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# Understanding Teachers' Childhood Exposure to Corporal Punishment and the Abandonment of this Practice: A Thematic Analysis

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# Understanding Teachers' Childhood Exposure to Corporal Punishment and the Abandonment of this Practice: A Thematic Analysis

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A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

2023

## Plagiarism Declaration

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**Title: UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS' CHILDHOOD EXPOSURE TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND THE ABANDONMENT OF THIS PRACTICE: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS.**

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## Abstract

In 1996, teachers' views about school discipline were challenged as they had to work their way into a new world of teaching that did not allow for corporal punishment to be used. Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers who are currently in the teaching profession in the era of banned corporal punishment have been exposed to it themselves as children. Using a thematic analysis, the current research sought to understand the perceptions of teachers who have been exposed to childhood corporal punishment and their mental process involved in abandoning this disciplinary practice as teachers. A qualitative methodology, by means of semi-structured interviews as a data collection method in a secondary school in the Johannesburg South District of Gauteng, was used where eleven teachers participated. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis was utilized in the data analysis and the findings indicate that teachers' abandonment of corporal punishment is a result of superficial transformation in response to policies and rules banning the use of corporal punishment in schools. Although this cohort of teachers has abandoned corporal punishment, the study found that they still believe in its efficacy, and they struggle to integrate alternatives to corporal punishment into their learner disciplinary methods. The findings of this study have implications for the Department of Education to help teachers understand the adverse physical and psychological effects of corporal punishment as including why it is considered a form of violence. Further, this study recommends that teachers be both consulted and trained in alternative forms of discipline in the classroom.


**Keywords:** Corporal punishment, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, School discipline, Learner behaviour, Department of Education, ATCP, ZPD

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## List of Abbreviations

ATCP- Alternatives to Corporal Punishment

DoE- Department of Education

SASA- South African Schools Act

SGB- School Governing Body

ZPD- Zone of Proximal Development

# Chapter 1: Background of the Study

## 1.1 Introduction

A conducive schooling environment that allows for learning and teaching coupled with the safety of all those who occupy the school establishment informs the goals of school discipline. In 1996, teachers' views about school discipline were challenged as they had to work their way into a new world of teaching that did not allow for corporal punishment to be used (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). In light of this, there are teachers who continue using corporal punishment in spite of its ban. For the purpose of this research, the attention is on teachers who have abandoned the use of corporal punishment. The main aim of this research was to understand teachers who have been exposed to childhood corporal punishment and their ability to abandon the practice using a thematic analysis. Using Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as a theoretical framework is suitable as it takes into consideration the decisions that human beings make are influenced by their context (Stetsenko, 2003). In addition to the main aim, the research also sought to probe into teachers' insights of their experience of corporal punishment and the procedures that they take to ensure learner discipline.

The background of the study is provided in this chapter by firstly stating the problem, delineating the aim, the primary and secondary research questions, and the rationale of the study. Lastly, the conclusion presents a summation of the chapters in the entire research report.

## 1.2 Problem statement

The most common form of violence against children is corporal punishment, however it is frequently viewed as a form of disciplinary action rather than violence. Despite a country-wide 11 percentage point decline in the use of corporal punishment in schools from 2009 to 2018, nearly 6% of children experienced frequent physical punishment at the hands of their teachers in 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2021). This indicates that despite the ban of corporal punishment, its use continues however not much research has been done on teachers that do not practice it. Therefore, in-depth understanding that informs on the reasons behind teachers' abandonment of corporal punishment as a disciplinary method is required. In essence, the intrapsychological transformation that teachers have or have not undergone to abandon corporal punishment. Mental processes like perception, decision making, agency, memory and self-regulation require exploration using in-depth interviews. It is important to note that for the purpose of this research, psychological and

mental processes will be used interchangeably. This research will add on to the current knowledge as to whether teachers understand why corporal punishment was banned and whether they would still advocate for its use had it not been banned. This is important in that it will inform on how the teachers have responded to both the ban of corporal punishment and the alternatives to corporal punishment as to their effectiveness.

### 1.3 Research Aim

Using a thematic analysis, the current research sought to understand teachers who have been exposed to childhood corporal punishment and their mental process involved in abandoning this disciplinary practice as teachers.

### 1.4 Research Questions

#### Primary Research Question

What are the mental processes involved in teachers who have experienced childhood corporal punishment abandoning this disciplinary practice?

#### Secondary Research Questions

- How do teachers perceive their childhood exposure to corporal punishment?
- What procedures are teachers using to ensure learner discipline in the absence of corporal punishment?

### 1.5 Rationale

An orderly surrounding is a significant requirement for learning and teaching that is effective to ensue. In light of this, the misconduct of learners seems to be an agitation for teachers in public education (Moyo et al., 2014). In particular, South African teachers face multiple forms of learner misconduct, which have increased with the ban of corporal punishment (Shaikhnag & Assan, 2014). Important to note is that anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers who are currently in the teaching profession in the era of banned corporal punishment have been exposed to it themselves as children (Mayisela, 2017, 2018, 2020; Morrell, 2001). Govender and Sookrajh (2014) state that before 1996, corporal punishment was perceived as a needed and normal practice that ensured discipline. It is for this reason that there are teachers who feel that discipline that is outside of corporal punishment is inadequate and ineffective (Moyo et al., 2014). Previous research on corporal punishment focused on the teachers who use or prefer corporal punishment even after its

ban. With this in mind, the current research focused on those who have chosen to abandon corporal punishment as a disciplinary method in schools. In turn, the study may inform whether the ban, and the provided alternatives to corporal punishment, is effective. In addition to this, it aims to inform policymakers, teachers and other stakeholders in teaching and learning regarding the mental processes involved in teachers abandoning corporal punishment, and which disciplinary interventions can be implemented to reduce learners' misconduct.

### 1.6 Outline of the Report

The first chapter highlights the introduction of the research report, which includes the research aims, research questions and the rationale. Next on is the literature review chapter where the initial section of this chapter reviews literature on school discipline, the ban of corporal punishment, teachers' exposure to corporal punishment when they were learners and the kinds of disciplinary methods that they engage in now. The next section of the second chapter offers Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as the framework that underpins this study. The third chapter presents and outlines the methodology for the implementation of this study. Incorporated in this chapter are the procedures that the researcher followed to select participants, which was a voluntary sample, an interview as the tool used to collect data, how the data was analysed using thematic analysis and ethical considerations. The fourth chapter presents the identified themes from the analysed data as responses to the primary and secondary research questions of this study. In addition to this, findings are also related to the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework. Finally, the conclusion is presented in the last chapter, while discussing the limitations, recommendations and implications related to the research.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

## 2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter offered the background and introduction to the current study of understanding teachers' childhood exposure to corporal punishment and the abandonment of this practice. In this chapter, literature that is pertinent to this study is reviewed and separated into two sections. The literature review being the first section, attempts to explore conclusions of scholars and experts regarding the topic of study, while the theoretical framework is discussed in the second section of the current chapter.

### *2.1.1 Defining mental processes*

A mental process is a set of internal mechanisms that take place regularly but not always in a predictable manner in order to bring about changes in behavior, emotion, or thought (Williams et al, 2009). When used to describe changes in behavior in individual organisms, psychological processes are defined as a sequence of planned changes in the state of the individual and its surroundings. According to Vygotsky (1978), humans are born with basic mental functions which are memory, attention, sensation, and perception. Social and cultural environments provide the opportunity to employ these fundamental abilities to grow and eventually acquire mental functions that are higher. Thus, social others play a crucial role in the growth of psychological processes because only adults who have already undergone cultural enculturation can set up a child's appropriation of the social group's cultural heritage (McLeod, 2014). Only then are specifically human, culturally mediated forms of psychological life made possible. It is for this reason that the study of psychological processes in humans must be situated in relation to historically accumulated forms of human activity, which are the closest points of contact with the human condition(Stetsenko, 2020).

## 2.2 Literature Review

### 2.2.1 Introduction

This section presents and discusses literature that is applicable to school discipline with the aim of understanding the intrapsychological transformation behind teachers' abandonment of the use of corporal punishment. Guided by the research rationale, the literature review has been structured in a way that allows for this report to discuss important theory and current trends regarding

understanding teachers' childhood experiences of corporal punishment and the abandonment of the practice. The inclusion of both international and national literature highlights how the current research not only positions itself nationally but rather seeks to add to a body of existing knowledge.

Firstly, a definition of both school discipline and corporal punishment is provided to give an understanding of the scope of the current research and how it has framed both concepts. This is followed by discussing the effects of corporal punishment that are deemed as the motives behind the ban of corporal punishment. Further, this literature review discusses research that has been conducted on the experiences that teachers have had with corporal punishment in their childhoods and why they have abandoned it as a method of discipline. Lastly, it explores the disciplinary practices that they have adopted as part of their teaching strategies.

### 2.2.2 Defining School Discipline

The learning process in schools is affected by various factors, but essential to successful teaching and learning is school discipline. School discipline is defined by the school guidelines and activities that are taken by the school staff to prevent learners from undesirable behaviors. In addition to this, these same guidelines provide teachers with approaches of managing learners in class (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). In other words, the school, like any system, has rules and when these are broken by learners, they are subjected to discipline. The intention of instilling discipline is to allow for learners to be able to not only learn but also reflect on the notion that every action has a consequence, as discipline strategies are normally communicated beforehand (Moyo et al., 2014). Equally important is that school discipline is intended to have a positive influence and yield positive results. In essence, for teaching and learning that is successful to occur, discipline that is appropriate should be present.

In certain cases, corporal punishment has been connected to school discipline, which is influenced by the notion that a teacher at school is a replacement of the parent (Mohammed et al., 2014). The term *in loco parentis,* which refers to someone who takes parental responsibilities, is common in the school system (Gershoff, 2002). Over and above having to ensure the effective delivery of the curriculum, the responsibilities of teachers in low and medium socio-economic context have various implications. To exemplify, it is a common occurrence for parents to use corporal punishment in the South African context which would make it is also tolerable for a teacher to do so (Mahlangu et al., 2021). Although there is no evidence of this, teachers believe that in recent

years, learners have been uncontrollable and therefore they have destabilised teaching and learning (Grobbelaar & Jones, 2020). Be that as it may, it has become normal for articles to be published on newspapers regarding the rising conducts of disciplinary problems in public secondary schools. To exemplify, an incident occurred where learners allegedly burnt down their school hall in protest of exams (Shange, 2021). In the next section, corporal punishment in the school context is explained.

