 1994, after the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (1994). To be protected against corporal

punishment was considered a human rights issue. All UN members except Somalia and the United States have ratified the Treaty on the Rights of Children (Gershoff, 2002).

2.5 Corporal punishment in South Africa

Corporal punishment in South Africa has a long history. The use is interwoven into the pattern of how power has been established and kept throughout South African history. Authoritarian societies tend to be ideologically based on the notion that discipline must come as a form of punishment, since most members of the society are incapable of self-discipline or critical thinking, making it necessary to teach fear for obedience. This has been the case in South Africa, corporal punishment been extensively used (Pete, 1999 in Dawes et al., 2005). Physical disciplining has been one of the ways the patriarchal, racial and authoritarian apartheid system gained and remained in power (Bower, 2002 in Dawes et al., 2005). During the slave- and in the apartheid era, corporal punishment was widely used as the primary method of discipline in schools and as a sentence for juveniles in the justice system.

2.5.1 Abandonment of corporal punishment in South Africa

In 1997, the Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act, and the South African Schools act of 1996, outlawed all forms for corporal punishment in schools. These acts were put into place soon after South Africa signed the Convention on the Right of the Child (Dawes et al., 2005). Even if corporal punishment in schools is against the law since 1996, it still often takes place, even with the approval of parents (Morell, 2001; The Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). In the book of the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005), many teachers, principals and parents share how they see physical disciplining as a normal way of disciplining a child when all other methods have failed. Teachers say they have difficulties finding alternative strategies. There are many who want the policy on corporal punishment to be revised (Galinetti & Kassan, 2005).

During the drafting of the Children's Bill (due to replace the Child Care Act of 1983) the question of introducing legalisation to ban corporal punishment in the home featured strongly. This path was ultimately rejected by the parliament. Among several points, the commission recognised the difficulty of policing private space, the risk of criminalizing caregivers, and a possible significant resistance from different cultural and religious groups (Dawes et al., 2005). However, the Commission recommended the removal of the common law parental defence *the right to reasonable chastisement* (of their children) from the statutes. This

provision raises the risk that parents accused of abuse can claim parental rights as a defence. The removal of the parental defence would have the effect of criminalizing corporal punishment, and would have the same status as Assault in Common Law. On 22 June 2005 the Children's Bill was passed by the National Assembly, which means that the common law still prevails. In other words, despite strong voices towards a legalisation against corporal punishment, the South African legal system still allows for the use of corporal punishment by parents (Galinetti & Kassan, 2005).

2.5.2 Prevalence

There is a shortage of good information available on parents or caregivers use of, or attitude towards, corporal punishment in the South African context (Soneson, 2005). The limited data available suggest that corporal punishment is widely used and is an accepted mode of child rearing. A large study on corporal punishment in South Africa by Dawes et al. (2005) is the first of its kind, creating national baseline information on parents' report of their use of corporal punishment. The study showed that children that are 3-4 years old are most likely to be subjected to corporal punishment in South Africa. This is in line with statistics from the U.S.A., with a peak at the age of 3-4 in exposure to corporal punishment (Gershoff, 2002). There appears to be a high frequency of corporal punishment in South Africa, with 57% in this study admitting to have used it and 33% using severe corporal punishment. The majority of the participants believed corporal punishment not to be a desirable approach, but most still admitted using it. To put this in perspective, in the United States more than 90% of parents have used corporal punishment, at least periodically (Gershoff, 2002). Dawes et al., (2005) study also showed that supportive attitudes to physical punishment and non-emphatic parenting attitudes were the only significant predictor of severity of corporal punishment.

2.6 Attitude and behaviour

An attitude is a positive or negative evaluative reaction towards a stimulus (Tesser & Shaffer, 1990), such as a behaviour or a person. Child rearing attitudes have their roots in culturally embedded practices often taken for granted (Dawes et al., 2005). Our attitudes help us guide our actions (Fazio & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005 in Passer & Smith, 2007). Our intention to engage in a specific behaviour is strongest when we have a positive attitude toward that behaviour (Passer & Smith, 2007). In other words having a positive attitude towards corporal punishment can guide the use of corporal punishment. Attitudes influence behaviour more when situational factors that contradict our attitudes are weak, as well as when subjective

norms (our perception of what other people think we should do) support our attitudes (Passer & Smith, 2007). In South Africa, where corporal punishment is an accepted form of disciplining, it is both more likely that parents' will have a positive attitude, and that this attitude will guide the use of it. Attitudes have a greater influence on our behaviour when we are aware of them and when they are strongly held (Passer & Smith, 2007). This is congruent with findings from the South African study by Dawes et al. (2005), where there was a link between more strongly held positive attitudes correlating with more severe use of corporal punishment.

2.7 Focus of the study

Corporal punishment is a common way of disciplining a child in South Africa. Despite that, there is only one prevalence study done on corporal punishment among the South African population, and there is no information available on risk factors associated with parental use (Dawes et al., 2005). However, research in other cultures suggests a risk for negative outcomes associated with its use. There are discussions regarding a total abandonment of corporal punishment in the South African parliament. Arguments in the discussion appear to be mainly based on studies from other countries. Use and outcome of corporal punishment appear to be affected by moderating variables such as norm, ethnicity and attitude. Therefore, it is questionable whether conclusions can be drawn to South Africa, founded in knowledge almost exclusively based in research from other cultures. As a result, research on corporal punishment, implies a need to increase the knowledge on corporal punishment in South Africa. Detailed interviews on the attitude to, and the use of, corporal punishment could make children more visible and also assist government and civil society to design appropriate interventions, regarding corporal punishment (Soneson, 2005). Accordingly, the focus of this study was to gain an in-depth knowledge about attitudes and use of corporal punishment in South Africa.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims

The overall aim of this study was to explore the use of, and attitudes towards corporal punishment in the South African context. It was explored through following research questions:

1. What is the participants' attitude towards corporal punishment?
2. Does the participant use corporal punishment, and in what way?
3. Does the attitude and behaviour correlate?

