Preschool teachers approach in suspected cases of domestic violence

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a public health and international problem. Previous research outlined the extensivity of the problem internationally and the missing approaches of professionals who work with young children. The study aims to explore the methods and routines used by preschool teachers in approaching suspected cases of domestic violence among preschool children in Sweden. The results show that there are only a few available methods and routines given by governmental agencies in guiding the preschool teachers to approach such cases. As an alternative, the preschool teachers themselves develop individual approaches like observation, documentation, and collaboration with different actors involved. The interviews were conducted with semi-structured interviews with four preschool teachers to give a deeper understanding of their knowledge about the topic and experiences with suspected cases of domestic violence and methods and routines. The normalization process theory (NPT) was used to highlight the complexity of modifying methods and routines for complex problems e.g. domestic violence. The method of deductive thematic analysis provided predetermined themes connected to the theory and new themes emerged from the data during the analysis process.

Keywords: Methods, Routines, Domestic Violence, Preschool Teachers, Normalization Process Theory
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1 Introduction

One of the goals in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is to end all sorts of violence against children all over the world. Around one billion children are in some way exposed to violence every year and every five minutes a child is killed by violence (United Nations [UN], 2018). According to the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], n.d.) every child has the right to protection from any form of violence, including physical violence which are still considered by many caregivers and societies around the world as a necessity for disciplining a child. There is a lack of legal protection of corporal punishment both by caregivers and in schools worldwide. Children are getting harmed by witnessing violence between caregivers, where most commonly it is the woman who is the victim in intimate partner violence (IPV). One in four children under the age of five is living with a mother who is a victim of IPV, from a global perspective (UNICEF, 2017).

According to United Nation Women (2018) and the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2013) the frequency of violence towards women and children can vary because of different factors e.g. socioeconomic situation, culture, value, age, and the mental health. In 2014 the Swedish Government came out with a proposal to work proactively in whole Sweden with the problem of domestic violence (Nationella samordnaren mot våld i nära relationer, 2014). In 2018 the Swedish Government had given different governmental authorities the mission to educated staff and create routines to see early signs of violence in service users (Regeringen, 2018). Domestic violence is a public health problem and it has tremendous consequences for the victim. The consequences are first and foremost seen in long-term mental health problems as a posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and physical problems (WHO, 2013).

It is arguable that domestic violence is a global problem (UNICEF, 2017) as well as a Swedish national public health problem (Nationella samordnare mot våld i nära relationer, 2014). Domestic violence affects all parts of society including children, especially preschool children in the age from one to six, due to their vulnerability (Hindberg, 2006). Based on the knowledge about domestic violence, it gives an insight into the importance of international social work addressing this issue and actively working with preventions of domestic violence. Throughout
this study, the term domestic violence was used, which means any form of violence that occurs between individuals living in a household (WHO, 2012).

The interest, to focus on preschool children, was drawn when the authors came across the article by Åsbrink (2018) which points out that statistically there are more reporting’s to the social service in school-age than in preschool age. That created a discussion in class of whether children in schools are more exposed to domestic violence than children in preschools, or if cases in preschools are just not reported as much as cases in schools. The authors of this study wanted to explore the reasons behind this. After further discussions, the authors became more interested in exploring what kind of methods and routines are used in preschools in approaching suspected cases of domestic violence.

In relation to social work, exploring the methods and routines used by preschool teachers in approaching suspected cases of domestic violence from the teachers’ own perspectives has an important contribution for social workers. This is based on the fact, that preschool teachers have a closer relationship with young children. The collaboration between preschool teachers and social workers can be beneficial in detecting signs of domestic violence and help the preschool teachers to help the children who are suspected of being a victim of domestic violence and introduce the problem of domestic violence through the CRC and the LPFÖ18 curriculum.

1.1 Aim and research questions

Research aim
The aim of this study explores the methods and routines used by preschool teachers in approaching suspected cases of domestic violence among preschool children.

Research questions
• What are the methods used by preschool teachers in approaching suspected cases of domestic violence among preschool children?
• What are the routines used by preschool teachers in approaching suspected cases of domestic violence among preschool children?
1.2 Disposition

In the first chapter, the introduction presents the research background, research aim, and research questions. Further on, in chapter two, the literature review discusses the concept of domestic violence, as well as how domestic violence and suspected cases of domestic violence are approached by preschool teachers and teachers both from an international and national point of view, based on earlier studies. In chapter three the theoretical framework presents the normalization process theory (NPT) which was used as a framework throughout the thematic data analysis. In chapter four the methodology is described with the research design, how the study is conducted, and it considers issues on credibility, ethical considerations, and limitations. In chapter five the analysis and the result are presented, and the results are based on the data which was analysed with the normalization process theory. Chapter six presents the discussion in relation to the aim and research questions, in relation to the previous research, theory, and methodology. Further, chapter six gives suggestions for further research. The study is written by Danielle and Johanna together in close collaboration. Therefore, both authors have contributed to all parts of this study.
2 Literature review

The literature review gives important information, foundation, and background of this study. The authors reviewed the articles written by authors who have conducted their studies on domestic violence in the Netherlands (Schols, Ruiter & Öry, 2013), United Kingdom (Lloyd, 2018), Sweden (Markström & Münger 2017), Jordanian (Fayez, Takash & Al-Zboon, 2014), and the United States (Bell and Singh, 2017). It was found that even with the diverse background of nations, the international articles were pointing out similar difficulties in managing the problems of domestic violence. It also gave an insight on an international perspective, that there are similarities for preschool teachers, teachers and other professionals in the school environment to approach suspected cases of domestic violence.

2.1 Definition for method and routine

A method is a specific way of doing something (Merriam-Webster, 2019), or a technique, a manner, a procedure performed in a systematic, logical or orderly fashion (Dictionary, 2019). A method can help to approach a certain, new phenomena, event or work (Oxford Dictionaries, 2019). Payne (2014) adds that a method orientates after empirical data and gives guidelines and techniques on how to handle a new situation or how to modify a work task. This gives predictability over the effectiveness and which has an ethical standpoint as well.

The definition of routines entails terms like regularity and repeated practice, for example (Merriam-Webster, 2019) and interval or everyday life and practice (Dictionary, 2019). A routine contains an activity, practice or behaviour which occurs in a habitual manner which can involve predictability in everyday life and work. There is a constant procedure which gives a recurring action or practice. A routine can help to do something in a more normalized way.

Based on the definition above, it is possible to make a connection between the two concepts of methods and routines and apply them to this study's research questions. When preschool teachers make use of a method to modify the working process a method can become a routine by the repeated use. However, there is no guarantee that a method becomes a routine even with the connection between the two concepts.
2.2 Domestic violence and children

According to Isdal (2017) domestic violence occurs when a person uses violence in a systematic way with the purpose of having control and power over the other person. It can be categorised into physical, sexual, material, psychological and latent violence. The violence can be expressed as only threats and words to scare the victim to actual physical actions, like beating and rape. The authors of this study highlight the importance to use the word violence when discussing domestic violence and not use a word that minimizes the problem (Isdal, 2017). It is significant to understand that violence is more than physical violence and that violence is not always obvious to detect.

In many countries, the term domestic violence refers to partner violence, but the term also includes children abuse, elderly abuse or abuse by any member of a household (WHO, 2012). To point out that children suffer from domestic violence one way or another, the literature review describes children's reaction towards domestic violence. Children might not carry bruises or talk openly about it, still, it is understood that a child always gets harmed by domestic violence (Hindberg, 2006). According to Schols et al (2013), if there is knowledge about domestic violence, it will be easier to detect the sign of domestic violence and it is easier to approach. Schols et al (2013) explore how public child healthcare professionals and primary school teachers identified and handled cases of domestic violence. The results showed that, there is awareness about the topic of domestic violence and reporting signs of domestic violence, but there is lack of knowledge about signs of abuse and child abuse reporting procedures, and that influenced the approach the professionals used to handle cases of domestic violence.

According to Jonhed (2018), children are aware when violence occurs between caregivers and are victimized by being a witness. Children can try to hide when a caregiver uses violence against the other caregiver, but they still hear the violence. Children can notice the consequences of violence, even when they have not been home during the actual abuse. Destroyed furniture can be one hint for children, or the caregiver is arrested by the police. Children are creating strategies to prevent violence to occur. Children stay home from school, invite friends or even take the blame for events that happen, in the hope that the caregivers do not get exposed to more violence. The child can even try to be a support towards the abused caregiver or react and
destroy the abusive caregiver's belongings after an act of violence. Isdal (2017) explains that to observe violent events can be more difficult to experience than for the victim that experience the violence him or herself. Isdal (2017) also mentions the risk for a child to develop violent behaviour because of being an observer. Exposure to violence needs to be seen as a negative impact on children’s health. The trauma can be worse for the observer than for the victim, and the observer is often the child. The Swedish legislation in the Swedish social service act (Socialtjänstlagen [SoL] SFS 2001:453) says a child is identified as a victim when the child has witnessed the caregivers, a relative, or another person that is close to the child being abused in some form.

