



**FRAGILITEIT VAN BESLUITVORMING  
IN DE VLAAMSE JEUGDHULPVERLENING**

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## INHOUD

Interactief deel: 4 vragen

Bespreking van vragen en de antwoorden door onderzoek

Conclusie



HET DENKEN MAG ZICH  
NOOIT ONDERWERPEN.



**Vragen!**

## VRAAG 1

- De Vlaamse hulpverlening grijpt te snel naar een uithuisplaatsing?

## VRAAG 2

- Vlaamse hulpverleners hebben een duidelijk beeld van kindermishandeling?

## VRAAG 3

- Vlaamse hulpverleners schatten de toekomstige risico's in mogelijke situaties van verontrusting voldoende consistent in?

## VRAAG 4

- De etnische achtergrond van kinderen beïnvloedt de beslissingen van Vlaamse hulpverleners?

**Vraag 1:** De Vlaamse hulpverlening  
grijpt te snel naar een  
uithuisplaatsing?

**Antwoord door onderzoek:**

# METHODS

## Respondents

Convenience sample of 95 decision makers

- 36 Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg
- 9 Sociale dienst JRB
- 50 Vertrouwenscentrum Kindermishandeling

Mean age = 37,62 (sd = 9,92)

Educational level

- Professional Bachelor = 53
- Master = 42

Experience in youth care varied from less than 1 year (n = 2) to more than 20 years (n = 17)

Experience in current function varied from less than 1 year (n = 5) to more than 20 years (n = 10)

# METHODS

## Material

Vignette with story of Diana. The vignette was taken from an international project (Benbenishty et al., 2015) and has been used in a number of studies (e.g. Benbenishty et al. 2015). Two versions: mother agreed with OHP, mother did not agree with OHP (consent is manipulated variable)

## Instruments

### Decision of decision-maker

- Refrain from further intervention,
- Offering help while the child stays at home (different levels of intensity (several possibilities)),
- Out-of-home placement (voluntarily or court ordered)

## RESULTS

	Mean (sd)/N (%)	Min-Max
<b>Attitude</b>		
<b>Against removal from home</b>	3.62 (.76)	2-5
<b>Physical abuse</b>	3.51 (.76)	2-5
<b>Emotional neglect</b>	4.47 (.56)	3-5
<b>Physical neglect</b>	4.11 (.79)	2-5
<b>Sexual abuse</b>	1.76 (.58)	1-3
<b>F</b>	307.67***	
<b>Risk for</b>		
<b>Physical harm</b>	3.81 (.79)	2-5
<b>Emotional Harm</b>	4.35 (.67)	2-5
<b>F</b>	39.01***	
<b>Recommendation</b>		
<b>Refrain from further intervention</b>	0 (0)	
<b>Help while the child stays at home</b>	82 (86.3)	
<b>Out-of-home care (voluntary of involuntary)</b>	13 (13.7)	

## ANTWOORD DOOR ONDERZOEK OP VRAAG 1

### De Vlaamse hulpverlening grijpt te snel naar een uithuipplaatsing?

- Only 14% Flemish respondents decided an out-of-home placement, BUT ...
- Very little: Israel 25%, The Netherlands 30%, Spain 53%, Portugal 53%
  - Flemish decision makers are very convinced of the idea (ideology?) that children should stay at home?
  - Question was placement in foster care. Negative view of foster care can be an explanation. If OHP general was question, higher numbers would be found?
  - OHP is challenging: not enough FF, high number of breakdowns, ...?
  - More opportunities for home visitation (with greater effectivity?) in Flanders compared to other countries, which make OHP less necessary?
- Shows the importance of this kind of research

**Vraag 2:** Vlaamse hulpverleners hebben een duidelijk beeld van Kindermishandeling?

**Antwoord 1 door onderzoek:**

# METHODS

## Respondents

Convenience sample of 748 home visiting workers

- 143 Flanders
- 321 France
- 284 Italy

Mean age = 40,6 (sd = 10,5)