3.2 Participants

Five South African women were interviewed. Four of them had children, one did not have any children of her own. The participants were between 30-40 years old, with a low-socioeconomic status. All the participants were black, with Xhosa as their first language. The participants had a maximum of 9 years of education. They all lived in, Khayleisha, a township outside Cape Town.

The choice of having women as participants in this study was led by the fact that South African women are more likely to be in charge of their children, as in many other parts of the world (Grogan-Kaylor & Otis, 2007). Therefore, it seemed a reasonable choice, both to interview women about attitudes towards, and use of corporal punishment on children. All races in South Africa report using corporal punishment, with the 'Indian' community doing it the least (Dawes et al., 2005). The choice of having a black sample was led by previous research on African Americans, where outcomes seem to differ from the European American sample. Education appears to correlate with a lesser use of corporal punishment in South Africa (Dawes et al., 2005), which is consistent with international research (Grogan-Kaylor & Otis, 2007). Lack of education among the participants did not predict an absolute use of corporal punishment, but increased the chances of corporal punishment being used, which was interesting in the light of my research questions.

The participants were accessed through word of mouth. The first participant was in contact with associates of the researcher. This participant spread the word among friends, relatives and neighbours. Women interested in participating in the study presented on a specified day.

They all volunteered without any economical benefits. No participant was excluded. They were all interviewed individually.

3.3 Design

The research interview, located within the qualitative research paradigm, was utilized to gather data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants on an individual basis. Qualitative interviews are especially useful to gain insight into the participants' own experiences, thoughts and feelings (Dalen, 2004). This was consistent with the goal of this study, which had an aim to understand more about the attitudes towards, and use of corporal punishment. An interview guide was utilized to guide the interview process. The interview guide includes a list of themes or topics that were to be pursued in the interview, and allowed for flexibility with respect to the questions asked and the order thereof (Kvale, 2001). The aim of these interviews was to explore the participants' experiences and undertake an in-depth look into attitudes towards, and use of, corporal punishment in its context, with the overarching goal to illuminate the relationship between the behaviour, the individual and the South African context.

3.4 Procedure

The interviews were conducted in the home of one of the participants in a township, Khayelisha, outside Cape Town. Since the township is about 40 minutes outside the city centre, this implied cost of public transport to the participants, and since public transport is not particularly safe, going out to where the participants lived appeared as the most convenient choice. The interviews were conducted by the researcher in a room without a door in a small house in a dangerous neighbourhood. The interviews were all completed without disruptions.

The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, and notes were taken both during the interview and directly afterwards. Interviews took about 30-40 minutes. A trial interview was conducted with another psychology student, who had lived in Cape Town for two years, before interviews were conducted. The interview guide was informed by previous research on corporal punishment and attitudes. It was revised several times before the interviews with the participants were conducted. (The interview guide in its full can be found as appendix 1). All interviews were executed by the author. They were performed in

English, which both interviewer and participants had as a second language. The interviews were transcribed by the interviewer directly after they were completed.

The participants were informed at the beginning of the interview that my interest in their attitudes, thoughts and behaviour was based entirely on my objective to gain more knowledge, stressing the fact that there were no right or wrong answers to avoid bias. Follow-up questions were also used under the interview to avoid bias.

3.5 Data analysis

The analysis was guided by Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), with the identification of core ideas, organised into categories. Memos and notes were included throughout the entire process. The results were coded into categories, however one main category was not chosen, as would have been in line with Grounded Theory. The results were further analysed in the light of previous research on corporal punishment, especially in South Africa, theory on attitudes and contextual factors specific to South Africa.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from the participants after a brief introduction by the researcher, on who I was (Norwegian psychology student undertaking research on corporal punishment for thesis purposes), the aim of the study (to gain more knowledge about corporal punishment), and how they were entitled to end the interview at any point or choose not to answer any of the questions. The participants were also assured of confidentiality. In the analysis they are referred to as Anne, Bea, Claire, Diane and Elaine, a pseudonym for each participant. The research design was approved by REK. The sample and method for recruiting participants changed the week before my arrival in South Africa due to a killing at the school where my intended sample was to be obtained. This change was accepted by REK.

4. RESULTS

Primary themes that emerged from the interviews, regarding the use and attitude toward corporal punishment, where:

1. Attitude and behaviour
2. Correlation between attitude and behaviour
3. Difference within the group
4. Level of reflection

The analysis was organised under these four themes.

4.1 Attitude and behaviour

“I hit her. Oh, I hit her badly.”

“I hit her. Oh, I hit her badly (show her arm). When I got her, oh my arm, so sore.” (Claire)

Claire described how she recently used corporal punishment on one of her daughters, and how the consequence turned out to be that she got a sore arm. Claire is in line with the majority of the participants in this study, being in favour of corporal punishment. Four of the participants communicated both a positive attitude towards corporal punishment, and also how they used corporal punishment on their children. Claire addressed getting sore arms as the biggest problem concerning her use of corporal punishment.

