

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING IN THE SECONDARY
SCHOOLS OF CAPRICORN DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

By

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DISSERTATION

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DECLARATION

I, **Setlhwana Sekedi Onicca**, declare that this dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree of Master of Arts in Research Psychology contains my own original work, that I am the owner of the copyright and that I have not previously submitted it for obtaining any qualification. I also certify that all materials contained herein have been dully acknowledged.

Signed at the University of Limpopo on the 2016

.....
Setlhwana S.O

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to all the participating learners who provided the data.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated prevalence rates and psychological consequences of bullying in schools within the Sekgosese West Circuit, Capricorn District, Limpopo Province. Participants were identified and drawn through stratified random sampling. The final sample consisted of 670 learners enrolled for Grades 8, 9 and 10, 49% of whom fell in the 14-15 years old age group, and 56% being female. Data were collected using a structured, composite questionnaire, within a cross-sectional research design. The results of the study show that most bullies and the bullied-bullies were male learners, and rates of the bullied were evenly split between male and female learners. The largest proportions of bullies and the bullied-bullies were the youngest and the oldest age groups. The oldest group was the largest group of the bullied. The largest proportions of the bullies and the bullied were in grade 8, and the proportion of the bullied-bullies was almost the same in grades 8 and 10, edging the proportion found in grade 9. The investigation also found that learners who were not involved in bullying experienced the least amounts of psychological distress. However, the bullies, bullied and bullied-bullies obtained mean scores that were not statistically different from each other from the measures of psychological distress used in this study. It is concluded from the results of the study that bullying is common in the Sekgosese West Circuit, and its psychological consequences are same for all the learners who involved in bullying one way or another. It is recommended that the study be replicated in other districts of Limpopo, and the context of bullying itself be considered as a candidate for inclusion in future studies.

Key words: Bullied, bully, bullied-bully, learners, psychological distress

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Studies show that students are bullied by their peers at school and that this victimization is damaging to their short- to long-term psychological, psychosocial and academic functioning (Baldry, 2003, 2004; Boyes, Bowes, Cluver, Ward, & Badcock, 2014; Brunstein Klomek, Sourander, & Gould, 2010; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009, 2013; Graham & Bellmore, 2007; Harel-Fisch et al., 2011; Lemstra, Nielsen, Rogers, Thompson, & Moraros, 2012; Özer, Totan, & Atik, 2011; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010; Wang, Nansel, & Iannotti, 2011; Wilson, Bovet, Viswanathan & Suris, 2010). The phenomenon of bullying is rife in both primary and secondary schools around the world (e.g., Baldry, 2004; Berger, 2007; Elgar et al., 2015; Due, Holstein & Soc, 2008; Harel-Fisch et al., 2011; Hemphill et al., 2012; Özer, Totan, & Atik, 2011). International rates are estimated at 30% (Elgar et al., 2015) for all types of bullying involvement. Craig et al. (2009) says that the rates can actually range from 4.8% to 35.8% for girls and 8.6% to 45.2% for boys. Some students view bullying as a normal part of their school experience, and feel that teachers are helpless in the face of the behaviour (Blake & Louw, 2010).

Bullying is commonly seen as aggressive behaviour intended to cause harm or distress (Olweus, 1993). Its primary features are the repetitiveness of the occurrence over time, taking place in relationships where there is an imbalance of power or strength and, with a more powerful individual or group attacking someone who is powerless and unable to defend himself (Olweus, 1993). Apparently, the power imbalance thrives and persists in situations and social organizations that elevate strength, popularity and advantage (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). Some schools seem to have these characteristics and a general climate which promotes bullying behaviours (Suckling & Temple, 2002).

Various forms of bullying have been observed among learners, including physical violence, teasing, intimidation, name calling and social exclusion

(Craig, Pepler, & Blais, 2007). Researchers have identified and referred to two broad types of direct and indirect bullying (Boyes et al., 2014; De Wet, 2005; Protogerou & Flisher, 2012). While both boys and girls are involved in the direct forms of verbal bullying, it is boys who are likely to engage in direct physical bullying (Baldry & Farrington, 2000). Whitney and Smith (1993) are of the opinion that while direct, physical assault seems to decrease with age, verbal abuse appears to remain constant. Some researchers further argue that whether bullying is direct or indirect the key component of bullying is that physical or psychological intimidation occurred amounting to abuse of a person (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefhoghe, 2002).

Although studies are increasing, rates of bullying involvement are largely unknown for some parts of South Africa. The same applies to consequences of bullying. Thus, the present study investigates rates and consequences of bullying in the schools of Sekgosese West Circuit, situated within the Capricorn District of Limpopo.

1.2 **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Mestry, van der Merwe and Squelch (2006) indicated that bullying in schools is a worldwide problem with negative consequences for the general school climate, and for the rights of learners and educators to learn and teach in a safe environment without fear (also see Laas & Boezaart, 2014; Suckling & Temple, 2002). The emergence of school bullying studies can be traced back to the ground-breaking work of Olweus in the late 1970s' (Zych, Ortega-Ruiz, & Del Rey, 2015). Since then, research on school bullying gained momentum and has featured in multiple disciplines, including education, psychology, organisational research and sociology. By far, the largest amount of research was done in Australia, Europe, United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries, with limited work done in South Africa, and much less in the rural areas of the country (Rigby, 1999).

There is a general consensus amongst studies that school bullying and psychological factors are interrelated. Traditionally, bullying was considered to

be a part of growing up, but now, research has uncovered its negative impact on bullies, victims and bullying victims, and even bystanders (Rigby, 2003). Since then, studies have considered it one of the leading public health problems.

Berger (2007) indicated that challenges posed by bullying become complicated when one considers the fact that in some instances it takes place in schools without parents and teachers noticing it, and victims are reluctant to complain. All parties to the bullying involvement act, including bullies, victims, bullied-bullies and bystanders, suffer one form or another of the consequences. Studies have found that anxiety (Kumpulainen, Räsänen, & Puura, 2001) and depression (Fleming & Jacobsen, 2009; Klomek et al., 2008; Klomek, Sourander & Gould, 2010) are two of the notable consequences. In extreme cases, the pathological forms of these conditions may manifest, even if the clinical picture does not meet strict diagnostic criteria. A case in point is Scott and Stradling's (1994) observation that post-traumatic stress disorder can be identified even if it appears without trauma, a condition they called "prolonged duress stress disorder" (cf. Hobre et al., 2006). An even more extreme case of bullying involvement is death through suicide and murder (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999; Mayer & Furlong, 2010). In any case, bullying is an aspect of aggression. It may involve violent aggression, and in that respect, the African continent has the highest incidence of violence compared to Europe and countries of the Eastern Mediterranean (Elgar et al., 2015). Although South Africa did not feature in this particular study, the levels of violence in schools reported are comparatively high (Shilubane, Ruiters, van den Borne, Sewpaul, James, & Reddy, 2013).

1.3 **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Bullying is a problem that continues to affect school going children, affecting their right to learn in a protective, secure environment (Mestry et al., 2006). Studies concur that bullying is the number one non-academic issue that most educators are faced with, yet many seem not prepared for it (Berger, 2007; Wang, Iannotti & Nansel, 2009). More than two decades ago Batsche and Knoff

(1994) observed that most South African schools have established or followed some form or another of a code of conduct and anti-bullying programs to address the problem of bullying. Yet the phenomenon persists in the schools.

Dake et al. (2003) further indicated that what causes this behaviour is really unclear because bullying is still a serious concern to school managers, educators and to all departmental officials. Most educators and school administrators are trying to find the underlying issues behind bullying in schools because the perpetrators are often successful and continue becoming more popular. Schools in the Capricorn district of Limpopo are likely not to be exceptions when it comes to the problem of bullying. Yet there are no studies that have been conducted from that area. As it is, it is not known what the rates of the phenomenon are in Sekgosese West Circuit. It is not even known whether the experiences of learners there are the same as known experiences regarding bullying and its consequences.