Educational level

- Professional Bachelor = 469
- Master = 278

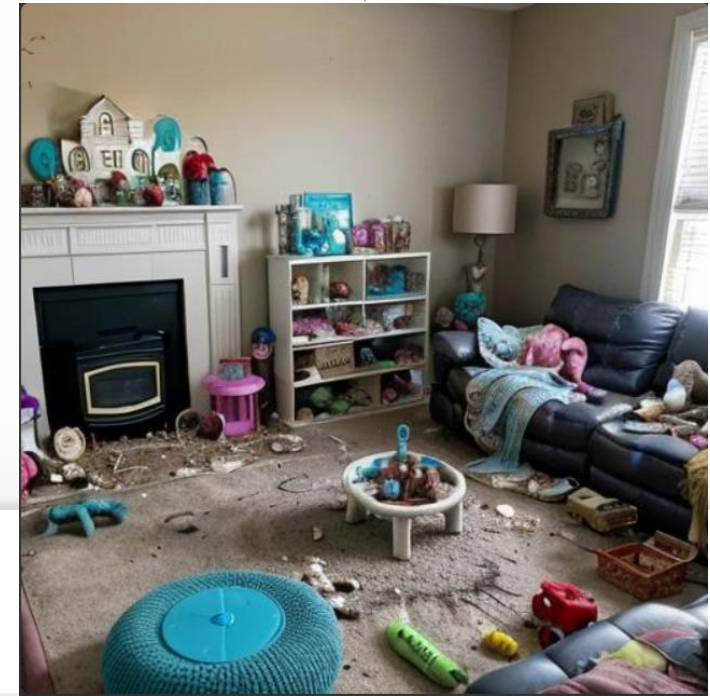
Experience in youth care varied from less than 1 year (n = 28) to more than 20 years (n = 126)

Training assessment CAN: yes = 445 (60%), No = 303 (40%)

## METHODS

### Material

Visual vignette, based on research of Ards et al. (2012) and Vanderfaeillie et al. (2023) and created by AI, accompanied with some text. 4 versions of the visual vignette: Western boy, Western girl, Roma boy, Roma girl, with Western/Roma names (first and family name) (manipulated variables are sex and ethnicity)



## METHODS

### Instrument

#### Assessment casus

After having seen the visual vignette respondents assess if this is a situation of neglect on 4 point scale (certainly not = 1, most certainly = 4)