According to BRIS (2019), the Swedish organization for children’s rights, violence against children occurs in every social class in the society, but there are some risk factors that can increase the possibility for a child to be exposed to violence. One factor is violence in the home e.g. between the caregivers, that is why the author's emphasis on contextualizing the problem with domestic violence and partner violence. That comes along with the importance to mention men's violence against women because women are highly represented of being a victim when it comes to partner violence, both national and international (Moser Hällen & Sinisalo, 2018). The Swedish authority crime-prevention council (Brottsförebyggande Rådet [Brå], 2019) collects statistics on police reports of the amount of child abuse. According to Brå (2019), the police reports about child abuse among children between zero to six years old have increased by 82 % from 2009-2018. Brå (2019) states that there is an increase in reports because preschools make more police reports today. During summertime when children are not in preschool, the statistics have shown that reports of child abuse decreases. This shows a relation between police reports and the amount of time children spend in preschool. Only when the children are in preschool the preschool teachers can recognize a suspicious case of domestic violence and can act accordingly. Another fact is pointed out by Hindberg (2006) and Brå (2019) they agree that the estimated number of unknown cases of domestic violence is high. They mention that women are highly suspected of being the perpetrator when it comes to domestic violence. The number of women committing a crime like domestic violence is much higher than in other forms of crime. One-third of the times it is a woman and in two-third it is a man who is abusive. The authors mention this to clarify the cycle that occurs because of domestic violence. When a man abuses a woman,
the consequence of that abuse is that a child runs a higher risk of being abused by both, father and mother, and that increases the risk for the child to develop violent behaviour in later life, and the cycle of domestic violence continues.

2.2.1 Reasons why children remain silent

According to Hindberg (2006), there are many reasons why children do not speak about their experiences of domestic violence. The age of the child can be a crucial factor for not telling about the abuse, the worst kind of domestic violence towards a child happens between zero and one year old. The child is in an extremely vulnerable age and the child does not have the ability to speak to anybody. Different challenges can aggravate the situation for the child. A child with a disability may have limitations in verbal communication or understanding of the abusive situation due to developmental disturbance. Immigrant children may have a lack of language skills and have trouble to express the traumatic event. To use an interpreter can make it more difficult for the child to open-up. Children that are in the psychosocial vulnerable situation can lack skills in expressing their experience, thoughts, and needs. They have learned how to adapt and not make any demands. Children who did not have the opportunity to create an identity and integrity have difficulties in understanding what their own thoughts, feelings, and will are. This makes it harder for them to express themselves to others.

Hindberg (2006) adds that silence and concealment, not to talk about what happens in the family and strong loyalty towards the caregivers can make the child remain silent about the events at home. The loyalty can have a connection to the survival instinct because children are dependent on the caregivers. Small children may not remember the abuse, because of difficulties in organizing the memory or they suppress the memory. An older child can get scared of the consequences of opening up, due to their development of the imagination. The feeling of shame and guilt can hinder a child to express the abuse at home. Also, the feeling that the abuse is their own fault can stop a child from telling. One condition that is needed for a child to speak out is a person that they can turn to talk about the abuse.
2.3 The role of a preschool in cases of domestic violence

It is stated in the preschool curriculum (Skolverket, 2018), that every individual, working with a child in a preschool and school setting must advertise human rights expressed by the CRC. All individuals have the responsibility to use education for any anti-discriminating behaviour and the integrity of the child. The professionals are in the demand to act in the child's best interest and enable the children to make use of their own rights, e.g. the right to participate. This can be done in using the material by the CRC and teach the children about their rights and raise awareness (Skolverket, 2018). In the Swedish legislation (SoL, SFS 2001:453) every person working with children or youths are obligated to report if there is any suspicion of a child is being harmed. Preschools have an important role to protect children if there exists any form of violence against a child. Lloyd (2018) confirms the statement that preschool teachers have an important role in child protection. A good collaboration is needed between different professions e.g. between preschool teachers and social workers to have a reliable social safety network around a child.

The article emphasizes the importance of schools to educate young people in domestic violence as a method of prevention work.

There are certain factors that can be crucial in the process of decision making of reporting or not reporting for preschool teachers. Markström and Münger (2017) have explored the factors behind the decision to report to the social service made by teachers and school health staff in cases of a child being exposed to domestic violence. They found that the professionals often felt insecure to decide to report to the social service. They uncovered a lack of knowledge about the exposure to domestic violence which was a contributing factor for the preschool teacher’s insecurity. The article mentions collaboration between schools and social service, and that distrust is a factor for not collaborate with the social service and not make a report.

How preschool teachers identify their role of detecting and reporting domestic violence has an influence on how they approach a suspicious case of domestic violence. According to Fayez et al (2014), preschool teachers mention different roles in reporting child abuse. Some preschool teachers have the belief that somebody else should be responsible for detecting and reporting child abuse e.g. the principal or the school counsellor. While others expressed that it is the role of the preschool teachers to report. The article describes that the preschool teachers participated in a
compulsory course on child abuse which was acknowledged as very important for the role of preschool teachers. Bell and Singh (2017) explore educator’s practices and methods to report abuse and neglect among children in America. The article is emphasizing the need to have good procedures and training for educators when it comes to domestic violence. Training and fixed procedures were shown to be effective for preschool teachers to know how to act when there is a suspicion of abuse and neglect among children.

2.3.1 Curriculum LPFÖ18

The Swedish Government has reworked the curriculum for the preschools in Sweden, which has not been updated for twenty years (Regeringen, 2018). One of the additions that have been made is a goal which deals with the children's development of their identity and feeling confident with their identity. The curriculum entails being aware and conscious about their right to their own bodily and personal integrity (Skolverket, 2018). The authors of this study emphasize that specific new goal in the curriculum, since it is seen as preventive methods for children against domestic violence. If a child understands their right of boundaries around themselves, they can speak up if they are being victimized of domestic violence.

2.3.2 Social Service Act

Any person who is working in an agency that is directed towards children or youths is, according to the social service act (SoL, SFS 2001:453), obligated to directly report to the social service if they suspect a child is being a victim of domestic violence. In this composition we empathise on suspected cases of domestic violence. A person does not need any proof, like visible bruises, or need to know that a child is being harmed. The professionals only need to suspect a case and they must fulfil the obligation to report. Then it is the responsibility of the social service to investigate if there is any action needed to protect the child’s best interest.

2.3.3 Barnahus

Socialstyrelsen (2008) explains the role of Barnahus. The agency comes in when there is a clear suspicion of domestic violence towards a child and the report is made to the social service. The agency gathers different professionals, the social service, the police, and medical professions and combines them in one place. The purpose is to facilitate the process of investigation for the child and avoid the child from visiting different locations during a traumatic event. Barnahus combines
the different kinds of support and governmental agencies in one place and their services includes specialized knowledge to interview and examine a child that has been victimized or is currently a victim of domestic violence.
3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Normalization Process Theory

After examining different theories and balancing the pros and cons, the Normalization Process Theory (NPT) was chosen. Main aspects were, that it helped to set a consistent framework for the interview questions, which in turn, helped to answer the research questions for methods and routines. Four different articles about the theory gave an idea about practical use.

May et al (2015) state that the theory was developed because of the challenge to implement or modify interventions in health care or other agencies. NPT targets to modify and implement a sustainable method about health care problems, for instance, domestic violence. The theory recognized an existing lack of knowledge when it comes to modifying interventions and wants to tackle that problem. The theory discusses the normalization process of implementation or modification of an intervention (Murray et al., 2010). Found in May and Finch (2009) NPT wants to give tools to professionals to understand, implement and sustain new or modified methods and routines. Based on the literature review, knowledge about domestic violence and therefore methods and routines are lacking, or not clear or just not existing. The theory inspired to understand the modification normalization process of the methods and routines in preschool settings. Those methods and routines are not newly developed. The authors expect clear guidelines for methods and routines for such a complex topic like domestic violence.

