

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON LEARNER BULLYING AT SELECTED  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MOLETJIE MOSHATE COMMUNITY

by

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the Degree of Master of Arts in Criminology has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; I declare that this is my work that I have done it on my own and that all references contained here have been duly acknowledged.

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my Mother Evodia Kwena Kgopyana and my late Father Justinos Kgopyana, my siblings Monicca, Welheminah, Precious, and Thabang, and also to my husband Joseph Sebopela and my daughter Tebogo, in appreciation of their encouragements and continuous support throughout the different steps leading to the completion of this dissertation.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Bullying seems to be prevalent in most secondary schools, and teachers have a daily task of dealing with it. In South Africa, there are many issues which influence teachers' management of bullying, such as community violence and parental attitudes. Teachers' abilities to identify and respond to incidents of bullying, and their knowledge of bullying behaviour can have an impact on anti-bullying strategies.

Secondary school management as well as parents have a responsibility towards efforts to eliminate bullying in schools. Failure to reduce bullying in secondary schools would result in high failure rates and poor concentration on school work among learners. This study aimed to describe teachers' perspectives on learner bullying at Schools A and B. This study used Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory which offers a theoretical framework that helped the researcher find meaning in respect of the roles of the bully, victim and offenders.

The study followed a qualitative approach, using focus group sessions to collect data in order to explore teachers' experiences of bullying. The qualitative data were analysed by means of thematic analysis to present the collected data. The responses were recorded in the form of writing. The data was thoroughly structured into themes. Information obtained from respondents was treated with great confidentiality. Purposive and availability sampling were used to identify potential respondents who were asked to volunteer to be part of the study. The research findings specified that teachers experience and observe a wide variety of bullying behaviour which takes place at different sites, both inside and outside the school grounds. Moreover, the teachers conveyed numerous factors which they experienced as pertaining to bullying and emphasised the perceived effects. In addition to this, the participants shared knowledge about their teaching practices and recommended a few approaches on how to deal with bullying more effectively in their schools.

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## **CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The researcher studied teachers' perspectives of learner-on-learner bullying at two schools in the Moletjie Moshate community. According to Suckling and Temple (2002:7), bullying behaviour amongst learners in schools is a serious problem embedded in the subculture of the specific schools where bullying takes place. The problem is compounded by the fact that, in some instances, victims of bullying fail to report this matter to teachers or school principals (Suckling & Temple, 2002:7). Nevertheless, in order for bullying to be addressed effectively; it is necessary to clearly establish what bullying is and how it affects both the bullies and victims.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION**

Teachers play a fundamental role in the management and prevention of bullying taking place in schools, and are in turn involved in implementing anti-bullying interventions (Kochenderfer-Laad & Pelletie, 2008:82). Bullying is a worldwide phenomenon that has the potential of impacting on children; both physically and psychologically. It sometimes causes children to leave school and permanently destroy both the psyche and education of the child (Laas & Boezaart, 2014:2679), hence bullying is a problem that can affect the ability of the victims to progress academically; socially and emotionally (Sullivan, 2004:18). This study investigated the issue of bullying from the perspective of teachers of two secondary schools in Moletjie-Moshate, Limpopo Province. There seems to have been an increase in bullying taking place during the last ten years at both of these schools. For example, in 2009, there was an incident (while the researcher was a learner at School A where a group of learners from School A bullied others from School B, and one learner from School A was stabbed and died. Another incident occurred in 2010, when learners from School A, during breaks, were using substances in the toilets, and an argument broke out which resulted in some learners being assaulted. Studying this phenomenon is essential to create an understanding of bullying and factors associated with it. It is an essential step in developing solutions to address the problem.

As a former learner from School B, the researcher noticed that many Grade 8 and 9 learners were bullied by older learners. This prompted the researcher to investigate teachers' perspectives on learner bullying as the researcher was concerned that learners who physically attack others could cause damage and psychological problems to the victims. Bullying often results in learning obstacles, absenteeism, high failure rates of dropping out of school (Vorster, 2002:29). In addition, community conditions and attitudes where violence is common and children are exposed to aggressive behaviour can also promote bullying. This can result in bullying behaviour that is carried into the school and onto the playground by learners.

### **1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Dake, Price and Telljohann (2003:175) state that bullying is a negative phenomenon in schools, and both bullies and victims are at risk of being affected negatively by this. Bullying is a problem that affects many learners at Moletjie Moshate secondary schools. Dake, Price and Telljohann (2003:175) found that, compared to non-bullies; bullies were more likely to turn out to be involved in self-destructive behaviour such as tobacco and alcohol abuse. Some learners in the two schools attend school while under the influence of alcohol and drugs which teachers were finding them in their bags, because they were using them during breaks which results in bullying taking place. The failure to reduce the frequency of bullying is largely due to the lack of learners not following the school policy that is often only implemented in part by school managers (Joubert, 2008:70).

According to Prinsloo (2005:457), bullying is a problem and is likely to occur wherever children are together. As mentioned above, it can cause mental, physical or emotional suffering to the learner who is bullied. Bullying in schools is a global problem which can have undesirable consequences on the overall school climate, and for the rights of learners and teachers to learn and teach in a safe environment without fear. It can cause negative lifelong social; emotional; psychological and educational damage to both offenders and for their victims (Collins, McAleavy and Adamson, 2004:55). Victims are mostly afraid to tell someone about the bullying incidences that they are experiencing due to the risk of repeat victimisation. Teachers must aim to bring bullying into the open by raising awareness of bullying and by encouraging victims to

look for assistance by speaking out. Educators should ascertain how all kinds of bullying behaviour begin, in order to stop it from happening. It would also be helpful to formulate rules to prevent bullying behaviour in schools; and to frequently communicate that it will not be accepted or tolerated (Prinsloo, 2005:457). Rules at school assist to maintain order and build a secure environment, and discipline within the school.

## **1.4 ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY**

### **1.4.1 Social Learning Theory**

This study was guided by the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura (1977: 22), which explains how behaviour is learned by learners who bully others at school. Bandura (1977:22) states that: "Behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning". Bandura argues that: "Individuals are not born with the inclination to act aggressively; they learn violent behaviour through their life experiences". These experiences include personally observing others acting aggressively or watching people being rewarded for violent acts. Most learners learn violent behaviour from other people and they end up imitating them by bullying other learners. According to Siegel (2005:114), the Social Learning Theory maintains that persons' violent tendencies are activated by factors in the environment, such as the regularity with which it is articulated; specific forms of violent behaviour; and the situation in which it is displayed.

According to Moretti and Stewart (2006:1), learners may get involved in bullying because they were exposed to violence at home. Moretti and Stewart (2006:1) state that: "*When children are exposed to parental violence and aggression, they may observe violent conflict in community life and copy behaviour and not learn other ways to solve problems*". These experiences can eventually leave children prone to bullying their peers and to later show aggression to their partners. Learners, who bully may also have observed physical and verbal violence or aggression at home. Domestic violence, common also within violent communities, may develop attitudes that violence is constructive and act aggressively towards other people, including fellow learners at school. Moretti and Stewart (2006:1) specify that: bullies are more likely to come from

families that lack warmth; and in which violence is common. For example, there are learners who live with parents who cannot resolve inter-personal conflict calmly, but use aggression. The probability is that their children might take part in bullying or other antisocial types of behaviour (Moretti & Stewart, 2006:1).

In these families, the parents may also apply inconsistent discipline. Parents may allow certain behaviour at a given moment and on another occasion it may be prohibited such inconsistent discipline leaves the child disorganised. They end up not knowing the exact way of behaving in the company of others.