# RESULTS

Groups do not differ  
From each other

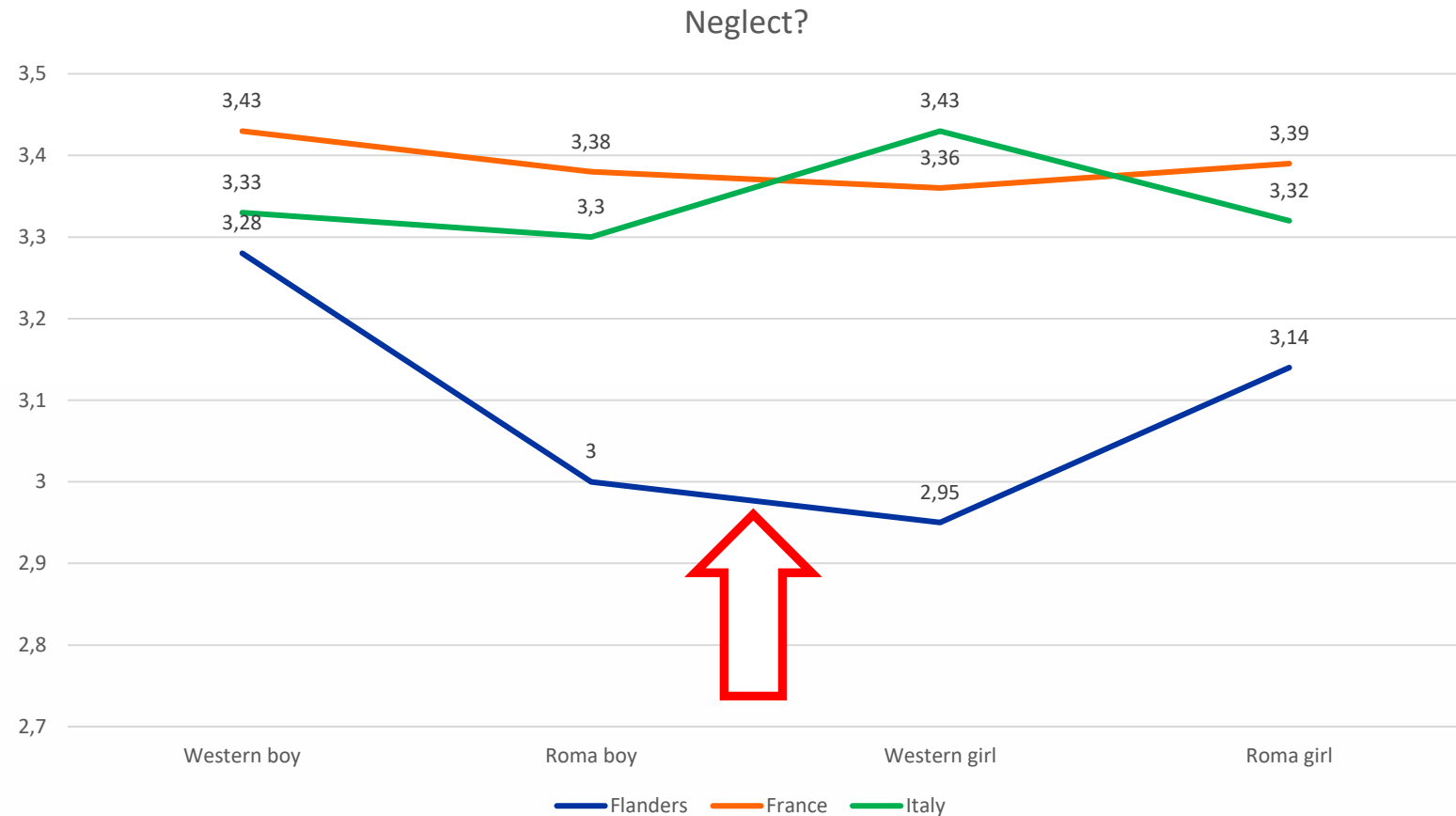
Group	A	B	C	D	Total	Chi <sup>2</sup> /p
	White boy	Roma boy	White girl	Roma girl	Mean(SD)/N(%)	
<b>N</b>	191	182	192	183	748	
<b>Country/region</b>						4.095
Flanders	40	30	38	35	143	
France	82	72	84	83	321	
Italy	69	80	70	65	284	
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	17	16	26	15	74 (10.1)	3.955
Female	173	162	162	163	660 (89.9)	
Missing	1	4	4	5	14	
<b>Age (missing = 1)</b>	40.54 (10.60)	39.53 (10.36)	41.46 (10.47)	40.81 (10.36)	40.60 (10.45)	1.097
<b>Ethnicity</b>						4.412
Western European	173	173	184	172	702 (94.0)	
Other	17	9	8	11	45 (6.0)	
Missing	1	0	0	0	1	
<b>Parent</b>						3.122
Yes	117	112	128	125	482 (64.4)	
No	74	70	64	58	266 (35.6)	
<b>Educational level</b>						1.362
EQF 4,5 or 6	123	108	120	118	469 (62.8)	
EQF 7 or 8	68	74	71	65	278 (37.2)	
Missing			1			
<b>Years of experience</b>						
Mean (sd)	11.35 (9.54)	9.67 (9.51)	11.83 (9.37)	10.91 (9.01)	10.96 (9.38)	1.808
						17.393
< 1 year	6	11	8	3	28	
1-5 years	64	77	61	66	268	
6-10 years	41	34	39	37	151	
11-15 years	24	20	19	28	91	
16-20 years	19	15	29	19	82	
> 20 years	36	25	35	30	126	
Missing	1		1			
<b>Training assessment CAN</b>						2.094
Yes	118	105	108	114	445 (59.5)	
No	73	77	84	69	303 (40.5)	
<b>Knowledge of CAN</b>	13.70 (2.31)	13.72 (2.34)	13.81 (2.27)	13.89 (2.32)	13.78 (2.31)	.263

# RESULTS

Countries differ on almost all variables: sex, age, parenthood, ethnicity, training assessment CAN, knowledge CAN.  
Only training assessment CAN associated with neglect

Group	Flanders	France	Italy	Total	Chi <sup>2</sup> /F
				Mean(SD)/N(%)	
<b>N</b>	143	321	284	748	
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	13	33	28	74 (10.1)	.192
Female	130	287	243	660 (89.9)	
Missing	0	1	13	14	
<b>Age (missing = 1)</b>	37.49 (10.42) <sup>a, b</sup>	41.36 (10.35)	41.31 (10.33)	40.60 (10.45)	7.981***
<b>Ethnicity</b>					23.895***
Western European	140 <sup>a</sup>	285 <sup>c</sup>	277	702 (94.0)	
Other	3	35	7	45 (6.0)	
Missing	0	1	0	1	
<b>Parent</b>					41.062***
Yes	89 <sup>a</sup>	246 <sup>c</sup>	147	482 (64.4)	
No	54	75	137	266 (35.6)	
<b>Educational level</b>					59.112***
EQF 4,5 or 6	105 <sup>b</sup>	235 <sup>c</sup>	129	469 (62.8)	
EQF 7 or 8	38	85	155	278 (37.2)	
Missing		1			
<b>Years of experience</b>					
Mean (sd)	9.41 (8.71)	11.32 (9.51)	11.32 (9.50)	10.96 (9.38)	2.405
					17.393
< 1 year	10	9	9	28	
1-5 years	55	113	100	268	
6-10 years	28	64	59	151	
11-15 years	18	42	31	91	
16-20 years	12	35	35	82	
> 20 years	20	56	50	126	
Missing	0	2			
<b>Training assessment CAN</b>					134.690***
Yes	24 <sup>a, b</sup>	229	192	445 (59.5)	
No	119	92	92	303 (40.5)	
<b>Victim of CAN</b>					
Yes	8	34	24	66 (10.2)	3.378
No	129	271	249	649 (90.8)	
Missing	6	16	11	31	

