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Parents' considerations of corporal punishment on preschool-aged children in South African homes

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Abstract

The utilization of corporal punishment (CP) is an integral part of childrearing and discipline in many homes. Numerous studies have elucidated the detrimental effect of CP use on parent-child relationships as well as children's psychosocial and cognitive development. Given the recent banning of CP in South African homes, the current study sought to understand the political, personal, and cultural-historical systems at play in parental use of CP, through the use of the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). The data was collected using qualitative methods. A total of nine couples from urban and township areas were purposefully sampled and interviewed from Ekurhuleni homes. Parents also completed demographic information within the allocated time. The results of the study illuminated that in a political sense unlike previous research, policy change and awareness thereof does not have an impact on the transformation of the mind and people's actions; as most parents disagreed with the law and had positive attitudes towards the use and effectiveness of CP towards their preschool-aged children. On a personal level, parents need guidance and intervention since most of them use CP to correct their children's behavior and do not child-rear appropriately. Finally, parents' cultural-historical background had a significant influence on the transgenerational transmission and internalization of CP use as a cultural tool.

Keywords: Corporal punishment, CHAT, preschool-aged, qualitative methods, South Africa