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is manifold, assessing the rates of bullying involvement, exploring its perceived psychological consequences, and determining the role of gender in both the occurrence and consequences of the phenomenon in the high schools within the Sekgosese West Circuit, Capricorn District in Limpopo province.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 To investigate the extent and psychological consequences of bullying; and

1.5.2 To determine gender differences in terms of bullying occurrence and psychological consequences.

1.6 HYPOTHESES

Based on the research objectives of this study, the following hypotheses are advanced:

- 1.6.1 No hypothesis is advanced concerning the rates of bullying involvement in the Sekgosesse West District, Capricorn District since there is no sufficient data to base it on.
- 1.6.2 There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between bullying and psychological distress.
- 1.6.2 Gender will moderate the relationship between bullying and psychological distress.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study on the perceived psychological consequences of bullying will be conducted in public schools in the Sekgosesse West Circuit within the Capricorn district, Limpopo province.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study intends to extend research knowledge on bullying by investigating occurrence rates and associated psychological consequences in the Sekgosesse West Circuit. Understanding factors associated with bullying is important to all stakeholders as this will highlight the plight of both victims and perpetrators in the schools. Studies point consistently to the relationship between bullying and learning. Consequently, bullying can no longer be ignored by researchers themselves.

The study further hopes to create and raise awareness of the problem, with the hope that ensuing efforts of alleviating the problem will create a school environment that will reduce bullying amongst learners. The findings of the

study will also be useful to school counsellors, psychologists, teachers and all people who work with bullies and victims of bullying, and seek further information to design and/or implement intervention programmes.

1.9 THEORETICAL FORMULATIONS

1.9.1 Operational Definition of Terms

Bullying:

Bullying is defined as aggressive behaviour intended to cause harm or distress. It occurs repeatedly over time in relationships in which there is an imbalance of power. Bullying aggression is characterised by any or all of the following: physical attacks (e.g., hitting, kicking and pushing), verbal aggression (e.g., teasing, name calling, and threatening) and relational behaviours that try to damage relations or isolate the bullying recipient (Olweus, 1993). This means that bullying can be classified. Types that have been identified include: (i) Physical bullying, which involves any physical contact that would hurt or injure a person; like hitting, kicking, punching or destroying another person's property (Benítez & Justicia, 2006); (ii) Verbal bullying, which involves name calling, cruel speech making, hateful graffiti writing, making offensive remarks or joking about a person's religion, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic-status (Benítez & Justicia, 2006; Nishina, Juvonen & Witkow, 2005); (iii) Relational or social bullying, which is sometimes referred to as social bullying, involves the systematic ruining of a bullied child's sense of self, and the victim's subsequent exclusion from social or peer groups (Buhs, Ladd & Herald (2006); (iv) sexual bullying, which includes exhibitionism, sexual positioning, sexual harassment and abuse involving 'gay bashing', physical contact and sexual assault such as in rape (Jerome & Segal, 2003; Salmivalli and Voeten, 2004); (v) Gesture bullying, which involves threatening facial expressions, gesturing and body language, is another type of indirect bullying, sometimes implying harm to be carried out at a later time (Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto & Toblin, 2005); (vi) Cyber bullying is broadly defined as wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of electronic devices such as computers and cell phones, as in emailing

or posting of embarrassing and humiliating internet messages about the victim (David-Ferdon & Hertz, 2007; Hinduja, 2007).

This study considers bullying in its traditional form, that bullying refers to situations where someone is repeatedly attacked, hurt physically or verbally by another individual who is relatively more powerful. In situations of bullying, the inability of the attacked individual to fight back and defend him- or herself is a *sine qua non* of bullying.

Bystanders:

Refers to those who passively accept bullying by watching it occurring and doing nothing about it (Protogerou, & Flisher, 2012). In some cases bystanders can encourage the bullying by seeming to express approval or even taking part in the act (Mestry et al., 2006). Nevertheless, Protogerou and Flisher (2012) differentiate neutral, inactive bystanders from those who are active, who they refer to as defenders (sympathising with the victim) and reinforcers (assisting the bully in some way).

Victim:

Refers to a defenceless individual who is repeatedly attacked by a peer(s), and is unable to retaliate or defend him- or herself. The definition overlaps with that of the bullied (Laas & Boezaart, 2014).

Anti-bullying:

In this study will mean a plan of action adopted by the school which is opposed to bullying amongst learners (Batsche & Knoff, 1994).

1.9.2 Theoretical Perspectives

The present study is an empirical study which does not attempt to investigate a particular theory directly. Nevertheless, some theories are relevant as guiding

concepts for the study. A general theory of information processing has been used to explain bullying behaviour (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003). One of the proponents of the theory is Dodge (1986). Dodge (1986) proposed a social information processing model of competent social responding. The model describes cognitive steps that are thought to be necessary for a child to react appropriately to a social situation. The first step of encoding involves searching for relevant social information before responding. For example, the child must attend to the other child's facial expressions and relevant cues before reaching conclusions.

Dodge (1986) reported that aggressive children usually believe that their behaviour will achieve rewards and will reduce future aversive bullying by others. Dodge (1986) and Sutton et al. (1999) further reported that when aggressive children encounter a frustrating situation, and the source of the frustration is unclear, they tend to leap to the conclusion that another person was deliberately trying to frustrate them and start bullying. Perry, Kusel and Perry (1988) found aggressive children to be more confident in their ability to enact aggression and being unconcerned about the possible damaging consequence of their behaviour such as psychological or physical harm to their victims.

The present study was also inspired by the ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989), which recognizes the cross-system role of institutions such as the school and peer groups in determining the learner's physical and psychological wellbeing.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section of the literature review, provides a historical background of the phenomenon of bullying in schools. Studies of school bullying trace their origins from the classic studies conducted by Olweus in Norway. The chapter also provides an explanation of the concept of bullying itself, beginning with its meaning. It goes on to provide the different types of bullying. It then explains the three bullying role players of the bully, the victim and the bystander. Finally, it focuses on the extent of bullying, its psychological consequences, and the role of gender.

2.2 The historical background of bullying

Historically, a significant research of school bullying was made in the Scandinavian countries, with the publication of Olweus's (1978) book called "Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and whipping boys". School officials in the Scandinavian countries were not taking serious actions against bullying until a newspaper report in 1982 revealed that three adolescent boys from Norway had committed suicide because of severe bullying by peers. The success of Olweus's Norwegian studies on bullying influenced and inspired subsequent research and intervention activities in other countries (Wang et al., 2009).

There are several aspects to the explanation of the concept bullying in the literature. Rigby (2003) explained bullying through five different perspectives; that bullying is an outcome of child development. The first explanation argues that as children mature they struggle to assert their school dominance. The second explanation attributes bullying to individual differences. Children who bully others tend to experience low levels of empathy and high levels of psychoticism, while victims of bullying tend to have low self-esteem and are psychologically introverted. Rigby (2003) further explained bullying as an

outcome of segregation into specific social groups with different level of power, and lastly, bullying is described as a response to group and peer pressure.

Neser (2006) reported that bullying among learners is always intentional. According to De wet (2006) bullies target learners who are weak and cannot defend themselves, whereas Smith and Levans (1995) add that bullying is a systematic abuse of power. Almost all researchers acknowledge the repetitive nature of bullying and imply that an imbalance of power exists between individuals who engage in bullying behaviour and those who are targets of bullying. Olweus (1993) reported that targets of bullying are bullied or victimized when exposed, repeatedly, negative action occurs when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempt to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another person. Negative actions can be executed verbally (Olweus, 1993), physically (Benítez & Justicia, 2006), relationally and emotionally or psychologically (Kaltiala Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, & Rimpela, 2000).

2.3 Major elements of bullying

Most researchers (Rigby, 2002; Zych et al., 2015.) concur with Olweus's (1993) definition that there are three major elements that identify bullying, namely, intention to harm, repetition of the harmful behaviour, and an imbalance of power between the bully and the bullied. These elements are supported by research (Volk, Dane, & Marini, 2014). Of course some researchers add one or more element to the list, which if looked at closely, seems to be an enhancement or breaking down of one of the three elements to be discussed below. For instance, Estévez, Murgui and Musitu (2009) add that bullying is violent. This aspect is covered in the first element below.

2.3.1 Intention to harm

Bullying can be demonstrated by a bully's intentionally negative behaviours (Nansel, Haynie & Simons-morton, 2003; Olweus, 1993; 2013). This intentional harm results in severe distress, immediate upset and anticipatory fear which is

anxiety caused by threat of future harm. Immediate upset is often caused by physical pain, humiliation and social rejection (Wang et al., 2009).

2.3.2 Repetition

Batsche and Knoff (1994) state that bullying is a type of behaviour that occurs on more than one occasion and that the repetition tends to establish an organized and systematic pattern on the bully and the victim.