### 2.2.3 Defining Corporal Punishment

In accordance with Straus (2000), corporal punishment pertains to suffering being inflicted on the learner with the purpose to rectify or to instil control over them with the use of this physical force. In other words, when learners engage in disruptive behaviour that is socially unacceptable, there are physical unpleasant consequences (Shaikhnag & Assan, 2014). To exemplify, offences such as talking to a friend during a lesson, not answering correctly, arriving late to class and not completing homework are usually considered as forms of disobedience. The physical force may involve hitting learners on their buttocks or hands with a cane or a wooden stick, or hitting their faces with an open hand (Gomba, 2015). Important to remember is that corporal punishment is used with the intention of resulting in behavioural change and not necessarily to negatively impact the child it is directed to. In addition to this, it has been suggested that in the presence of corporal punishment, children are controlled and results in learning that is effective (Marais & Meier, 2010). The implication here is that the users of corporal punishment deem it to be effective and they have no intention to abuse the children, although this does not mean that corporal punishment cannot be used in an abusive manner to coerce the child.

For some time now, corporal punishment has been linked to school discipline, although, as will be shown later, it has certain ramifications for not only the learners but teachers as well (Grobbelaar & Jones, 2020). In light of the debates in research that speaks to the consequences of corporal punishment, however, a belief that the effects on learners should be viewed as ranging from not harmful to abusive exists (Gershoff, 2010). This means that while there may be children who can be exposed to corporal punishment and not be affected temporarily or in the long-term, there might be others who are impacted at different severity levels.

### 2.2.4 Effects of Corporal Punishment

Irrespective of whether effects are long-term or short-term, these can be categorised as physical and psychological. Physical side effects indicate that these can be seen on the learner's body, which, as mentioned above, can range from non-harmful to abusive. Although there are cases of corporal punishment that is abusive, there is inadequate evidence to show any kind of relationship between corporal punishment and physical abuse (Gudyanga et al., 2014). Psychological effects can be considered to be mostly long-term as they may alter how an individual thinks and behaves. The intended effect of corporal punishment is ussually for it to be temporary instead of resulting in long-term behavioural effects. As Elbla (2012) argues, learners might show the required behaviour change only when the teacher who has disciplined them is present, and fails to sustain it when the teacher is not present. In addition to this, corporal punishment has been found as being applied to the same children, for the same offence, suggesting that usually the offences are not in the control of the child, but due to unidentified internal or socio-economic challenges they experience (Elba, 2012; Mahlangu et al., 2021).

#### Physical Effects of Corporal Punishment.

Considered as one major consequence of corporal punishment relates to the potential of injury as it involves physical force coming from an adult who is stronger than a child (Gershoff, 2010). With this in mind, corporal punishment may increase the risk for physical abuse in the case of non-compliance from a child since violence lies on a continuum from minor to severe (Heeks et al., 2020). In Kenya, death that results from corporal punishment has been detailed and it is these cases that have led to the need to prohibit corporal punishment being used (Kiman et al., 2012). Children who grow up being beaten are likely to beat others when in conflict (Grobbelaar & Jones, 2020). This outlines how the use of corporal punishment validates hitting as an attempt to solve problems and therefore further propagates a violent society. Examining the effects of corporal punishment, it is imperative to bear in mind that the child's experience of education will be impacted. Talwar et al. (2011) found that an association exists among the experience of corporal punishment in a school context and below standard scholastic outcomes.

#### Psychological Effects of Corporal Punishment

The psychological impact of corporal punishment was illustrated through a case study where a teacher's encounter with corporal punishment led to childhood trauma which further resulted in her using defences such as splitting and identification with the perpetrator (Mayisela, 2020). It is as vital to comprehend that the learner has increased stress levels before, during and after the experience of corporal punishment as it is an anxiety-provoking interaction. This explains how frequent experiences of corporal punishment increases the likelihood of experiencing depression and anxiety (Gershoff, 2010).

A study that analysed the outcomes of corporal punishment and psychological treatment on learners' behaviour and learning indicated that learners who are exposed to corporal punishment have a high possibility of using violence with their family and friends in the future in order to elicit compliance (Shabbaz & Shaban, 2007). Although corporal punishment is said to be used with the intent that it would result in behavioural change, there has been no direct link that has been found between the two but rather that it results in behavioural problems and fear of the teacher who uses it (Ahman et al., 2013; Laurence Lwo & Yuan, 2011). With the global understanding that children are humans and therefore their human rights in a democratic society must be respected, the ban of the use of corporal punishment in South African schools was introduced.

### 2.2.5 Ban of Corporal Punishment in South Africa

Before curriculum reform that occurred in 1996, teachers were placed as authorities of knowledge and this was maintained using corporal punishment (Govender & Sookrajh, 2014). The Constitution affirms that "everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person which includes the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way" (Republic of South Africa, 1996a, p. 12). Taking from this, and in consideration of human rights, discipline that is constructive should be emphasised. Insofar as schools have their own rules, they are also part of a system and therefore school rules and discipline guidelines need to be in accordance with the national legislation. By using corporal punishment, which can be considered degrading and inhumane, teachers are violating their learners' rights. There is a great history of how South Africa became committed to the human rights movement as well as joining the United Nations which has influenced the ban of corporal punishment (Mayisela, 2018). Important to note is that South Africa is a participant of the United Nation Convention on the Right of a Child at a global level, and at the regional level, a signatory of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, an

African Union charter (Grobbelaar & Jones, 2020). This further explains how these global and regional policies have impacted the South African Schools Act and other South African legislation. The South African Schools Act (SASA) (84 of 1996, s.10) states that:

> (1) "no person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner;
>
> (2) any person who contravenes subsection 1 is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence which could be imposed for assault".

The aforementioned indicates that teachers are supposed to make discipline that seeks to avoid violation of learners' rights and is not punishment-oriented. With reference to the date when the law banning corporal punishment was passed, learners who were in school prior to this time had been exposed to corporal punishment and therefore have different experiences of schooling and discipline. Important to note is that despite the ban in 1996, corporal punishment has continuously been used by teachers unlawfully. Segalo and Rambuda (2018) found that even though the teachers know of the abolishment of corporal punishment and its harmful outcomes on learners, there is preference to administer it.

### 2.2.6 Teachers' Childhood Experiences of Exposure to Corporal Punishment

A study that examined teachers' insights of their earlier encounters with corporal punishment and their insights of their disciplinary methods after its ban found that they experienced corporal punishment seeing it was a needed and normal practice (Govender & Sookrajh, 2014). Moreover, although they did not enjoy the experience, teachers considered corporal punishment as needed to show power dynamics in the school context and helped them differentiate between right and wrong. In essence, corporal punishment was viewed as a strategy that was effective in instilling obedience in schools (Marais & Meier, 2010). The educators also spoke to how corporal punishment was normal even at home and therefore never saw fault when being exposed to it as learners at school as their parents would tell the teachers to hit their children to instil discipline (Mayisela, 2017).

Important to realise is that in Africa corporal punishment could be culturally embedded and therefore its use had been normalised (Gomba, 2015; Morrel, 2001). Consequently, the preference for corporal punishment to be used after it was banned is complex and varies across different teachers who themselves experienced it while they were learners. There are teachers who

articulated dissatisfaction about the abolition of corporal punishment, believing that discipline without corporal punishment will result in the deterioration of the African culture as it is a western concept (Laurence Lwo & Yuan, 2011). By the same token, there are teachers who still use corporal punishment as they feel that learners are taking advantage of them with the awareness that corporal punishment has been abolished resulting in a rapid increase of learner misconduct (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010; Yeboah, 2020). In light of this, there is a need to explore the various explanations given by teachers as to why they abandoned the use of corporal punishment.

### 2.2.7 Reasons Behind Teachers' Abandonment of Corporal Punishment

In contrast to teachers who still prefer corporal punishment, there are teachers who prefer not to use this form of discipline even though they have been exposed to it. Sekiwu and Naluwemba (2014) state that behaviour that is problematic only occurs because of particular precursors and that if those conditions are changed then the problem will not occur. As an illustration, if a learner tends to answer a question incorrectly because they do not understand the question, then repeating or explaining the question may result in the learner answering correctly. This highlights that corporal punishment may not be effective if the learner's cause of behaviour is not properly examined. Gudyanga et al. (2014) points out that if corporal punishment is depended on over time, it cannot effectively help the learner with applying problem-solving skills and being able to constrain themselves from engaging in unacceptable behaviour at school.

Mtsweni (2008) found that teachers have realised that corporal punishment leads to fear instead of respect and argued that learners only behave in an appropriate manner when the teacher is close by and therefore do not entirely change their behaviour. Teachers who have been experienced corporal punishment also believed that it perpetuated a violent society in that it played a role in their interpersonal relationships with other learners as they started understanding hitting as a way to solve problems (Laurence Lwo & Yuan, 2011). This indicates that teachers do not desire for their learners to have exposure to what they experienced themselves and sought to make a better evironment for learning. Contrary to the above mentioned, there are teachers who have reported feeling disempowered as the levels of misbehaviour by learners has increased drastically since the ban of corporal punishment (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). This not only highlights the opposing opinions on what the abolishment of corporal punishment signifies for learners but for teachers in the learning environment as well. At the same time, there are teachers who prefer not to use

corporal punishment out of fear of breaking the law or being fired (Siddiqui et al., 2020) and therefore they use alternative strategies to instil discipline.

### 2.2.8 Disciplinary Strategies Used by Teachers

For teachers, the ban of corporal punishment called for complete transformation, which was a move from an oppressive and corrective relationship with learners to one that rewards and encourages good behavior. The manual, “The alternatives to corporal punishment ” was presented by the Department of Education (DoE) in 2000. The purpose of this manual (ATCP) is to help teachers to come up with alternative methods of maintaining discipline in schools (Department of Education, 2000). It summarises the legislation on the abolition of corporal punishment and provides recommendations on alternatives to corporal punishment. The guidelines include being ready for lessons, having self-discipline, enusring that there is learner stimulation and having class rules. Despite these alternative strategies being laid out in the manual, teachers have reported struggling to implement them as they have either received little or no training at all (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018).