“I want them (her children) to do what is right in their lives. I want them to be a good person. That is why I was doing that, hitting them.” (Claire)

“Do you think there is parents who believe you shouldn't hit at all?” Diane: “Yes, there are people who think so. These are people who will always spoil their children, “I will never ever hit my child because it is my one and only.” I think these children are growing up not knowing what is right or wrong. You need to hit your child.” (Diane)

Both Claire and Diane explained how they see the need of corporal punishment, to be able to raise their children into responsible adults. This is one underlying reason all participants' using corporal punishment in this study mention as to why they use corporal punishment. The four participants approving on corporal punishment all saw a risk of spoiling the children if

they choose not to use corporal punishment. Their positive attitude was in line with research on attitudes and use of corporal punishment in South Africa (Dawes et al., 2005). Many parents in South Africa rely on corporal punishment as a way of disciplining their children.

“Corporal punishment is not good at all...”

"I think the punishment, the corporal punishment, that is being used towards our children when they are not behaving is not good. I wouldn't say it's a fair way of raising a child. Corporal punishment is not good at all." (Bea)

A positive attitude expressed by the majority of this sample, is however contradicted by one of the participants, Bea. She instead disclosed a very negative attitude throughout the interview towards the use of corporal punishment

Bea also differs from the other participants in another important area. She was the only participant without any children of her own. Bea got a lot of exposure to children, even if she didn't have any of her own. She lived in a home with a child and a single mother. Bea seemed to be highly emotionally affected by the topic, using a lot of body language. She shared a strong negative opinion, raising concern for children being affected by corporal punishment. It can be questioned whether Bea is influenced by her situation at home. Bea explained how the mother in the house was using a lot of corporal punishment on her daughter, to an extent that worried Bea. The child prefers to be in the homes of her friends. Bea interprets this as if the child is running from home, because of the treatment she receives from her mother. This can be part of explaining Bea's strong way of expressing her attitude. It might be led by feelings of frustration, watching a child being subjected to a lot of corporal punishment in her home without being able to stop it.

Since this is only one person and the scenario is hypothetical (how she would treat a future child), it's only possible to speculate regarding future behaviour, which will be further explored later on. Bea differs from the other participants on a third variable as well, being very consistent throughout the interview in her negative opinions regarding corporal punishment. The attitudes towards corporal punishment among the other participants, grew however more complex.

4.1.1 Conflicting information

“...No man, I have to stop this...”

“Tomorrow she is going to do another thing. I have to beat her again. No man, I have to stop this (to use corporal punishment). I want to stop it. I want to try” (Claire)

Do you think there is anybody who never hit their children? Claire: It wouldn't work well. From that day I hit her (her daughter) she wouldn't do it again.” (Claire)

This line of arguments, that Claire wants to stop using corporal punishment, came only minutes before her line of reasons why corporal punishment is useful, to make her child stop an unwanted behaviour. It could at times look like the participants in favour of corporal punishment were arguing against themselves, giving conflicting information. At different points along the interview being in favour of corporal punishment, at other times against it.

Among the participants, four admitted using corporal punishment, and articulated a belief in the necessity of it. Even so, they also disclosed disapproval, such as Claire here. This is again in line with Dawes et al. (2005) big prevalence study, where many of the participants didn't necessarily approve on the use of corporal punishment, at the same time admitted using/ to have used it. Why the participants sometimes argued in favour and sometimes against the use of corporal punishment was further analysed.

“Sometimes people say...”

“Sometimes people say you didn't have to hit her, because she is going to do it again.”

Interviewer: “So, if you beat her she will do it again?” Claire: “They said so. I must sit and talk.”(Claire)

Claire is being challenged by others to choose other strategies than corporal punishment. At this point of the interview Claire argue why she should stop using corporal punishment. All participants share how they discuss corporal punishment among friends and sometimes among relatives, sharing experiences and advice. A possible explanation to their attitude shift might be that the participants sometimes argue a point that is not completely theirs and internalised, disclosing arguments that they've heard from someone else.

“If you just slap, sometimes the children go to the streets to stay there...”

“If you just slap, sometimes the children go to the streets to stay there. So that is why you sometimes have to sit down with your children and tell them everything. If they do it again you have to sit down again. You have to first sit down and say no, don’t do that. If you took money from my bag you have to stay.” (Elaine)

Elaine had the most consistent positive attitude towards corporal punishment throughout the interview compared to the other participants. She is arguing the need of corporal punishment at several times. At the same time, she also addresses the need of talking, among several alternative childrearing strategies. Being in favour of corporal punishment did not mean to argue its use in all types of situations. All the participants shared how they rely on several childrearing strategies, which they argue for in different types of scenarios. This might be another reason why their attitude sometimes sounded in favour of corporal punishment and at other times argued against the use.

“At that age she won't listen unless I slap her”

"At that age she won't listen unless I slap her (before age 7). At least, even if it's once or twice. (Long thoughtful break.) Just to give her a fright. (...) By that time (2-6 years old) I remember I used to beat her very much."(Anne)

The age of children influence what type of disciplining Anne believed was appropriate. Between the ages of 2-6, Anne argued how children are too young to understand other instructions than the voice of her hand, corporal punishment. She described how she views other strategies as useless when the child is young.

"...What's the use of slapping her, because she will keep on doing the wrong things." (Anne)

When the child gets older however, Anne came with comments that support a more limited use of corporal punishment. Anne's attitude depended on what age the child was in, with a positive attitude when the child was 2-6 years old, and a more negative attitude when the child gets older.

“With the smaller one’s you just let it go, because they don’t understand anything. I just take him from there and put him other places. Or I put him onto my body. And then I’m not angry any more. If I put her (show her back)” (Diane)

(It is common among women in the black community in South Africa to carry small children in a towel or a blanket on their back.)

Diane on the other hand describes the opposite behaviour from Anne. How she views corporal punishment as useless until the child turn 4-5 years old. When the child gets older Diane explains how she tends to rely on it more.