2.3.3 Imbalance of power

A final core element is that bullying involves some obvious power imbalance between the victim and the perpetrator, and this can be physical, psychological or intellectual action that causes an obstacle for the victim to defend himself or herself. Studies agreed that the targets of bullying are characterised by their inability to defend themselves against individuals engaged in bullying behaviour. Furthermore, studies noted that the effects of being threatened by a more powerful person or group are likely to differ from the effects of being threatened by someone of equal power (Rigby, 2003).

2.4 Role players involved in bullying

In the bullying problem there are three role players involved, and they are: the bully, the victim and the bystander. Children in a school will usually fall under one of these three categories when it comes to victimization and bullying (Berger, et.al. 2007; Salmivalli, 1999).

2.4.1 The bully

Bullies are described as powerful students who are engaged in doing harm with repeated actions that have little or no cost to themselves (Dewet, 2006; Sharp, 1995). Barnett (1987) investigated bullies' emotional characteristics by examining their degree of empathy. The bullies scored significantly lower on cognitive empathy. Subsequently, bullies appeared to be emotionally immature,

moody and without any sense of remorse. Studies further indicated that one cannot assume that a bully looks a certain way but they can be identified by the way they act. Bullies are then classified according to the way in which they actively or passively bully others (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003).

Whitney and Smith (1993) mentions that children's reasons for bullying includes, amongst other reasons, a striving for attaining popularity, proving toughness and generally showing off. Students who engage in bullying behaviour seem to have a need to feel powerful and to be in control (Banks, 1997). Banks (1997) further adds that bullies appear to derive satisfaction from inflicting injury and suffering on others and have little or no empathy for their victims. It has been noted that bullies do not randomly attack victims, instead, they target individuals of a specific personality. Studies indicated that others bully because they lack the ability to establish positive peer relationships.

2.4.2 The bullied (bullying victim)

A victim of bullying is someone who sustained repeated and intentional acts of aggression from someone holding more power in the situation (Olweus, 2013). A child who becomes the target of the bullying behaviour is either called the target or the victim. Boulton (1992) further indicated that victims show vulnerability and in most cases do not have support from the group. The roles are not fixed since a confident person in one environment can be vulnerable in another. Victims of bullying are also of various kinds; most are passive victims who are weak, defenceless and submissive; demonstrate poor social adjustment and most of them report greater difficulty in making and maintaining friends than their peers. In general victims are found to have few or no good friends if any and are lonely, inclined to experience pain, and are prone to self-blaming (Batsche & Knoff, 1994).

Shyness and an inability to trust others are likely to contribute to poor social adjustment, which, in turn, results in feelings of loneliness and avoidance of social situations. With regard to affective characteristics of victims, Salmon, James and Smith (1996) noted that victims of bullying are found to be more

anxious, depressed and fearful, and are likely to react to bullying with tension and poor or low self-esteem. This set of symptoms makes them more attractive targets for bullies. They may feel to be close to parents and teachers but doubt to get help from them.

A small group of bullied children are called provocative victims, since they often behave in ways that arouse negative responses in those around them (Nansel et al., 2003). Olweus (1995) added that provocative victims tend to fight back when under attack from bullies, since they themselves are very aggressive, and are considered to be hot tempered. Learning difficulties interfere with their ability to interpret social cues correctly. Thus they are excluded from peer groups because of their provocative behaviour, their parents are inclined to punish them, and teachers dislike them (Schwartz et al., 2005). Perry et al. (1988) state that there was an equal chance for a victim to be provocative or passive, and Olweus (1994) concluded that less than one in five victims tend to be provocative. For that reason, Perry et al. (1988) classified victims as either “high-aggressive” or “low-aggressive” victims.

2.4.3 The bullied-bully (“bully-victim”)

The bullied-bully, also referred to as the “bully-victim” is a person who is both a victim of bullying and someone who bullies other individuals (Carrera, DePalma & Lameiras, 2011). The individuals have the worst characteristics of the bullied and the bully (. A prospective study found that they were the ones who suffered most from symptoms of anxiety and depression, when compared to bullies and the bullied (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Rantanen, & Rimpelä, 2000). Whereas they have characteristics of victims they do not enjoy the benefits of the bullies such as high self-esteem and popularity in social circles (Graham & Bellmore, 2007).

2.4.4 The bystander

There are some discrepancies in the definitions of bystanders. Early definitions seem to be confined to dictionary definitions of the concept, unrelated to actual

bystander behaviours in situations of bullying. For instance, Webster's Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (1996) defines a bystander as a person who is present at an event without participating in it. This definition confines the bystander's role to mere observation, witnessing and standing by without any active involvement. Barnett (1987) reviewed diverse definitions of bystanding behaviours and found that most of them refer to standing by or being present without taking part as a spectator or observer. Barnett (1987) then expanded the scope of bystanders by adding that they can decide to get involved or stay uninvolved. Bystanders are then defined as people who are present and witness bullying situation and their behaviours may vary from intervening to supporting the victims, remaining uninvolved, or supporting perpetrators' harassment.

Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjoorkqvist, Osterman and Kaukiainen (1996) added to Barnett's (1987) definition by clarifying the group participation aspect to a bullying incident, whereby bullying does not concern only the victim and the bully; but also other pupils present who may either support the perpetrator by their behaviour, or try to defend the victim or simply withdraw. Thus, bystanders too can be categorised into various types: there are those who instigate the bullying by urging the bully to engage in the behaviour through prodding comments or laughter, and some may actively join the ongoing bullying (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Hazler, 1996). Thus, they are considered to be a "supporting cast" in an ongoing play. Protogerou and Flisher (2012) have refined the naming of bystanders in that regard (see section 1.9.1 above).

Bullying statistics imply that most students are just witnesses of bullying who merely fail to intervene on behalf of the victims, rather than its perpetrators or targets (Juvonen, Graham & Schuster, 2003). The fact that bystanders are the majority of the participants in school bullying implies that they can play an important role in maintaining or prohibiting it. In spite of their numerical superiority, bystanders are yet to receive full attention as a category of bullying involvement (Carrera et al., 2011). For now we only note their presence as a category, and they are more likely to form a bulk of students who in standard questionnaires and surveys are simply denoted as "uninvolved".

2.5 The extent of bullying amongst school students

Bullying behaviour is pervasive in schools, workplaces and similar environments throughout the world and in South Africa. Recent research shows that opportunities for bullying have become more, partly due to technology and its influence on a new method of bullying, namely, cyber-bullying (Keith & Martin, 2005; Li, 2000; Rivers & Noret, 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Nevertheless, traditional bullying remains the most dominant form of bullying since it is more prevalent than cyber-bullying (Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra, & Runions, 2014). After studying bullying as well as bullying prevention programs, Dake et al. (2003) and Sharp (1995) concluded that after decades of research, no one has yet found a way to reduce bullying in schools

The most notable early work in the quantitative assessment of the extent of bullying was carried out by Olweus in Norway. Through the use of his questionnaire (OBVQ) on a national basis, it was established that approximately fifteen percent (15%) of school students (from a sample of over 13,000 Norwegian students) were involved in bullying perpetration or victimisation. Some estimates are higher (Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja & Ruan, 2004). Several studies indicate that as many as 35% of youngsters reported that they are somewhat involved in bullying (Nansel et.al, 2003; Olweus, 1994; Rigby, 2003, 2005). An international survey of trends shows that prevalence rates of bullying involvement (as bully, bullied, bullied-bully) ranged from 4.8% to 35.8% for girls and 8.6% to 45.2% for boys, with an average of 16% of global children being affected by it in any given year (Craig et al., 2009).

Burton (2008) conducted a national study amongst learners in South African schools and found that about 1.8 million, or 15.3%, of South African learners between Grade 3 and 12 were exposed to some type of school violence, including school bullying. A follow-up comparative study found that the Free State, Limpopo and the Western Cape were the provinces with the highest frequency of threats of violence in both 2008 and 2012 (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Yet another study compared the prevalence rates of risk behaviours related to the injury of adolescents at various sites in South Africa, including

Cape Town, Durban, Limpopo and Port Elizabeth (Flisher et al., 2006). Part of the findings was that 33.0% of the participants were found to have bullied others while 44.5% of the same group had been bullied.