Further, Hooker, Small, Humphreys, Hegarty and Taf (2015) explain the four constructions NPT is based on. The first construction is coherence with the meaning of how the work is understood. Second, cognitive participation, meaning who does the work. Third, collective work which is asking how the work is done. Fourth, reflexive monitoring wants to answer how the work is sustained and improved. These four constructions build each on four components. In the thesis, the four components for each of the four constructions are mentioned in the table but not explained in detail. Due to the limited time and word limit, the authors decided to focus on the constructions, coherence, cognitive participation, collective work, and reflexive monitoring and give a detailed description of the implementation of the four constructions.
Coherence provide the sense-making process of an intervention and to make the preschool teachers understand the meaning of the methods and routines in suspected cases of domestic violence. NPT suggests, that only professionals who understand the methods and routines and are adequately informed can raise awareness about the importance of their own role. The four components of coherence are differentiation, communal specification, individual specification, and internalization (May & Finch, 2009; May et al., 2015; Murray et al., 2015). Coherence helped to highlight the understanding the preschool teachers have about domestic violence, which are an important first step in NPT and the process of implement complex intervention. Formulation of the interview guide and interview questions was inspired by the theory, questions were asked about their educational background and education about signs and forms of domestic violence. They were asked if they put emphasis on the approach of a suspicious case of domestic violence. More questions were regarding the child's best interest, integrity and what they know
about it. Coherence was implemented in the analysis as well. Coherence helped to analyse if the preschool teachers understand the significance of the problem with domestic violence and if the preschool teachers are aware of the methods and routines. Coherence is important, because a better understanding of a problem raises the chances that the preschool teachers take the problem seriously, engage in education, and implement methods and routines (May & Finch, 2009; May et al., 2015; Murray et al., 2015).

Cognitive participation clarifies about who does the work in a complex intervention. After understanding the methods and routines itself, one needs to understand their own role in the intervention. The four components of cognitive participation start with the initiation and continue with enrolment, legitimation, and activation (May & Finch, 2009; May et al., 2015; Murray et al., 2015). To understand the collective participation, questions were formulated to understand the role of the preschool teachers when it comes to a suspicious case of domestic violence. The authors of this study found out who is involved in the process and how they divide different roles. Questions about the responsibility of reporting and education about integrity were asked. Further questions helped to understand how each preschool teacher see his or her practical task to implement methods and routines. The construction of cognitive participation helped in the analysis to illustrate the awareness about the role of the preschool teachers when it comes to implementing methods and routines.

The third construction is collective work and answers how the work is done in a practical sense. The four components start with interactional workability, then relational integration, skill-set workability, and contextual integration (May & Finch, 2009; May et al., 2015; Murray et al., 2015). The questions were meant to find out how the methods and routines look like in everyday practice. That went hand in hand with the question of governmental or individually made methods and routines which has implications on the resources the preschool teachers have. Additionally, if they have information about CRC, the child's integrity and how they implement the child's best interest. Besides, it was asked how the preschool teachers proceed in a case of suspicion and what they do. Based on that, the authors were able to analyse what kind of methods and routines were implemented in their daily work.
The fourth construction is reflexive monitoring and means how the methods and routines are implemented in a sustainable way and if efforts are made to improve. The components are systematization, communal appraisal, individual appraisal and reconfiguration (May & Finch, 2009; May et al., 2015; Murray et al., 2015). Using the fourth construction, the authors tried to understand how the preschool teachers evaluate existing methods and routines and if they have wishes or ideas on how to improve the practice. Precisely it was asked if they feel enough support by whether governmental agencies, the preschool principal and colleagues when it comes to a suspicious case of domestic violence. The last construction gave an idea for the analysis if there is a normalization process of methods and routines to approach a suspicious case of domestic violence.
4 Methodology

This chapter describes the entire research process and the framework of the methodology including the essay credibility, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

A qualitative approach was chosen to gather empirical and rich data. There are a few characteristics that are recognized in most qualitative studies, it is primarily conducted in the respondents natural setting doing their daily business. It includes variables that cannot be controlled or experimentally manipulated, and questions are not always fully conceptualized. Collected data is influenced by the experiences and priorities of the respondents. The result is drawn from the empirical data and does not need to be statistically analysed (Grinnell & Unrau, 2018).

4.1 Research Design

Through the purpose of this study, the authors applied a case study as a research design. This strategy is often used in qualitative approaches, together with interviewing as a method for collecting data in a setting to capture the circumstances of an everyday or commonplace situation for the respondents (Bryman, 2016). This strategy was chosen to get rich data around the formulated aim. To combine the previous research and the empirical insight by the interviewees helped to get a better understanding of their subjective experience.

Specifically, this case study was recognized as an exemplifying case study which means to explore in the broad research field of domestic violence through secondary data and literature review. It got evident that through the research questions the authors can narrow down to researchable examples. In this case, the aim is to explore methods and routines to approach cases of suspicion of domestic violence in preschool settings. This was particularly interesting because it was not as prevalent in secondary data or literature review (Bryman, 2016).
4.2 Data Collection

4.2.1 Literature review of secondary sources

According to Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias and DeWaards (2015), secondary data has an implication on the credibility, in case the study replicates in, for example, the methodology. The review of this study’s secondary data is under the literature review.

Most of the used scholarly articles were searched in the library databases through the University. Here the authors got further ideas about where to find academic texts. Many databases were available, but not all of them suited the search. The database socINDEX did not offer enough choices for scholarly articles. It was used only in the beginning to get an idea about search terms. Useful databases were Scopus and Eric. It became clear that much research is done about the topic and that enabled the authors to make use of diverse articles from different countries. Search terms were combined, for example, signs of domestic violence, methods, routines, preschool teachers, the normalization process theory, children's rights, and integrity.

Relevant literature was used to give the authors a deeper understanding of domestic violence and children being a victim of domestic violence. Earlier course literature was combined with the literature review and gave an understanding of the methodology framework and the procedure of the research.

4.2.2 Sampling: Selection of participants

The research included four interviewees as a convenience sample. As mentioned, the respondents are all working in preschools as teachers. According to Grinnell and Unrau (2015), informants are one main importance for the whole research. All interviewees were chosen because they work with preschool children and have the same responsibility to implement the LPFÖ18 curriculum and to report suspected cases of domestic violence. The sampling ensures the closeness to the aim because the aim was formulated to focus on people who work in preschools. It did not matter for the authors if the interviewees were from the same school or not, because the authors were interested in every individually.
The authors found a list with 70 preschools from the municipality’s website. The authors of the study send 40 interview requests to the principal of the preschool, but only one responded. The authors decided to call the schools within the list of 40 preschools. As the number of respondents was low, the first four were chosen for the interviews. The four respondents received the Swedish interview guide before the actual interviews.

The email to the preschools is attached as Appendix I.

4.2.3 Designing interview guide and interview questions

The interview guide was carried out in a semi-structured manner. The semi-structured interviews gave flexibility during the interviews and the possibility to explore the respondent’s answers and to ask follow up questions during the interview to get and deeper understanding of the respondent’s perspective. It is important to have a structure in the interview guide that helps to answer the aim (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Due to that, themes were already determined before the interviews took place and the questions were divided into methods and routines, further sub-themes that were retrieved from the NPT. The constructions coherence and cognitive participation were divided under methods. The constructions collective work and reflexive monitoring were divided under routines. The guide included eleven questions with more follow up questions. Based on the previous research the authors had certain ideas for the answers and formulated follow up questions according to the previous research. Follow-up questions were supposed to help the respondents to get ideas about the meaning of the questions if deeper explanation was needed of the main question.

The interview guide is attached as Appendix III.

4.2.4 Conducting interviews

The advantage of using face-to-face interviews is the flexibility so that the interviewers had control of the interview situation and the methods give possibilities to collect supplementary information. It is important for the respondents to feel comfortable, that they feel they have a significant value for the research, and any barriers need to be erased (Frankfort-Nachmias et al, 2015).
The working experience from the respondents varied from five to more than twenty-five years. The four interviews were held in the teacher’s offices in the respective preschools. The time and location were discussed by telephone. Before the interview began, the respondents got introduced to the form of consent and were asked again, if they are ok with being recorded. Three interviews were held in Swedish at the request of the respondents because they are afraid of not being able to express themselves in English. One respondent offered to do the interview in English. Danielle, as a native Swedish speaking, performed three interviews and Johanna the interview in English. Even though a language barrier was identified, both authors engaged in every interview. Each interview took around 30 to 40 minutes and no follow up interviews for clarification where needed.

The consent form is attached as Appendix II.

4.3 Data Transcription

All interviews were recorded by using two mobile phones. As soon as the interviews were done, the authors started transcribing. The participants are represented as A, B, C, and D respectively. The word-by-word transcribing is very important because it ensures the right wording and makes an interpretation possible (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Danielle transcribed and translated three interviews which were conducted in Swedish. Johanna transcribed the one conducted in English. The interviews were translated through the program Word 2016, in order to save time. Corrections were made manually to make sure that no misinterpretations or mistranslations changed the meaning of the content.

4.4 Data Analysis

For facilitating the process of analysing the authors chose a deductive thematic analysis. Hence, before gathering the data, the theory was chosen. As presented before, it is the NPT. The data is analysed and interpreted through the lens of the theory. Within the process of creating themes by the theory and deciding for themes by the respondents, the authors of the study got familiar with the retrieved material. It is important to go back and forth between the data obtained in the
fieldwork and the aim, otherwise, the risk getting off topic increases (Frankfort-Nachmias et al, 2015).