Anne’s attitude, how she view it as necessary with corporal punishment when the child is young, correlates with research both internationally and in South Africa (Dawes et al., 2005; Gershoff, 2002). Many parents who use corporal punishment view it as especially important when the child is young. Diane’s argument how she didn’t use corporal punishment when the child was young where more surprising. This difference indicates two different approaches regarding the use of corporal punishment in South Africa. Anne on one hand shared how she believed corporal punishment is necessary before it is possible to verbally address the child, arguing the need for corporal punishment because she views other strategies as useless before the child is able to understand an argument,. Diane on the other hand, only believed in the necessity of corporal punishment when the child is old enough to be able to grasp the meaning behind its use, arguing its usefulness when the child is able to understand the meaning behind the behaviour. These women both argue the necessity for corporal punishment, but appear to put different meanings to its use.

Attitude and use of corporal punishment appear to depend on what age the child is in, another reason why the participants disclosed seemingly different attitudes in the interviews, at least among two of the participants. The other three participants expressed how they wouldn’t change their attitude or behaviour noticeably based on the child’s age.

“By not be hurt...”

“How could you teach him? What can you do to make him understand?” Diane: “By not be hurt, maybe (show me with a slap on her hand).” Interviewer: “A slap on the hand?” Diane:” Mm. Not over the body, a pinch or something like that.”(Diane)

Diane gave first the impression that she has a very strong opinion against corporal punishment even if she admits using it on her children. Here she gives an answer to what alternative strategies she has to corporal punishment, and she explained how she wants to teach them but not hurt them. She was actually describing a mild form for corporal punishment as an alternative to corporal punishment. Explored further, it becomes clear that Diane believe a mild form for corporal punishment is necessary, which she did not include in her own definition of corporal punishment.

There are several possible explanations why the participants sometimes seemed to approve and at other times disapprove on their own use or attitude towards corporal punishment, seemingly giving conflicting information. Variables such as expression of other people's opinion, age of the child, use of several strategies and the severity of the punishment, all seemed to influence their answers. Another possibility to explain this inconsistency could be that the participants might have lied. This seemed less likely though, since their discrepancies felt clarified after exploring mentioned variables.

Definition of corporal punishment

What seemed to be a theme throughout these explanations where the definition of corporal punishment. This is in line with research (Ripoll-Nunez & Rohner, 2006), where results appear to differ, especially when severe and mild forms for corporal punishment has been analysed separately. The definition of corporal punishment in this study was very broad, including all ages and all types and any level of severity, regarding physical disciplining. This broad definition made it possible to look into how the participants viewed corporal punishment possibly different, depending on different variables, and how these changed their attitude and behaviour through follow-up questions.

Looking in depth at their answers suggests that this broad definition is a reason why the participants in favour of corporal punishment disclosed somewhat different attitudes throughout the interview. How some of the participants did not put the same meaning into corporal punishment as suggested in the introduction only become clear after follow-up questions. What could at first be misunderstood as arguments against all types of corporal punishment was later modulated to include sever forms for corporal punishment. These results highlight the need for sensitivity towards the meaning the participants put into corporal

punishment, both regarding level of severity and the age of the child. There is a need to explore what meaning participants give to their words or a very explicit approach if for example questionnaires are going to be used. A careful approach to definition could be argued to be important both in research in a South African context and globally. It's seems especially important to be very careful regarding definition of corporal punishment if comparison between different cultures are being made.

4.2 Correlation between attitude and behaviour

“I mean you can't slap a child...”

“I mean you can't slap a child, or whip a child because they've done something wrong. And you call your brothers', aunts' and everything. It is like everyone is hitting you at once. That is not justice, that is injustice.” (Bea)

Bea expressed a negative attitude towards the use of corporal punishment. In this case it sounded like a severe form for corporal punishment. She was totally consistent throughout the interview, not accepting any form for corporal punishment no matter what age the child was in, what type of problem being presented, or in its' mild form. Bea is continuously arguing why corporal punishment is bad for the child, and put forward several alternatives childrearing strategies. The question still remains whether it can be assumed that her attitude would guide her behaviour.

A reason why it seemed likely that Bea's negative attitude is going to be reflected in future behaviour is because it is an opinion going diverse from what most people think in her environment, among her friends, relatives and among her neighbours. This can indicate that corporal punishment is a topic she has thought a lot about. Another reason is her well-thought arguments and presentation of alternative strategies, again indicating of a high level of reflection. According to theory on attitudes (Olson & Zanna, 1993), it seems likely that such a strong attitude as this participant communicated, and with the high level of awareness of the attitude that was being revealed, it appears probable that the negative attitude would guide Bea to choose other strategies than corporal punishment.

“So angry, so I hit them.”

“I got my own worries. Nobody was helping me. So when I think of these things I get so angry. So angry, so I hit them. Sometimes I don't want to. That's why corporal punishment is wrong sometimes.” (Claire)

“Sometimes I come home from work. I have no money, I didn't get my salary. Then, I know it's not a good thing, then the child do something and all these things, I take them out on him (very quietly).” (Diane)

All participants in this study, by own initiation, brought up the topic corporal punishment caused by their own anger, and not by the child's behaviour, as Claire and Diane do here. This was a topic where three of the participants disclosed a discrepancy between attitude and behaviour. They described the behaviour as wrong. They also saw a risk that the corporal punishment could become severe in its form. All participants expressed concern regarding this type of behaviour, whether if they believed in the need for corporal punishment or not. At the same time, three of them shared how they sometimes would submit to this behaviour themselves, using corporal punishment led by their own anger, two of them in severe forms. It can be discussed if this goes under the definition corporal punishment used in this thesis. When it was their own anger causing the behaviour, the aim change from “to try and make their child behave” (see definition page 2). It is difficult to draw a line regarding if the child might have provoked the behaviour by misbehaving, or how much of the mother's own worries that trigger the corporal punishment. What this however showed was that some of the participants' behaviour contradicted their expressed attitude, when they used corporal punishment and it was initiated by their own anger.