In their 2002 national youth risk behaviour survey Reddy and colleagues found that 41% of learners (N = 10405) reported being bullied (Reddy et al., 2003). This rate was higher than what was found in international prevalence studies, where bullying ranges between 15% and 35% (cf. Townsend, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard, & King, 2008). Although the proportions of bullying involvement declined somewhat in the third instalment of the national youth risk behaviour survey, at more than 30% they were still high (Reddy et al., 2013). A study conducted in the Western Cape, South Africa also confirmed that South African schools have high rates of bullying behaviour among learners. The study found that 49% and just over 60% of the learners were bullies and bullying victims, respectively (Penning, Bhagwanjee, & Govender, 2010). It can be concluded that South African rates, assessing perpetrators, victims and bullied-bullies, vary from 4% to 61% over the years for different samples of learners and various geographic settings (Liang, Flisher, & Lombard, 2007; Mlisa, Ward, Flisher, & Lombard, 2008; Reddy, 2003; cf. Boyes et al., 2014; Penning, Bhagwanjee, & Govender, 2010; Protogerou & Flisher, 2012).

Bullying behaviour appears to be more common in elementary than in junior and senior high schools, meaning that it increases with grades (Dake et al., 2003; Seixas, Coelho & Nicolas-Fischer, 2013). Similarly, bullying involvement is common in younger age groups than older ones (Bauman, 2008; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1994; Yen, 2010). The reasons why bullying involvement is more common in secondary schools include developmental issues. The stage of development of adolescence and puberty introduces drastic and unpredictable physical changes, accompanied by mood swings. The adolescent also has to contend with crises of establishing an identity and finding a place in the social structure where he or she is located. Some adolescents may use bullying as a way of adapting to the changes of adolescence (Sullivan et al., 2004). During this stage, belonging and fitting in with the peer group is also important. Thus, some adolescents may find it difficult to report bullying for

fear of being ostracized by peers as a “cry-baby” and also aggravating the bullying if adults do not intervene (Smith & Shu, 2000). In any case those who do not report may also do so because they may be blaming themselves for the bullying

2.6 Psychological consequences of bullying

Studies abroad and in South Africa concur that bullying can have devastating, negative effects on all parties concerned (Bauldry, 2004; Houbre, Tarquinio, & Thuillier, 2006). The effects are numerous, and may last longer than the duration of the bullying, in some cases well into adulthood (Boyes et al., 2014; Heino-Kaltiala, Frojd, & Marttunen, 2010; Hampel, Manhold & Hayer, 2009; Ttofi, Farrington, Losel, & Loeber, 2011; Reijntjes et al., 2010). Only a sample of the effects is provided here. The consequences for the bullied can range from skipping breakfast (Sampasa-Kanyinga, & Willmore, 2015; Sampasa-Kanyinga, Roumeliotis, Farrow, & Shi, 2014), to physical illnesses (Nishina, Juvonen & Witkow, 2005; Rigby, 1999; Williams, Connolly, & Pepler, 2005), academic under-achievement and lack of academic self-efficacy (Özer et al., 2011), dropping out of school (Townsend et al., 2008), substance abuse, including smoking (Forero McLellan, Rissel and Bauman, 1999; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000); depression (Boyes et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2010), anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (Boyes et al., 2014), and perceptions of stress (Combs, 2012). In the most extreme cases suicidal ideation, death and murder are possible (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999; Mayer & Furlong, 2010).

Psychosomatic illnesses, constituted by symptoms such as irritable temper, backache, headache, stomach ache and dizziness, can be considered an aspect of physical ailments with a strong psychological component. They are discussed here since they feature in the clinical pictures of depression and anxiety disorders. Gini and Pozzoli conducted two meta-analytic studies, one in 2009 and a follow-up in 2013, and in both instances concluded that bullied children were at a significantly higher risk for psychosomatic symptoms compared to children who were not bullied. Forero et al. (1999) analysed the

presence or absence of psychosomatic symptoms, and found that bullies, as well as bullied-bullies, were likely to experience symptoms more frequently and report elevated symptom scores. This was more so for boys than for girls. Seixas et al. (2013) did not find statistically significant differences between bullying involvement groups. However, this may have been the effect of the method used rather than a true outcome, as the authors themselves comment.

Nevertheless, the most consistent finding regarding the consequences of bullying involvement is in two types of internalizing behaviours, namely, depression and anxiety (Hawker, & Boulton, 2000; Ttofi et al., 2011; Reijntjes et al., 2010; Swearer, Song, Cary, Eagle, & Mickelson, 2001). Externalizing behaviours are consistently associated with being a bully (Dake et al., 2003). In instances when depression is observed among the bullies (e.g., Combs, 2012), it is when they admit their bullying rather than when they deny it (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Otherwise, youngsters who identified themselves as being bullied were likely to be anxious (Combs, 2012). Studies agree that internalizing behaviours are more common among the bullied (Baldry, 2004), and the moods of depression in particular increased immensely when there was a high frequency of bullying (Lemstra et al., 2012). Internalizing behaviours as a set appear to be particularly common and more intense among bullied-bullies (Combs, 2012). Nevertheless, there appears to be no consensus regarding the presence of internalizing behaviour among bullies.

2.7 The role of gender and age in the bullying process

Evidence exists that bullying is a problem of great proportion among learners. Characteristics, including sex and age/grade level, of those involved in it have potential to exert substantial effects on the relationship between bullying involvement and psychological consequences (Hawker & Boulton 2000; Reijntjes et al., 2010; Townsend et al., 2008). Studies show that different genders bully differently and are exposed to different types of bullying (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). Similarly, the consequences are different for both sexes (Keriikowske, 2003). Dake et al. (2003) investigated gender differences in bullying behaviour among school children. Findings indicated that boys are

more likely than girls to be involved in direct physical bullying and are equally likely to become involved in direct verbal bullying. In terms of who bully who, boys were found to be bullied by boys and girls reported being bullied by both genders equally. It has also been noted that girls are more worried and troubled by social and relational aggression than boys (Seals, 2003).

Salmivalli et al. (1996) found that girls and boys are likely to play different roles in the group process of bullying. According to their findings, girls are more likely to assume the roles of defender and outsider whereas boys play the roles of bully, reinforcer and assistant. Similarly, Espelage and Holt (2003) found that according to self-reports, girls are more often classified in an uninvolved cluster for bullying, whereas boys are more likely to be classified in bully, victim, and bully-victim groups. Girls were also likely to intervene in bullying when the bully and victim are females and boys more likely to intervene when bully and victim are males (Rigby, 1998).

Studies that have examined gender differences in victimization by cyber bullying have found mixed results. Some studies found that girls and boys are equally likely to be victims of cyber bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Li, 2000). Contrarily to these findings, Lenhart (2007) reported girls to be target of cyber bullying than boys. In this study 38% of girls and 26% boys reported being target of cyber bullying. Baldry (2003) agree with studies that contended that exposure to violence affects boys and girls differently. Girls are more likely to exhibit internalized symptoms whereas boys are more likely to react in an externalized way by showing conduct problems such as aggression, drug abuse and delinquency. Rigby (1998) found peer victimized girls to have higher incidence of emotional distress and more perceived adverse health effect than boys.

Kaltiala-Heino and Frojd (2011) indicated that findings on gender differences in the association between victimization from bullying and depression have been contradictory. The research conducted by Kaltiala-Heino et al. (2011) reported that victimization increases the risk of depression among boys and that depression is a risk factor for later victimization among girls. Other studies reported an association between victimization and subsequent depression and

self-harm to be more strongly present among girls and that depression is an antecedent of later victimization among boys. Keriikowske (2003) found children who are bullied are more likely to be depressed; there were more boys and girls who reported bullying among children who were bullied, but the percentage of girls (26%) was greater than that of bullied boys (16%).

2.8 **Conclusion**

Bullying is global problem that can be found in every school over the world. Studies indicated that it has a lot of negative consequences on the children. Children can suffer torments and harassments. Bullying can cause life-long damage to all concerned parties, namely, the bullied, the bullies, he bullied-bullies and bystanders. Studies suggest that It is a highly prevalent behaviour with significant social, medical, psychological and even financial costs for the public and those who are involved in it. Often it is not easy for teachers and parents to detect signs and symptoms of physical psychological distress. It is therefore important to gather knowledge about the occurrence and consequences of bullying.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the following aspects of the study: research design, sampling method, procedures, data collection, and the instruments used to collect data. The instruments' description is done and their psychometric properties provided.

3.2 Study design

The study was based on a cross sectional research design. Data was collected once, with no follow-up data collection planned. The design was used because it is efficient. It allows for the analysis of many variables and their comparison at minimum cost in terms of time and effort. Because data is collected at a single point in time, it means that the researcher who uses this type of study design does not attempt to influence the variables or the setting in which the data is collected. Analysis of data from this type of design will not make it possible that the temporal relationship between the variables can be determined. However, prevalence rates and associations between the variables can be established.