Important to realise is that when these alternative strategies are implemented, they are expected to result in the same outcome that was initially intended by corporal punishment, that is to instil discipline. Serame and colleagues (2013) investigated methods that teachers use to uphold discipline in a secondary school and found that having a system of classroom rules, consulting parents of the learners, and handing learners over to the principal in severe cases to be strategies that are effective. In addition to this, detention systems, withdrawal of privileges and community service have also been found to encourage cooperation between teachers and learners (Ngubane, 2000). Since corporal punishment is seemingly prevalent in the South African context, it might indicate the ineffectiveness of the introduced ATCP. Several explanations for the apparent absence of success could be as a result of teachers not having the necessary skills to implement them effectively and that non-compliance after using these still continues (Ntuli & Machaisa, 2014). With this in mind, it is important to know the reason behind the strategies that teachers choose to use, whether following the guidelines provided or their own preference. The theoretical framework that follows assists in describing and comprehending teachers’ intrapsychological transformation in realtion to the abandonment of the utilization of corporal punishment. Discussed further in the next chapter is Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development  as is central to this transformation.

## 2.3 Theoretical Framework

Existing knowledge coupled with ideas that are previously formed regarding phenomena that is complex are often embedded in particular ways of thinking and particular worldviews, which speaks to theory. When it comes to research, theory influences the research design and has inferences for how data is analysed and interpreted while suggesting how the researched phenomena can be understood (Grant & Osanloo, 2016; Moira, 2010). Using the theoretical framework chosen in this study helped in refining research goals, developing aligned research questions, choosing the appropriate methodology, identifying possible threats to validity, and demonstrating the relevance of the study. The following segment will speak to cultural-historical understandings as underpinned by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and how it relates to the intrapsychological transformation of teachers regarding their abandonment of corporal punishment.

### 2.3.1 Vygotsky's sociocultural theory

For this research project, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory will be employed to show that the usage of corporal punishment developed from cultural practices is impacted by the social, political and historical context. The above-mentioned theory explains how there is an association between a person's mental processes and how they interact with cultural, historical and institutional spaces (Foot, 2014; Stetsenko, 2003). Through constant interactions with Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, Vygotskian scholars, Leont'ev and Luria further spoke to the importance of cultural-historical understandings to development (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004).

Common to these scholars is the notion that a human mind is impacted by the activities in which one engages in using cultural tools. Vygotsky asserts that social practices emerge from the community as a collective and that practices include child-rearing practices such as discipline (Mayisela, 2017). To explore the concepts related to Vygotsky's sociocultural tehory is helpful in understanding the effectiveness of this theory in analysing humans' lives as mediated by culture and history. The central concept of this theory is that activity takes place in a specific cultural context and relates the evolving activities in time.

### 2.3.2 Assumptions and Concepts of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory

'Culture' makes reference to activities and practices as informed by a collective group of people, and being embedded in history indicates that it can change over time (Foot, 2014). Therefore, activity that can be considered as what individuals do as a collective is moulded by both culture and history. Equally important is that cultural tools that are used in an activity are informed by the social, historical and political context. Engeström (1987) stated that in activity, the actor who desires a certain outcome uses various methods in order to achieve that outcome, therefore, in order to make sense of the acts of individuals, one has to know the bigger objective backing the activity. Important to note is that tools that are used in order to achieve a certain goal are adapted over time with the changing culture (Nussbaumer, 2012). To put it differently, tools in communities are put in place in order to solve problems that the society comes across and since these are used by the collective community, they result in a culture (Sannino & Engeström, 2018). Corporal punishment is considered a tool in this study.

In light of this, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has grounding assumptions that help explain the activity theory as the link between the mind of an individual and how they engage with other human beings (Mayisela, 2017). Firstly, humans act as a collective and also learn by engaging in an activity. Followed by this, tools are created, used and adapted by humans in order to learn and communicate with each other. Lastly, the collective is fundamental to the procedure of creating and explicate meaning in their communication. This outlines that tools are created at a certain point in time, and modified with time as different needs, values and norms of culture arise (Roth et al., 2012). Vygotsky's sociocultural framework can be utilised as a tool to aid in understanding activity systems, which shows teachers' mental processes as they continue to practice or have abandoned corporal punishment in South Africa (Beatty & Feldman, 2012). Therefore, corporal punishment as an activity driven by motive ensures that the child is accepted in the cultural and social context that they find themselves in. The goal, therefore, is to prevent the child from misbehaving or being labelled as unregulated. In addition to this, as a collective activity, corporal punishment has multiple members of a community with different roles who themselves are transformed by the same activity (Gretshel et al., 2015).

Important to note is that rules in society may be stated clearly and in detail or not expressed directly to society. As is with all communities, schools have rules, norms and values that impact on how

various individuals in the school community behave (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). Therefore, these norms, practices and values in a school frame the content of the minds of those who are part of it as the dominant culture is created through similar ways of thinking. Important to realise is that corporal punishment is embedded in history and therefore can be considered a cultural practice that has developed from historical and social development (Stetsenko, 2003). However, inside and amongst activity systems it is likely that contradictions will manifest. Contradictions are defined as structural tensions that accumulate throughout history within and between activity systems (Engeström, 1999). In essence, contradictions are considered to result in transformation and development in the activity system therefore members query and depart from norms that were previously established. Hence, for transformation to occur, contradictions must exist (Gretshel et al., 2015)

### 2.3.3 Corporal Punishment as a Cultural Tool

According to Mayisela (2018), cultural-historical understandings permit the researcher to not only consider an individual and their immediate community but also their historical background when trying to understand the occurrence of corporal punishment. Socialisation allows for cultural activities and tools to be conveyed across generations as it is common for humans to internalise cultural tools (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004). Important to note is that in the apartheid era corporal punishment was previously utilized as a political tool to subjugate black people and therefore, continued exposure to it resulted in them internalising it as a tool to use in their child-rearing practices (Harber, 2004). In application to this research, corporal punishment is a historical tool embedded in culture used to ensure discipline and compliance in learners.

Corporal punishment being banned relates to creating a different context through using rules that are aimed at developing learner development that is appropriate. With teachers who have experienced corporal punishment while they were learners, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is suitable in explaining how the changing rules of relating shapes their decisions to not use it as a disciplinary method. Be that as it may, there is great intrapsychological transformation that needs to happen in order to abandon the use of corporal punishment. Hence there is an assumption that teachers who have experienced corporal punishment in their childhood have found it to be a useful tool for discipline and may then have difficulty abandoning the use of it (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). Since cultural tools are created, used and passed on by the collective, for transformation to

occur there should be collaboration and constant social interaction, therefore impacting the community as a whole (Mayisela, 2017).

### 2.3.4 The essence of the Zone of Proximal Development in disciplinary practices

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) speaks to the space between what one is able and not able to do without the presence a certain knowledge (Margolis, 2020). In other words, the gap between the level of development that allows for problem solving that is independent and that of potential development informed by guidance by a knowledgeable other (Silalahi, 2019). Therefore, the learning is targeted at potential development as every human innately can develop and use tools. Although Vygotsky studies the utilization of the ZPD mainly with children and adolescents, this can also be applied to adults as in this case, teachers. The internalization process is crucial to Vygotsky's explanations of higher mental development and understanding of learning in the ZPD (Niewolny &Wilson,2006). Fundamentally, internalization contends that social interaction produces ZPDs to promote abilities that initially function best solely in collaborative contexts, but overtime internalize as self-regulatory processes with practice. As a result, from a sociocultural perspective, human development can be described as the ongoing internalization of those processes that were initially shared by the collective but eventually came to be viewed as autonomous problem-solving abilities (Shah &Rashid, 2017).

According to Vygotsky, having crises is an indication that development is occurring therefore teachers being frustrated with the need for the abandonment of corporal punishment indicates that assistance is required to target their psychological processes (Mayisela, 2017). This indicates that there is an existing ZPD when it comes to why corporal punishment was banned as the reasons teachers have been given might not be persuasive as this stage. In this case although teachers may want to abandon corporal punishment, there is a gap that results from not knowing how to do so. In addition to teachers knowing about ATCP, they might not know how to implement these hence need to be guided further. Furthermore, learner’s behavior is not viewed by teachers as an indicator of the ZPD which would present an opportunity to assist in their development of mental processes that are essential for problem solving and self-regulation (Mayisela, 2017). As in the current case, learners are afraid of corporal punishment however it is not certain whether they do understand why the punished behavior is not allowed.

### 2.3.5 Application of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in South African Research

There have been scholarly arguments applying theories that are not context appropriate, especially the use of Western theories in African or post-colonial contexts. To that end, one can question the researcher's application of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and its appropriateness in the South African context. Various studies have effectively taken place in the South African context that support this theory being applicable with evidence that this theory considers the historical, cultural and social context; and it aims to explain human activity and mental processes as informed by the context.

Among the successful South African studies is Francis and Hardman's (2018) study, which presented that social media can be considered as a means to decolonise South African universities as it was used to aid teaching and learning teaching during the Rhodes Must Fall Movement. To point out, social media played an important role in not only arranging the protests but also sharing information between the students and the public. In another study, Gretshel et al. (2015) showed that in designing an intervention, occupational therapists can use their own knowledge system in combination with the environment of their client as this process is an activity that is historically located and socially and culturally mediated. Therefore, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory allows for the recognition that who individuals are cannot be separated from how they are influenced by their context and various power dynamics (Toth-Cohen, 2008). Specifically and relevant to the current study, when it comes to acknowledging corporal punishment as a cultural tool, Mayisela (2017, 2018) applied Cultural Historical Activity Theory which developed from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to understand the persistence of the use of corporal punishment by South African teachers after its abolition. With the successful application of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in the above studies, there is contribution to the knowledge base in the South African context that this study will make.

## 2.4 Conclusion

As this research seeks to understand teachers' childhood exposure to corporal punishment and their intrapsychological process of abandoning it as a disciplinary method, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory seemed to be a suitable theoretical lens to understand their intrapsychological transformation after the ban of corporal punishment. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has been advanced to explain human interaction and activity with historicity and cultural and political

spaces as impacting what can be transmitted from one generation to the next. In addition to this, Vygotsky's ZPD provided a way to understand teacher's struggles with andoning corporal punishment as well as implementing alternatives to corporal punishmet. Taking from this, corporal punishment being considered as a cultural tool asserts that it has been transmitted from previous generations and was created by the community as a collective. In essence, teachers who have abandoned the use of corporal punishment, in spite of having experienced it, shows that they have had to undergo psychological transformation. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory further offered an opportunity to reflect on the methodology of this research and established the foundation for the research design and methods, as is deliberated in the following chapter.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed pertinent literature related to understanding teachers' childhood exposure to corporal punishment and the abandonment of this practice. This chapter explains the research design along with the methods utilised to attain the aim of this research, which was to understand the teachers' intrapsychological process involved in abandoning the adherence to corporal punishment as a disciplinary method. It also details the methodology in terms of the participants, the participant selection procedure, how the data was collected and analysed in addition to the considerations for the validity and reliability of the selected method and prospective findings. Important to note is that qualitative research and the case study research design were considered as appropriate methodologies as this allowed for participants to express their thoughts and perceptions.