All participants in favour of corporal punishment in this study disclosed own use of corporal punishment which they also stated as unwanted. Besides when their own anger was guiding their use of corporal punishment, also when the corporal punishment was severe and violent in its form, the participants argue with disapproval towards their own behaviour. The participants also explained situations when they do not view it as the most effective way of teaching the child how to behave, and therefore disapproved on their own behaviour.

4.2.1 Discrepancy between attitude and behaviour

The participants being in favour of corporal punishment disclosed disapproval both of corporal punishment and about their own behaviour during the interview. This is in line with Dawes et al., (2005) study where many of the participants didn't necessarily approve on the use of corporal punishment, at the same time admitted using/ to have used it. As already discussed, the attitude can at times appear as mixed, and it could be partly explained with a look at the definition of corporal punishment and the context. However, the participants also described own use of corporal punishment which they disapproved on, disclosing a discrepancy between attitude and behaviour. Theory on attitudes suggests that even with a disapproval of certain behaviour, such as the use of corporal punishment; the behaviour can still appear (Passer & Smith, 2007). There is a higher probability that the attitude will guide a person's behaviour if it is in line with the norm of their culture (Passer & Smith, 2007). In South Africa where corporal punishment is highly accepted, it is therefore not surprising that with disapproval only at times, the behaviour is still present.

4.2.2 Underlying variables

It is not easy to draw any conclusions regarding where this variance in attitude and behaviour stems from, since many variables, such as own childhood experiences (Ferrari, 2002), education level (Dawes et al., 2005) beliefs about parenting and stress (Pinderhughes, Dodge, Bates, Petit & Zelli, 2000) are all thought to influence the use and attitude towards corporal punishment. Even if the women being interviewed share a lot of these underlying variables, they differed in attitudes and behaviour. This indicates a need for sensitivity towards variance in behaviour and attitude towards corporal punishment, regardless of whether a lot of contextual factors are being shared.

“I was doing the wrong thing; it's not right to a child nowadays”

“I do not listen to media. The media is not always right, because they say don't hit the children. Don't talk to them like that, talk to them easy. I don't listen to the media. They talk about something they can not do. They exaggerate. That's why I don't listen to them. We are living in a society where people use corporal punishment.”(Diane)

Diane shared how the times have changed regarding what is viewed as appropriate childrearing in South Africa in the media, and how she doesn't agree with their approach. Change in time might be another reason for a discrepancy between attitude towards corporal

punishment and use. The law-change more than ten years ago, with the abandonment of corporal punishment in schools, might have created a greater awareness around the use of corporal punishment in South Africa. Some of the participants spoke about a new time, with new expectations concerning the use of corporal punishment. They did however not use less corporal punishment because of this change in expectations. What had changed was how others, such as media and politicians, viewed appropriate childrearing.

The law forbidding corporal punishment in schools might have created a greater awareness around possible negative outcomes and therefore created a more negative attitude toward corporal punishment among the participants. It can be suggested that the implementation of laws against the use of corporal punishment might create a more negative attitude towards its use. Statistics still showing a high prevalence of corporal punishment in schools' in South Africa, ten years after the implementation of the law, indicate that it is possible to have a law-change without ending the use of it. In other words, it might be possible to create an attitude shift towards a more negative attitude towards corporal punishment. This shift is not necessarily followed by a change in behaviour, with an abandonment of corporal punishment.

“...when she is little there is really nothing else to do”

“If that is the only way, why do you feel bad? Anne: Like when you hit someone you expect them to not do it again, neh? (Slang for right?) And she'll do it again. But when she is little there is really nothing else to do. I don't think so. I really don't think so. Even my mother used to tell me to slap. If I asked her what to do with this kid, she is like this and this, she used to say slap her.” (Anne)

“How was it as a child, when your grandmother was using her stick on you? Elaine: I was scared, if I do the wrong things. I'm not going to do it again.”(Elaine)

Another way of explaining the discrepancy between use of corporal punishment and a disliking towards its use could be with a look at how the participants base their actions. Anne is arguing why she dislike her own use of corporal punishment, since the child won't learn from it. At the same she also share how this is her only option when the child is little, this being re-enforced by her mum. Elaine based her arguments on her own childhood memories, how she as a child would learn not to do wrong things through the use of corporal punishment. It looks like that the participants' base their actions on several variables. Such as

on their interpretations on incoming information, previous knowledge of various strategies, and their assessment of these elements to achieve desired goals (consciously or unconsciously) in line with research on corporal punishment (Isipa & Halgunseth, 2004; Pinderhughes et al., 2000).

If the participants don't approve of their own use of corporal punishment, it can still be argued that they assess the situation of the child's misbehaviour as most effectively stopped by using corporal punishment. Even if all participants in this study tend to rely on several child-rearing strategies, the perceived benefits of corporal punishment might out-weight possible alternatives in the situations when corporal punishment was being used. In the interviews this seems to be the case when they for example argue that the child won't listen, or learn from alternative strategies, because of a young age. In other words, it seems like the participants in this study base their use of corporal punishment on several variables. Multiple variables working inter-changeable might be an explanation to why the participants sometimes seem to rely on corporal punishment even though they recognize it as either bad or not view it as a preferred way of raising their child.