3.3 Participants

Participants for this study were Grades eight, nine and ten learners from 10 high schools in the Sekgosesse West Circuit, Capricorn District. All the prospective participants were registered learners at the different schools located within the Sekgosesse West Circuit, Capricorn District in Limpopo. Their ages ranged from 12 years to 18 years and above, covering even those who repeated some grades. The choice of grades was influenced by Whitney and Smith's (1993) observation that direct bullying increases in the middle junior high school levels (also see Dake et al., 2003; Seixas et al., 2013). However, it

is important to note that in the South African schooling system some learners are old for the grade they are in, which is why there are learners in the sample who are old for the grades sampled (cf. Harrison, O'Sullivan, Hoffman, Dolezal, & Morrell, 2006). The manner in which the sample was drawn will be explained in the next section.

3.4 Sampling method

Stratified random sampling was used to identify schools and sample the learners. The particular sampling strategy used ensured that all areas and schools had an equal chance of participation. The desired target population (Grades 8, 9 and 10 learners) of this study consisted of 4456 students attending 10 schools located in the Limpopo provincial Department of Basic Education's Sekgose West Circuit, Capricorn District. It is from this population that the sampling frame was created. The demographic information of interest for the study, namely, sex, age and location, were included. It was obtained from the registers created by the Circuit office. From this sampling frame a representative sample of 670 students (about 15% of the target population) was selected. The total sample size was allocated to the schools (strata) proportional to the total size of the school (stratum), and the allocation was done using the following formula:

$$n_h = \frac{N_h}{N} \times n$$

where n_h = the number of students selected from school h , N_h = the total number of students in Grades 8, 9 and 10 in school h , N = the total number of students in the target population, and n = the total sample size. The allocated sample size of a school, n_h , was further allocated to Grades within the school proportional to Grade size (i.e., the number of students in a given grade).

3.5 Procedure

The research protocol of the study was first submitted for ethical clearance before data collection commenced. Subsequently, the research and ethics committee of the University of Limpopo provided the ethical clearance for the study (see Appendix). A group of research assistants were trained to administer the research instrument and relate to participants. The first step to the implementation of the study's data collection strategy was to test the data collection instrument. A pilot study was conducted to enable the researcher to check and, if necessary, adjust the data collection instrument. Once it was established that there were no major problems with using the instrument, actual data collection commenced. This involved seeking and obtaining approval to survey learners from the Department of Basic Education's Sekgosesa Circuit, Capricorn District; and the respective school management bodies (that is, School Governance Bodies and School Management Teams).

Soon after the bodies provided the necessary approvals, sampling was conducted. Notices to parents and learners who were identified for inclusion in the sample were distributed. Parents were informed through letters about the study and were given a chance to decide as to whether their child was to participate or not. The learners themselves were required to complete a consent form before responding to the study questionnaires if they chose to participate in the study.

On the days of data collection, the researcher, accompanied by trained assistants, assembled groups of prospective participants who had a positive parental assent form with them. The average sizes of the groups were thirty respondents. Each participant was provided with a research package consisting of a data collection instrument, a general instructions sheet and an additional consent form. Students were first orientated to the process of completing the questionnaires. In addition, the respondents were informed about their rights and privileges as research subjects. For instance, they were reminded that their participation was completely voluntary, and that they are allowed to discontinue participating at any point without giving reasons. The

questionnaires were answered in English, the instructional language of the learners. However, the research leader and assistants, who were also first language speakers of the languages of the respondents, announced that they were available to answer questions of clarification during the filling of the questionnaires. Respondents were strongly encouraged to give sincere answers. Although they were not going to be remunerated for participating in the study, they were offered drinks and snacks at the end of the data collection session.

3.6 Measures

3.6.1 Biographical questionnaire

To provide an overall description of the sample, participants were asked to provide their biographical information. The biographical questionnaire used included items pertaining to participants' age, sex, grade, ethnic identification, type of family structure, school name and number of years in that particular school.

3.6.2 The Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (R-OBVQ)

The R-OBVQ was used to obtain descriptive information about the nature and prevalence of bullying. It is designed for learners from grades 3—12 and it has two versions, junior version for grades 3-5 and the senior version intended for learners in grades 6—12 (Olweus, 1996). For the purpose of this study the senior version was used. The R-OBVQ is a standardized multiple choice questionnaire designed to measure five aspects of bullying problems in schools. The items refer to: prevalence, forms, locations, duration and reporting, feeling and attitudes regarding bullying at school. The bullying questionnaire is normally introduced with a standard definition describing bullying. The key question in this aspect was how often have you been bullied at the school in the past months. The response options were Never ("I have not been bullied at school in the past couple of months"), 1—2 times, 3—4 times, and about once or more times per week. The reported psychometric properties

of the R-OBVQ were satisfactory (Olweus, 1996). Since some of the determinations of bullying involvement status depended on one or two items, it was deemed not suitable to conduct any reliability analysis of the R-OBVQ in this study. However, its usefulness is borne on the strength of the numerous studies that have used the scale in South Africa and abroad.

3.6.3 Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)

The ESDS (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) includes 20 items which reflect six major dimensions of depression, namely: depressed mood, worthlessness and guilt feelings, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, psychomotor retardation, loss of appetite and sleep disturbance. Response categories indicate the frequency of occurrence of each item, and are scored on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (rarely or none of the time) to 3 (most or all of the time). Total scores can range from 0 to 60, where higher total scores indicate more depressive symptoms. The scale has been translated into different languages (e.g., Cheung, & Bagley, 1998; Noh, Avison, & Kasper, 1992), and validated overseas and on the African continent (Natamba et al., 2014; Radloff, 1991). A short-form CES-D 10 (Andresen, Carter, Malmgren, & Patrick, 1994) was validated for adolescent learners with a mean age of 16.20 years, in Nova Scotia, Canada (SD = 1.10; Bradley, Bagnell, & Brannen, 2010), and was also successfully used in South Africa and Kenya (Hamad, Fernald, Karlan, & Zinman, 2008; Othieno, Okoth, Peltzer, Pengpid, & Malla, 2015). The CES-D has been shown to be a valid and reliable measure for assessing the number, types, and duration of depressive symptoms across racial, gender and age categories (Andresen et al., 1994; Knight, Williams, McGee & Olaman, 1997), and was also considered suitable for evaluating depression among adolescents (Chabrol, Montovany, Chouicha, & DuConge, 2001; Radloff, 1991). A score of 16 or higher (for CES-D 10 cut-off is ≥ 10) has been used in overseas and South African research and clinical work as the cut-off score for probable depression (Hamad et al., 2008; Radloff, 1977). Reliability in this study was $\alpha = 0.738$. The issue of the CES-D's factor structure is far from settled, with numerous indications that it may actually consist of more than one factor (Bradley et al, 2010; Chabrol et al., 2001; Dick, Beals, Keane, & Manson, 1994; Edman,

Danko, Andrade, McArdle, Foster, & Glipa, 1999). For that reason only the total score was used for analysis in this study.

3.6.4 Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21)

The DASS-21 was designed to measure emotional distress in three sub-categories, namely, depression, anxiety and stress (“tension/stress”) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The third component of stress actually refers to chronic nonspecific arousal (cf. Crawford & Henry, 2003). Participants were asked to rate how each statement applied to them over the past week. The response scale was a four-step scale ranging from 0 (“Did not apply to me at all”) to 3 (“Applied to me very much or mostly”). Thus, the higher the score the more severe the emotional distress was. The DASS-21 has been validated in a number of racial or ethnic groups (Crawford et al., 2009; Daza, Novy, Stanley, & Averill, 2002; Norton, 2007). Szabó (2010) utilized a sample of learners with a mean age of 13.62 years ($SD = 1.01$) to validate the factor structure of the instrument. The overall findings of the studies showed that the factor structure of the instrument was reproducible, and that it was psychometrically sound with good internal consistency reliability and (construct, discriminant and convergent) validity. Concerns were nevertheless raised by Szabó (2010) regarding the meaningfulness and/or comprehensibility of some phrases used in the stress subscale of the DASS-21. In this study the reliability was as follows: $\alpha = 0.709$, 0.709 and 0.738 for the Depression, Anxiety and Stress subscales, and $\alpha = 0.882$ for the DASS-21 full-scale.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the findings of the study, providing the rates of bullying as reported by participants. The rates are provided for each of the demographic variables. The chapter also covers consequences of bullying involvement, measured mainly as depression and anxiety. Although the R-OBVQ (Olweus, 1994, 1996) was administered in full, only data pertaining to the hypotheses of this study are analysed and interpreted.