# RESULTS



Significant main effect voor country ( $F(2, 735) = 6.033, p < .005$ ), Picture = ns,  
Significant main training CAN ( $F(1, 735) = 3.988, p < .05$ ), No interaction effect.  
=> Flemish home visitors considered the situation less as neglect compared to French  
and Italian home visitators. No difference between France and Italy

**Vraag 2:** Vlaamse hulpverleners hebben een duidelijk beeld van Kindermishandeling?

**Antwoord 2 door onderzoek:**

## METHODS

### *Again the story of Diana:*

#### **Respondents**

Convenience sample of 95 decision makers

- 36 Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg
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Mean age = 37,62 (sd = 9,92)

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## METHODS

### ***Again the story of Diana:***

#### **Material**

Vignette with story of Diana. The vignette was taken from an international project (Benbenishty et al., 2015) and has been used in a number of studies (e.g. Benbenishty et al. 2015). Two versions: mother agreed with OHP, mother did not agree with OHP

#### **Instruments**

##### Assessment casus

After reading the vignette assessment of *presence of child abuse and neglect*: emotional neglect, physical neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse on 5-point scale

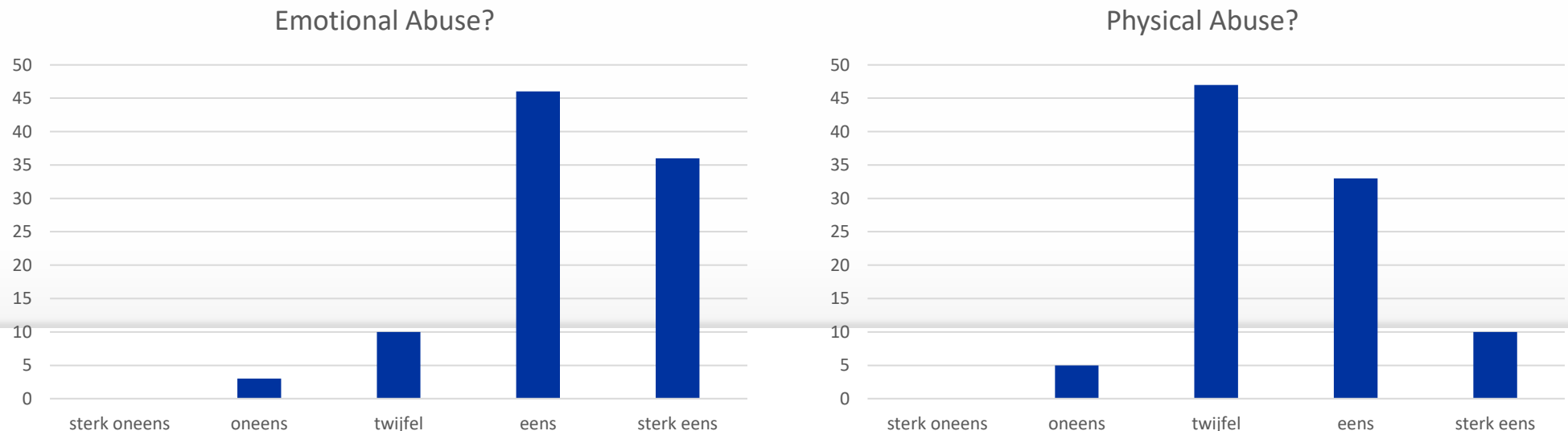
# RESULTS

## Agreement of decision makers regarding form/kind of abuse

- Over 5 forms of abuse: ICC = .71 (result due to agreement regarding absence of sexual abuse)
- Over 4 forms of abuse (exclusive sexual abuse): ICC = .23