## 3.2 Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research speaks to a multi-viewpoint method which helps make sense of meanings that participants attach to their experiences (Neumann, 2010). The crucial condition for this approach is that the researcher must see the world from the viewpoint of the participant. Creswell (2011) states that in qualitative research, it is essential that the researcher speaks to the participants regarding their subjective perceptions in order to understand the reasons behind their behaviour. Hence, this approach was suitable in that it allowed for the collection of in-depth information when it comes to the values, feelings and perceptions that influence teachers' abandonment of the use of corporal punishment. Equally important is that researchers who use this methodology maintain that social phenomena are not quantifiable and if done so, their reality will be lost (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012).

## 3.3 Case Study Research Design

The current research has taken a qualitative research approach, which accentuates the importance of understanding the social world through social context (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). There are various types of qualitative research designs but for the purpose of this research, due to its aim of obtaining in-depth knowledge that is contextual, the case study research design has been used (Crowe et al., 2011). A single case study with numerous participants has been utilized for

generating a broader perception of the experience and corporal punishment being used. This research method is suitable in that it allows for the detailed examination of the application of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in relation to a specific group of people. This study was conducted within a school context, a system that consists of rules, values and tools that allow for the community as a collective to achieve the desired outcomes. This demonstrates why a case study method is suitable alongside the above-mentioned theoretical framework. Although a case study design is normally critiqued for not allowing for generalisation, the aim in this research design is not to make sweeping statements from the sample to the population but rather to analyse the intrapsychological process of individuals as impacted by their historical and cultural contexts (Schoch, 2020).

### 3.4 Participants and Selection of Participants

The research used a convenience volunteer sample as teachers indicated their availability and willingness to participate. Although using a sample of a particular network may lead to bias, the advantage of having access to a certain population supersedes the negatives (Faugier & Sargeant, 1996). One of the limitations of a volunteer sample is that it results in a biased sample. In a way, it is possible that volunteers have psychological characteristics that set them apart from those that do not volunteer even though they meet the participant criteria (Salkind,2006). For example, these individuals might be more motivated or having free time to engage with the researcher. Therefore, the self-selection bias lessens the sample's representativeness. Selecting the case for this research study was grounded on the assumption that there might be teachers who have abandoned the use of corporal punishment in the school. The location of the school is in a comparatively affluent area. In addition to this, learner misbehaviour occurs more in secondary schools than in primary schools, which is related to adolescents struggling with accepting authority figures (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021).

A principal in a secondary school consisting of grades 9 to 12 in the Johannesburg South district of Gauteng was contacted who then distributed information about the research. Following this, teachers who have abandoned the use of corporal punishment and wanted to participate indicated their interest in the research. However, due to time and data constraints, the principal arranged for the interviews to be done over a period of two days with teachers using the same internet-connected laptop one after the other. Sixteen teachers indicated interest and were interviewed, however only

eleven interviews were used as data. Of the unused interviews, two had sound difficulties as the recording device struggled picking up sound, two did not properly sign consent forms and never returned them after being requested to correct errors, and one chose to withdraw from the research. The final sample of 11 participants consisted of eight females and three males who were spread out between 20 to 59 years of age and in the teaching profession for a duration of between 1 to 30 years.

### 3.5 Data Collection Method

In this research project, interviews were suitable for collecting data as they allowed for cooperation and rapport to be built to ensure a thorough exploration of the abandonment of corporal punishment. Conducting interviews depends on the truthfulness of the person being interviewed, which may be the limitation of this method of data collection. However, semi-structured interviews can help with ensuring truthfulness as it also follows the train of thought of the interviewee (Salkind, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were utilised using key questions in order to guide the interviewees permitting the interviewer to ask follow-up questions, probe further for additional information and gain a richer understanding. The interviews were conducted online on the Microsoft Teams platform as it was convenient due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Equally important is that online interviews do not provide the same research space as face-to-face interviews but are advantageous in that they can be carried out with individuals who are in different geographical locations, which was essential due to the requirements of social distancing (Oliffe et al., 2021). The data collection process was conducted in the third quarter as agreed on with the Gauteng Department of Education guidelines for conducting research.

### 3.6 Research Tool

With the intention to use semi-structured interviews, an interview schedule (Appendix A) consisting of open-ended questions is more suitable to produce in-depth information (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The interview schedule was made up of four sections, namely demographic information, childhood experiences of corporal punishment, current disciplinary strategies and reasons for abandoning the use of corporal punishment. The sequence in which several questions were asked changed contingent on the answers of the participant. The advantage of using a set of questions that functioned as guidance is that the interview is easily facilitated (Breakwell et al., 2006). The interviewee was asked a few demographic questions to build rapport and as a warm-

up before continuing to the other sections of the interview schedule. The interviews were audio recorded, which allowed me to be fully present with the participant and not be concerned about note-taking. Since consent had not been obtained for video recording using Microsoft Teams, the interviews were audio recorded with a separate device.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

In the analysis of data, thematic analysis was used. This technique is used in data identification, analysis, and reporting of themes that result (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Central to this analytic method is that qualitative data is mostly subjective, distinct and contains in-depth information that is audio recorded and then later transcribed. This indicates that the data should be prepared before analysis (McLellan et al., 2003).

#### 3.7.1 Transcription

The beginning step for data analysis consisted of converting the audio-recorded interviews to text through word for word transcription (McLellan et al., 2003). Important to note is that transcribing the recorded interviews was the responsibility of the researcher. Streefkerk (2019) states that there are various stages that a researcher should go through when transcribing to ensure that the data is accurate for analysis. Choosing a transcription method to use, transcribing the audio interview and lastly refining and proofreading the transcript are relevant steps. For the transcription process, I used the verbatim transcription method, which allowed for the expression of emotions like laughter and stuttering (Streefkerk, 2019). This highlights how I was able to record what participants might have been feeling in relation to a specific point. Following the transcription, the researcher proofread the transcriptions and clarified missing information through relistening to the recorded interviews. After transcription had been complete, the steps as guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used in the data analysis process.

#### 3.7.2 Thematic Analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a researcher should decide whether the data and themes respond to the research questions or that the research questions come from themes identified. The different approaches are categorised as inductive “bottom up” and deductive “top down” respectively. Furthermore, one can choose to identify themes taking only what the participants state, which is referred to as semantic analysis or go beyond the surface connotations of the data

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). For the purpose of this research, an inductive thematic analysis at the semantic level was used as I was mostly interested in explaining and describing the data collected. Hence there were no identification assumptions in analysing the data. The six step-by-step process of data analysis as relevant in this study guided by Braun and Clarke is described below.

The first step that the researcher engaged in was to be accustomed with the data, which begins with the transcription process and includes reading the transcriptions and listening to the recorded interviews multiple times (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After being acquainted with the data, the researcher created coding categories where sections of the transcribed interview were highlighted and short phrases led to the codes that were used to describe the content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this case, noted down were participants' responses that related to or were considered as having the potential to respond to the research questions. Important to note is that not all responses by the participants were responding to the research questions. After an iterative process of identifying the similarities and differences between codes, these same codes were organised into potential themes, which meant focusing on broader patterns of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After examining the potential themes constructed, the researcher reviewed themes to assess whether they were useful and accurately represented the data. Thereafter, these themes were further developed and fully expanded on (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), it is significant to name and identify the themes' principles in relation to the data. To better identify themes, the researcher grouped themes that were similar while keeping in mind the differences between how participants elaborated on their experiences. The final stage was writing up the results where the data was presented in a form that relates to the themes, literature review and the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, to form an argument to answer to the research questions, the researcher described and interpreted the data. This kind of analysis was suitable in that it allowed for the research to contain rich descriptions and the relevant integration and understanding of theories. Creswell (2011) asserts that an important feature of any tool that one uses in research is the presence of validity and reliability. These two elements allow for conclusions to be made about data and will be explained further below.

### 3.8 Reliability and Validity

Reliability refers to how accurate the methods used by the researcher are in answering the research questions, which determines whether research findings can then be trusted and considered consistent (Salkind, 2006). In contrast, validity speaks to the level at which the findings precisely depict the phenomenon being investigated (Breakwell et al., 2006). Trustworthiness of research findings is important as it indicates the credibility of the study. Credibility of the data relies on how rich the information acquired from participants is rather than the amount of data gathered (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Due to the difficulty of accessing the school community during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was difficult to use diverse methods of data collection to allow for triangulation. Therefore, engagement with the participants together with within-method triangulation were used to ensure credibility. Nøkleby (2011) refers to within-method triangulation as using various ways to obtain data from a single method. For instance, I asked for both narratives ("How do you think the use of corporal punishment has impacted you in your adulthood?") and semantic knowledge ("What do you think was the disadvantage of using corporal punishment?"). This allowed for different aspects of the research topic to emerge in relation to the subjective perceptions of participants.

### 3.9 Researcher Reflexivity

It is important that a researcher engages in critical self-reflection especially when it comes to how their thoughts and perceptions could influence the data that will be reported (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Important to consider is that the researcher had a week of practicums in 2020 at the secondary school in which the research was conducted when previously registered for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. Therefore, there are subjective views, values, experiences and attitudes that the researcher holds when it comes to this study. The researcher continuously reflected using a journal in order to counteract influences of these on how the researcher interacted with the participants and data analysis. The researcher was, at several points, overwhelmed especially after the participants shared their experiences of corporal punishment. More so since the researcher has an experience of corporal punishment as a learner, emotions of past trauma and pain were awakened especially during the process of listening to recorded interviews. However, personal therapeutic sessions allowed for critical self-reflection regarding the influence that these feelings could have had on the data reported.

### 3.10 Research Procedure

In this section, the process followed in this study is described as a way of showing the sequence of events from the research proposal to writing up this report. The importance of a research procedure is to be able to provide a systematic and orderly work plan to accomplish the research. To begin with, a research proposal indicating the aim, methodology and ethical considerations was submitted and then approved by methodology and ethics readers. Therefore, an ethical clearance was received from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) on 17 May 2021. Following this, the researcher applied to the Gauteng Department of Education for permission to conduct research and was granted this with a few conditions. Letters were then sent to various secondary school principals in the Johannesburg South district via email addresses to ask for permission to collect data according to the availability of teachers. Following this, the researcher approached the secondary school where data was collected due to a pre-existing relationship and then verbal consent was given which allowed for participation information forms to be disseminated among teachers. After confirming their inclination to participate and their availability, participants were then requested to sign an informed consent form through email communications. Due to time constraints, data was collected over a period of three days with interviews running from 45 minutes to an hour on Microsoft Teams.