## **1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.5.1 Aim of the study**

The aim of this study was to produce a phenomenological description of teachers' perspectives on learner bullying at two secondary schools in Moletjie-Moshate.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What is the frequency of bullying at these schools?
- What are the causes of bullying at these schools?
- How is gender represented in bullies and victims?
- What types of bullying are the most serious/detrimental in these schools?
- Is the prevention of bullying strategies effective at these schools?

## **1.7 METHODOLOGY**

### **1.7.1 Research design**

A qualitative design, employing a phenomenological approach, was used in this study in order to examine experiences of learner-on-learner bullying in the selected schools through descriptions provided by the participants (teachers) involved. According to Donalek (2004:172); phenomenological studies define the meaning that experiences hold for each subject. The phenomenological approach, best suited this study, as it explores the life experiences of teachers on the phenomenon being studied. Qualitative approaches are concerned with understanding human behaviour from the

perspectives of the people involved, therefore they use language to record aspects of social reality (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2012:1). The researcher also wanted to obtain a deeper understanding of the problem of bullying at these schools as a phenomenological experience from the point of view of the participants (teachers).

### **1.7.2 Population**

Two secondary schools, which will henceforth be referred to as School A and School B for ethical reasons, were selected, mainly because these schools are situated in the community where the researcher comes from, and the researcher has had personal experience of the high levels of bullying taking place in these institutions. The population in this study consisted of teachers from both schools.

### **1.7.3 Sampling**

The sample of respondents was obtained by selecting available teachers from the two schools, teaching from grade 8 to grade 12. The study used non-probability sampling to collect data. The availability sampling method has been used to select the participants. Availability sampling involves selecting a sample from the population because it is accessible.

### **1.7.4 Data collection**

Focus group interviews have been chosen to collect data. Focus groups were selected as they create an excellent environment for interaction between participants (one focus group was formed at each school). Once a question was posed, further questions were asked, depending upon the initial responses by participants, to explore the phenomenon more deeply.

### **1.7.5 Data analysis**

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the findings by coding themes from the data collected. Thematic Analysis involves a search for themes that occur as being important to the explanation of the phenomenon. The process includes the identification of themes through, "careful reading and re-reading of the data" (Braun & Clarkes, 2006:77). It is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis.

### **1.7.6 Ethical considerations**

Ethical issues are the dilemmas, concerns, and conflicts that arise over the appropriate way to conduct a research, ethics defines what is not legitimate to do, or what moral research process involves (Neuman, 2003:1). This study was conducted based on the following ethics which need to be taken into consideration when conducting a research because they will serve as standards which the researcher should comply with. According to Creswell (2009:1) the consent form, allows that participants' rights shall be protected during data collection. The researcher ensured that the participants were free of unnecessary physical and psychological harm during the interviews. The participation was voluntary and no participants were forced to participate. Confidentiality was mentioned to them and they were informed that if they did not feel comfortable with the questions during the interviews they could withdraw at any time.

### **1.7.7 Quality Criteria**

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of data in this study the researcher used Guba and Lincoln's (1981:1) three criteria, namely:

- Credibility;
- Dependability; and
- Conformability.

Credibility was reached by ensuring that the results are realistic from the standpoint of the participants. In other words, credibility is the degree to which interpretations and concepts have similar meaning to the participants and the researcher. The research procedure and the concepts were explained to participants. Dependability will be used to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. If the study is repeated, it should yield the same results. This was pursued by asking questions developed from the literature study. Dependability has been ensured through theoretical conceptualizations. Conformability have been achieved by checking similar studies in the literature review to determine whether results of the study conform or differ, where necessary explanations of non-conformity will be offered. Trustworthiness will be enriched by checking with the recordings to verify that data has been correctly and comparing data within and between groups.

## **1.8 SUMMARY**

In this chapter the research background was provided and the research problem was stated. The aim of the research study was indicated, the research questions were specified and also the research approach and design, data gathering method, data analysis techniques were summarised. These elements of the research are comprehensively dealt with in Chapter 4.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter emphasizes on aspects related with types and frequency of bullying; causes of bullying; the effects of bullying; and as well as risk factors for bullying in schools. This chapter provide also with clarification of the concepts that this study has adopted, highlights relevant work regarding school bullying, learner often education and what constitutes bullying and appropriate help-seeking strategies, as well as a clear understanding of what will happen when bullying experiences are reported, are also discussed as well as, present the conceptual framework. According to Nesor; Ovens; Van der Merwe; Morodi; Ladikos and Prinsloo, (2004:28), “...*bullying is a hostile form of behaviour that is done deliberately to other learners*”. It contains an imbalance of power, and strength that is repeated over time if there is no intervention by parents; peers or teachers. The frequency of bullying might differ from country to country and from one school to another and across gender. Both boys and girls can be the perpetrators of bullying and also at the same time can be victims (Nesor *et al*, 2004:28).

Bullying is a social phenomenon that has been around for years and is particularly common. The reason why bullying is a common occurrence, it is because parents and teachers do very little or nothing about it; even when there is clear evidence that there are learners who bully others (Bishoprelly’s High School’s Report, 2004:2). Bullying is also a major problem at the schools selected for the study. The researcher attended one of the schools and witnessed numerous incidents of bullying over the years. Bullies often waited outside the school grounds and intimidated learners and even took the bags of some learners.

#### **2.2 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

This section outlines how this study has used the terms *bullying*; *victim* and *bully*, based on research in the field. Addressing the issue of bullying, it is critical to clearly understand exactly how bullying, the victim and the bully are defined and explained by researchers.

### **2.2.1 Bullying**

According to Levinson (2002:135), bullying is an impairment of a person that might range from social isolation; exclusion; teasing to physical violence. Furthermore, Futterman (2004:27) notes: "Bullying is an action that leaves the victim feeling afraid, powerless, incompetent, and ashamed". Additionally, Rigby (2002:15) describes bullying as "repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or a group of persons". Rigby (2002:15) contends that bullying is repetitious and occurs over time. Sullivan (2004:3) agrees, stating that "...bullying is a negative act by one or more people against another person or people usually over a period of time". Swearer (2008:165) states that: "Bullying is the act of someone hurting or scaring another person on purpose and the victim has a difficult time defending himself/herself". The definition of Swearer has been adopted for this study.

### **2.2.2 Bully**

According to Krige, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart (2000:19), "The bully is an attacker with a dominant personality who needs to feel powerful and in control, and feels little empathy with victims". Haynie; Nansel; Eitel; Crump; Saylor and Simons-Morton (2001:44) stated that: "Bullies are particularly high-risk cases for having depression symptoms and poor school functioning".

### **2.2.3 Victim**

A victim of bullying is somebody who is offended or whose rights are violated in some way by someone frequently over a period of time. Krige *et al.* (2000:19), describe victims of bullying as "anxious, shy, insecure, physically smaller and/or weaker than their peers". Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann and Jugert (2006:261), on the other hand, describe victims of bullying as "passive and submissive, showing low self-worth, loneliness, a tendency to blame themselves for their difficult times and as children who find social situations difficult". Victims often lack the support of a group which can lead to a continued feeling of poor self-respect, depression, plus social problems (Nansel; Overpeck; Pilla; Ruan; Simons-Morton; & Scheidt, 2001:22; Sullivan, Cleary & Sullivan 2004:17).

In addition to the above definitions of victims, Smokowski and Kopasz (2005:104) reveal that victims may come “from families that tend to be overprotective and sheltering”. This may cause victims to become loners who are listless or unhappy (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:12). For this reason, family influences such as loving acceptance, attention and education form an important part in the child’s life, because, without these, a child may develop emotional problems and have a poor attitude towards schoolwork. This study acknowledges all these points and uses the term “victim”, to indicate a target of bullying at school by a more powerful person or group (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:12). The definition of Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann and Jugert (2006:261) has been deemed the most appropriate for this study as it clearly indicates the traits that can make them to be exploited by bullies.