Through the deductive thematic analysis, the themes are created after the theory. The themes are coherence, cognitive participation, collective work, and reflexive monitoring. Those themes are found throughout the thesis. A theme is like a pattern which is named repeatedly and helps the reader recognize the most important statements. The research questions are divided into ‘methods’ and ‘routines’ as well as divided into sub-themes. The theme ‘methods’ became the sub-themes coherence and cognitive participation which built one section. The second theme ‘routine’ has the sub-themes collective work and reflexive monitoring. One can recognize that the theory leads to the research questions and the theory and previous research gave examples for more subthemes for the interview guide and the analysis.

The coding interrelates with the deductive thematic analysis. First, the authors pre-determined the themes by the theory and added the codes for the analysis, taken by the interviewee's answers. After several times of reading the material, new themes emerge while coding the transcribing. First, both authors coded the transcribing individually and afterward, discussed the codes together. That ensures that the different interpretations of the transcribing are discussed. All the coding was done manually to be as close to the data as possible. Different colours identified the codes easily and helped to facilitate the process of analysing.

The authors are aware that the data is retrieved by individuals and that it is about their individual experiences. The authors of this study have to be aware that the answers by the respondents are not to generalize. Further, the subjective answers given by the participants are, to some extent, interpreted and analysed. Here it is important to mention, that the results are depending on the interpretations by the authors. Even with all effort, the results must be read carefully and should not be generalized to any other people or preschools.
4.5 Essay Credibility

Throughout the research, from the point of planning to analyse, and writing the results, the authors had different points of credibility in mind. To benefit from the used empirical method the part of credibility must be emphasized throughout the process (Alvesson & Skölberg 2018).

One emphasizes was on objectivity, a non-biased, and non-judgmental mind while formulating questions, during interviews, interpretation, and analysis. In this case, one helpful aspect was the pre-understanding of the topic. Throughout the whole Bachelor program of international social work, problems and ideas were discussed. The thesis benefited from that because of access to previous research and knowledge. Also, discussions about objectivity raise awareness and gave a sense of paying attention.

Retrieved by Grinnell and Unrau (2015), triangulation is one big aspect for research studies, though, the authors of the study did not fully implement a triangulation. Nevertheless, the study includes two kinds of data, the secondary data, and the empirical data by the interviews. This, in turn, helped with the replication of the study. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) take up the point of replication because they see that the replication of the study can increase the credibility of a thesis. In this case, the authors worked closely with previous research and articles about the NPT to have the study replicated, but the findings itself cannot be replicated. It is not possible to create the same result again, because the respondents may answer differently because of external factors. Especially when using qualitative interviews different factors can lead to different answers and results.

Obtained by Alvesson & Skölberg (2018), reflexive research can lead to better and credible research. Based on that, the authors put emphasis on being transparent which means to give the respondents a full picture about the aim, interview questions and consent form. Secondly, being transparent with the reader. It must be clear, that this is a bachelor thesis with a limited frame of time and resources. The authors tried to be as reflective as possible to give an idea about the shortcomings and make the reader aware of alternatives. The research can be taken as an inspiration for further research, but it should not be taken uncritically. The authors ask the reader to be reflective and critically with the results.
4.6 Ethical consideration

The authors followed the Swedish Research Council’s four requirements for humanistic and social scientific research, which include information about the study, consent, confidentiality and data utilization (Vetenskapsrådet, n.d.). The respondents were verbally informed and additionally had a written consent form.

The new General Data Protection Law (GDPR) helped to strengthen data privacy (EU GDPR, n.d.). Due to the ethical considerations and the sensitive topic of domestic violence, the authors put emphasis on the anonymity of the respondents, their preschools and the municipality. No names or locations are released to protect the respondents and all data was destroyed after the use. It is the author's responsibility to prevent any harm through the research. Another ethical consideration is the agreement on the recordings (Frankfort-Nachmias et al, 2015). Confirmed through telephone and on the interview day was given for the recordings. The interviewees got asked if they wish to have a copy of the consent form. All the respondents were offered to receive the final thesis via e-post.

4.7 Limitations of the study

The main limitation of this study was the short time of six weeks to conduct the study. That is the reason for using only four interview participants. Another limiting factor was the language barrier in conducting the interviews as Johanna has a limited understanding of Swedish, and three participants were not comfortable being interviewed in English. The transcription process and going through the translation was time-consuming. The translations were carried out to assure that correct information was presented and understood by Danielle and Johanna.
5 Analysis and Results

The collected data and results for this study are presented and analysed with the use of the normalization process theory (NPT). In the following, the methods and routines the preschool teachers had for the problem of domestic violence and more precisely, the approach of a suspicious case of domestic violence was analysed. The empirical data was analysed through the lens of the NPT.

To reach that point where methods and routines have become normalized in an organization there are, according to the NPT, certain steps that must be fulfilled (May et al, 2015). Just like throughout the thesis, the analysis is divided into methods and routines to be able to answer the research questions. Analysis will be divided by the themes by the constructions from the NTP which are coherence, cognitive participation, collective work, and reflexive monitoring. Lastly, the analysis got subthemes by the codes of the transcribing. Those codes helped in the analysis to point out the main answers by the respondents.

5.1 Theme 1: Coherence

5.1.1 Education, knowledge and experience

In the process of modifying and normalizing methods and routines, there are certain steps that needed to be reached. The first step was coherence which means, how the work is understood (May et al, 2015). Obtained by the interviews, the preschool teachers had different backgrounds in both education and experience and in how many years they have been working as preschool teachers. They had differences in education they attended and gained knowledge and experience when it comes to cases of domestic violence. There may be different backgrounds in education and experience, still, all four participants are aware of their obligation, by the Swedish social service act to report, if they suspect a child is being a victim of domestic violence. Albeit, how they were informed about the social service act differs. Some of them were informed during their education, respondent B explained it: “...that information you get already from the education...”, while others were informed by the preschool principal, respondent C: “I get that first and foremost from the principal.”
Two of the respondents had special crisis groups for their preschool. Those groups hold regular meetings and discussed different topics. Special representatives from each preschool had the responsibility to inform other colleagues about the new information that is discussed in the crisis group. The two preschools use a binder with written routines on the process of reporting as a method to know what to do when suspicions had arisen of a child being a victim of domestic violence, respondent B: “...it is us that informs all other staff, what is applied, because we have the same routine in the whole area [...] and those routines are collected in a binder...”.

All four preschool teachers worked from a similar understanding of children's rights and work actively with Children's Right Convention (CRC). They have special representatives that work with an equal treatment plan in the preschools and these representatives, as mentioned above, are those who are responsible to inform the other colleagues with new information on, for example, domestic violence. Here it is important to point out, that the special education is not mandatory. The preschool teachers can participate if they feel the need to or if they are interested. They all described a deep understanding of integrity and working actively with it in the daily work with the children. Important to point out is, that the work with integrity and the child’s best interest has a connection with the normalization process of methods and routines. The preschool teachers get exposed to the topic, start conversations and engage in the problem. Moreover, they make the children aware of boundaries and their agency and that is one reason why it is so important that children know about their rights and have words to their experiences. That gives them the chance to express when something happened. Under theme collective work, there is a more detailed explanation of work with children’s rights and integrity. Participant B and C described the view they have at the preschools about integrity:

“...Yes, we've worked pretty much with it [...] we work a lot all things in ehm permeated by that we teach children to be able to say stop. It's something that we... That you should be able to stand up and you should be respected for what you now say, I do not want. No, but then you should respect them. Teach the youngest kids, stop I don't want. We work daily with it.” (B)
“Yes, that is spoken about on a regular basis in meetings and stuff and work with it and how we going to work with it and proceed. So that is, also what we used is the iPad. With the children and to document their work and we spoke with them if it is ok if I take a picture of you and their work. Because if they say no and I do it anyways the rights are taken away.” (C)

There are opportunities to get further education on different topics, but these educations are not mandatory. As mentioned, if one preschool teacher attended the education it is his or her responsibility to share knowledge from the education, and according to respondent A, it can be difficult to recall everything and explain it to the other colleagues. Besides, it is not certain to be able to go to such an education even when they are interested:

“I have gone to one education ehm “Speaking of Concerns” that the local crime-prevention council and social service have, it was really good, but not everybody went to that, only selected ones got to go. We in the crisis group and some from student health team are allowed to go.” (A)

Earlier the authors mentioned the respondent's experience and knowledge about domestic violence. They have different knowledge and made different kinds of experiences. The differences did not seem to make a difference in their understanding of the obligation to report and take the children serious, when they express verbally, to be victimized. The big difference in knowledge and experience about violence is a factor that cannot be ignored on how it affects the implementation of methods and routines. NPT is used in complex interventions and domestic violence is a complex and difficult problem, which all the respondents agreed on. The first step in NPT is sense-making, if there are differences in understanding domestic violence, there will be differences in how to approach a child when domestic violence is acknowledged. As written in the background, being a victim of domestic violence includes the children who are witnessing the violence (Hindberg, 2006). In terms of that it was sensed that one respondent did not understand that a child is seen as a victim of domestic violence when there is violence between the caregivers. This is based on the answer that the respondent C only talked about the abused child as a victim and did not acknowledge the witnessed violence between the caregivers “I think there was one case, of like, dad hit mum or something. I am not sure if anything, if any more discussions about it, but I also think that coming back to the children who are abused...”
While the other respondents understood that there are different forms of violence. The lack of understanding can influence the approach and for the report. The lack of methods to detect and approach the children will affect the outcome of reporting or not reporting. In other cases, preschool teachers may have knowledge about domestic violence, but not because it is included in the preschool teacher’s education or in the actual methods in the preschool. Their own experiences, working in other fields of interest can raise awareness. Respondent A and D gave an insight into the broad differences of knowledge and experience and some explanations on why it is like that. Respondent A described that they have too little knowledge about domestic violence. Respondent D described having a lot of knowledge about domestic violence, mostly from previous working experience in other settings then preschool and of personal curiosity to do further reading.