ICC between -1.00 en .30 is bad; between .71 en 1.00 is good

=>Flemish decision-makers *lack* agreement on the presence of the of abuse and the risk of future harm



## ANTWOORD DOOR ONDERZOEK OP VRAAG 2

### **Vlaamse hulpverleners hebben een duidelijk beeld van wat kindermishandeling is?**

- Compared to French and Italian home visitors, Flemish home visitors considered the situation less as neglect
  - Result of lack of training
    - lack of training was significantly associated with recognition/detection
    - Flemish home visitors were significantly less trained in the recognition of CAN
- Lack of agreement
  - Points to lack of agreement regarding conceptualisation of CAN
  - Risk of influence of personal values and norms is very high. This is undesirable
  - Importance of training and use of actuarial instruments
- Shows the importance of this kind of research

➤ **Vraag 3:** Vlaamse hulpverleners schatten de toekomstige risico's in mogelijke situaties van verontrusting voldoende consistent in?

**Antwoord door onderzoek:**

## METHODS

### *Again the story of Diana:*

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## METHODS

### ***Again the story of Diana:***

#### **Material**

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#### **Instruments**

##### Assessment casus

Assessment of future risk on *emotional harm and physical harm* on 5-point scale

# RESULTS

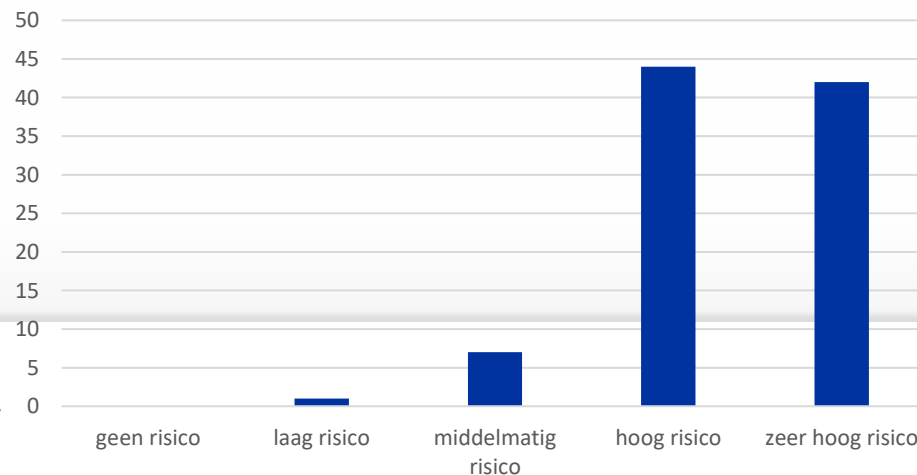
## Agreement of decision makers regarding risk of future harm

- Agreement regarding risk of future harm (emotional and physical): ICC = .20

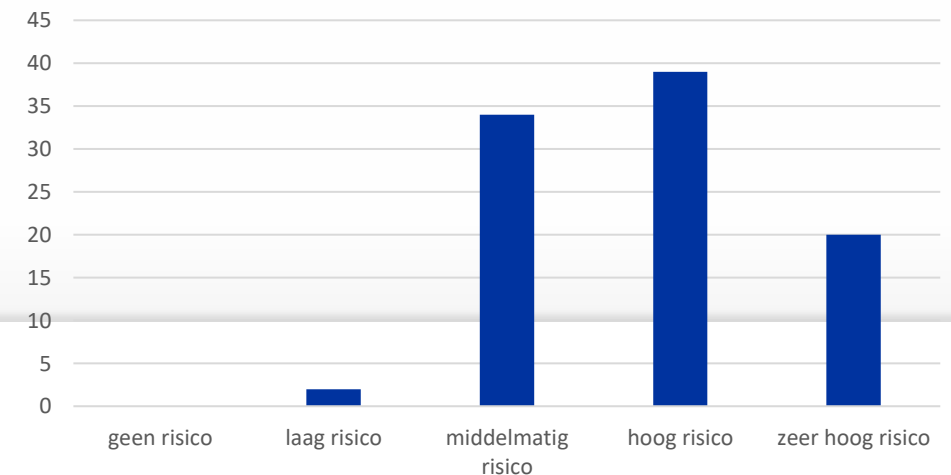
ICC between -1.00 en .30 is bad; between .71 en 1.00 is good

=> Flemish decision-makers *lack* agreement on the presence of the risk of future harm

Risk of future emotional harm



Risk of future physical harm



## ANTWOORD DOOR ONDERZOEK OP VRAAG 3

### **Vlaamse hulpverleners schatten de toekomstige risico's in mogelijke situaties van verontrusting voldoende consistent in?**