### **2.3 TYPES OF BULLYING**

There are different ways in which learners can intimidate other learners. De Wet (2005:707) and Smit (2003:27) have recognized different forms of bullying. Bullying can be physical, for example when a learner is kicked, pushed or beaten. It can also be verbal, such as when a learner or learners spread malicious gossip about another learner with the intent to make them suffer emotionally. Children, for example, who achieve poorly, having little standards in terms of educational achievement; and changing schools frequently are more likely to take part in bullying behaviour (Nansel *et al.*, 2001:22).

Bullying can also entail of unintended actions such as stealing or damaging other learners’ belongings, or hurting them emotionally. Indirect bullying, as mentioned by Marais and Meier (2010:114), can take the form of name-calling; teasing; taunting; mocking; as well as intimidating other learners. They explain that racial bullying is insulting the victim’s culture or making violent gestures, while sexual bullying includes passing unsuitable notes, jokes, pictures, taunts, or starting rumours of a sexual nature or inappropriate physical touching.

Sullivan (2000:26) maintains that a bully’s behaviour is influenced by his/her family or life events such as, the need to obtain power, anti-social peer pressure, the social climate of the school or community, personality characteristics, or a combination of these and other factors. The household is commonly recognised “... as making the

deepest and most continuing influence to the way children think; feel and behave, inside their households as well as in the outside environment' (Rigby, 2002:27). According to Sullivan (2000:26), bullying can be passed on from generation to generation, through learned behaviour and role-modelling. Males who are bullies and are forceful at school are likely to have sons who will repeat this behaviour. Futterman (2004:27) states that "Bullying is an action that leaves the victim feeling afraid, powerless, incompetent, and ashamed." Naser *et al*, (2004:28), has identified the following common types of bullying that occur and that is supported by other researchers:

### **2.3.1 Physical bullying**

According to Harris and Hathorn (2006:51)

Physical bullying is a direct form of bullying which includes beating, tripping other individuals on purpose, kicking, punching, damaging property, extortion or blackmail, taking other individuals' belongings or stealing school property, physical assault, corporal punishment, as well as threats of physical violence.

Physical bullying usually occurs when one individual physically attacks another on purpose' with the intention of harassing, intimidating or humiliating them.

### **2.3.2 Verbal bullying**

According to Christine (2009:21) verbal bullying includes such actions as hurtful name-calling; persistent teasing; gossiping and racist comments. Verbal bullying could be direct or indirect and is repeatedly referred to as emotional or psychological bullying. Direct verbal bullying is done face to face. Usually it includes name-calling; insults; put-downs; harassment and intentionally ignoring an individual. Indirect verbal bullying is done behind the victim's back and includes acts such as gossiping which may result in lowered self-esteem and influence the opinion of others about the victim (Christine, 2009:21). Sullivan (2000:26) states that:

Verbal bullying includes abusive phone calls, extorting money or material possessions, extortion or threats of violence, name calling, racist remarks,

sexually suggestive or abusive language, spiteful teasing and spreading false or hateful rumours.

### **2.3.3 Cyber-bullying**

Cyber-bullying can be described as the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail; cellular phone and pager messages; instant messaging; insulting personal websites and online personal polling websites to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others (Besley, 2009:71). Digital bullying is also described as every type of bullying that is carried out by an electronic medium, such as: Text message bullying; picture / video clip bullying; phone call bullying; e-mail bullying; chat-room bullying; bullying through instant messaging and bullying by means of websites where the bully may post personal information about the victim (Norfolk County Council, 2007:1). This basically sums up what authors describe as cyber-bullying, and simply boils down to bullying via the internet or cellular phones.

The researcher believes that cellular phones, in particular, because of common availability, are an influential means with which to bully others. One can send frightening text messages, take awkward pictures of them and post them directly on the internet. Cyber-bullying can also be regarded as repetitive when a message, photograph or video-clip is taken once and sent to more than one individual who in turn forward this to other people. Every time someone accesses this site or material, it can be viewed as repetition (Juvonen & Gross, 2008:496). It can be contended that individuals who get involve in cyber-bullying can be seen as unknown predators that hide behind their mobile phones or computer screens (Colorosa, 2008:208). According to Colorosa (2008:210), "The ability to inflict pain anonymously, and with such a wide audience to reinforce the humiliation, often encourages the individual who engages in cyber-bullying to inflict far greater damage to the target than would have been imaginable in a face-to-face encounter".

### **2.3.4 Social or relational bullying**

Social or relational bullying takes place when the victim is intentionally excluded from group activities and socialisation. Lee (2004:68) expresses this type of bullying as one which includes deliberate exclusion from a social group or intimidation from within a

social group. It occurs when the victim is deliberately excluded from group activities (Pauw, 2007:96) or when a particular individual is picked-on by other members of the group. Oyaziwo (2008:56) adds that this type of bullying is aimed at manipulating relationships and includes indirect behaviours such as gossiping and spreading rumours and direct behaviours such as making racial insults or ignoring the victim. Other examples of social bullying include aggressive stares; rolling of eyes; sighs; frowns; sneers; snickers; hostile body language; shaking fists and looks or glances that contain subtle meanings of a nasty nature (Anderson, 2007:10).

### **2.3.5 Emotional bullying**

Emotional bullying occurs when a learner's properties are demolished or deliberately smashed. This type of bullying can take several forms; direct and easily observable and subtle and not easily identifiable for those not involved. Neser, Ovens, Van der Merwe, and Morodi (2003:128) state that:

Emotional bullying includes engaging in extortion, humiliating, blackmailing, terrorising, rating of personal characteristics such as race, disability or ethnicity, defaming, manipulating friendships and peer pressure.

For example, if a learner is being called names such as you are "ugly like a baboon"; this will hurt the emotions of the targeted victim. The possibility will be that the victim will cooperate out of fear of being humiliated. Seals and Young (2003:1) indicate that, the most common form of bullying is verbal bullying, followed by physical bullying. The fact that there is no uniform explanation on how emotional bullying can be separated from other forms makes it difficult to isolate. Verbal, as well as physical bullying may cause emotional damage as well.

### **2.3.6 Sexual bullying**

According to De Wet, Jacobs and Palm-Forster (2008:98), sexual bullying can take place in the form of verbal, physical or relational bullying. It includes undesirable sexual jokes; sexual remarks; taunts about sexual body parts; sexual gestures; advances; and the display of sexual material. Teasing regarding someone's sexual orientation or starting rumours about their sexual activities, as well as the passing of

unwanted notes or pictures about sex is also seen as forms of sexual bullying (Wilson 2008:2). It may involve posting explicit materials about a victim on the internet.

## **2.4 CAUSES OF BULLYING**

Burton (2008:17) mentioned that: “Schools are generally seen as mechanisms to develop and reinforce positive citizens with pro-social attitudes and as sites where individuals are prepared for the role they are to play in society at large”. The issue of children spending half of their day at school, schools function as the second most significant socialising mechanism after the home. From a holistic perspective, Burton (2008:17) contends that:

Schools are important environments in which children not only gain knowledge, but also learn about themselves, how to behave as well as how to interact with other children. In such a way, children who are exposed to violence in this context will tend to model this behaviour.

Schools therefore have the potential (especially within peer groups) of being a negative or positive strengthening agent (Burton, 2008:17).

According to Burton (2007:12) there is no single cause of violence, but rather, “A series of interrelated factors which impact on young people in different ways, one of which will be in the perpetrating of violent acts against other young people and society in general”. In other words, it is tremendously difficult, or terrible, to pinpoint one primary reason for the high rates of violence. Bullying has been attributed to several causes at school namely the use of drugs, and smoking, unequal treatment by teachers, jealousy, poverty, broken homes, and age as the greatest contributor to older learners bullying the younger ones.