In order to establish rapport prior to the interviews, teachers were asked biographical information such as their gender, age group which they fall into, how long they had been teaching and which phase they teach. The recorded raw data was downloaded on a password-protected computer, which only the researcher had access to. The recorded interviews were then transcribed and saved in a password-protected computer. The data was analysed using thematic analysis as described in the data analysis section. After the completion of the transcription, the recorded content was destroyed to ensure confidentiality and the transcripts were kept in a password-protected computer. The participants were informed of the researcher's contact details to request a synopsis of the research findings and to be directed to the research publications if they desired.

### 3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are essential to focus on in the conceptualisation of any research project. Ethics are essential in that they guide the research and ensure that participants are not harmed and

are consensual about their partaking in the research (Breakwell et al., 2006). The University of the Witwatersrand Research and Ethics Committee granted the ethics clearance for the study and approved the research to take place. Following this, the Gauteng Department of Education granted permission for this research to use teachers as participants. The following ethics were considered and communicated to the participants. The researcher thoroughly engaged research participants in line with ethics principles of the right to autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, confidentiality and anonymity.

Autonomy refers to respecting participants' rights to make voluntary informed decisions regarding their involvement in the research study (Arifin, 2018). The informed consent letter clarified that taking part in the study is voluntary and that in no way will anyone be penalized for choosing to withdraw from the study either before or during the data collection process. Under no circumstances was any participant forced to participate in the research if they did not desire to do so and this was confirmed at the beginning and the end of the interviews. Following this, beneficence speaks to the potential benefits that participants may derive from being part of the study, which should positively contribute to their welfare (Andersson et al., 2010). There was no direct benefit for the participants, however the results will contribute to knowledge about effective disciplinary strategies and how these can be implemented. In addition to this, the interviews made teachers reflect on their own experiences which has value as it allowed them to consider how this may be impacting their current teaching experiences.

Non-maleficence involves ensuring that participants are not harmed or placed at risk because of taking part in the research (Andersson et al., 2010). If some risk was identified prior to their participation, it was made known to them. In the case of a participant experiencing any distress or discomfort at any point during the process, then the interview would have been paused or resumed at another time. In addition to this, therapy was recommended together with free helplines on the information sheet given to participants.

Protecting the identities of participants is important so that they are not identifiable through their responses. All the participants were guaranteed that the information they offered is confidential and that it will not be linked to them. In addition to this, the data collected was stored on a password-protected device with only the researcher and supervisor having access to it. Anonymity in this study was ensured by codes being allocated to participants during the collection, analysis,

and reporting of the data. Code names were utilized for anonymity, for example, teacher number 1 is referred to as T1. Through the participant information sheet, the participants were informed of their role in this research. They were further informed that findings from this study will be distributed through the research report and may be published in journal articles and/or presented in conference proceedings.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the current chapter has outlined the specifics of the research methodology adopted in this study, additionally, the research design, the research methods and the accompanying research tools. Furthermore, procedures that were used to identify and choose participants, collect and analyse the data regarding teachers' childhood exposure to corporal punishment and their abandonment of it as a disciplinary method were discussed. Since this study involves human participants, ethical considerations and how they were approached were outlined. In addition to this, processes that were kept to as a way to warrant validity and reliability of the findings were clarified.

# Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

## 4.1 Introduction

The current chapter offers a comprehensive description, how data was analysed and interpreted in the context of the literature reviewed and research questions this study sought to answer. The procedure of data analysis detailed in the chapter that precedes was employed to answer the research questions. The research activities aimed to answer the secondary questions, which ultimately contribute to answering the primary research question. The primary research question was: What are the psychological processes involved in teachers who have experienced childhood corporal punishment abandoning this disciplinary practice? Following this, the two secondary research questions were:

- What do teachers understand of their childhood exposure to corporal punishment?
- What procedures are teachers using to ensure learner discipline in the absence of corporal punishment?

As mentioned above, the data established from the interviews was presented as themes to illustrate how teachers experienced corporal punishment in childhood and their choice to abandon the practice. In addition to this, the themes were grouped according to the research objectives, namely teachers' childhood experiences of corporal punishment, why teachers abandoned corporal punishment, and the alternative methods that they are currently using. These themes are supported by extracts from the interviews. For the main objective, two themes were found to respond to why teachers abandoned the use of corporal punishment. Following this, there were three themes found to explain teachers' perception of their exposure to corporal punishment. Lastly, there were two themes that showed the procedures that participant teachers currently use following the ban of corporal punishment.

## 4.2 Why Teachers Abandoned/Chose Not to Use Corporal Punishment

### 4.2.1 Changed School Rules

It was evident with some teachers that when they began working at their first schools, corporal punishment was still used. This included teachers who started teaching after it was banned. However, all the participants had stopped using it later in their teaching careers or due to the rules of the current school they are in. T2, who started teaching in 2006 said the following:

> T2*: At first it was corporal punishment but a year later I moved so I got a new job. There everyone was against the use of beating so were told to send them to detention or maybe tell them to clean the school yard.*

This emphasizes the concept of community and its role in transformation. Corporal punishment being a cultural collective activity, indicates that its use depends on the context as guided by the norms and rules of the community (Mayisela, 2017). As the individuals that are part of this community continue to engage in activities, they can be influenced to transform and therefore a different meaning of a cultural tool is created (Sannino & Engeström, 2018). This seems to be the case with the school that this teacher was in, as they joined a school community that uses other disciplinary practices and has school rules against the use of corporal punishment. Therefore, the school rules and being a part of a certain community played a part in this teacher abandoning the use of corporal punishment instead of the ban itself.

T3, who also previously used corporal punishment, said the following when asked if she remembers her reaction to the ban:

> T3: *I can't really say I remember my response to it when it happened exactly. But I think I got wind of it when our principal you know said, we need to find other ways to discipline children. We were all shocked, I think we knew about it but we all just continued with it because we really did not know any other way to discipline children.*

This goes back to the notion of corporal punishment being normalised and the only way teachers knew how to discipline learners. The school where participants are from, has several stakeholders which have different and important roles to play, i.e., the division of labor, in ensuring that teaching happens in an effective manner. The South African Schools Act (SASA) guides the School Governing Body (SGB), principal and deputy principal as stakeholders responsible for its management. As tools that are guided by the DoE, the school has a policy and a code of conduct mounted in the staffroom wall, visible for anyone who enters. In this case then, when it comes to discipline, there is clarity on the role that the school management system plays to prevent corporal punishment being used.

### 4.2.2 Stopped because of the Consequences of Breaking the Law

When asked about the reasons why teachers are not using corporal punishment, most teachers were honest in that they were avoiding being in trouble with the law.

> T5: *[…] to be truly honest. Because the principal does not allow it. Even in my previous school. It was because we were told not to. Besides that, a child can open a case against you then what? They can hit and abuse teachers, but we can't retaliate with hitting. Sounds unfair to me but the government has given them rights*.

This shows that there are teachers who would have preferred to continue using it but cannot due to the ban. T6 said: *"Because of the school rules but also because it is a criminal offence to hit a child"* and when asked about whether learners are benefitting from the ban further added:

> *"They can learn free without fear. But also, that they are accountable for their own actions, and no one has to chase them with a whip to get them to do something. They are responsible for themselves."*

Considering that T6 has experienced corporal punishment as a child in a school context, the notion that learners are capable of being able to formulate their own behavior indicates higher psychological processes. This then is positive transformation that teachers are expected to have when it comes to their abandonment of corporal punishment.

When structural tensions arise in an activity system, they have accumulated over time and result in contradictions (Vygotsky, 1997). When these contradictions occur in the activity system, some participants start to query and want to start deviating from norms put in place for the collective (Toth-Cohen, 2008). With the understanding that punishment that is physical violates the human rights of children and that its objective is to instil good behaviour, this raises a contradiction in the education system as an activity system on its own. In this case, the rules that govern schools and the society have changed and now teachers must abide by these. Therefore, teachers' intrapsychological transformation on using corporal punishment is because of having to internalise rules that are imposed on them by the Department of Education. However, as will be shown below, teachers seem to be struggling with processing the rule as they feel that they were not consulted as part of the collective.

### 4.3 Teacher's Childhood Experiences of Corporal Punishment

#### 4.3.1 Being Beaten was Normal

Across all participants, the experience of corporal punishment in childhood was normal, hence they did not see anything wrong with it and they did not feel offended in any way. This indicates that corporal punishment is embedded in the cultural tools of society when it comes to punishment and therefore it is considered a way of being, especially on school grounds. After being asked about how she felt about being disciplined using corporal punishment, T1 responded: "*It was normal, I guess. We were all used to it so we expected to be hit somehow…*" This signifies that teachers did not think much of it as it happened and that it was an expected form of punishment. T7 agreed: "*I did not make much of it. It was just normal. The whole school would know a teacher is famous for a certain type of punishment so it was expected.*" In the same way, it was a way of being for every child, when at school, to know that should they engage in anything that results in a punishment, it would be corporal punishment. This indicates that the only way these teachers might have known how to relate to their own learners was based on their personal experience as learners themselves.

Furthermore, corporal punishment was normalised to an extent that it was recognised as the only way in which children could learn. T5 explained her own opinion: "*I was always a disobedient child but that stick would fix you. Us black children can't learn without a stick, it's not like you can sit down and talk to us.*" This shows that there is an aspect of corporal punishment that is considered to function as a tool to not only discipline a child but to push them towards being able to learn. T7 agrees: "*It was our culture as we knew it. As black people, we grew up knowing induku [stick].*" With this in mind, the normalised experience of corporal punishment does not mean that there were no teachers who felt that it impacted on them negatively. According to Gomba (2015), corporal punishment is regarded as an aspect of the practices in the African culture which cultivates appropriate behaviour as it has been passed from generation to generation.