5.1.2 The best of the child

The respondents stated that it is always clear that they are working for the child’s best interest and although the participants feel uncomfortable in some situations. They repeatedly mentioned to be there for the child, and they do what is best for the child. They mentioned that of course children are children and they might have a different way of expressing themselves in different situations, but still, all four preschool teachers have an approach of believing the child and stand on the child's side. The respondents replied that they are with the child, that they must believe the child and still, it can be difficult to approach cases of domestic violence:

“The feeling of discomfort is always there because I mean even if I stand on the child's side, so I violate another person by making a report. Then I do it on the basis of the child's best and that I always stand on the children's side but at the same time I violate the other the human.” (D)

5.1.3 Signs of domestic violence

All four preschool teachers responded similarly that there are no specific methods they use for approaching the problem of domestic violence or suspicious cases. Three of them A, B and D mentioned that they can react to changing behaviour in a child and that can make them more observing and try to get information from the caregivers or try to have a conversation with the child. These three ways of approaching suspicions of domestic violence are different kinds of methods. Even though they are individually modified from the preschool teachers and not given
by governmental agencies. All four talked about bruises as a suspicious sign, that it can be an indicator that something is not right. Otherwise, they said they understand that children get bruises because they are children and all respondents mentioned that their approach towards the child is different depending on the child’s age. Smaller children who cannot speak are more difficult to approach. Here they try to ask the caregivers if they have a reasonable explanation to the bruises. Respondent B and D talked about the feeling that something is not right, but both said that it can have to do with their long experience working in preschools and their experience of cases with children, domestic violence and reporting:

“Yes, changing behaviour you can see because I know for example that I can see a child changing a lot then eh. I know several times where I have been thinking: What is it now? Then they can come after a week and say they will get a divorce. Then I have been able to see at the child that something is not really good.” (B)

“Yes, it gives me inner security to know that it does not feel, like I do not know how to explain it but, the vibes that you get from some people makes me feel like no. It is crawling inside of me. I would rather not get close or I do not want to be alone with a parent because there is something that is not right. It is something that signals to me and so far, I have been always right.” (D)

5.2 Theme 2: Cognitive Participation

5.2.1 Divisions of responsibility

The second theme for the analysis is the cognitive participation and therefore the question, who does the work. There are several different agencies mentioned by the four respondents which give a clear understanding of the different approaches by different actors and the different roles they must play in the process from suspecting a case of domestic violence to reporting the case. Analysed will be the role of the preschool teachers, the principal, and the agencies as the social service and the Barnahus and the crime-prevention council. It got highlighted, that the preschool teachers have the main role to make the preschool principal aware if a report to the social service needs to be done. The preschool teachers are close to the children every day for long hours and for many years. They are the ones who create a relationship with the children and can tell if a child shows a changed behaviour, or they are present when a child says or do something that creates suspicion. All four preschool teachers said that they turn to the principal when something
raised their suspicion. That shows that the preschool principal has the main responsibility when it comes to deciding if or if not to write a report. It is always the principal’s name on the report to the social service, and the principal is always the one talking to the caregivers about the situation. The preschool teachers are present during the meeting with the caregivers, but the principal has taken over the responsibility for the whole situation and the report. Following the NPT one crucial factor to succeed of modifying methods and routines is that the participant needs to understand their own role in the process and what value that has in the process (May et al, 2015). The respondents answered, that they understand their role and what they need to do once it comes to a report. They understand what their own role is, other people's role is, and the role of other agencies. Participant C and D described the preschool principal’s role clear:

“But when you do the report it is always the principal of the preschool who is responsible. No one else name is mentioned, only the bosses name is mentioned, and she is responsible for everything that happens after.” (C)

“We make a report, you really want to feel sure but I feel sure that this has happened and I do it for the child's best and that you like, and there is always our principal it is her that says: If it is so that the caregivers come, direct them to me because I have the main responsibility over the report depending on what you are saying to me.” (D)

The social service is mentioned several times because they process the report ones it is written. All the respondents mentioned that social service has visited their preschool at some point. At some occasions, they informed the preschool teachers about the procedure of the report. Other times the social service gave information to the caregivers and what kind of support the social service has for the caregivers. Respondent D describes that the preschool principal can have a dialogue with the social service on how they should proceed when they feel that a case is unclear. Furthermore, respondents A and B mentioned the local crime-prevention council that collaborates with social service. They educate preschool teachers on different topics that help them in their daily work. Participant B and C also mentioned Barnahus. Both respondents, B, and C said that they believe that Barnahus has the necessary methods to talk to a child about domestic violence:
“I would say so. They know how to talk to the child without using leading questions or like, how do you say it, brainwash. Because it is easy for us to say something wrong and that’s why they go to them.” (C)

5.3 Theme 3: Collective work

The third theme is the collective work. Taken by the NPT, in this section, the question is, how the work is done around a case of suspicion about a child being a victim of domestic violence. As mentioned in the description of the theory this section of collective work wants to find out the practical application of the methods and how they can be seen and become a routine, or not. The focus on the analysis was collaboration and missing collaboration. The collaboration was differentiated between different persons like a collaboration between the teachers and the child. Collaboration between the teachers and the preschool principal, the collaboration between the teachers and caregivers. Lastly, the collaboration between the teachers and agencies like social service, and more child protective oriented agencies. The missing collaboration was not as frequently mentioned, but significant for methods becoming a routine. Therefore, the emphasis was on the collaboration because the authors saw as more communication and collaboration was taken as a method and implemented it as a routine, more confidence in handling the problem of domestic violence was seen.

5.3.1 Collaboration

First, the collaboration between the teachers and the child needs to be pointed out. It highlights the application of the work about integrity and the right of participation of the child and brings the child’s perspective into the daily practice. As mentioned earlier there are different people involved in the process which have different roles. In this section, it will be elaborated how the preschool teachers implement the work with integrity and how this can help to gain a routinized application. The preschool teachers can be one of the most important figures in a child's life, due to the fact, that the child is spending a lot of hours every week in the preschool environment. Therefore, preschool teachers have the responsibility to enable the child’s development in different terms. Stated by respondents C and A, a close relationship with the child is most important to be able to approach a suspicious case of domestic violence. This shows, that in general, but especially in the process of detecting a sign of domestic violence until writing the
report the teachers want to create a trusting and cooperative environment with the child. Especially since the children are young in preschools and not as verbally expressive the professionals depend on a close relationship to the child to give the child trust to say something and be able to recognize a changed behaviour in the child. Respondent B emphasized that sometimes the most important skill, in relation to the child, is to be able to listen to what the child says.

To create integrity for the child, the learning and the educative environment is favoured with the help of booklets and pictures from, for instance, the Children's Right Convention (CRC). The material can be a booklet, pictures and is used by the teachers who can read with the children, see pictures and have conversations. In these conversations, the preschool teachers want to collaborate with the children and give words to feelings, experiences and set limits. Practical examples are taken by the CRC and should give children the ability to set limits to others and create confidence to say no. Respondent B gave examples of expressions like, “Stopp min Kropp” and “…stop, I don’t want.”