4.2 Plan of analysis

Data were captured and analysed using the statistical software called the International Business Management Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Version 23 (IBM SPSS 23; IBM Corporation, 2015). Demographic information was provided using frequency tallies. Thereafter, rates of occurrence of bullying involvement were determined. They were contrasted by sex, age group, grade level and school. The learners were not contrasted by the ethnicity variable since there was only one dominant ethnic group and the remainder constituted less than 3% of the total sample. Finally, a GLM-based analysis of variance (GLM-ANOVA) was conducted, modelled as a 2 × 3 (gender × bullying type) factorial design. For all the analyses, the dependent variable was each of the psychological distress variables, namely, DASS-21's stress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) total score, Depression, Anxiety and Stress subscales, which are the subscales of the DASS-21, and the ESDS (Radloff, 1977)

4.3 Description of the sample

The first aspect considered for analysis was the description of the sample. Table 1 indicates that the sample was predominantly (98%) Black and there were more (56%) female learners in it. The majority (49%) of the learners were

aged 14—15 years and 12% were either 18 years old or older than that. Most of the learners had at least 1 (37%) or 2-3 (34%) friends in their respective classes. Interestingly, 21% said they had no friends at all in their classes. Fifty nine percent of the participating learners had been in their particular school for a period of 2-3 years.

Table 1:
Demographic details of the sample

<i>Gender</i>					
	Female	Male			
	371 (55.5%)	293 (44.5%)			
<i>Age group:</i>					
	12—13 yrs.	14—15 yrs.	16—17 yrs.	≥18 yrs.	
	31 (4.7%)	329 (49.4%)	227 (34.1%)	79 (11.9%)	
<i>Grade level:</i>					
	8	9	10		
	179 (29.2%)	220 (33.0%)	251 (37.7%)		
<i>Ethnicity:</i>					
	White	Asian	Indian	Black	
	2 (0.3%)	1 (0.1%)	8 (1.2%)	654 (97.6%)	
<i>Family type:</i>					
	Biological parents	Single mother	Single father	Blended	Grandparent-led
	216 (33.3%)	110 (17.0%)	24 (3.7%)	81 (12.5%)	174 (26.9%)
<i>Friends in class:</i>					
	None	1 good friend	2/3 friends	4/5 friends	≥6 good friends
	139 (20.7%)	250 (37.3%)	225 (33.6%)	22 (3.3%)	32 (4.8%)

Number of years in the school

1 year	2-3 years	4-5 years	≥6 years
172 (26.3%)	387 (59.3%)	79 (12.1%)	15 (2.3%)

Note: Percentages across rows do not always add up to 100% due to rounding error.

4.4 Prevalence rates of bullying according to gender, age range, and grade level

4.4.1 Gender contrast

Table 2a presents the prevalence rates of bullying-related behaviours, and the reports of bullying are disaggregated by the learners' gender. According to Table 2a, there was a clear gender effect as far bullying involvement was concerned. Bullying occurred by gender for the categories of involved in bullying and the bullied-bully ($p < 0.05$), but the gender effect was not evident for the bullied category ($p > 0.05$). A large proportion of male learners (21%) were involved in bullying, compared to female learners. There were also more males who were bullied-bullies ('bully-victims'), relative to females who fell in this category.

Table 2a**Prevalence rates of bullying by gender:**

	Females	Males	χ^2	df.	<i>p-value</i>
<i>Bullied</i>					
No:	270 (73.6%)	224 (75.7%)	0.383	1	0.591
Yes:	97 (26.4%)	72 (24.3%)			
<i>Involved in Bullying:</i>					
No:	337 (92.3%)	234 (79.1%)	24.488	1	0.001
Yes:	28 (7.7%)	62 (20.9%)			
<i>Bullied-bully:</i>					
No:	357 (97.0%)	267 (89.6%)	15.316	1	0.001
Yes:	11 (3.0%)	31 (10.4%)			

4.4.2 Age range contrast

According to table 2b, the youngest and the oldest age groups registered the largest proportions of bullied students, with 36% of the over 18 year olds saying that they have been bullied. Similarly, the same two age groups recorded the largest proportions of bullied-bullies, with the oldest age group saying they were bullied-bullies. When it comes to bullying involvement, again it was the youngest and the oldest age groups that reported to be bullies, but this time it was the youngest age group (39%) that said they bullied another learner.

Table 2b**Prevalence rates of bullying by age group:**

	12-13 years	14-15 years	16-17 years	≥18 years	χ^2	df.	<i>p-value</i>
<i>Bullied</i>							
No:	25 (80.6%)	290 (89.5%)	206 (91.2%)	49 (63.6%)	42.398	3	0.001
Yes:	6 (19.4%)	34 (10.5%)	20 (8.8%)	28 (36.4%)			
<i>Involved in Bullying:</i>							
No:	19 (61.3%)	238 (73.5%)	181 (80.1%)	54 (61.3%)	8.328	3	0.040
Yes:	12 (38.7%)	86 (26.5%)	45 (19.9%)	25 (31.6%)			
<i>Bullied-bully:</i>							
No:	28 (90.3%)	310 (94.8%)	220 (96.9%)	65 (83.3%)	20.168	3	0.001
Yes:	3 (9.7%)	17 (5.2%)	7 (3.1%)	13 (16.7%)			

Note: Row totals for variables do not equal 100% due rounding error.

4.4.3 **Grade level contrast**

According to Table 2c, the largest proportion of learners who reported that they have been bullied came from the grade 8 group (18%), followed by the grade 10 learners (14%). When it comes to involvement in bullying, it appears that the behaviour gradually decreased as grade levels became higher. In other words, the largest proportion of those learners who said they were bullies themselves came from the grade 8 group (33%) and the proportions became less and less across the higher grades. The pattern of occurrence of bullied-bullies was different. The proportions of the behaviour were almost equal for grades 8 and 10 levels (8% each).

Table 2c:
Prevalence rates of bullying by grade level

	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	χ^2	df.	<i>p</i>-value
<i>Bullied</i>						
No:	156 (81.7%)	196 (90.8%)	215 (86.3%)	7.293	2	0.026
Yes:	35 (18.3%)	20 (9.2%)	34 (13.7%)			
<i>Involved in Bullying:</i>						
No:	128 (66.7%)	165 (75.7%)	198 (79.2%)	9.241	2	0.010
Yes:	64 (33.3%)	53 (24.3%)	52 (20.8%)			
<i>Bullied-bully:</i>						
No:	178 (92.2%)	213 (96.8%)	231 (92.4%)	5.121	2	0.077
Yes:	15 (7.8%)	7 (3.2%)	19 (7.6%)			

4.4.4 School level contrast

Schools were also contrasted on their rates of occurrence of bullying. The school with the highest proportion of students who have been bullied was Motlalaohle High (41%), followed by Makgato High (34%). The school with the lowest proportion of bullied learners was Rasema High (6%), followed by Tidima (13%). The school with the highest proportion of students who are involved in bullying other learners is Makgato High (36%), followed by Mamafa High (24%). The schools with the lowest proportion of bullying learners were Fedile High (1%), Letheba High (2%), Kharahara High (2%) and Rasema High (3%). As for the bully-bullied category, Makgato High had the highest proportion of learners (18%) who reported that they were victims of bullying while they themselves were bullies. The next highest proportion of bullied-bullies was recorded at Motlalaohle High (14%). The lowest proportion of bullied-bullies were recorded in Rasema, where no student belonged to this category, followed by Fedile High (1%).