Learners may display antisocial behaviour and emotional problems for different reasons and these can be caused by factors that are either inherent or extrinsic (Prinsloo 2005:450). Prinsloo (2005:450) states that: “The home environment in South Africa fails to a large extent to pay attention to children and parents who neglect their responsibility to teach their children norms and values and to serve as role models.” She further suggests that learners who are rejected at home are more likely to show

unacceptable behaviour than learners who receive love and encouragement. According to Weeks (2001:167), bullying behaviour often first appears within the home environment wherever the earliest signs that could be observed, are instances of dishonesty, disobedience towards parents and verbal or physical aggressiveness. Hence, learners need love acceptance, attention, and the necessary education for them to refrain from bullying behaviour. Prinsloo (2005:452) asserts that teachers should have the necessary knowledge and abilities to observe and assess bullying behaviour and the skills to plan suitable strategies to prevent misbehaviour.

According to Weeks (2005:40), the behaviour that a child displays, is largely determined by the home environment and its surroundings. For example, learners who grow up in an environment where they are exposed to bullying behaviour may act violently in order to deal with differences or conflicts. Family factors such as a harsh parenting style, family conflicts and abuse, have all been identified as causes of bullying among school goers (Mestry & Khumalo 2012:97; Protogerou & Flisher 2012:1).

This part of the report is going to attempt to unpack the individual, peer relationship and community factors which individually and collectively laid the foundation for bullying as well as perpetuating and increasing the prevalence of school-based violence in South Africa. The following factors are going to be explored:

- i. Individual factors;
- ii. Peer relationship factors;
- iii. Community factors;

#### **2.4.1 Individual factors**

According to Ward (2007:17), "Violent behaviour in young people results from a complex interaction of risk and protective factors in different environments and over time, which influence how children learn behaviours". Based on this dispute, the greater the risk factors a child are exposed to; the higher the chance that the child will take part in aggressive and violent behaviour. This theory is based on the foundation that individuals obtain information from a variety of sources, (for example exposure to others' behaviours; discipline from parents and other people in authority); which form

mental representations of behaviours; how they work as well as the expected result if the behaviour is executed (Ward 2007:17).

#### **2.4.2 Peer relationships**

Causes or factors which may contribute to violence among learners are that of peer pressure (Jefthas & Artz 2007:37). The need for power and status among peer groups can be one of the causes of violence amongst youth. With particular reference to male learners, it can be argued that great pressure exists amongst them to be seen as brave and possess prowess, to be accepted in the peer group as well as to have a girlfriend. Girls are more easily reported as victims due to constructions of femininity and gender dynamics.

#### **2.4.3 Community factors**

“South Africa’s young people live in an environment where they learn violent behaviour, where they learn that it is rewarded and where they feel that violence is likely to solve their problems and make them feel powerful and worthy” (Ward, 2007:36). For example children tend to imitate other peoples’ behaviour, for instance if children grow up knowing that when you have conflict with someone, you fight, they will grow up thinking that. When struggling to understand the problem of school-based violence it is imperative that one looks looking beyond the school to the community and the neighbourhoods in which the school is situated. Ward (2007:36) contends that the everyday social context in which children learn and grow up in play a serious role in the socialisation of the child. Cohen and Felson (1979:588) also mention that peer pressure in the community is another factor that influences learners to be involved in bullying activities, further indicated is the place we go to the people we interact with and the events we attend, influence the likelihood of criminal behaviour. South Africa is renowned for violent reaction to problems such as the current wave of service delivery protests in which learners often participate. This is a breeding ground for entrenching violence as a form of social engagement.

### **2.5 SITES OF BULLYING**

The phenomenon of bullying within the school context cannot be fully understood without taking the places where bullying are most likely to occur into account (Cowie

& Jennifer 2008:7). According to existing research, bullying is more prevalent during school hours and occurs in certain public places (Vaillancourt, Brittain, Bennett, Arnocky, McDougall, Hymel & Cunningham 2010:40). These consist of classrooms, hallways, playgrounds/school yards, gymnasiums, cafeterias, changing rooms, bathrooms, halls, parking lots, taxis, buses, during break times outside and inside, organised sporting events, during extra-mural activities, in front of school, at the back of the school, and road to and from school (DeVoe, Kaffenberger & Chandler 2005:14; Lee, 2004:68; Vaillancourt *et al.*, 2010:40). As will become evident in the data presentation, there are areas and places in school campuses where bullying is more prevalent.

## **2.6 LEARNER-ON-LEARNER BULLYING**

Burton (2008:15) mentioned that: “The most common form of violence in schools includes learners acting violently towards other learners”. Jefthas and Artz (2007:37) contend that the bullies are often children who tend to use weapons such as knives and guns when engaging in bullying activities. In addition to these weapons, bullies often use stones to threaten and beat learners if they are not given what they want. According to Jefthas and Artz (2007:37), in some cases, bullies may force other learners to bully learners on their behalf.

Male learners practice more physical forms of bullying behaviour than female learners. A reason for this is that in most cases males might experience a need to create control inside social groups by using their physical strength (Athanasziades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzi 2010:335). Other researchers show that learners are more regularly targeted by other learners in their class because of the lack of physical space and the perceived permanence of the situation (Greeff & Grobler, 2008:140). According to Thornberg (2010: 320) bullying takes place as a reaction to deviance. For example, learners may be targeted because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, because these behaviours are considered as unusual among other learners, and are then used as stigmatising labels in bullying situations.

## **2.7 LEARNER-ON-TEACHER BULLYING**

Educators’ experience of bullying behaviour as learner misbehaviour manifests through a plethora of behaviour which includes:

Learners making noise; learners leaving their seats or the classroom without consent; talking constantly or making sounds; teasing and humiliating teachers; inattention; non-cooperation; deliberately ignoring the teacher; refusing to follow orders or failing to complete assignments; lack of preparation; insolence; intimidation; harassment; verbal abuse; destroying or defacing school or personal property; theft of personal belongings or school property; and physical abuse (De Wet 2010:194; Prinsloo 2005:455).

In addition, disturbing behaviour can be seen as any behaviour or act that disrupts the flow of a lesson; the process of teaching; or distracts others from participating in the lesson (De Wet, 2006:63). Therefore, the misbehaviour of learners develops into bullying behaviour when they challenge teachers' "authority in order to disempower them" (De Wet, 2010:198).

According to De Wet (2010:190), excellence in learning and teaching is not possible in a school setting where teachers are targeted by learners. Educators may however experience a much wider range of bullying such as from fellow teachers or the school management. They may also experience a breakdown in learning and teaching, as well as a general disintegration in the collaborative relationship between fellow teachers, and between teachers and school management (De Wet, 2010:197). Action as a result needs to be taken in order to reduce bullying behaviour towards educators so that ideal learning and teaching can take place.

## **2.8 TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON LEARNER BULLYING**

Teachers recognise that bullying can take numerous forms, but that they consider physical bullying to be the most severe form when compared to verbal or relational bullying (Dake *et al* 2003:177; Sahin 2010:133). Educators need to generate a safe and reassuring learning environment for learners. Teachers are a critical component in the counteracting bullying since they witness these events first-hand (Smith; Varjas; Meyers, Graybill; & Skoczylas; 2010:136). Kasen; Berenson; Cohen; and Johnson (2004:187) stressed that "...the classroom teacher's role is to identify bullying and provide reliable and effective interventions when bullying occurs in the classroom". Research indicates that teachers are important agents when it comes to dealing with bullying. Teachers' own insights and understanding of bullying determine how they will

respond to incidences. Responses to bullying are influenced by teacher effectiveness, understanding and insights of seriousness and a grasp of the need to foresee teachers' adherence to an anti-bullying programme (Bauman & Del Rio 2005:431; Yoon 2004:40).