These practical methods with the children are implemented on a regular basis and therefore implemented as a routine within the daily work. The close relationship improves the trust from the child to the teachers to open up. The educative environment gives the child awareness of their own rights. Respondent C got more specific and mentioned clearly the linguistic goals of the CRC. The linguistic goals want to give tools to a child to give words to the events, happenings and most important their feelings:

“So, we implement it in such a way that we have priority goals that we must meet. And then we have one which is a linguistic goal. The children should learn to express themselves in different ways, and then we have sustainability goals because all preschools in X are looking for applying in different ways to get sustainability certificate.” (D)

Here one can see, that the children need to be enabled to learn about their rights and give language to their experiences. That can make the collaboration much easier because once a child mentioned anything about domestic violence, by law, the teachers must report to the social service:
“If a child is older and the child says something than it’s the time when you really react. Because you don’t even ask them to repeat it. You heard it once then you act on it. That’s the law.” (C)

The collaboration between the preschool teachers and the children were mentioned by all respondents. Therefore, the routine, when the child expresses verbally to be victimized it is clear to the preschool teachers to report. All existing routines in preschools, when they exist, are created by the preschool teachers themselves and not any other governmental agency. Otherwise, respondent A explained that routines are helpful to have a structure. The need for more routine is mentioned by respondent B, that there is no direct method to use or heard of and that you can only go by your own experience.

Next comes the collaboration between the preschool teachers. Here different ways of collaborating were exemplified. Already in the part of coherence, the meetings for different kinds of groups or colleagues were mentioned. Respondent A concentrated much on crisis meetings with colleagues in the same district. Having discussions with professionals from outside can help the preschool teachers to see different perspectives of the situation. Besides, after respondent B, once taken over the position of a representative of such a group they are in the demand to share the knowledge with colleagues. This can create a platform of news for other colleagues and gives confidence in the tough situation of suspecting a case of domestic violence:

“...we work in teams here. Here I am with my three colleagues. Then we have one, our own Student Health Team. Both, here central to the preschool but also in the area a large where you can lift different children anonymously”. (A)

Being in such a group can make them attentive towards the child and give the teachers a different perspective on the situation. Throughout the analysis, to routinize a discourse about the topic with colleagues and regular meetings and sharing the knowledge with colleagues was recognized as positive and helpful. As respondent D mentions:
“It does, it's something we're talking about as well as how to do it. Because I mean it may be that I discover something and so I talk to my colleagues then you talk around and check, what you think, what do we do, and then you go on to the principal.” (D)

Even though, some respondents wished for more focus on topics like domestic violence during the meetings, because of the overall uncomfortable situation of suspecting a case of domestic violence and the importance of the security of the child. All the respondents solely mentioned benefits by the collaboration with their colleagues. A question arose when the communication between the teachers does not work out as it should and what consequences does that have for the case? When the self-confidence is built on the collaboration with the colleagues than the risk exists that a case could get neglected, because of the insecurity by the preschool teachers.

Further comes the collaboration with the preschool principal. All respondents highlight the collaboration with the principal because the principal is the person who reports and takes over the responsibility for the report. Respondent C mentioned the time after detecting a sign of domestic violence. Here the respondent clarified the close collaboration to give the principal first-hand information about events and in turn the responsibility of the principal to secure the preschool teachers against possible irritated caregivers. Respondent C mentioned that the report can be written in collaboration with the preschool teachers and the principal because the teachers are closer to the child and can explain the events for the report. Therefore, communication must be established to give the principal a full picture of the events. Then the principal is equipped to make a valid report, takes over responsibility and protects the employees:

“I can start thinking and I always discuss this with my colleagues here, and then we take it with our principal and then she will be taking a position on what is to be done and she, in turn, always consults the social services, because we call you there and ask what we are going to do and how to do it.” (D)

When the situation got so far and a report is written, respondent C pointed out the feeling of togetherness between the colleagues. No one should disclose any information or reveal names. Important to remember is, that without the teachers recognizing a sign of domestic violence, the principal cannot make any report. The principal is quite dependent on the abilities of the teachers. Respondent B added inconvenience as a reason why a principal possibly would not
want to report. Respondent B had personal experiences of a principal not wanting to report to the social service. In those situations, there is not so much to do than to continue documenting important events around the child. So, once it comes to the report, the process is fast. Overall, all respondents were very apprehensive about the routines after the report is made by the principal because it falls into the hands of the social service. Only two of the respondents mentioned the routine of follow up the case of suspicion by observing the child and document any signs. Those routines were exemplified by respondent C and D, as routines which are used when the preschool teachers recognized a sign of domestic violence but are not yet sure if to report to the principal. The observation and documentation should help to give evidence while reporting.

Collaboration with the caregivers is highlighted as one of the most critical ones throughout the four interviews. Respondent D highlighted the comparably close relationship to the caregivers in preschool, rather than in school settings. Pointed out by respondent C, it is important to stay in touch and communicate with the caregivers to know if they recognized any bruises or changes of behaviour in the child. Only when the teachers know and have talked with the caregiver, they can make doubly sure the child was not harmed by domestic violence. Teachers must communicate with the caregivers, so they know what the child has been up to during the preschool day. Obtained by respondent C, this can create an understanding and appreciation by the caregivers because they know that the teachers have an eye on their child when it comes to any kind of changed behaviour or bruise. It was mentioned that the preschool teachers need a good relationship and communication with the caregivers for everyday practice. It was frequently said, that this relationship can become a problem because of different reasons. Sometimes the caregivers themselves ask for advice or support and that brings the preschool teachers in an overwhelmed position, respondent A described: “It is obvious that they come in a crisis, the parents. Oh, how to respond to them, when you still have a full children's group and other parents too?”

Another time, the close relationship and everyday contact with the caregivers put them into a moral dilemma. The preschool teachers do not want to believe that the caregivers are maybe perpetrator or witness of domestic violence and hesitate to make the report to the principal. Respondent B described the difficulties of making a report when you have a good relationship
with the caregivers. The respondent had experienced working with a parent and the respondent had to report to the social services. Stated by respondent C, the caregivers even demand that the preschool teachers should have warned against the report, but this is forbidden within the process. On one hand, the caregivers could leave the children at home and avoid the preschool. This could have a negative effect on the child and on the other hand, the caregivers could tell their children what to answer to the questions from the social service. Especially problems arise when the caregivers feel mislead:

“After that, they get informed that social services have been here to interview the child. And that's when it gets ugly. Because the parents don’t know and feel betrayed as you know, ‘We have a good relationship, you should have told me’. But that's not the way it's meant.” (C)

Respondent D recognized the caregivers also as a problem. Respondent D stated to worry about the caregiver's reaction to the report because one cannot be completely sure if the report is right and that can evoke irritations in the caregivers. It is the preschool teacher’s obligation to report by any kind of suspicion, but there is the problem of whether to lose the trust of the caregivers or risk that there are consequences for the child.

Lastly, collaboration with social service and other child protective agencies are analysed. All the respondents stated, and as mentioned before whether get education from the different services or must collaborate once a sign of domestic violence was shown. The respondents all mentioned the advantages, just like respondent C said, that the routines by the social service are very clear for the preschool teachers. Once the child says out loud to experience any kind of violence the teachers must report, and the social service takes it from there. Respondent A gave an interesting view of the disadvantages. The lack of communication between the preschool which reported and the social service staff who takes over the case. Respondent A wished a closer collaboration to know what happened with the child and the following procedure.

Respondent B talked about a similar case. Already by suspicion the respondent made a report, four times in total and never got any reply by the social service. That leaves the preschool teachers with doubts especially and left alone without any feedback. One more collaboration was pointed out, albeit only after reporting. It can happen that the Barnahus asks for an appointment
with the suspected child. Here is a collaboration needed because the preschool teachers must follow the child to the agency, because of the reason, that the caregivers are not allowed to know about the meeting at the Barnahus. Interestingly, even when respondent C admitted the beneficial collaboration between the preschool and the agencies and sees the effective methods used by the pedagogues the respondent did not show any interest to learn those methods. Having methods and routines could mean to be enabled to facilitate the process of recognizing signs of domestic violence. Contrary to this, respondent A criticized the small knowledge about the different kinds of violence and sees the need to know more practical routines used by other agencies to be able to talk to a child without using the wrong approach.

Resuming the part about collaboration, one can see, that the communication between different people in charge can help to approach the problem of domestic violence and in the process of a suspicious case. It gives enough confidence to the teachers to report to the principal. However not many more existing routines were found.

5.4 Theme 4: Reflexive monitoring

The previous part helped to understand what kind of methods and routines are known and used by the preschool teachers. The last part of the analysis wants to find out how the methods and routines get modified, sustained and improved in long-term. The NPT was used throughout the thesis to emphasize the process of normalization of methods and routines which in turn should help to sustain people involved for better wellbeing.

5.4.1 Support by meetings

To sustain the routine, the preschool teachers named for instance the support by Kommunhälsa. In critical situations and after, the principal can call for pedagogues which can assist the preschool teachers to get through the tough time and talk. Good health and mental health can sustain motivation and the work moral from the preschool teachers. When they feel support from outside it can contribute being confident in the next tough situation. Several of the respondents mention Kommunhälsa which provides support.
The certainty about the collaboration between the teachers and the agencies are a sustaining factor in general. Even when some of the respondents wished to concentrate more on the topic of domestic violence and forms of violence. In the end, all the respondents had a positive perception about the meetings and the collaboration and wished to continue with improvements. The analysis highlights the crucial need of the collaboration between the professionals as a sustaining factor but shows room for improvement. Throughout the interviews, learning more and discussing the topic of suspected cases of domestic violence was favoured and wanted by the respondents.