Important to note is that corporal punishment was normalised across different contexts and not only at school. Mahlangu et al. (2021) reported that for most children, their experience of corporal punishment was not only restricted to the school context but it was also present at home as parents supported it and encouraged teachers to also use it. In support of this, in a different study, children held negative views of corporal punishment when it occurred at school as they knew that their

parents had been using it on them prior to their schooling years (Dobbs & Duncan, 2004). This indicates the notion that the collective determines the culture, hence corporal punishment was considered an aspect of discipline embedded in culture. The following extracts highlight this point:

> T3: *It was normal, it's fine. We were used to it. Anyway, it was not just at school, even at home it would be done so it was a common thing as a child to know that if you do something wrong then you get a beating.*
>
> T8: *We were beaten but it was also a thing that was happening at home. Mostly using a stick, yes, or a belt depending on the teacher.*
>
> T9: *It was our culture as we knew it. As black people, we grew up knowing induku [stick].*
>
> T11: *It was painful but I think we were used to it. Imagine being beaten from home so by the time you get to school, it's just like okay that's fine.*

When a tool is introduced into the community and is considered effective to maintain cultural norms, it is then easier for this to be accepted and be passed through to the next generation (Foot, 2014). When acceptance occurs, it means the thoughts and values of the collective become those of the individual who is part of the community. In this sense, interactions with corporal punishment in the community leads to individual's intrapsychological processes changing. According to Vygotsky (1997), for psychological functions to be transformed there should be internalisation of culturally mediated tools. In the South African context, corporal punishment is considered a result of culture and history and therefore internalised by the community (Beatty & Feldman, 2012). This explains how corporal punishment became a normalised experience for teachers when they were children and the alternative to the use corporal punishemnt happened to be the Zone of Proximal Development of these teachers. Suggesting that they need, as they testified during the interviews of this study, and in other sudies that they need to the to be assisted on learning the alternative to corporal punishment.

### 4.3.2 Experience of Corporal Punishment as Traumatic

Speaking to the negative experience associated with corporal punishment, teachers expressed the trauma that it left them with and how they remember certain teachers as triggers of this trauma. In essence, being in the presence of a teacher who uses corporal punishment would be an anxiety-provoking experience. Mayisela (2017) reported that children who have experienced corporal

punishment stated that they would get anxious and fearful that a teacher would hit them even if that specific teacher is just walking around or walking past them. Important to note is that this would be their experience even if they had not done anything wrong or were witnessing their peers being punished. This shows how being at school could change from being a conducive learning environment to being a place where a learner is constantly triggered by certain aspects (Cuartas et al, 2021). In the same way, learners can grow to fear certain teachers or feel anxious being in the school environment as a whole.

In the interview with T1, it was noticeable that her experience of corporal punishment is a part of her past that she struggled to talk about. When asked about what she considers to be the disadvantage of corporal punishment, she sadly expressed the following: "*The trauma, I guess. There is that thing of always being scared, always when you see that teacher, they are a trigger of your physical pain somehow*." When asked why she has chosen not to use corporal punishment, she responded: "*It's just something I am not fond of. I think it's traumatic for a child to look at an adult and be scared of them. I know how I felt so I would not want another child to feel the same*." The following extracts highlight how traumatic the experience of corporal punishment was for certain teachers and how their interactions with certain teachers would then be anxiety-provoking:

> T8: *I think I felt scared mostly because it would be painful so now there were teachers I was scared of. Obviously, I'm in pain so I would claim that I hate the teacher.*
>
> T4: *[…] because it was traumatic for me. It was horrible so I don't want any child to experience it in my presence.*
>
> T5: *Yoh I think the pain. And being scared of teachers.*

These extracts indicate that there seems to be unintended effects of corporal punishment, especially with teachers who still carry the trauma into their adult lives. The objective of corporal punishment was to instill good behavior, which is different from its outcome of trauma as experienced by teachers. In this case, fear and anxiety of teachers meant that being at school was not a great experience. As mentioned above on my reflections throughout data taking, the traumatic experiences of corporal punishment were brought back to the researcher's mind which supported that the trauma of corporal punishment causes fear of the teacher, and thus compromised learning. This highlights the contradiction that exists in the activity system that destabilizes the system and requires transformation to occur. According to Vygotsky (1997), contradiction suggests that the

activity and tools are not relevant to the objective. Binu (2020) found that teachers believed that fear is seen as a sign of respect and therefore the fear of being beaten results in learners' good behaviour. In contrast, the same fear resulted in some learners having a difficult experience of school, hence the trauma led to the ban of corporal punishment, among other factors (Ali et al., 2019). This explains the concept of transformation as initiated by the DoE as an activity system that relates to teachers.

### 4.3.3 Corporal Punishment Made Teachers Who They Are

Speaking on the experience of corporal punishment, some teachers credited corporal punishment to be what shaped them to become better people and that they would not have been where they are if it was not for this experience. Therefore, it seems it is quite common for teachers to be grateful for experiencing corporal punishment as they believe that its use is a direct contributor to their success, as was reported by a different study (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). From this, there is a general understanding that the academic success of a child is impacted by how the child has been disciplined. In addition to this, it seemed that corporal punishment was viewed as a tool that would serve as motivation towards the teachers' academic success when they were learners. Therefore, this supports the notion that corporal punishment is used with the intention to correct learners' behaviour and not to cause injury or any negative effects. T2 believed that being beaten had a positive result on her:

> T2: *It made me a better student. I don't think I would be where I am today if it wasn't for the punishment. It made me take my education seriously. Actually, it made me understand that there are consequences to every action.*

This then results in the notion that if it worked for them then it should also work for their learners. T3 also agreed:

> T3: *Yes, it made me who I am. Not like these children of today, back then, a beating would make you know what you really want to do. You would be straight, and you know that, no, I don't want that beating again so what do you do? You change your behaviour*.

In the same way, although it was a painful experience for some teachers, they believed it also shaped them in a way. The researcher did note in their diary the newly found reasoning behind teacher's struggling to let go of corporal punishment as it was quite difficult initially to

comprehend how those who have experienced it continue to support its use. When it comes to whether corporal punishment positively impacted on her, T7 said: "*I don't think it made sense. It was fine I guess, but maybe it would just help me change my behaviour or do what was expected of me.*" This indicates how the ban of corporal punishment may have then meant that teachers had to find other ways to leave an impact on their learners.

When the ban of corporal punishment was nearing closer in various African countries, teachers believed that learners often did better when exposed to corporal punishment and that the standard of education would fall when it did get banned (Ndubisi & Uka, 1987). Contrary to teachers linking their academic success to corporal punishment, research has shown that learners who experience corporal punishment develop a negative attitude towards learning (Ahman et al., 2013). In this case, learners who experience corporal punishment start considering school as an unsafe place and therefore avoid coming to school. According to Ahman et al. (2013), a learner's academic success can be impacted by their attitude to learning and that those who do well tend to do so because of their motivation to learn. In essence, attitude can be influenced by multiple factors including the classroom setting, teachers' attitude, curriculum and resources (Gershoff, 2002; Tharps, 2003). Learners exposed to corporal punishment hesitate to participate in classroom activities due to fear of teachers and therefore their motivation to learn decreases. Consequently, these teachers' academic success could be a result of various factors and not of corporal punishment.

## 4.4 Alternative Methods to Corporal Punishment

### 4.4.1 There's No Training Given on Alternatives

When it comes to alternative methods to corporal punishment, although teachers employ various ones, there was a consensus that they were not trained in these. Some teachers use alternatives to corporal punishment provided for them in the DoE (2000) document, however some participants had only heard of it and thus do not refer to it. When asked about the document, T5 responded:

> T5: *Eish the problem with that document is that they just gave us that thing without any training. I mean it was like it is open for different interpretations because even they say parent meetings. What if a parent doesn't show up?*

This indicates that the training on the alternatives to corporal punishment was very little and infrequent. This raises another problem in that the alternatives are not well defined and therefore

if training was given, an opportunity to raise such concerns would be given. When questioned about whether the alternative methods to corporal punishment work for her, T3 responded:

> T3: *I think these methods don't obviously work for every child. So, I use as applies in the situation. Some children will naturally listen and then there's those unruly ones, you do as much as you can to show them the way so what works for child A will not be the same for child B.*

Furthermore, most of the teachers uphold the notion that these alternatives may be effective or ineffective, depending on the learner. T6 stated: "*I think it depends, some repeat their behaviour, but you try and try different methods until one works.*" T5 agreed with this: "*It really depends on the child. Some do change their behaviour or listen but some they just continue like nothing happened.*" These responses demonstrate the frustration educators feel that they encounter as a result of inadequate training when it comes to learner discipline. This further corresponds with teachers indicating that their negative perceptions of corporal punishment can be attributed "to a lack of adequate training in the implementation of alternative forms of discipline" (Marumo & Zulu, 2019, p. 46). Therefore, the need to close the gap as teachers need assistance to transform and shift from what they know and could do well as everyday knowledge, without any support, to what they cannot do on their own, that is, the integration of alternative disciplinary into their measures in this case.

As previously mentioned, within an activity system, for a rule to be adopted by the collective it needs to be internalised. With teachers stating that they have received inadequate training, internalising the alternatives to corporal punishment is seemingly difficult. Seemingly, teachers were only warned about not using corporal punishment but there were no discussions that they were a part of that suggested the possibility of achieving discipline without using corporal punishment (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). Essentially, the ZPD has not acknowledged for teachers which explains their incompetency in applying alternatives to corporal punishment. As a result, schools would then take the alternatives recommended by the DoE and include them in their school policies to further reinforce the ban of corporal punishment (Grobbelaar & Jones, 2020).

### 4.4.2 The School Provides Guidelines on Learner Discipline

Furthermore, it was common among the participants that their choice of discipline methods was dependent on the school guidelines, which they referred to throughout the interviews. Hence when

T2 was asked if she knew about the DoE document, she responded: "*No. I don't think I know anything about it. But our school has guidelines on how to discipline children so I would like to believe that it comes from there.*" This was the same for T3: "*No, I don't think I have heard of it. Only the school's rules about discipline.*" In light of this, there were various methods provided by teachers that they use to ensure learner discipline and, as mentioned above, some were considered to be effective while some are challenging to employ. T10 was asked about the methods that were effective when he started teaching: "*It was detention, parent meetings and disciplinary hearings in the worst-case scenario. But there was never any physical punishment.*" Although using these methods, T3 felt she was left without a choice. When asked about her current disciplinary methods, she expressed the following: "*What can a teacher really do these days? I just shout or chase them out of my class. There's also a detention system here so also that.*"

This speaks to how common it is for teachers to feel like they cannot further discipline the learner and keep them in class, therefore these teachers would resort to removing these learners from their classes. T8 said: "*I give them warnings or ask them to leave my class. A few times, I have sent them to detention or the principal's office.*" T5 felt that some methods were difficult to implement:

> T5: *[…] detention or ask them to leave my class. Only a few times have I had parent meetings because I have seen with the other teachers that sometimes parents don't care. Or they will say yes I will talk to the child but the child's unruly behaviour will still continue. You see?*

In the same way, some teachers also felt that some methods would take their time. T1 expressed the following when asked about why she feels that the ATCP are not effective for her: "*Yes. Like detention needs me to be present which means I also have to be at the school outside school hours then how would it be punishment for the child if I am also wasting my time*." This complaint may be because detention needs a teacher's supervision which takes time from either the teacher's free time or their after-school hours (Mayisela, 2021). Mugabe and Maposa (2013) similarly found that teachers in Zimbabwe felt that learners assigned to do manual work have to be supervised by a teacher, thus the supervisor feels punished too. When it comes to the researchers's reflections, it was evident that certain teachers were uncomfortable discussing the alternative methods they use. The reason behind this could be that they have previously had the researcher work alongside them.