Table 2d:

Prevalence rates of bullying by school

	Makgato	Letheba	Brendans	Kgarahara	Rasema	Tidima	Motlalaohle	Fedile	Rampo	Mamafa
Bullied	$\chi^2 = 65.537$ df. = 9 p-value = 0.001									
No	35 (66.0%)	56 (84.8%)	38 (70.4%)	35 (74.5%)	31 (93.9%)	77 (87.5%)	79 (59.0%)	68 (73.9%)	45 (75.0%)	30 (81.1%)
Yes	18 (34.0%)	10 (15.2%)	16 (29.6%)	12 (25.5%)	2 (6.1%)	11 (12.5%)	55 (41.0%)	24 (26.1%)	15 (25.0%)	7 (18.9%)
Involved in bullying	$\chi^2 = 38.403$ df. = 9 p-value = 0.001									
No	34 (64.2%)	65 (98.5%)	45 (84.9%)	46 (97.9%)	31 (96.9%)	78 (89.7%)	105 (78.4%)	93 (98.9%)	47 (79.7%)	28 (75.7%)
Yes	19 (35.8%)	1 (1.5%)	8 (15.1%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (3.1%)	9 (10.3%)	29 (21.6%)	1 (1.1%)	12 (20.3%)	9 (24.3%)
Bullied-bully	$\chi^2 = 41.986$ df. = 9 p-value = 0.001									
No	43 (81.1%)	65 (98.5%)	51 (96.2%)	46 (97.9%)	33 (100.0%)	86 (97.7%)	116 (85.9%)	94 (98.9%)	57 (95.0%)	34 (91.9%)
Yes	10 (18.9%)	1 (1.5%)	2 (3.8%)	1 (2.1%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.3%)	19 (14.1%)	1 (1.1%)	3 (5.0%)	3 (8.1%)

4.5 Mean differences of bullying styles on psychological wellbeing

The following tables are results of GLM ANOVA conducted to investigate the mean differences of psychological wellbeing between the different types of bullying involvement. The results consistently show that there is no main effect of gender and no gender and bullying type interaction effect ($ps > 0.05$). However, there was a bullying type main effect on all the analyses ($ps < 0.001$; see Tables 3a—e). Although the p-values of the bullying types' impact on each of the well-being measures was the same for all analyses, the effect sizes differed, ranging from 6% for the DASS-21 Stress scale to 12% for the Epidemiological Studies of Depression Scale. A series of ANOVA analyses were conducted to investigate the exact nature of the differences between the bullying types as regards psychological wellbeing (see table 4). In almost all instances, the students who were not at all involved in bullying scored lower on all the wellbeing scales, compared to those who were bullied, bullying others, and those who were both bullying perpetrators and victims, and the differences were statistically significant ($ps < 0.001$). On the other hand, the scores of learners who were bullied, bullying others, and those who were both bullying perpetrators and victims were not statistically different from each other ($ps > 0.05$).

Table 3a:**Two-way analysis of variance test results of DASS-21 Depression with bullying involvement status**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	6.900	1	6.900	.866	.353	.001
Bullying Type	409.649	3	136.550	17.133	.000	.074
Gender * Bullying Type	6.107	3	2.036	.255	.857	.001
Error	5124.789	643	7.970			
Corrected Total	5633.321	650				

Note: R Squared = .090 (Adjusted R Squared = .080)

Table 3b:**Two-way analysis of variance test results of DASS-21 Anxiety with bullying involvement status**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	2.426	1	2.426	.302	.583	.000
Bullying Type	505.626	3	168.542	20.995	.000	.089
Gender * Bullying Type	9.805	3	3.268	.407	.748	.002
Error	5161.746	643	8.028			
Corrected Total	5777.118	650				

Note: R Squared = .107 (Adjusted R Squared = .097)

Table 3c:**Two-way analysis of variance test results of DASS-21 Stress with bullying involvement status**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	3.710	1	3.710	.414	.520	.001
Bullying Type	335.537	3	111.846	12.474	.000	.055
Gender * Bullying Type	4.570	3	1.523	.170	.917	.001
Error	5765.140	643	8.966			
Corrected Total	6176.187	650				

Note: R Squared = .067 (Adjusted R Squared = .056)

Table 3d:**Two-way analysis of variance test results of DASS-21 with bullying involvement status**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	.735	1	.735	.013	.911	.000
Bullying Type	3705.827	3	1235.276	21.050	.000	.089
Gender * Bullying Type	44.676	3	14.892	.254	.859	.001
Error	37732.462	643	58.682			
Corrected Total	42194.547	650				

Note: R Squared = .106 (Adjusted R Squared = .096)

Table 3e:

Two-way analysis of variance test results of Epidemiological Studies of Depression Scale with bullying involvement status

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	35.136	1	35.136	.768	.381	.001
Bullying Type	4204.332	3	1401.444	30.630	.000	.124
Gender * Bullying Type	283.072	3	94.357	2.062	.104	.009
Error	29602.631	647	45.754			
Corrected Total	34100.931	654				

Note: R Squared = .132 (Adjusted R Squared = .123)

Table 4:**Means and standard deviations of psychological distress for each of the bullying involvement types**

Psychological distress	Bullying type				<i>p</i> -value
	<i>Not involved</i>	<i>Bully</i>	<i>Bullied</i>	<i>Bully-Bullied</i>	
	$\bar{X}(SD)$	$\bar{X}(SD)$	$\bar{X}(SD)$	$\bar{X}(SD)$	
DASS-21 Depression	4.856 (2.749) ^a	6.696 (3.231) ^b	6.484 (2.912) ^b	7.286 (2.944) ^b	0.001
DASS-21 Anxiety	4.600 (2.751) ^a	6.196 (3.351) ^b	6.694 (2.897) ^b	7.000 (2.802) ^b	0.001
DASS-21 Stress	5.219 (2.877) ^a	6.391 (3.969) ^b	6.952 (3.037) ^b	7.048 (2.767) ^{b'}	0.001
DASS-21	14.695 (7.488) ^a	19.283 (9.172) ^b	20.129 (7.846) ^b	21.333 (6.774) ^b	0.001
ESDS	20.560 (6.642) ^a	26.146 (8.688) ^b	25.392 (6.499) ^b	27.171 (6.500) ^b	0.001

Note: Means in the same row sharing the same superscript are not statistically different from each other, and those with different subscripts differ statistically.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings presented in chapter four in greater details and integrate these where applicable with the literature discussed in chapter two. Discussions will be based on the main aim and objectives of the study; the psychological consequences of school bullying. The study was correlational in nature and established the significant effect of bullying on gender and psychological distress. Based on the findings of the study, concluding remarks as well as limitations and recommendations will be outlined in this chapter.

5.2 The prevalence rates of bullying involvement based on the demographic variables of sex, age group, grade level and school

The observed large variation in the rates of occurrence of bullying involvement emanates from the different ways that bullying has been measured, including the measurement scales used (also see Sittichai, & Smith, 2015; Solberg & Olweus, 2003). For instance, studies that have used the OBVQ or its revised version (R-OBVQ) (Olweus, 1994, 1996) use a five-point response scale, and determine prevalence on the selection of the “2 or 3 times a month” response option as recommended by Solberg and Olweus (2004). However, it is not uncommon for studies to use a bipolar “Yes or No” scale (Liang et al., 2007; Townsend et al., 2008). Blake and Louw (2010) used a five-point scale, but the item used comprised of what they called an ‘all inclusive’ content, asking about the frequency of being a bully, being bullied or being a bullied-bully in the same item. Besides measurement scales, studies also differ in terms of the duration covered. In the third wave of a nationally representative, wide-ranging study, Reddy et al. (2013) reported experiences of bullying in the past month. On the other hand, Liang et al. (2007) expected their respondents to report bullying experiences over a period of 12 months, which in their own admission may have

inflated rates of occurrence considering the relatively longer duration covered. It is best to keep in mind the variation of items used to collect bullying involvement data.

In this study, the Solberg and Olweus (2004) recommendation was adopted in the determination of prevalence rates of bullying involvement. Bullying involvement was measured separately for each of the categories, namely being a bully, being bullied and being a bullied-bully. A separate item asks the respondents to specify the duration of the bullying. Nevertheless, bullying involvement is based on the respondent's endorsement of the "2 or 3 times a month" response option. Furthermore, the rates of bullying involvement prevalence were calculated for the learners' gender, age group, grade level and school.

In the Sekgosese West Circuit, Capricorn District, the rates of involvement in bullying were high for males. Male learners were likely to be bullies and bullied-bullies more than their female counterparts. The results were in line with studies such as Hoertel, Le Strat, Lavaud and Limosin (2012) and Seixas et al. (2013), which investigated gender directly (see also Houbre, Tarquinio, & Thuillier, 2006; Huang, Hong, & Espelage, 2013; Kepenekci, & Şakir, 2006; Wang et al., 2009). Yet there was no sex difference in the present study regarding the rates of being bullied, same as in studies such as Bauman (2008) and Wilson et al. (2010), but contrary to Craig et al. (2009) and Liang et al. (2007) who found differences in favour of male learners across all bullying involvement categories. Rivers, Poteat, Noret and Ashurst (2009) used an even more elaborate system of categorizing the learners, and found a slight sex difference of witnessing bullying, with female learners witnessing more bullying than male learners. The results suggest that the issue of sex differences regarding bullying involvement is not yet resolved.