Keeping the attitude respondent C found it helpful to have guidance by the CRC guidelines. The respondent included the integrity of the child of having privacy on the toilet and respect privacy while changing diapers, for example. Having this kind of clear guidelines was desired and found helpful in the approach of domestic violence. The feeling of being secure and have back-up by the laws and the environment helps to modify methods and routines about the topic and starts a process of normalization. Discussing and exchanging knowledge gives a different awareness:

“So, the more you see it, the more responsive you will be. If you have been through, well then you start as well as realize that you have not been through anything then you may be lulled into a false security that there is nothing on this preschool. Have you been through it or as well, when you wake up you listen in a different way and start watching with some other eyes maybe exactly like me with these vibes, everyone has surely it somehow. You like taking it more seriously what you feel, the thoughts you have been taking more seriously and then I think, it feels like it has become an increase.”

(D)

Respondent D added the more aware the preschool teachers are of the problem, the more they feel suspicious of a domestic violence case. That shows that solely the awareness through laws and applying methods and routines the preschool teachers can get enabled to recognize suspicious signs on a child more easily.

Generally, after analysing, the authors did not find any hints on the sustainability of the used methods and routines if the preschool teachers are going to improve the missing methods and routines when approaching the problem of domestic violence or a sign of domestic violence on a
child. Solely the wish of more knowledge around the topic of signs of domestic violence on the child and better communication methods with the social service was mentioned.
6 Discussion

6.1 Brief summary of the main results

The conducted study explored the approach on the problem of domestic violence and the methods and routines in preschools when a case raises suspicion of domestic violence. With the help of the previous research, the authors gained international perspectives on the problem with domestic violence and the different kinds of methods and routines to tackle the problem in preschool settings. Much importance laid on the theory normalization process theory (NPT) because it was shaping the interviews and the analysis. It had an impact on the methodology like conducting semi-structured interviews, using a deductive approach and made use of thematic analysis. The insight that was achieved showed that there were no official methods and routines for the preschool teachers when it comes to the process between the suspicion of a child being a victim of domestic violence and reporting the case. There were no methods written down by governmental agencies, and no methods and routines by the preschool itself. Highlighted in the interviews was the importance of the methods and routines made individually by the preschool teachers, for example, the collaboration between different people in charge, personal experiences and the own interest for further education. These approaches are methods and routines made by preschool teachers.

6.2 Discussion in relation to the aim and research questions

The aim explored what kind of methods and routines preschools use to approach suspicions of a child being a victim of domestic violence. Main results were, that there were no methods and routines which are written down or even formulated by any of the preschools or governmental agencies. The preschool teachers did have some methods and routines created by their own. Those were depending on the availability of information like the CRC, crisis groups and meetings. These meetings were on a regular basis and give the preschool teachers confidence because the group can share knowledge and experiences. It can give different opinions and perspectives on cases. Acting as a collective is one of the routines which were figured out by the preschool teachers. Since there were no methods and routines which were followed the collaboration served as a secure network for the preschool teachers. In general, it was figured out
that the preschool teachers were much closer with the children and their caregivers in preschool age than in school age. They are young and therefore not as verbally expressive. That is why, the children need trust in their preschool teachers. Mutual trust of preschool teachers and caregivers is one of the routines. Having regular contact with the children and the caregivers gives an insight into their world and serves as a routine to get to know the persons better. The most routinized process was found when it comes to a clear case of suspicion. Then all the respondents were aware of their duty to inform the principal and the principal takes the case from there to inform the social service for the following procedure.

While analysing, the authors found themselves with results which did not meet the hypothesis. In the aim and research questions, there was a hypothesis that there will be methods and routines given by governmental agencies which can be clearly analysed. This became a problem because the authors did not get clear instructions on methods and routines from the respondents. For the future, this is one point of improvement for the authors to not expect any result in any direction. One should be as open-minded to the results as possible. Nevertheless, the emphasis was shifted from methods and routines made by governmental agencies to methods and routines which are made by the preschool teachers. The individual methods and routines are methods and routines but were a different kind of answer than expected. For an enhanced thesis, the authors should have made clearer in the research questions if they were looking for methods and routines by the governmental agencies or individually made by preschool teachers. That emphasis would have had changed the formulation of the aim and research questions. Even though, the expectations were not met the authors wanted to put emphasis on the importance of clear methods and routines by governmental agencies which can be followed by the preschool teachers. As presented above, the preschool teachers were glad to have the meetings but mentioned the wish for more focus on domestic violence, signs, and forms of domestic violence. Even with the responsibility to share the new knowledge, it is not sure that the knowledge will be shared. The risk exists and the consequence would be on the child. Risks in general exist, that the discourse around the topic of domestic violence gets less and that teachers do not raise awareness about different forms of violence and do not create an environment where people can discuss it. In the opinion of the authors of the thesis, there is a lack of methods and routines by governmental agencies. The preschool teachers should have clear guidelines by the government itself to follow.
That would illustrate the importance of a national level of the topic that preschool teachers need to acknowledge it.

The recognized methods and routines were often self-made by preschool teachers. In a case of suspicion but no reporting, the routines of observation and documenting were mentioned. Then the preschool teachers can follow up on the case and discuss with colleagues and the principal. Knowledge is made by their own experiences at work and personally and their own interest in attending further education by different providers about the topic of domestic violence. There is a lack of mandatory education for preschool teachers. The information, education, and support by different agencies is available, but not mandatory. Throughout the thesis, the only consistency in the results related to the aim and research questions was, that all the respondents liked having methods and routines for a suspicious case of domestic violence.

Awareness of the obligation to report was well known by the preschool teachers but it depended on the preschool teachers and their closeness, knowledge, and confidence to report to the principal. If preschool teachers do not report to the principal, then the principal cannot report to the social service. There is a certain dependence on the abilities of preschool teachers to report to the principal.

The authors wanted to point out the importance of the results for the field of social work. As mentioned above, the matter of domestic violence is an international concern, which also affects social work. As illustrated in the introduction and background, high numbers show that domestic violence is often directed against women and children and this creates more inequality against women. The wellbeing of the victimized women is under threat which can have long-term effects and can include not being able to take care of the children. Due to that, the children might be affected in their development and have problems to live their life. This is an important point for social workers. Social workers have a strong interest to create a healthy youth and to cut the cycle of inequality and violence.

Based on the findings, the study implied that social workers can support preschools in different ways and different levels. The findings can help social workers to understand the importance of
collaboration between them and preschools. It can give more ideas to develop routines together and have fluent communication with each other. It gives an idea to create local interventions with children and preschool teachers about the problem of domestic violence. Since the authors did recognize gaps of knowledge and therefore a lack of methods and routines, a social worker can fill in and be in the conversation with the preschool teachers on a local level. On a macro level, social workers can help to create programs with regional or national agencies and stand up for a united program against a lack of knowledge about domestic violence, signs, and forms of domestic violence. They can raise awareness for the preschool teachers and point out their important role in the life of a child and in the process of approaching a suspicious case of domestic violence.

6.3 Discussion in relation to previous research

The whole process of reading through previous research helped to gain an understanding of the scope of the problem and more specific, to understand what kind of research is done already. In this thesis, it helped to show the international extensivity and other people’s commitment and effort towards the problem. The five previous research articles were chosen because they gave a good view of different countries which concentrated on suspicion of domestic violence in the age of preschool children. By the understanding of the results, support and collaboration are important factors during the process of approaching a suspicion of a child being a victim of domestic violence. It is understood by the earlier research that collaboration was one main point of discussion and, in some cases, the lack of support among preschool teachers and teachers in schools, both nationally and internationally. This thesis showed an existing lack of information, knowledge, and collaboration in some cases which is similar to the previous research articles. This showed similarity and therefore, consistency and replication between the previous research and the thesis.

The authors wanted to remember that only a small size of respondents was participating in this study. The previous research had access to more participants and therefore to more data to work with. Similar to the findings in this research and earlier research was the importance of having specific methods on approaching the children and having specific knowledge about domestic violence. Based on the findings and compared to the earlier research, the authors can say, that a
child’s chance being acknowledged of being a victim of domestic violence relayed often on the preschool teachers own abilities and knowledge. It was found that it is often depending on preschool teachers own motivation and interest in gathering knowledge about the subject and what kind of experience the preschool teachers made previously.

Previous research helped the authors to compare the results and helped to realize, that different countries have different knowledge and different approaches to a suspicious case of domestic violence. Recurring statements in the thesis and previous research were pointing out the need for the support and collaboration of colleagues and the principal. Since there are only little methods, routines and in general approaches many preschool teachers relied on and trust the network they worked in.