- When assessing the reliability or consistency of a group of Flemish decision makers regarding the future harm, the reliability or consistency is, compared to the reference values, “bad”
- Almost all possible answers were used by the respondents.
- However, prediction of future harm is one of the most important tasks of decision-makers
- Lack of agreement
  - Points to lack of agreement regarding prediction of harm
  - Risk of influence of personal values and norms is very high. This is undesirable. Can lead to danger for the child and unequal treatment
  - Importance of training and use of evidence-based instruments
- Shows the importance of this kind of research

➤ **vraag 4:** De etnische achtergrond van kinderen beïnvloedt de beslissingen van Vlaamse hulpverleners?

**Antwoord door onderzoek:**

# METHODS

## Respondents

All workers of all Flemish SGC (= CLB) (n = 61) were invited to participate in the study

Participants received a Qualtric-link

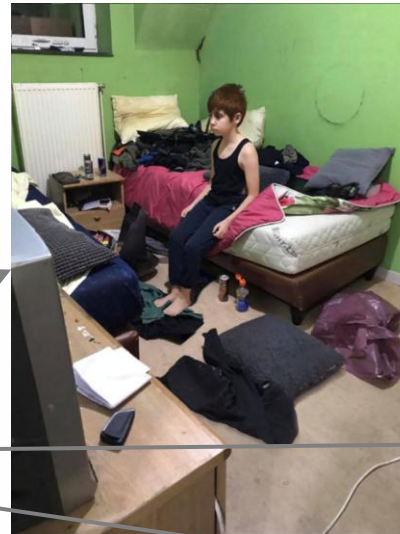
- 335 participants opened the link
- 97 participants had too many missing data
- Final sample 238 participants

No comparison with non-response group or with group of too many missing data was possible

# MATERIAL

Each participant was presented a visual vignette consisting of 2 pictures

Three groups: white child, coloured child or empty room



Fragiliteit van Vlaam

# METHODS

## Assessment of the situation

- Is this a situation of neglect (yes/no)?
- Would you report this situation (yes/no)?

# PARTICIPANTS

Group	A	B	C	Total	Chi <sup>2</sup> /F
	empty	white	Colored	Mean(SD)/N(%)	
<b>N</b>	73	79	86	238	
<b>Gender</b>					
<b>Male</b>	4	11	5	20 (8.4)	4.688
<b>Female</b>	69	68	81	218 (91.6)	
<b>Age (missing = 1)</b>	40.86 (10.69)	40.59 (10.51)	40.41 (11.21)	40.61 (10.78)	.035
<b>Ethnicity</b>					2.134
<b>Western European</b>	66	71	83	220 (92.4)	
<b>Other</b>	5	7	3	15 (6.3)	
<b>Missing</b>	2	1	0	3	
<b>Parenthood</b>					.447
<b>Yes</b>	55	58	61	174 (73.4)	
<b>No</b>	18	20	25	63 (26.6)	
<b>Missing</b>	0	1	0	1	
<b>Educational level</b>					3.231
<b>Bachelor</b>	35	48	43	125 (52.5)	
<b>Master</b>	38	31	44	113 (47.5)	
<b>Years of experience</b>					9.346
<b>&lt; 1 year</b>	9	10	8	27 (11.3)	
<b>1-5 years</b>	14	14	16	44 (18.5)	
<b>5-10 years</b>	5	8	15	28 (11.8)	
<b>10-15 years</b>	10	18	10	38 (16.0)	
<b>15-20 years</b>	12	9	12	33 (13.9)	
<b>&gt; 20 years</b>	23	20	25	68 (28.6)	
<b>% non-white chldrn</b>					5.616
<b>0-20</b>	15	24	23	62 (26.1)	
<b>21-40</b>	29	31	28	88 (37.0)	
<b>41-60</b>	14	11	20	45 (18.9)	
<b>61-80</b>	8	6	9	23 (9.7)	
<b>81-100</b>	4	3	2	9 (3.8)	
<b>missing</b>	3	4	4	11	
<b>Level of school</b>					
<b>Primary</b>	43	52	49	144 (61.3)	1.175
<b>Secondary</b>	28	27	36	38 (38.7)	
<b>missing</b>	2	0	1	3	

## ASSESSING THE CASE AS A CASE OF NEGLECT

- 71% assessed the case as a case of neglect
- Assessment differed significantly depending on the vignette. Effect is moderate ( $\chi^2(2)=12.821, p = .002, V = .23$ )
- Differences between the white child and the coloured child are significant ( $\chi^2 = 12.729, p < .001$ )