Studies have shown that teachers identify bullying as the main problem in their schools (Harris & Willoughby 2003:5). Teachers' definitions of what constitutes bullying are critical in an assessment of teachers' responses to bullying behaviour.

Moreover, numerous studies report that teachers find it difficult to recognise name-calling, spreading rumours, intimidation, taking other people's belongings and social exclusion as bullying, and that their intervention strategies may vary for the different types of bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2005:430.) If teachers, for instance, do not define name-calling or social isolation as bullying, this behaviour may be dismissed by them as not being serious enough to warrant intervention (Ellis & Shute, 2007:653). Therefore, (Maunder; Harrop & Tattersall 2010:275) recommend that information about all forms of bullying be circulated to every member of a school community so that different bullying behaviours receive equal attention and are treated with equal importance.

Juvonen, Graham & Schuster (2003:1236) and; O'Moore (2000:11 say in this connection that:

Teachers' perceptions of the staff's participation in reducing bullying, their own childhood experiences of bullying, their emotional involvement, and the amount of information or knowledge they have, play a vital role in determining whether teachers participate in anti-bullying programmes.

Additionally, Ellis and Shute (2007: 650) report that: "if a school's anti-bullying policy is in direct contrast to a teachers' moral stance, it is less likely that he or she will adhere to such a policy. It is argued that justice orientation, which focuses on fairness, rules and care orientation, and on understanding relationships and the needs of others, are two forms of moral reasoning which influence teachers' attitudes towards bullying". However; some literature reports that teachers do not know how to deal with bullying and have received little or no training on the management of bullying behaviour

(Bauman; Rigby & Hoppa, 2008:850). It is important for the whole staff to have regular opportunities to communicate about the types of incidents that occur; who is involved in the bullying behaviour, what intervention strategies were used; how effective it was; and then co-ordinate unified responses (Ellis & Shute, 2007:650).

## **2.9 CHARACTERISTICS OF BULLIES AND VICTIMS**

Characteristics of learners who bully one another consist of lack of empathy or concern for others (Baier 2007:10). In most cases bullies have a tendency of demonstrating a strong need to control their peers. They are normally short tempered and become angry easily (Baier 2007:10). Learners who bully others, in most cases, have a tendency to choose victims who are weaker and use intimidation such as threats or compromising the victim's reputation (Baier 2007:10). Bullies at schools are normally physically aggressive and they tend to be disobedient, oppositional, and aggressive towards teachers and other learners; and pick victims who show some form of vulnerability, For example the way other learners dress or look - especially clothes that they wear are all open targets for bullies (Baier 2007:10). According to (Ziemann, 2006:68),

Factors that may influence a person to become a victim of bullying are poor social skills. For example, their reactions to others' interactions and their lack of social awareness contribute to other's perception of them, as different or odd. Unfortunately, instead of avoiding peers who exhibit these qualities, bullies tend to choose these individuals as their victims of bullying.

It is thus clear from the literature that bullies are aggressive, disobedient and select weaker victims in their quest to control others. Short temperedness contributes to their aggression and domineering attitudes. Disobedience is probably an attribute brought from home to the school.

## **2.10 FREQUENCY OF BULLYING AT SCHOOLS**

Roche; Tucker; Thomson and Flynn (2004: 214) conducted a study of bullying in Sheffield schools (United Kingdom) in 1994. They found that some of the secondary school children were bullied sometimes, while others were bullied every week. Some learners also acknowledged that they sometimes bullied others. Roche *et al*

(2004:215) mentioned that: "...bullying is a problem that is experienced by a large number of children". Up to 73% of learners in their study specified that they have been bullied at school at particular time during their school lives. Levinson (2002:135) states that: "Bullying threats and intimidation are common phenomena in most schools in the United States". It is a phenomenon that occurs in most schools at varying frequencies, but it is a problem of reasonable regularity. The fact that it is often not reported makes it virtually impossible to accurately determine frequencies.

## **2.11 GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF BULLIES**

Comparing boys and girls, Nesor *et al.* (2004:45), Greef (2004:1), De Wet (2005:716), Baldry and Farrington (2000:1), Sapouna (2008:1), Proctor (2007:1), Smit (2003:27), and Moretti and Stewart (2006:1) found that boys tend to engage in bullying more often than girls. Both boys and girls tended to be bullied by boys; boys usually experience physical and verbal forms of bullying. Types of methods that are used to bully girls and boys also differ. Nesor *et al.* (2004:45), Greef (2004:1), De Wet (2005:716), Sapouna (2008:1), Proctor (2007:1), Smit (2003:27), Moretti and Stewart (2006:1) found that: "*Boys were made fun of and teased in a hurtful way and they are more likely to physically abuse other learners as compared to girls, who mostly suffer from verbal bullying and sexual comments*". Chabalala (2011:42) points out those bullying strategies that are used by boys and girls differ. Boys may be involved in physical bullying, while girls engage in verbal bullying. Girls bully in a more secretive way called relational aggression. The word 'relational bullying' refers to psychological and emotional types of bullying. This includes bullying behaviours such as: "Giving hurtful nicknames; making humiliating remarks; spreading rumours; mocking; passing notes which contain cruel statements; gossiping; and intimidating others by staring or giving threatening looks' (Whitted & Dupper 2008:336).

## **2.12 RISK FACTORS OF BULLYING**

The use of physical violence against children may increase their tendency to behave in either violent or non-violent ways; although physical punishment may induce conformity in children in the short run, over the longer term it may create the very problems it is intended to prevent (De Wet 2005:231). Parents who bully their children can cause their children to bully their classmates or other acquaintances as a way of

expressing their frustration about their abusive home situations (De Wet 2005:231). Growing up in a violent home can therefore be seen as providing young ones with lessons on the use of violence as a means of reaching goals and controlling others. A child who witnesses spousal violence may, for instance, come to see it as a legitimate way of resolving conflict. Bullying affects both victim and perpetrator. Bullying as a violent phenomenon obviously has adverse effects on victims, and children who bully are also at risk of social and emotional problems (De Wet 2005:231).

According to De Wet (2010:189), bullying among elementary-age children may be an indication of more violent behaviour in future grades. Bullies are also more likely to settle towards other aggressive children and be involved in gangs and delinquent activities (Piskin, 2002:555; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005:105) have found that a disproportionately high number of bullies tend to under-achieve in school and later perform below average in employment settings. Research has indicated that adults, who engaged in bullying as children, were predisposed towards aggression in relationships and are also more likely to use severe physical punishment on their own children (De Wet, 2010). Olweus (2008:6) adds that children who bully are more likely to be involved into frequent fights, steal and vandalise property, as well as drinking, smoking, and carry a weapon. Bullying is a relationship-based form of aggression, which involves repeatedly exposing an individual to negative acts. Marais and Meier (2010:54) stated that “If teachers yell at learners, while exhorting them not to yell, learners are taught that undesirable behaviour is appropriate when you are an adult or if you have the power in your hands”.

### **2.13 THE EFFECTS OF BULLYING**

Some research shows that bullying can negatively impact on a range of variables, notably academic, physical, social, emotional and psychological, with resulting negative consequences for bullies, the children who are bullied and the witnesses of violence (Oyaziwo, 2008:56). According to Banks (2000:23) bullying might also greatly affect the overall climate of a school; these consequences can be short-term or long-term. Rigby (2003:585) identified and categorised the possible consequences and negative health conditions of victims as follows:

### **2.13.1 Low psychological well-being**

This includes states of mind that are commonly considered unkind, such as general unhappiness; low self-esteem; and feelings of anger and sadness.

### **2.13.2 Poor social adjustment**

This usually includes feelings of hatred toward one's social environment by expressing dislike and isolation.