In relation to Vygostky's sociocultural theory, the school policy serves as a tool that is used to restrain teachers from using corporal punishment although not explicit concerning this goal. Due to teachers believing that corporal punishment worked in achieving and the maintenance discipline in their classrooms, it seems they are struggling to accept the reasons behind why it has been banned (Binu, 2020). The perceived ineffectiveness or implications of some alternatives seemingly make the intrapsychological transformation difficult for teachers (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). Since teachers are considered to undertake a parental role when children are at school, the tools of instilling discipline are shared among the community. Parents struggling to accept the ban of corporal punishment makes it more difficult for teachers as they are expected to instil discipline in the school context (Gomba, 2015). These alternatives to corporal punishment have not yet fully reached acceptance by communities, making disciplining learners complicated. Tools for teaching discipline are shared in the community because teachers are to assume the role of parents when children go to school. Therefore, this presents a contradiction when it comes to sociocultural understandings. In this case, teachers are anticipated to implement ATCP, however they have not been given the necessary assistance to do so especially considering that they were exposed to corporal punishment and reflect on it as a normal experience. In as much as policies and laws are present, these are superficial as teachers are not being given necessary resources to be able to make sense of corporal punishment being banned and how to apply ATCP.

### 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter analysed and discussed data from the participants of the study in relation to the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework. The research findings highlighted that although the aim of the use of corporal punishment is to encourage behaviour change, its effects can be damaging and long term, lasting well into adulthood for the learner who experiences it. Teachers who experienced corporal punishment when they were learners perceived it as a necessary and normal practice. Contrary to this, there are teachers who have come to the realisation that corporal punishment, among its other detrimental effects, leads to fear instead of respect for the teacher. The intrapsychological transformation that teachers have gone through after the ban of corporal punishment seems to be a continuous journey with hurdles. Be that as it may, this research study has its limitations, implications and, therefore, recommendations that will be presented in the next chapter.

# Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

## 5.1 Introduction

The summary of this study is presented in this chapter. Furthermore, the implications, limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed.

## 5.2 Summary of the Study

This research was conducted with the aim of understanding teachers who have been exposed to childhood corporal punishment and their abandonment of this disciplinary practice. Important to note is that anecdotal evidence proposes that teachers who find themselves in an era when corporal punishment is banned had been exposed to it themselves as children (Mayisela, 2017, 2018, 2020; Morrell, 2001). Previous research on corporal punishment has studied the reasons behind teachers' continuous use corporal punishment even after its ban. The current research aimed to understand whether the ban and the provided alternatives to corporal punishment have influenced the abandonment of corporal punishment. Of great interest was the intrapsychological transformation that teachers have had to undergo and are still undergoing to shift from seeing discipline as only being achieved using corporal punishment.

From this research, it does seem that teachers are not convinced about why corporal punishment was banned hence it becomes difficult for them to view discipline as being achieved without it. The psychological processes involved in keeping teachers believing in corporal punishment are perception, decision making, agency, memory and self-regulation including the ZPD. In addition to this, it aims to inform policymakers in education, teachers and all involved stakeholders in teaching and learning as to which disciplinary interventions can be implemented to reduce learners' misconduct.

To investigate teachers' childhood experiences of corporal punishment and their abandonment of its use, teachers from a secondary school in the Johannesburg South District of Gauteng were interviewed. A semi-structured interview schedule was utilized to address the aims and research questions of this study. The data collected from these interviews was transcribed then analysed using the six steps for thematic analysis. As shown in the previous chapter, seven themes were developed from the findings of this enquiry, in response to the research questions. The four findings of the research are presented below.

### *5.2.1 What are the mental processes involved in teachers who have experienced childhood corporal punishment abandoning this disciplinary practice?*

Teachers believe that corporal punishment was effective in achieving and mantaining discipline in their classrooms, therefore they struggle to accept the reasons behind why it has been banned. This suggests that there is  insignificant, if there is any at all, intrapsychological transformation taking place in teachers' minds as their childhood experiences of corporal punishment has deemed it as effective. Above policies and laws that are put in place, there is a need for teachers to understand why corporal punishment was banned besides the fact that it is a violation of children's rights. This absence of understanding from teachers suggests a ZPD, a developmental potential and an opportunity for the DoE to fill the knowledge gap regarding human rights, children's rights, psychological and physical effects of violence. Overall, teachers need to understand why corporal punishment is considered a type of violence. As it stands, teachers' transformation regarding the use of corporal punishment is a result of having to internalise rules that were imposed on them by the DoE.

Furthermore, regarding teachers' motivations for abandoning the use of corporal punishment, the changed school rules after its ban played a huge role, together with the possibility of being in trouble with the law should they use it. It was a common point from all teachers that they felt at a disadvantage after the ban of corporal punishment because they were not designated training on the ATCP and thus they were dependent on guidelines provided by schools. As it appears from the data, the teachers' response to policies and school rules, is merely a superficial change, but there is no intrapsychological transformation on the ineffectiveness of corporal punishment as a disciplinary method.

### *5.2.2 How do teachers perceive their childhood exposure to corporal punishment?*

From the teachers' childhood experiences, corporal punishment was a shared and accepted practice in the community, thus they did not view it as a negative experience with nor attach any negative connotations to it. In addition to this, there are teachers who believed that this experience shaped them and therefore had a positive impact on their development. On account of these teachers being a part of a collective that uses corporal punishment as a strategy to encourage discipline in schools, they came to understand and internalize it in the same manner. In this case, teachers were

transformed in their childhood to view and understand corporal punishment to be a suitable strategy to discipline learners as in their childhood.

### *5.2.3 What procedures are teachers using to ensure learner discipline in the absence of corporal punishment?*

An underlying contradiction emerged in the adoption of alternative disciplinary strategies that teachers use, in that they expressed the willingness to try alternatives to corporal punishment, however, teachers are still not convinced that these ATCP are fully effective in the absence of corporal punishment. This indicates a manifestation of an intrapsychological ZPD, because although they use these in their classrooms, it does seem that teachers do not believe entirely in the effectiveness of ATCP to achieve and maintain discipline. In this case, teachers also felt that they are left stranded as they feel that undesired behavior seems to continue in the presence of these ATCP which they believe would have been different if they were using corporal punishment.

## 5.3 Implications of this Study

Subsequent to the ban of corporal punishment, there have been reports that learner misconduct has increased, which has led to the assumption that teachers are struggling to instil discipline (Makewa et al, 2017). Since then, there have been alternatives that teachers use regardless of whether they result in the intended effects. The findings of this research confirms that despite the ban of corporal punishment, teachers still struggle with understanding why it was banned and therefore advocate for its use in schools. In addition to this, the ban of corporal punishment is perceived as having negative consequences on the learning process and hence the belief that learner misconduct has increased over the years (Grobbelaar & Jones, 2020). In essence, this research study indicated that corporal punishment is internalised and perceived as being important to teaching and learning because teachers felt that its use shaped them in their learning.

The findings further confirm that the suggested ATCP are not considered effective because of the lack of training that teachers have. Additionally, teachers may have not been involved in the development of the ATCP document. This implies that the introduction of this document was done haphazardly, which then left teachers struggling with changing their perceptions regarding the normalisation of corporal punishment in the classroom. Additionally, the research has highlighted that the responsibility to choose which alternatives to implement lies with each school as there is no one strategy that can be used with every learner. As a result, the intrapsychological

transformation for teachers has been difficult with some firmly believing that not using corporal punishment is the government's directive and not their choice. In general, it has become apparent that managing discipline in schools is important to allow for effective teaching and learning and that teachers need to devise non-violent and non-abusive disciplinary measures that would encourage such an environment.

### 5.4 Limitations of the Study

The findings of this research are founded on a secondary school and will not be used to infer to other secondary schools in the Johannesburg district. However, despite the limited generalisability of the current study due to the small sample and the explicit geographical setting under study, it aimed to contribute to the broader literature on teachers' intrapsychological transformation on corporal punishment being used, therefore it could be replicated across different contexts. Furthermore, the research questions on childhood experiences of corporal punishment and its use currently made some of the participants uncomfortable, which could have impacted their truthfulness. In addition to this, there might have been a power dynamic that existed between me and the participants. For example, it is a possibility that there were instances where the participants could have felt the need to give answers that they thought the researcher wanted to hear instead of their own personal opinions. Nevertheless, using semi-structured interviews for the study allowed for opportunities where clarity could be provided by the participants as well as enabling unrestricted expressions from them.

### 5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

From the findings of this study and the limitations, it is apparent that there are knowledge gaps. Consequently, presented below are three recommendations for future studies. Firstly, it is essential that research studies take place to discover various techniques in which the DoE can enhance the knowledge of teachers regarding the use of corporal punishment and provide support for transitioning into a post corporal punishment legislative era in South Africa. Secondly, further research could focus on psychosocial factors that result in indiscipline in the South African context. This can better inform how children's needs could be addressed appropriately, which would explain the reasons why corporal punishment a contradiction is for achieving learning. Lastly, to transform teachers' mental state, research is necessary on which alternatives to corporal punishment teachers have used and which of these South African teachers have found to

specifically work for them so as to inform the DoE on further steps to implement when training teachers on these.

### 5.6 Conclusion

Some teachers have stopped using corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy in schools since it was abolished through the Schools Act in South Africa. Nevertheless, data from this research suggests that mental processes encompassed in the abandonment of corporal is superficial due to the lack of psychological tools used to transform teachers understanding of physical, psychological and long-term traumatic effects of corporal punishment. The following drawbacks account as evidence to this superficial transformation.