Group	Empty room	White child	Colored child	Total	
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	$\chi^2$
<b>Detection neglect (Yes)</b>	52 (71)	66 (84)	50 (58)	168 (71)	12.821*
<b>Total</b>	73 (100)	79 (100)	86 (100)	238 (100)	

\* < .005

## REPORTING THE CASE

- 64% of SGC-workers would report the case mostly to child welfare organisations (VK (29%) or OCJ (24%))
- Only 2 (1,4%) would report to judicial authorities
- Reporting did not differ statistically significant regarding the vignette. The effect is negligible ( $\chi^2(2) = .875, p = .646, V = .061$ )

Group	Empty room	White child	Colored child	Total	
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	$\chi^2$
<b>Report (yes) (all)</b>	45 (62)	54 (68)	54 (63)	153 (64)	.875
<b>Total</b>	73 (100)	79 (100)	86 (100)	238 (100)	

## REPORTING THE CASE

- SGC-workers with a non-Western ethnicity reported more
- SGC-workers assessing the situation as a situation of neglect reported more

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	OR	OR	OR
<b>Gender</b>	1.126 (.408-3.108)	1.188 (.423-3.340)	1.272 (.389-4.165)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	3.466 (.746-16.098)	3.444 (.736-16.107)	5.531* (1.013-30.215)
<b>Parent</b>	1.164 (.574-2.361)	1.158 (.570-2.354)	1.012 (.456-2.246)
<b>Educational level</b>	1.361 (.776-2.387)	1.400 (.794-2.469)	1.088 (.572-2.073)
<b>Years of experience</b>	.954 (.797-1.141)	.960 (.802-1.149)	1.071 (.871-1.317)
<b>% non-white students</b>	.966 (.742-1.256)	.981 (.752-1.281)	.933 (.691-1.258)
<b>Level school</b>	.829 (.464-1.481)	.851 (.474-1.527)	.916 (.473-1.775)
<b>Group (ref white child)</b>			
<b>Colored</b>		.859 (.474-1.527)	1.637 (.719-3.726)
<b>Empty room</b>		.716 (.347-1.480)	.994 (.438-2.253)
<b>Assessed as neglect</b>			10.305**(4.971-21.364)
<b>Block <math>\chi^2</math></b>	5.309	.819	46.759**
<b>df</b>	7	2	1
<b>Model <math>\chi^2</math></b>	5.309	6.128	52.887**
<b>df</b>	7	9	10
<b>Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup></b>	.033	.038	.293

## ANTWOORD DOOR ONDERZOEK OP VRAAG 4

### De etnische achtergrond van kinderen beïnvloedt de beslissingen van Vlaamse hulpverleners?

- **Assessment was influenced by the colour of the child** (more neglect if white child)
- These results seem in contradiction with the existing literature.
  - Indeed, CAN is NOT more detected when the victim belongs to an ethnic minority (Alink et al., 2018; Arruabarrena et al., 2017). Now the opposite!
  - Assessment of neglect was not universal, but influenced by the colour of the child.
    - Corresponds with the concept of racial biases: families of ethnic minorities are often represented as poor and living in dirty and dingy houses.
    - Can be dangerous as racial bias can result in the non-investigation of cases of neglect of coloured children, ultimately leading into serious harm or even death.