### **2.13.3 Physical illness**

Children who turn out to be victims of bullying are more likely to suffer physical illness. According to, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart (2000:10), the bullied often suffer from the following physical conditions:

- i. Headaches;
- ii. Loss of appetite;
- iii. Unexplained aches and pains;
- iv. Nail biting; and
- v. Bedwetting.

From the above it can be deduced that bullying has a wide and multi-faceted influence on the victims and impacts on their total person in a harmful way.

Relations between parents and families may affect the likelihood of children becoming involved in bullying or victim problems at school; for example, a child's relations with other children at school can lead to the early recognition of problems associated with bullying. This can more easily be achieved by nurturing supportive and trusting relations with one's children so that they may be more inclined to disclose any problems (Holt; Kaufma & Finkelhor 2009:65). The effects of bullying on the victims, bystanders and even the bullies themselves also warrant attention.

### **2.13.4 Psychological distress**

This is considered to be more serious than the first two categories and includes high levels of nervousness, despair, and even suicidal thinking.

According to Sullivan (2004:6), victims of bullying may feel "angry, scared, depressed, disempowered, hateful, hurt, hopeless or vengeful". Victims of bullying also often feel

insecure and think there must be something wrong with them. They may become anxious, cautious, withdrawn, and isolated from their peers (Sullivan, 2004:6). They may even lose self-confidence and often do not want to go to school. Further implication of bullying is that learners feel under pressure to fit in with their peers, and this may lead to a decrease in their academic performance. As it is evident in the research findings, these learners are sometimes forced to stop expressing their ideas, speaking up in class and achieving academically (Thornberg 2011: 262).

Victims of bullying often suffer from a number of psychological complications. These may include "...Sleep disturbances; psychosomatic complaints; irritability; an increased frequency of illness and diseases related to chronic stress and regression to more immature behaviour such as nail biting". (Marais & Meier, 2010:41). Bullying does not only affect the direct victims but creates indirect victims as some of the children in schools with serious bullying problems feel less safe and less satisfied with their schools. Educators' attitudes also have an effect on student's attitudes and behaviours towards bullying. When teachers ignore bullying, learners may feel that they cannot count on the teachers for protection and, in turn, feel that bullying behaviour is accepted (Bauman & Del Rio, 2005:431). Bullying thus negatively affects the school climate and the learning environment and bullying also has the potential to disrupt the process of instruction and learning in schools (De Wet, 2006:62).

## **2.14 WHOLE-SCHOOL INTERVENTION AND POLICY**

It is very important for schools to oppose bullying, because schools have general principles, for example considering everyone using respect, which should be conformed to all learners (Rivers; Duncan & Besag 2007:38). According to Prinsloo (2008:27), a safe school environment is characterised by a humane and caring character. Schools are institutions that consist of interrelated elements (MacDonald & Swart 2004: 36). All of these elements, such as teaching, recreation, administration and governance need to function effectively, otherwise a negative ripple effect spreads through each element and impacts the functioning of the whole school (Davidoff & Lazarus 2002:19). A whole-school approach is recommended to ensure the effective functioning of the school, and is a vital framework which the elements of prevention and intervention can be co-ordinated at different levels (Cowie & Jennifer 2008: 30;

Ma 2001: 354). The focus of a whole-school approach is therefore on the school as an organisation and the community it serves (Cowie & Jennifer, 2008: 33).

According to Cowie and Jennifer (2008:24), whole-school approach should emphasise the involvement of external agencies through creation of partnerships aimed at reducing and preventing bullying in schools. This approach includes:

- cultivation of a exemplar shift on the matter of bullying among all school staff;
- fostering opportunities for the school community to participate in meetings about bullying;
- implementing anti-bullying policies; providing interpolations for victims of bullying and for those who engage in bullying behaviour; and
- Suggesting supportive training for teachers; school managers and other school staff (Bauman; Rigby & Hoppa 2008: 851; Dake Price & Telljohann 2003:353).

Children should feel safe in the school. A culture of respect and recognition of human dignity is important. A zero-tolerance policy with celerity and appropriateness of disciplinary actions aimed at confronting bullying should be part of the school code of conduct. There should be no payoff for bullying (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005:108). Bullies should be aware of school policies and the code of conduct and should be held responsible when they fail to obey to the rules. Behavioural contracts and social skills training can also be helpful (Smokowski & Kopasz 2005:106). If all teachers in a school are well-trained to deal with matters such as bullying, schools would become safe places where learners feel free to explore academic life.

Zeelie (2004:66) notes that schools are “accountable and need to be proactive in behaviour policy and the implementation thereof”, however; educators need training to develop and implement educational policies and practices (Prinsloo, 2005:464). As soon as measures are put in place to put a stop to bullying, schools will be a much safer and more pleasant environment for learners. Educators should therefore be empowered to meet the challenges of bullying behaviour in such a way that such anti-social behaviour does not impact negatively on or impede the learning process (Prinsloo, 2005:464).

## **2.15 SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT ADDRESSING BULLYING**

The South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) stresses that students found guilty of serious delinquency be suspended or expelled from the school. Furthermore, the Department of Education revised the curriculum in 2006, by presenting new content and teaching methods that aim, amongst other things, to improve student-student and student-teacher collaboration (Department of Education 2007:1). The National Programme of Action for Children is accountable for incorporating all policies by all governmental departments and non-government group organisations (NGOs). Even though South African national policy specific to school bullying (or school violence) do not exist; there are some policies associated to youth wellbeing; in general, wherein violence reduction can be an indirect outcome (Department of Health 2001:1). For example, “The Child Care Act includes a reporting system requiring any type of child abuse to be reported to the police and, or, child welfare officials” (Human Rights Watch 2001:1).

The South African Schools (Act 84 of 1996) provides that governing bodies of public schools must implement a code of conduct for learners after suitable consultation with the various role-players. The code of conduct includes a set of rules which sets the standard for learner behaviour, and encourage self-discipline and mutual respect. It outlines positive behaviour but also specifies how misbehaviour will be dealt with. A code of conduct offers the regulatory framework within which a safe, secure, well-organized and purposive learning environment may be established. It must also improve and maintain the excellence of the educating process (Laas & Boezaart, 2014:2679). A code of conduct aims at correcting misconduct a conduct that will not be tolerated for example, defiant, deviant or disruptive behaviour and makes provision for the procedures that attend to learner misconduct. In general, schools depend on their code of conduct to address bullying, but unfortunately bullying is hardly ever specifically mentioned therein as a form of disobedience. It is submitted that clearly defining bullying and spelling out the consequences thereof in the code of conduct would improve school discipline, because it would categorise the act of bullying as transgression to be dealt with. (Laas & Boezaart, 2014:2680).

## **2.16 SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT**

To maintain a quality school environment that is safe and bully-free, Zeelie (2004:29) proposes a code of conduct as an important instrument. A school's code of conduct outlines procedures for maintaining supportive and safe environments that cater for all learners. The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996), Section 8(1) (South Africa, 1996b), requires school governing bodies to draw up a code of conduct for learners in consultation with learners, parents and educators. In terms of Section 8(5), a code of conduct has to make provision for interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary procedures. Oosthuizen and Roos (2004a:38) state that a code of conduct is a "clearly drafted set of rules which may act as code of conduct between learners themselves and learners and educators to emphasize the correctness of appropriate behaviour". It is important that schools provide every learner with the schools' code of conduct to make sure that learners follow the procedures that they have seen, discussed and agreed to. A school's code of conduct encourages good behaviour and therefore describes what an offence is and what the consequences for offences are (Bray 2005:134). This study deems it important to highlight the use of a school code of conduct as it enables schools to include an anti-bullying policy in which schools can state clearly that bullying is taken seriously and that penalties will be applied should it happen. The purpose of an anti-bullying policy is to help establish a safe environment by providing clear rules and procedures for dealing with bullying on a regular, consistent and on-going basis (Krige *et al.*, 2000).