That the participants expressed negative views on corporal punishment at the same time being part of their childrearing strategies illustrate how the use of corporal punishment appear to rely on several variables. This is in line with literature on corporal punishment, suggesting a need for interventions on several arenas, if corporal punishment should be discarded (Eisenstein, 2004; Smith & Mosby, 2003). It might be of particularly importance in South Africa, with interventions on several arenas besides a law-change. Both because corporal punishment seems to rely on several variables, and based on the assumption that there might be a more dubious approach to the law in South Africa, compared to most places in the world. Looking at South African history, the struggle against the apartheid system continued for decades, where striving to change the law often meant breaking the law (Nationalencyclopedia). Based on this particular history, it is possible to suppose that there is a need for several types of interventions besides a law-change, if abandonment of corporal punishment were to be achieved in South Africa.

4.2.3 Attitude, behaviour and norm

This study points towards a discrepancy between attitude and behaviour at times. This suggests the possibility that a norm change is possible without change in behaviour, since

attitude and behaviour doesn't necessarily correlate. As previous studies have showed (Lansford et al., 2005) it seems to be a tendency that a more negative norm towards corporal punishment is associated with more negative outcomes. Some of the participants in this study were arguing against some of their own behaviour, creating a division between expressed attitude and behaviour, indicating that it might be possible to have a norm shift without change in behaviour. Previous studies (Lansford et al., 2005) in the combination of these interviews, show that if corporal punishment were to be forbidden in South Africa, it seems highly important to also have enough interventions to make people change their behaviour and not only attitude. It might be a risk for increased negative outcomes associated its use, if a norm shift in attitude isn't followed by an abandonment of corporal punishment.

4.3 Difference within the group

“Corporal punishment is not good at all...” (Bea)

*“Sometimes you need corporal punishment, just to let them know that now is enough”
(Claire)*

Bea differs from the other participants holding a strong and consistent negative attitude towards the use of corporal punishment, while the others express the need of. The participants being in favour of corporal punishment also differs among themselves regarding how corporal punishment should be used regarding age and how severe forms that are acceptable. The difference was in some ways surprising, with a very homogenic group, living in the same environment under similar conditions with similar experiences regarding corporal punishment. A reason for this difference could be that the one participant with a negative attitude didn't have any children on her own, making her argue in favour of an opinion that might change if she would get children. This is however less likely since this participant already lived in a home with a child, and appeared to have thought a lot about this topic, revealing several alternative child raising techniques, and arguments why these should be favoured. Her negative attitude could be a sign of a realistic variance that can be seen among the South African population regarding corporal punishment (Dawes et al., 2005).

4.3.1 Division of the population

This study indicates that there might be a diversity regarding attitude and use of corporal punishment, in the group consisting of black, Xhosa women living with a low socio-economic

status. This suggests a need of an awareness, to not become blinded or pre-assume similarities of a certain group, when looking at the topic corporal punishment in South Africa. It is often practiced to divide the countries population into groups based on either cultural or socioeconomic characteristics such as black/ coloured/ white, Zulu/ Xhosa/ Venda, or rich/ middle class/ poor, in South Africa. This was also done in the big prevalence study by Dawes et al. (2005). A reason for this is the fact that these groups differ tremendously in way of living, cultural norms, religion and language. Another rationale to divide the population into subgroups is recent South African history. A division of the population based on colour (black/ coloured/ black) was the most prominent aim of the apartheid government in 1948-1994 (Nationalencyclopedia). This study points toward the necessity of a careful approach if division into subgroups is being considered within a South African sample. Not to pre-assume similarities based on a small sample, even if several other characteristics are being shared. This is based on the result that the participants in this study shared several contextual factors but still differed in attitude and use of corporal punishment.

4.4 Level of reflection

“I don't think corporal punishment is right or wrong”

“I don't think corporal punishment is right or wrong, but I do it almost always on my girls”.
(Claire)

Claire communicated a strong faith in the usefulness of corporal punishment, without any clear arguments why. This could be an indication of a low level of reflection. The level of reflection was explored through several variables, such as consistency in answers, answers to questions like if they thought about this topic or discussed it with other people. Level of reflection was also analysed through the ability to take other people's perspective, and on their willingness to reflect on their own opinions and behaviour in the interview situation.

“Why do you think you slap your child?” At first Anne respond with comments like *“I haven't thought about this, I really don't know.”* (Anne)

Anne first respond saying she doesn't know the answer, given some time or optional questions she always ended up coming with answers. This could indicate that a lot of her use of corporal punishment is based on habit, it could also mean that Anne has an interest in the topic, she want to understand more, a third possibility could be that she wants to be a good participant,

answering questions that was given. This is less likely since the interviewer several times reassured Anne when she didn't know the answer that it was ok.

“Do you believe everyone think like you”? Diane: “I don’t think so. There are people who will always think that they must hit their children hard or send them to the Eastern Cape, where they can grow up” (a rural area in South Africa, where many black people from Cape Town send their children to grown up amongst relatives). (/Diane)

Diane doesn't seem to have a problem taking other people's perspective. This is a quality Diane show several times along the interview. Diane gives the impression of being reflected both on her own and others use of corporal punishment

“Even when I was doing grade twelve they (her parents) used to hit me. I grew up like that. That’s why with my baby I got angry, because it is still inside me.”

Here is Diane reflecting on her own behaviour and how it is linked to past experiences, making it explicit how her own feelings of anger sometimes make her use corporal punishment. It is a topic she seems to have thought a lot about; both as a mother and when she was a child.

What could at first be understood as a very positive attitude, a very consistent approval of the use of corporal punishment, appeared instead, through a more in depth look at the interviews, to be a high level of reflection regarding their use of corporal punishment. A low level of reflection seemed to indicate a more frequent use, with more harsh forms for corporal punishment. It could be argued that it is level of reflection that explain the lower prevalence of corporal punishment among educated parents, which can be seen both internationally and in South Africa (Dawes et al., 2005; Grogan-Kaylor & Otis, 2007).