Regarding bullying involvement and age, the results of the present study somewhat add to and modify the finding that both bullying others and being bullied are more common among younger learners (Bauman, 2008; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1994; Yen, 2010). Seixas et al. (2013) found that being

bullied and bullying others increased from lower to higher grades (Grades 7—9), but the trend was opposite for being a bullied-bully. Grade in Seixas et al. represents age, in that younger grade will have younger children compared to a higher. A unique trend about the results of the present study is that not only the youngest age group, but also the oldest, had the highest proportions of bullies, victims of bullying and bullied-bullies. Bullying of older students could be related to some characteristics of the students. The age of the students may have to do with poor academic performance and/or deficiencies in cognitive functioning. There are not many professionals to evaluate the cognitive status of poor performing learners, and very few special schools to place those identified, with the consequence that the learners may be left in normal schools for one reason or another. In general, the findings of the present study are contrary to studies such as Houbre et al. (2006) and Estévez et al. (2009), which found no effect of age in being involved in bullying.

Analysis of bullying involvement at the level of school grade level showed that proportions of bullying behaviour, being bullied and being a bullied-bully were almost always higher at the lowest grade (grade 8), dropped at the next grade only to increase again in grade 10, although the proportions did not in most cases quite return to the levels observed for grade 8. The pattern of falling rates of bullying involvement is contrary to what Houbre et al. (2006) found, since the latter found no grade level effect in their study.

Additional analysis was conducted at the level of the school, in order to add perspective to the results. There is no clear-cut pattern emerging from the analyses. Nevertheless, it is clear that rates of occurrence of being a bullied learner, a bully and being a bullied-bully varies across the schools of the Sekgosesse West Circuit, Capricorn District. Aspects such as the school's climate, insecurity, school delinquency, permissiveness for bullying, and even the location of the school, tend to add to factors supporting bullying behaviour (Carrera, DePalma & Lameiras, 2011; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Mlisa et al., 2008). It comes as no surprise when bullying behaviour varies so widely between the schools.

5.3 **The association between different types of bullying and psychological distress**

The hypothesized relationship between involvement in bullying and the symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression were investigated. The present study found that learners who were not involved in any type of bullying scored low on all measures of psychological distress, inclusive of depression and anxiety. However, whilst the psychological distress mean scores of the three categories of bullying involvement, namely, bullied, bully and bullied-bully differed from the scores of learners who were not at all involved in bullying, they nevertheless did not differ statistically from each other. The current results are largely in agreement with the general findings in the literature (Craig, 1998; Fleming & Jacobsen, 2009; Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2004; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Kaltiala-Heino & Fröjd, 2011).

Nevertheless, a qualification of the findings must be made. Although the results are similar to other studies by differentiating the non-involved learners from those who are involved in some way (bully, bullied, bullied-bully), they differ by finding no statistically significant differences between the bullying involved learners. Only a few studies have similar results (e.g., Seixas et al., 2013).

A number of studies have suggested that although there are communalities between the profiles of bullying types, a number of characteristics set them apart from each other and from those students who not involved in bullying (Dake et al., 2003; Graham & Bellmore, 2006, 2007, Graham & Bellmore, 2006; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003). One of the ways they differ is in the intensity (strongest correlations) and/or likelihood of experiencing any of the internalizing behaviours (Dake et al., 2003; Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012). For instance, in some studies bullies resemble the non-involved learners with their lack of depression, when on the other hand the bullied and the bullied-bullies have high levels of depression (Graham & Bellmore, 2007; also see Kaltiala-Heino & Fröjd, 2011). Still, the results of the present study are not in agreement with such a conclusion. They suggest that at least in the Sekgosese West Circuit, Capricorn

District the psychological effects are the same for the three types of bullying involvement. At this point in time it is not easy to explain with certainty the reasons why the results are the way they are. One can only speculate that the measures used are partly responsible, since they are not refined enough to capture the different aspects of psychological distress. It can even be argued that a much more fine-grained measure of bullying involvement would most likely produce different results (see Yen et al., 2013).

5.4 **Limitations of the study**

The first limitation of the study is that the cross-sectional nature of the study precludes any determinations of causality. For instance, it is not possible to know whether psychological distress was a consequence or actually a precursor to bullying involvement behaviour. For instance, while depression and anxiety are likely consequences of bullying involvement, Fekkes, Pijpers, Fredriks, Vogels and Verloove-Vanhorick (2006) found that children's depressed and anxious states predisposed them to being bullied. Another contribution that a longitudinal design may make, which was not possible in the current cross-sectional design, is the impact of cumulative bullying vis-a-vis incidental or time-limited bullying. There is a difference in letting learners report bullying that may have gone on for a few months, compared to bullying taking place over time; alternatively, time-delayed reactions ('dose-response' and trajectory analysis) to bullying can only be observed over an extended period of time (Lester & Cross, 2014; Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, 2004). This type of information can only be established on the basis of a longitudinal design. Also, whilst the delimitation and type of sampling used to identify and select participants for inclusion in the study were deliberate and based on a reason, the implications must be accepted. The meaning and interpretation of the findings cannot be transferred to other learner populations outside of the Sekgosese West Circuit, Capricorn District. If this is to be done, it must be done cautiously. As for the reliability of the information obtained, this cannot be guaranteed. The researcher motivated the students to be honest in their answers and presented conditions to facilitate it. However, in the long run, it is up to the students to answer honestly. Therefore the researcher cannot

guarantee that the data collected was reliable in all instances and for all participants, and that factors such as social desirability responding or difficulty in expressing internal states was operational. Perhaps this aspect of the research should have been directly determined by including measures to detect them. Finally, the measurement of bullying used in this study, based on Olweus's framework (Olweus, 1993, 1994, 1996; Solberg & Olweus, 2004), should not be generalized. Comparisons of the findings must be done with care to take into account the diverse ways that bullying is measured.

5.5 Conclusion

This study reiterates that bullying exists in South African schools and that both perpetrators and victims experience psychological distress. Although the findings of the study are consistent with the extant bullying literature, they also make unique contributions. In this study, bullying victimisation was perpetrated by male learners but there were no sex differences of the perpetrators of bullying; it was common in the younger age groups and declined with increasing age, but the older age groups experienced bullying at rates approaching the younger age groups; for bullying involvement rates at different grades, appears that bullying perpetration and reception declines as grade levels increase, yet for simultaneous bullying perpetration and reception (bullied-bullying) the rates remain the same across the different levels; and, rather than differentiate between the different types of bullying involvement in terms of the psychological consequences, this study found that their psychological distress is similar. The implications for policy and intervention is that, at least in the Sekgosesse West Circuit, Capricorn District it must not be assumed that victims are only the youngest learners. There are older victims, whose characteristics making them vulnerable to victimisation by bullies are yet to be explored. Nevertheless, they too require protection from bullies.

5.6 Recommendations

The first recommendation is that this study needs to be replicated. It is also important that replications must also extend to other areas of the province to

establish if the results will be reproduced. Further studies must also incorporate other variables that may contribute in the relationship between bullying involvement and psychological consequences. The social environment of bullying must be explored further, including, social support available for victims, and the school climate that encourages or discourages bullying. It appears that some of the schools in the Sekgosese West Circuit, Capricorn District are able to retain low rates of bullying, while others have very high rates. It could be that the schools differ in terms of their characteristics, and researchers need to determine what the bullying enabling and discouraging elements are inside the schools. An important observation was made that victims of bullying are not only the youngest learners. Oldest learners also seem to be targeted. Studies need to target this group to find out why they too are victims of bullying.

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Appendix: Clearance certificate

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO
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Research Development and Administration

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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06 December 2012

Dr S. Mashegoane
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ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This is to confirm that the following proposal was considered for ethical clearance, and was duly approved by the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC):

TITLE: "Psychological consequences of bullying in the Secondary Schools of Capricorn District, Limpopo Province."

RESEARCHER: S.O. Setlhwana (Student No. 200015229)
School of Social Science
University of Limpopo

SUPERVISOR: Dr S. Mashegoane

CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr S Moripe

DATE CONSIDERED: 05 November 2012

TREC REFERENCE: TREC2012/2422-2474

PROF R.L. HOWARD
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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