## **2.17 SUMMARY**

From the above it is clear that the manifestation of bullying behaviour by an individual has a higher risk for those who grew up in homes where domestic violence is prevalent but that it can also be learned by copying bullies at school. Bullying, normally follow form of forceful occurrences in which attacks are continually carried out by one or more children on a weaker or smaller child, normally being unable to defend him/herself. It furthermore manifests in many forms ranging from verbal to violent behaviour and even cyber actions. A total strategy involving both schools and community members, obviously including parents is necessary. A code of conduct strictly enforced must be the backbone of the strategy through education to gain compliance but disciplinary action taken when necessary. The harmful effects on both the bully and victim must be addressed.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The theoretical framework can be seen as a structure that guides research and assists in explaining the results of the study. It also presents a framework explaining why the problem under investigation exists. The study was guided by the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura (1977: 22), which is used to explain how behaviour is learned by learners who bully others at school. Bandura (1977:22) states that behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning, and also children learn by observing other people's behaviour and they display what they have seen other people do. Learners may therefore copy bullying behaviour by observing their parents/caretakers, members of their communities and other bullies. He argues that people are not born with the inclination to act violently; they learn aggressive behaviour through their life experiences.

Most learners pick up violent behaviour from other people and may display behaviour imitating them that can result in bullying other learners. Siegel (2005:114) stated that:

The Social Learning Theory maintains that a person's violent tendencies are activated by factors in the environment; such as the specific form of aggressive behaviour; the frequency with which it is expressed, and the situation in which it is displayed. Social behaviour is acquired through direct conditioning and through imitation or modelling of other behaviour. Behaviour is strengthened through reward and avoidance of punishment or weakened by aversive stimuli and loss of reward.

According to Bandura (1977:22), this theory is based on ideas that we acquire from our communications through other people in a social context individually, by observing the activities of others, people develop related behaviours. After observing the behaviour of others, people familiarise and copy that behaviour, particularly if their observational practices are positive ones or include rewards connected to the observed behaviour. According to Bandura, imitation includes the actual reproduction of observed motor activities (Bandura 1977:22). Bandura (1977:25) states that as a result of frequent experience to violent behaviour, modelling stimuli ultimately produce

continuing, retrievable images of modelled performance. People can observe and learn various lifestyles of conduct through mass media. Models presented in televised form, are so active in capturing attention that viewers learn much in what they see. The researcher assumes that learners, who watch violent movies most of the time on television where, the heroes are never punished for their actions, are likely to result in romanticising similar behaviour and could engage in aggressive behaviour in the form of bullying. The Social Learning Theory proposes that behaviour of all varieties is learned through the observation of models. This theory implies that individuals learn certain behavioural patterns by imitating other people's behaviours. Social Learning theorists have long posited that individuals learn from observing the behaviour of others, and that behaviour is more likely to be copied when it is observed repeatedly (Bandura 1986:1).

Social Learning Theory upholds that a person's violent tendencies are activated by factors in the environment, such as: The specific form of aggressive behaviour; the occurrence with which it is expressed; and the situation in which it is displayed (Bandura 1977:22). Children learn to act aggressively after observing parents and other adults acting aggressively towards each other. For example, there are learners who live with parents who cannot resolve inter personal conflict peacefully, but use aggression. The likelihood is that these children might engage in bullying or other disruptive behaviours.

It is in peer relationships that they extend self-knowledge of their capabilities. Peers serve several important efficacy functions. Those who are most informed and adept, offer models of efficacious styles of thinking and behaviour. Additionally, age-mates provide highly informative comparisons for judging and verifying one's self-efficacy (Siegel, 2005:110). Children are, therefore, particularly sensitive to their relative standing among their associates in activities that determine status and popularity. Peers are neither homogeneous nor selected indiscriminately. Children tend to choose peers who share similar interests and standards. Selective peer association will promote self-efficacy in directions of mutual interest, leaving other areas of potential underdeveloped (Siegel 2005:110). As a result of peers serving as a main effect in the development and validation of self-efficacy, interrupted peer relationships can disturb the growth of personal efficacy. A low sense of social efficacy can in turn engender

inner conflict un favourable for peer relationships. Thus, children who regard themselves as socially inefficacious tend to withdraw from society, have a perception of rejection through their peers and have a low sense of self-worth (Bandura 1994:1).

### **3.2 LEARNING THROUGH OBSERVATION AND MODELLING**

Bandura (1977:24) explains Social Learning Theory as learning occurrences resulting from direct experience that occurs on an indirect basis through observation of other people's behaviour; in a sense, learners get involved in bullying behaviour because they learned that from other people, it may be through observation or direct experience as in being a victim. Bandura (1977:24) argues that:

Most behaviour displayed by people is learned by observation through modelling (copying) others. From observing others, a person is able to form an idea on how new behaviours are performed and on later occasions the acquired information serves as a guide of action.

Bandura also argues that children are not born with the ability to act violently; but they learn delinquent behaviour through their life experiences. Modelling is also one of the important aspects of Social Learning Theory that asserts that people learn how to act by observing others. It emphasises that children portray behaviour that they observed through their role models or people they respect; usually children's role models are their parents (Bandura (1977:24). For example, a young boy who sees his father hurting, beating or kicking other people will not see that as wrong because as the father and will most likely imitate the behaviour as he will desire to be like his father.

According to Siegel, (2005:144) Social Learning Theory maintains that a persons' violent tendencies is stimulated by factors in the environment, such as the specific form of aggressive behaviour; the frequency with which it is conveyed; and the condition in which it is displayed. Siegel (2005:114) states that: "Social Learning Theory views violence as something that is learned through a process called: behaviour modelling and aggressive behaviour in modern society is usually modelled after three principles". Those three principles are:

- **Family interactions:** Siegel (2005:114) highlights that studies of family life discovered that aggressive children have parents who use related strategies when dealing with others. *For example, the children of a wife batterer are more expected to use aggressive strategies to solve problems than are other children in the general population.*
- **Environmental experiences:** People who belong to places where aggression is expressed on a daily basis, are more likely to act violently, than those who live in low crime areas whose customs stress more tolerant and non-aggressive behaviour.
- **Mass media:** Television usually displays violence that is frequently held as satisfactory behaviour, particularly for heroes who never have to face legal consequences for their actions. Children who watch these films are likely to act aggressively toward others as they copy the behaviour of their heroes in these films.

Modelling behaviour is a natural learning process and is part of a child's process of growing up. Within a community, family and peer environment where younger persons observe others, aggressive behaviour can be learned through observing others and can be particularly directive if those who are observed have a "high profile".

### **3.3 LEARNING THROUGH ASSOCIATION**

The Social Learning Theory maintains that individuals learn social behaviour by associating with other people. Association with models is the most important element of how children learn bullying behaviour. This process can be seen in the development of language; aggression; and moral decision-making (Siegel 2005:114). For example, a learner who associates himself with peers who use and sell drugs end up being reinforced by the expensive clothes and money the peers possess; hence they learn to engage in illegal activities because it is rewarding. Similarly, the power dynamic vested in bullying may be copied as it creates control and dominance.

### **3.4 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

The major part of the learning of bullying behaviour arises within intimate personal groups; Siegel (2005:115) states that bullying behaviour is something that is learned in closely clustered groups and sources through a process called behaviour observing, modelling and imitation. In modern society, bullying behaviour is typically modelled after three principal primary sources these are: family, environmental experiences, and mass media.