There is a higher probability that the attitude will guide a person's behaviour if they are aware of their own attitude and if it is in line with the norm of their culture (Passer & Smith, 2007). This was in line with findings from these interviews if one assumes that awareness is corresponding with level of reflection. These findings suggest that level of reflection might be a very important tool into a better understanding of the use of corporal punishment in South

Africa. Level of reflection could possibly be the most effective instrument if abandonment would be aimed for.

4.5 Summary of research findings

Founded in the research questions, a summary of the information that emerged through the interviews are here presented.

4.5.1 What is the participants' attitude towards corporal punishment?

Four of the participants disclosed a positive attitude, agreeing about the need for corporal punishment. Their attitude was however influenced by several variables, such as age of the child, definition of corporal punishment and access to alternative strategies.

One of the participants disclosed a negative attitude. This attitude was expressed in a consistent manner, disapproving on the use of corporal punishment regardless other variables.

4.5.2 Does the participant use corporal punishment, and in what way?

Four participants revealed that they used corporal punishment on their children. Their use seemed to be affected by age of the child, access to alternative strategies, and level of reflection. What kind of impact these variables had on behaviour varied among the participants. Low levels of reflection was associated with a more frequent and severe use of corporal punishment, higher levels of reflection was associated with less use of corporal punishment.

The participant with a negative attitude did not have any children. Based on her answers it was still assumed that her attitude would guide future behaviour.

4.5.3 Does the attitude and behaviour correlate?

The attitude and behaviour among the participants using corporal punishment did not correlate consistently. Attitude, behaviour and the discrepancy between the two appeared to be influenced by several variables.

It was not possible to conclude if there was a correlation between attitude and behaviour among the participant disclosing a negative attitude, since she only spoke about a hypothetical behaviour regarding a future child. Looking at her answers in light of theory on attitudes, it

seemed however likely that her attitude and behaviour would correlate, since her attitude most probably would guide her behaviour.

5. DISCUSSION

Looking at corporal punishment in South Africa through the use of qualitative interviews gave new insight to the topic. These interviews gave an in-depth understanding to the inner world of the participants, both regarding their attitude and use of corporal punishment. This was in line with the aim of this study. The results were based on a small sample from one cultural group in South Africa. It is therefore not possible to make any type of generalisations. However, these results could possibly serve as a guide towards future research on corporal punishment in South Africa.

5.1 Implications

Based on the analysis four possible loop-holes were identified. All four seem important to be aware of in work concerning corporal punishment in South Africa.

5.1.1 Definition of corporal punishment

Results from this study indicate that a broad definition of corporal punishment might lead to unreliable answers, if the meaning behind the word is not explored, since both age and severity tend to influence the use and attitude towards corporal punishment. This is in accordance with international research, pointing towards the importance of clear and exploring approaches regarding the definition of corporal punishment, also in South Africa.

5.1.2 Difference between attitude and behaviour

Attitude and behaviour did not consistently correlate in this study. This indicates a need for an awareness to both dimensions in the work with corporal punishment, since both attitude and behaviour seemed to affect use and outcome of corporal punishment somewhat independently. They seemed to rely on several variables, suggesting a need for several types of intervention in work regarding corporal punishment in South Africa.

5.1.3 Variance within the group

The study demonstrated a big variance in a group that shared a lot of contextual factors, thought to influence the use and attitude towards corporal punishment. In a South African context, this big variance highlights the need of not pre-assuming characteristics to a group that in other ways appear homogenic.

5.1.4 Level of reflection

Level of reflection emerged as the one variable most consistently predicting level of severity and frequency in the use of corporal punishment, among the participants. These results identified level of reflection as possibly one of the most important tools in future work with corporal punishment in South Africa

Attention to these possible loop-holes would limit the risk of making wrong type of assumptions, and could therefore guide more appropriate interventions regarding corporal punishment.

5.2 Strength and limitations

Results from these interviews appear relevant either if corporal punishment was to be forbidden or if only severe and abusive forms for corporal punishment was sought to be thwarted.

5.2.1 Qualitative research methods

Because this study was qualitative in its form, it was possible to meet the person behind the expectancies of a certain group and to hear the personal meaning of a word. In other words it was possible to listen to the story behind the statistics, which gave a depth to the information being prevailed.

At the same time, choice of method led to a small sample of participants. Therefore it is not possible to conclude if the results speak of South Africa in general, the group of black Xhosa women, or if they were barely a reflection of the people participating in this study. This study doesn't say anything about fathers, children or other racial groups' relation to corporal punishment in the South African context.

It can be argued anyhow, that this limited number of qualitative interviews gave a deep insight into the subject. This insight might have been difficult to obtain if quantitative instruments would have been used instead. Even so, it's no doubt that it could have been useful with more participants. This small sample was partly due to the big distance between researcher and participants (Norway- South Africa) and the forced late change in method obtaining participants (See ethical considerations). When such a small sample was used it

seemed better to use a homogenic group, being able to get an indication of individual patterns between individuals already sharing a lot of characteristics.

Both more qualitative interviews, accompanied with other research methods, such as quantitative and longitudinal, could be useful in the exploration of corporal punishment. They would most probably gain a more complete picture of the South African population. Even so it appears that these interviews have given indications to arenas of importance.

5.2.2 Culture

Another possible limitation of this study was how the researcher came as an outsider, not sharing the same culture as the participants. It could make the researcher unaware of relevant cultural information or making the participants hold back relevant information. The researcher had been living and working in this environment for 2 years, possibly making her aware of several significant cultural cues. On the other hand, coming as an outsider could also be considered a strength. Participants might have been clearer with someone from a different culture, not assuming a previous knowledge. The possible limitation caused by coming from a different culture could still be reflected in the results.