## ANTWOORD DOOR ONDERZOEK OP VRAAG 4

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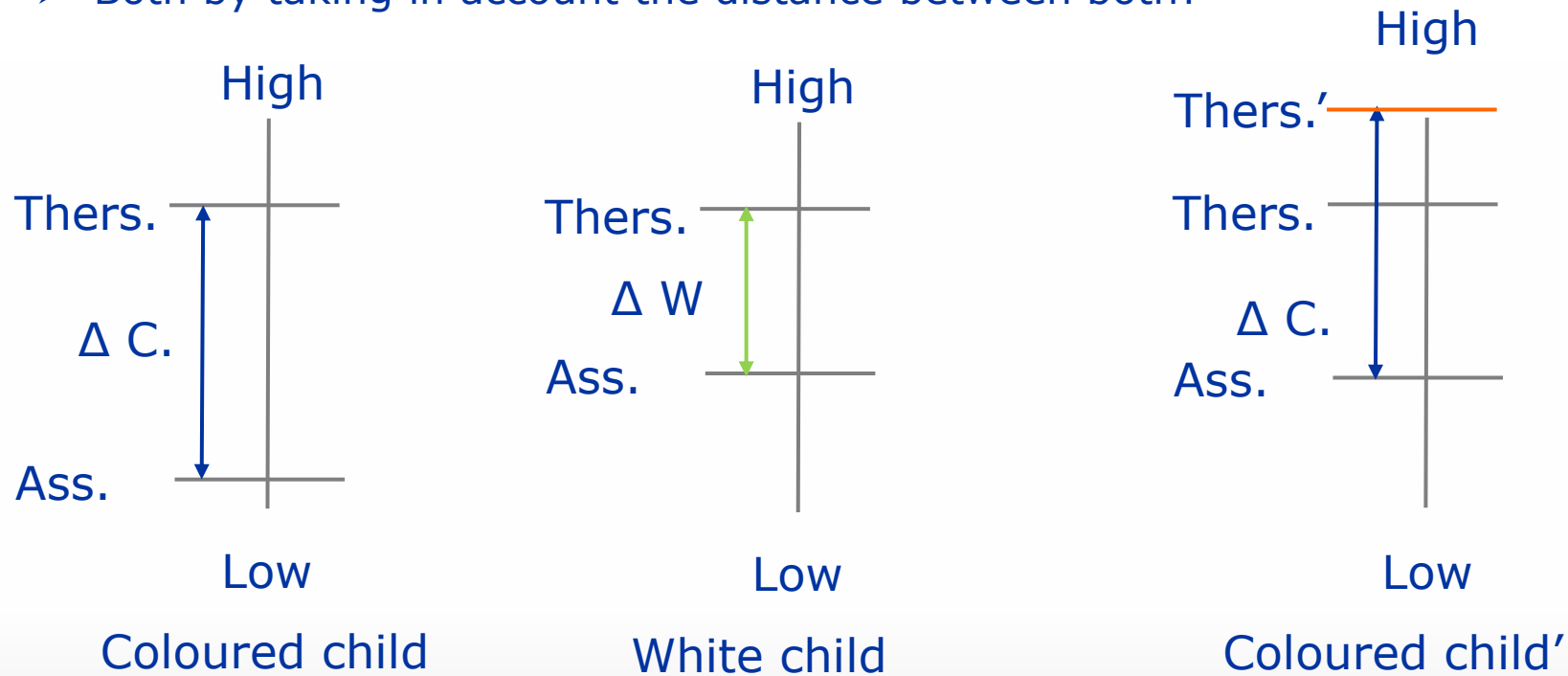
- **Reporting was NOT influenced by the colour of the child**
- These results seem in contradiction with the existing literature
  - Indeed, CAN is NOT more reported when the victim belongs to an ethnic minority (Alink et al., 2018; Arruabarrena et al., 2017). Now the opposite!
  - Our data do **not** show that factors influencing the action threshold are decisions makers characteristics, such as views on race
- Personal characteristics of SDG-workers were of less importance.
  - Less experienced workers **assessed** the situation *more* as neglect
  - Workers with a non-Western ethnicity were *more* inclined to **report** the situation

**Comment in the margin**

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DME

When trying to remedy this situation.

- Assessment? (judgemental conflict, easier to resolve by training in assessment)
- Action threshold? (decisional conflict, difficult to resolve because depends on personal values)
- Both by taking in account the distance between both?



**Conclusion**

## VRAGEN

- De Vlaamse hulpverlening grijpt te snel naar een uithuisplaatsing?
  - No! However, compared to surrounding countries Flemish youth care workers have a low action threshold
- Vlaamse hulpverleners hebben een duidelijk beeld van wat kindermishandeling is?
  - No, lack of agreement regarding CAN exists (within Flanders and between countries)
  - Training in conceptualisation of CAN and training and use of diagnostic instruments might help

## VRAGEN

- Vlaamse hulpverleners schatten de toekomstige risico's in mogelijke situaties van verontrusting voldoende consistent in?
  - NO! Risk of influence of personal values and norms is very high. This is undesirable. Can lead to danger for the child and unequal treatment
  - Likelihood of decisional conflict (decision to take action) is very high
  - Importance of training and use of evidence-based instruments

## VRAGEN

- De etnische achtergrond van kinderen beïnvloedt de beslissingen van Vlaamse hulpverleners?
  - Yes! Strategies to decrease racial bias is important as
    - Racial bias can result in the non-investigation of cases of neglect of coloured children, leading into serious harm or even death
    - Racial bias can lead to unnecessary separation of children from their family

Thank you



HET DENKEN MAG ZICH  
NOOIT ONDERWERPEN.