Firstly, teachers felt that there was no involvement from their side when the conclusion to ban corporal punishment was reached and therefore its ban is not justified. Secondly, teachers still do not understand that corporal punishment is damaging and have thus stopped using it due to the fear of consequences that they may face. Following this, teachers believe that ATCP are ineffective in addition to feeling that they are incompetent to use these. Hence, alternatives are being used on a trial and error basis since teachers do not believe that they are proficient in using these. Lastly, the findings of this study suggest that the teachers' childhood exposure to corporal punishment, even though it was experienced as traumatic, has no influence on the teachers' abandonment of corporal punishment. The study found that it is the policy that has abolished corporal punishment and its implementation in schools has led to the abandonment of corporal punishment by teachers that participated in this study. While this abandonment of corporal punishment is a positive change, its superficial nature renders this change unsustainable. The long-term absence of functional disciplinary measures adopted by teachers; schools are likely to crumble into a state of disciplinary anarchy that is already echoed in communities.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Interview Schedule

**Activity:** Reminder given to the participant about ethical principles as part of rapport building exercise. This includes confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and other relevant issues.

**Section A: Biographical Information**

Participant will be asked for biographical information at the beginning of the interview session

Gender

| | |
|---|---|
| Female | |
| Male | |

Age

| | |
|---|---|
| 20-29 years | |
| 30-39 years | |
| 40-49 years | |
| 50-59 years | |
| 60 years and older | |

Years of teaching experience

| | |
|---|---|
| 0-10 years | |
| 11-20 years | |
| 21-30 years | |
| 31-40 years | |

| | |
|---|---|
| 40 years and more | |

Teaching phase

| | |
|---|---|
| Foundation phase (Grade 1-3) | |
| Intermediate phase (Grade 4-6) | |
| Senior phase (Grade 7-9) | |
| FET phase (Grade 10-12) | |

**Section B- Childhood experiences of corporal punishment**

1. How were you disciplined as a learner?
2. How did you feel after being disciplined by this method?
3. How do you think the use of corporal punishment has impacted you into adulthood?

**Section C- Current disciplinary strategies**

1. When did you qualify as a teacher? And started teaching?
2. From when you started teaching what disciplinary method was used at your school?
3. What disciplinary method did/do you use?
4. Do you remember the time when corporal punishment was abolished? What was your response?
5. Do you have access to the DoE document on the "alternatives to corporal punishment"?
6. Have you ever used the guidelines provided in the document to choose a discipline method for the learners that you teach? Why?
7. What methods do you use to discipline learners? Tell me more about this method.
8. Do these methods that you use lead to a positive result?

**Section C- Reasons for abandoning the use of corporal punishment**

1. Why have you chosen to not use corporal punishment on the learners that you teach?
2. What do you think was the disadvantage of using corporal punishment?
3. How do you think the ban of corporal punishment has been beneficial to learners?
4. If you had to mentor a young teacher of learner discipline, what methods would you recommend? And why?

**Appendix B: Permission to conduct research**




**Permission to conduct research at the school**

Dear Principal

My name is Phindile Mabena and I am a Master of Education (in Educational Psychology) student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As a requirement to obtain this qualification, I am conducting research that seeks to understand teachers' childhood exposure to corporal punishment and their choice to abandon this practice using a cultural historical activity theory. This research will inform on whether the ban and the provided alternatives to corporal punishment are effective. In addition to this, it will hopefully inform policy makers, teachers and all involved participants in teaching and learning as to which disciplinary interventions can be implemented to reduce learners' misconduct.

For the purpose of this research, I would like teachers who have experienced corporal punishment as learners and have now chosen to abandon it in their teaching disciplinary methods to participate through an online individual interview. The Microsoft Teams platform will be used where interviews will be audio recorded and will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Should this request be granted, I would like you to distribute the participant information sheet to teachers that would like to be participants of this study so that they can indicate their interest to me. Interviews will be conducted outside school hours, and this will be communicated with the participants.

The identity of the participants will be kept confidential during the collection, analysis and reporting of data as codes will be allocated to all participants. All research audio recording will be stored in a computer that is password protected and may be shared with my supervisor. Should you have any questions relating to the research, you can contact me on the details provided below. With your permission, the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers in a format that ensures participant anonymity. Results will be distributed through the research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. If you have any concerns or

complaints regarding the ethical parts of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) on 0117171 1408 or email on hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Kind regards

Phindile

Researcher: Phindile Nothando Mabena, Phindilen64@gmail.com, 0765887644

Supervisor: Simangele Mayisela, simangele.mayisela@wits.ac.za, 0117171 4529

**Appendix C: Participant information sheet**




**Participant information sheet**

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Phindile Mabena and I am a Master of Education (in Educational Psychology) student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As a requirement to obtain this qualification, I am conducting research that seeks to understand teachers' childhood exposure to corporal punishment and their choice to abandon this practice using a cultural historical activity theory perspective. This research will inform on whether the ban and the provided alternatives to corporal punishment are effective. In addition to this, it will hopefully inform policy makers, teachers and all involved participants in teaching and learning as to which disciplinary interventions can be implemented to reduce learners' misconduct.

I am therefore inviting you to participate in this research which will involve an online individual interview. The Microsoft Teams platform and will be audio recorded with your permission. The decision to participate in this research is voluntary as you may choose to not participate and can choose to withdraw at any time during the process of the research without any risks involved. Your identity will be kept confidential during the collection, analysis and reporting of data as codes will be allocated to all participants. There are personal costs to you if you participate in this project which will be to have enough data for the duration of the interview. All research audio recording will be stored in a computer that is password protected and may be shared with my supervisor. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will pause the interview or resume at another time. Should you need some support or counselling services following the interview, contact SADAG on 0112344837 or Lifeline on 0861322322.

Should you have any questions relating to the research, you can contact me on the details provide below. With your permission, the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers in a format that ensures participant anonymity. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical parts of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) on 0117171 1408 or email on hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Kind regards

Phindile

Researcher: Phindile Nothando Mabena, Phindilen64@gmail.com, 0765887644

Supervisor: Simangele Mayisela, simangele.mayisela@wits.ac.za, 0117171 4529

**Appendix D: Participant consent form**




**Participant consent form**

**Research title:** Understanding teachers' childhood exposure to corporal punishment and the abandonment of this practice: A cultural historical activity theory perspective

I agree to participate in this research project. I have been given and understand the Participant Information Sheet which explains the nature and processes involved in this study.

1. I understand that there will be no immediate benefit to me, should I agree to participate, nor will I receive any payment
2. I understand that participation will be of a personal cost to me as I would require data for the interview
3. I understand that, even if I initially consent to take part in the study, I may withdraw at any time and would not be required to give any reasons therefore any data collected about me for the purposes of the study would immediately be destroyed, unless I give consent for it to be retained
4. I have been given a range of contact details, listed below. If I require further information or become concerned about any aspect of this study I am able to speak to any of these contacts.
5. I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this research project by other researchers.
6. I hereby consent to audio recording of the interview

7. I understand that recording will be stored in a password protected computer with restricted access to the researcher and the research supervisor.
8. I understand that the recording will be transcribed and any information that could identify me will be removed
9. I agree that direct quotes from my interview, without any information that could identify me, may be cited in the research report or other write-ups of research.

Contact details

Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) on 0117171 1408 or email on hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Researcher: Phindile Nothando Mabena, Phindilen64@gmail.com, 0765887644

Supervisor: Simangele Mayisela, simangele.mayisela@wits.ac.za, 0117171 4529

Name of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

## Appendix E: Ethics Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

**SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE**
**CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)**

| | |
|---|---|
| **CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE:** | **PROTOCOL NUMBER: MEDPSYC/21/05** |
| **PROJECT TITLE:** | Understanding teachers' childhood exposure to corporal punishment and the abandonment of this practice: A cultural historical activity theory perspective. |
| **INVESTIGATOR** | Mabena Phindile (1424768) |
| **SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR** | SHCD/Psychology |
| **DATE CONSIDERED** | 17 May 2021 |
| **DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE** | Approved unconditionally |
| **RISK LEVEL** | Low Risk |
| **EXPIRY DATE** | 31 December 2023 |

**ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE** 11 June 2021 **CHAIRPERSON** *Z. AMOD*
(Prof. Zaytoon Amod)

Cc Dr Simangele Mayisela (Supervisor)

---

**DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR**

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

**Signature** **Date** 25 / 06 / 2021

**PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES**

## Appendix F: Gauteng Department of Education Approval Letter

**GAUTENG PROVINCE**
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

**GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER**

| | |
|---|---|
| Date: | 18 May 2021 |
| Validity of Research Approval: | 08 February 2021– 30 September 2021<br>2021/134 |
| Name of Researcher: | Mabena PN |
| Address of Researcher: | 743 Lithuli<br>Kwamhlanga |
| Telephone Number: | 0765887644 |
| Email address: | phindilen64@gmail.com |
| Research Topic: | Understanding teachers' childhood exposure to corporal punishment and the abandonment of this practice: A cultural historical activity theory perspective |
| Type of qualification | Master of Education in Educational Psychology |
| Number and type of schools: | 1 Secondary Schools |
| District/s/HO | Johannesburg South |

***Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research***

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

18/05/2021

**The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:**



**Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management**
7th Floor 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

**Appendix G: Editing certificate**

Richard van Rensburg
*Language Editing Services*
Richard.Leslievan@gmail.com
0728212151

# CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

24 February 2023

To whom it may concern,

I am an associate member of the Professional Editors' Guild (membership number VAN092) and hold a copy-editing and proofreading course qualification through the SA Writers College. This certificate serves as confirmation that I, in my capacity as a language editor and proofreader, have performed a language edit and proofreading of the following student's work:

| | |
|---|---|
| Student name: | **Phindile Mabena** |
| University: | **University of the Witwatersrand** |
| Degree: | **Master of Arts (Educational Psychology)** |
| Document type: | **Research Report** |
| Title of research: | **Understanding Teachers' Childhood Exposure to Corporal Punishment and the Abandonment of this Practice: A Cultural-Historical Activity Theory Perspective** |

Conventions as outlined in *New Oxford Style Manual* have been applied in the editing process, and discretion applied where needed to ensure consistency with conventions in South Africa. The referencing and formatting followed APA 7th edition guidelines.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there are any further queries in this regard.

Yours faithfully,

**Mr Richard van Rensburg**