It is always a risk that the participants might feel the need to answer questions in a specific manner. Coming as an outsider might feel less threatening for the informants, since the researcher won't stay in the community after the study is done. Information was shared about own behaviour, which they on one hand disapproved on and felt bad about, and on the other hand still admitted doing. This could be a proof of their willingness to open up in an honest way.

5.2.3 Language

English was the language used in the interviews. Both the participants and the researcher had English as their second language. This could potentially have put limitations to the expression and reception of content and small nuances. On the other hand, since both participants and researcher had an accent, an environment of acceptance towards language mistakes seemed to have been created, making the content the primary focus.

The use of a translator was discharged because the benefits of talking directly to the women were perceived as higher. In combination with audio-recording and careful questioning the limitations of the use of a different language was thought to diminish.

5.3 Recommendations for future research

This study points toward several arenas where future research could be useful.

The results from this study could benefit from further exploration. Bigger sample, quantitative and longitudinal research methods would broaden the level of knowledge regarding these findings, opening up for the possibility to make generalisations to a bigger population.

Furthermore, studies where researcher and participants share cultural characteristics and same language could also be highly useful.

Different groups of participants would also be valuable, such as other cultural groups, fathers, children and other people relevant to the use of corporal punishment such as grandparents, siblings, teachers etc in research on corporal punishment.

Exploration of negative attitudes and people who doesn't use corporal punishment would also be important for future research, since this knowledge could suggest tools that would be useful to make people use less corporal punishment.

The study did not say anything about the outcome of corporal punishment among children in South Africa. This is another arena that appears important for future research.

Comparisons between different countries seem important to reach a better understanding regarding corporal punishment.

6. CONCLUSION

To be able to keep our children safe, it is essential to have knowledge about what would make them safe. Several studies indicate that corporal punishment can lead to several negative outcomes. The aim of this study was to gain more knowledge about the topic, in South Africa. The majority in this sample shared how they use corporal punishment and communicated a mainly positive attitude. Attitude and use of corporal punishment did not correlate consistently, and both seemed to be influenced by several variables. Four implications from the findings were identified, 1. It seems important with a clear definition of corporal punishment, 2. It appears to be a difference between attitude and behaviour, 3. A variance was evident within a group that was homogenic on many variables, both regarding attitude and behaviour, 4. Level of reflection appears to correlate with frequency and severity levels. More research is needed before any generalisation to the bigger population can be made. Further explorations of these areas seem important, as they could be part of guiding the work with issues concerning corporal punishment in South Africa.

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APPENDIX 1.

Comments to the interview guide:

The guide was created to lead the questions. However the order of the questions were guided by how the conversation developed, and not by the way they were set up in the interview guide. The formulation of the questions were also depending on previous answers.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Small introduction of myself and the study

Definition of corporal punishment

Confidentiality

Use of recorder

Anything you would like to ask before we start

Opening questions

Do you have any children?

How old are they?

Boy or a girl?

Do you ever use corporal punishment?

If your child/ children is/ are misbehaving, do you ever slap or in any other way physically reprimand your child/ children?

How do you teach your child a lesson?

If yes:

Can you describe a typical situation?

What happened?

Why do you think you used corporal punishment here?

Do you always react like that? When/ when not?

Would you react the same way if the same situation appeared today? Why/ why not?

Does it depend on what the child has done?

Does it differ depending on the age of the child?

Does it differ depending on your mood? (E.g. Tired/ Angry.)

Anything else it depends on?

Do you think this is the best way of doing it? Why/ why not?

If you wouldn't have slapped/ hit (etc.) in this situation what do you would have happened?

Can you describe last time it happened?

Is this a typical situation? Why/ why not?

How did it make you feel?

Would you react the same way if the same situation appeared today? Why/ why not?

Do you think this is the best way of doing it? Why/ why not?

If you wouldn't have slapped/ hit (etc.) in this situation what do you would have happened?

Own exposure

As a child, did people use corporal punishment on you?

Can you describe a typical situation?

What happened?

Do you remember how it made you feel?

Attitude

Do you think corporal punishment is the best way of disciplining/ any time you think corporal punishment is the best way of disciplining?

Why/ why not?

Have you always thought like this?

Do you think other people think the same?

Why do you think people use corporal punishment?

Is it the same for you?

Is this a topic you discuss with other people?

Is this a topic you think about? What do you think/ when/ how much?

Do you know anyone who doesn't use corporal punishment?

What do you think would happen if you didn't use corporal punishment?

Is there any time it's better to not slap/ hit your child?

What can you do instead?

Any other way?

When would you use these strategies?

Where did you learn them?

End

Anything more you think I should hear about before we end?

Anything you would like to ask before we end?

If no:

Why not?

What do you think are the consequences of corporal punishment?

Never?

Age/ gender/ type of problem etc.

What do you do instead?

Explore: last time you child was misbehaving, what did you do?

Do you think this is the best way of doing it? Why/ why not?

What do you think would happen if you used corporal punishment?

Where did you learn this?

Any other way you could discipline/ teach/ stop your child from misbehaving?

Own exposure

As a child, did people use corporal punishment on you?

Can you describe a typical situation?

What happened?

Do you remember how it made you feel?

Attitude

Any time you think corporal punishment is a good way of disciplining?

Why/ why not?

Have you always thought like this?

Do you believe other people think the same?

Why do you think people use corporal punishment?

Is this a topic you discuss with other people?

Is this a topic you think about? What do you think/ when/ how much?

Do you anyone else who doesn't use corporal punishment?

End

Anything more you think I should hear about before we end?

Anything you would like to ask before we end?