6.4 Discussion in relation to the theory

Previous readings on different theories opened different perspectives on the subject for the authors of the study. After the research, the NPT was chosen to fit into the aim and enabled to answer the research questions about modifying methods and routines. NPT focuses on difficult interventions which handle difficult subjects e.g. domestic violence. The authors decided for this theory because it gave an idea about the process to modify methods and routines and how to implement it as a routinized process with an understanding of the subject and problem, understanding one's own role, understand and be enabled to implement the methods and have ideas and tools to sustain the routine.

The theory gave a good direction for the theoretical framework and the authors could make much use of the theory. Being close to the previous research, as mentioned, and to the theory helped for a certain consistency in the thesis. The theory was guidance within the interview guide and the analysis through the usage of coherence, cognitive participation, collective work, and reflexive monitoring. Several articles were found about the use of the NPT and this was found very helpful for the process of writing the thesis. But the authors recognized that they are not able to make use of the theory to full extent. The little time frame and the limited number of words did not give enough time to go deeper into the theory. The description of the theory is meant to name the constructions and components, so the reader knows that there is more to the
theory. The authors were aware that they did not make use of the theory to the full extent. This is one clear point of improvement to make use of all the positive elements of the theory by using it to the full extent. Hence, the authors decided to work on the four main themes of coherence, cognitive participation, collective work, and reflexive monitoring and applied them to the data. This is done to create again a feeling of consistency throughout the whole thesis. The theory made sense to use because the NPT wants to give an understanding of methods and routines and of complex topics like domestic violence related to young children.

It can be mentioned that different theories would have given a different perspective on the topic, like Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory. The theory could have been very helpful to highlight the significant role of preschool teachers in a child's life because many people do not understand the significant role of preschool teachers. In some cases, the preschool teachers are the only external person and attachment figure for the child, except their caregivers and their family. The role of preschool teachers can be vital in creating a safe environment for the child, educate them in their own rights and approach a suspicious case of domestic violence.

6.5 Discussion in relation to methodology and research process

The last part of the discussion examined the methodology of the thesis. A recognized advantage was the interview guide with formulated themes by the theory. As mentioned before, it helped the authors of the study to make a connection between the theory, previous research, the data and enabled to answer the research questions. To use the theory gave again the consistency to the thesis. The semi-structured interview gave enough space for the interviewees to respond freely and additionally gave space to the interviewer to ask to follow up questions when it was clear that there are no official methods and routines. The semi-structured method allowed the authors to redirect the questions, for example, into methods and routines to individual methods and routines made by personal experiences, knowledge, and collaboration.

Apart from that, it would have been beneficial to listen to different professions and their point of view about the topic. In this case, having four times the same profession gave consistency to the data. One main challenge was the interpretation of the data. The authors tried to be as objective as possible while analysing and interpreting. It is challenging when the own expectations come
up and hinder from being objective, that is why the authors discussed a lot about the results. In the end, the authors interpreted the answers by the respondent's answer, and it might be the case that there are mistakes in the interpretations. This is a point which always must be in mind by the reader and improved by the authors.

6.6 Further research

Within the process, further ideas came up to expand the research or continue in different directions e.g. the discussion about believes of domestic violence. Within the interviews, the term of common sense in terms of domestic violence was mentioned. This raises the question if there is a common sense when it comes to the topic of domestic violence. Different people think differently about the topic and normalize, excuse violent behaviour or simply do not know about the topic. The authors see the need to extend the research, because of the massive prevalence of domestic violence globally.

As social work students, it is believed that more emphasis must be on the lack of methods and routines by governmental agencies. Research in the field of social work could be used to shed light on these shortcomings. Social workers and researchers can highlight this lack with adequate research and raise awareness.

Another topic which could be elaborated is the role of the preschool principals and their role in the process from the approach of detecting a sign of domestic violence. Since they have a key role to report but are not present or close to the children.
Reference list


Appendixes

Appendix I: Letter to the preschool principal

Hej!

Vi är studenter från Högskolan i Gävle som går sista terminen på socionomprogrammet, inriktning internationellt socialt arbete och det är dags att skriva vårt examensarbete. Vi vill fördjupa oss i hur förskolor bemöter och hanterar barn som misstänks vara offer för våld. Även hur förskolan arbetar förebyggande om våld och vilka riktlinjer förskolan har för att hantera ärende involverat våld. Alla information kommer att vara anonynt. Inga namn på lärare eller på skolor används.

För vår egen förberedelse har vi behandlat tidigare litteratur och nu är vi intresserade av din åsikt. Därför skulle vi vilja fråga om en förskollärare skulle vilja delta i studien och bli intervjuad. Intervjun kommer att ta ca 30-45 minuter och vi kommer gärna att träffas på ett ställe som passar Er.

Vi hoppas att Ni har möjlighet att delta.


Vi tackar dig för din tid och hjälp.

Med vänliga hälsningar,
Danielle Simba and Johanna Rostek

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Appendix II: Information letter and written consent to the participants

Information on participation in the interview

Methods and routines used in preschool in approaching suspected cases of domestic violence

This is a thesis for the Bachelor of Social Science in International Social Work Program at the University of Gävle and is conducted by two social work students in the fifth semester.

The planned interview will take 30-45 minutes and recorded digitally at a mutually agreed location. The recordings will limit misinterpretations by the interviewees and help to gather the whole conversation, but additional notes will be made. The participation throughout the study is voluntary and the respondent is free to withdraw at any point in time. The interviewee is also free to decline answers throughout the interview. In case of follow up questions, the interviewers will try to contact the participants again.

The interview and all retrieved data are strictly confidential. The writer using fictitious names for participants and places. Further, the researchers will transcribe the interview. The material is only available for the researchers, the supervisor, and the examiner. Therefore, no authorized person will have access. Upon request, the research result can be presented for the participants.

It is assessed that the study will not bring any harm to the participants.

For any further questions, please contact:

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Consent form to participate in the study

Methods and routines used in preschool in approaching suspected cases of domestic violence

☐ I have been given oral and written information about this study and what it means to participate.

☐ I have understood the content and been given the opportunity to ask questions.
☐ I consent to how my personal information and information I give is handled according to the information given above.

☐ I consent to participate in the study ‘Explore the guidelines for preschool teachers to detect and report domestic violence’

Date ________________________________

Signature ____________________________

Name__________________________________

Phone and e-mail_______________________

Thank you for participation
Appendix III: Interview guide

Background questions

1. How many years have you been working in your profession?

2. What is your educational background?

Follow up:
- If it is not preschool teaching; What major profession do you have?

Theme 1: Method

Subtheme Coherence

3. How are you informed about your obligations on reporting when it comes to a case of a student being suspected of being victims of domestic violence?

4. How do you implement the new curriculum (LPFÖ18), especially in terms of integrity and children rights?

Follow up:
- How does it look like in daily practice in preschool?

5. What makes you suspicious that a child is affected by domestic violence?

Follow up:
- What is a sign for you? E.g. bruises or changed behavior like aggression or being sad.

Subtheme Cognitive Participation

6. What kind of education and knowledge do you have about domestic violence?

Follow up:
- Who offered the education?
- How did the education look like?

7. What methods do you use to detect signs of domestic violence?

Follow up:
- What methods do you use to detect external or internal signs?
- Do you collaborate with other teachers and process together a student with suspicion of being a victim of domestic violence?
**Theme 2: Routines**

**Subtheme Collective work**

8. What kind of routines does the preschool have when it comes to the case of a student being suspected of being victims of domestic violence?

Follow up:

- Who is involved in the routine?
- How is the routine process, for example, paper form or meetings?
- Who makes the decision to report or not report?
- Who is making the report?
- Which name is on the report?

9. How do the teachers collaborate with each other?

Follow up:

- Does the professional have a work supervisor for professional suggestions during the process and after?
- Who can the teacher talk to? For examples, colleagues, principal, for sharing experiences and emotional support during the process and after?

10. How do routines support you in cases of students being suspected of being victims of domestic violence?

Follow up:

- How does a routine give guidelines in the process?
- How does a routine hinder you to act fast while processing the suspicion?

**Subtheme Reflexive monitoring**

11. How do you follow up on the methods and routines and make sure they are implemented in the preschool?

Follow up:

- Do you share experiences and knowledge about methods and routines?
- How did your perception change over time while using methods and routines?
- With whom do you share experiences and knowledge of students being suspected of being victims of domestic violence?
- How do the routines make you more effective in detecting students being suspected of being victims of domestic violence?
· How are you and other people involved following on students being suspected of being victims of domestic violence?
· Do you think the used methods and routines are enhancing your work with students who are suspected of being victims of domestic violence?
· Do you think the methods and routines are implemented as standard in your preschool?