#### **3.4.1 The family**

The family plays a significant role in determining or shaping conformity or unusual behaviour for a young developing child, as it is the primary source of socialisation. According to Ward (2007:29), the family has been heralded to be one of the most, if not the most, significant socialising institutions for influencing childhood behaviour as well as during adolescence; importantly, parents play a crucial role in modelling behaviour as well as facilitating another factors such as poverty, school truancy, peer pressure which may increase the risk of school-based violence. In light of this foundation one could therefore claim that it is highly difficult when parents are not good role models and are engage in violent and criminal activities (Ward, 2007:29). *For example families in which violence is the norm children learn to judge violent behaviour positively and tend to view violence as the appropriate manner of dealing with conflict.* According to Ward (2007:29), with specific reference to South African society, too many “children are being exposed to violence in the home, to caregiver criminality and quite possibly, to poor family management practices”. Bullying has been attributed to various causes. Family factors such as harsh parenting style; family conflicts and abuse have been recognised as causes of bullying behaviours between school goes (Mestry and Khumalo 2012:97; Protogerou and Flisher 2012:1).

#### **3.4.2 Family size and poor parental skills**

Large families have more delinquent children than small families where parents can easily discipline and monitor their children’s behaviour; parents who lack parental skills turn to indirectly strengthen delinquent behaviour of their children (Baldry & Farrington, 2000:112). For instance, behaviour that is followed depends on the observed penalties

of their actions. If the model is observed to be reinforced by rewards deemed conducive for the perpetrator then imitation becomes likely (Baldry & Farrington, 2000:112). When the model is punished, then imitation becomes less possible even though the behaviour may still have been learned. For example, if an elder sibling of a child commits crime and is never caught or punished either by the parents or the police, as a result the behaviour is definitely reinforced to the child (Baldry & Farrington, 2000:112).

### **3.4.3 Child abuse, parental conflict and disrupted families**

According to Siegel (2005:124), the majority of children abused in childhood are at greater risk of abusing other children because of the anti-social learned behaviour. Moreover children who have observed their fathers abusing their mothers when they were young tend to solve their problems aggressively as they learned from their parents. For example, young adults who witnessed and experienced abuse while they were young are more to be expected to be in an abusive intimate relationship as an abuser.

### **3.4.4 School and peer relations**

The school also acts as a primary source of socialisation as learners spend most of their time at the school premises. In adolescence, the importance of the family is reduced; as a result school, leisure, and recreational peer groups become more important. The social relations between learners in a school class are modelled through attachment relations. Peer approval serves as a positive reinforcement for assault or delinquent behaviour. Positive reinforcement can also be provided when behaviour produces an increase in status; money; awards or pleasant feelings (Baldry & Farrington, 2000:112). For example, learners who associate themselves with peers who are bullies at school and commit delinquent behaviour can also end up engaging in such behaviour in order to feel respected by the peer group, as a result of friendship, they might end up learning such behaviour. Another example may be that a learner who associates themselves with peers who like to steal money from other learners, does what his friends increasingly do and steals from other learners (Baldry & Farrington 2000:112).

### **3.4.5 The community**

According to Weeks (2005:40), “the environment in which children grow up in plays an important role in the way their behaviour develops”. For example, learners who grow up in an environment where they are exposed to bullying behaviour may act violently to deal with differences or conflicts. “South Africa’s young people live in an environment where they learn violent behaviour, where they learn that it is rewarded and where they feel that violence is likely to solve their problems and make them feel powerful and worthy”, (Ward, 2007:36). When trying to understand the problem of school-based violence, it is imperative that one looks beyond the school, to the community and the neighbourhoods in which the school is located. Ward (2007:36) contends that the everyday social contexts in which children learn and grow up in playing a critical role in the socialization of children.

This falls in line with Bronfenbrenner’s theory (Bronfenbrenner 1998:993) of human development where emphasises the relations between child growth and interacting systems within the social environment. According to his systems theory; the family; the school; the community and the relations between them are important influences in the life of the child. Understanding the causes and effects, for example, the child’s personality, or the atmosphere can help avoid bullying and restrain it when it does happen (Bronfenbrenner, 1998:993).

Family factors may consist of violent behaviour towards the child by the parent. Individual factors may include certain personality styles and interpersonal behaviours. Community conditions and attitudes where violence is widespread and children are exposed to aggressive behaviour can also encourage bullying. Week (2005:40) stated that: “the environment in which children grow up in plays an important role in the way their behaviour develops”. Learners who grow up in an atmosphere where they are exposed to bullying behaviour may act violently to deal with differences.

### **3.4.6 Learning from peers**

According Krige, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart (2000:12) peer pressure seems to be a factor contributing to bullying. Some of the bullies; bully because they want to relieve themselves of the stress they have from their friends and peers. Young people usually think that if you want to fit in or belong to a group, you need to do what the members of the group are doing. Peer pressure thus plays a big role in making another learner’s

do things that they really do not want do, things that they only do to impress their peers. "According to Krige *et al.* (2000:12), one of the greatest psychological needs a child has; is to belong to and to be part of the group; however; belonging to and being part of a group requires commitment. This means that one should do what is required by the group". According to Burton (2008:1), children and youth who are brought up in violent environment tend to interact and spend time with antisocial peers or criminal.

### **3.5 CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, Social Learning Theory has indicated how children learn different behaviour on a daily basis and practice them on other people around them. Bullying appears to be a pervasive problem and in most secondary schools it is the problem of the people raising children with different behaviour that influencing them to bully others. Bandura (1977:22) states that behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. Children learn by observing other people's behaviour and display what they have seen other people do (Bandura, 1977:22).

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an outline of the research design and methodology used in the study. An outline of the research methodology is presented. The study is best suited for a phenomenological approach as it presents the lived experiences of participants. The chapter moves from the purpose through the selected population and sampling procedure; method of data collection; analysis and ethical considerations. As a qualitative methodology was used in the research the data integrity is based on creditability, dependability and conformability.

#### **4.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

##### **4.2.1 Aim**

The aim of this study is to present a phenomenological perspective of learner bullying from a teachers' perspective at two secondary schools in Moletjie-Moshate.

#### **4.3 METHODOLOGY**

##### **4.3.1 Research design**

The researcher used the phenomenological approach in order to examine experience through narratives provided by the participants. According to Donalek (2004:172), phenomenological studies define the meaning that experiences hold for each subject. The phenomenological approach is best suited for this study as it explores the lived experiences of teachers on the phenomenon under study. The general purpose of qualitative methodology is to "...describe, reconstruct, interpret or make sense of a phenomenon in terms of the meaning that a subject attributes to it" (De Wet, 2005:15). The researcher wanted to achieve a deeper understanding of the problem of bullying at these schools as a phenomenological experience from the ideas of the participants (teachers).

#### **4.3.1.1 Characteristics of the qualitative approach**

Lidzhegu (2012:42) states that: “the purpose of qualitative research is to describe and evaluate the collected data”. It seems appropriate for the researcher to explain these concepts in order to show their relevance in this study. The concepts can be explained as follows:

- **Describe**

The researcher gathered data from the school teachers about bullying behaviour in school, existing intervention programmes and prevention strategies. The purpose of this description is to observe a situation in order to understand what is happening.

- **Evaluate**

The researcher provides relevant and purposeful interpretation and analysis of the collected data in order to create a phenomenological presentation of the lived experiences of teachers about bullying at the two selected schools.

#### **4.3.2 Population**

The researcher selected the two schools mentioned mainly because these schools are situated in the community where the researcher comes from, and the researcher has had personal experience on the high levels of bullying taking place at these institutions.

#### **4.3.3 Sampling**

The sample of respondents was obtained by selecting available teachers from two secondary schools, teaching from Grade 8 to 12. There were five males who participated in the study from School A; two teaching Grade 8 to 10; three teaching Grade 11 to 12 and seven females participated in the study, one teaching grade 8 to 9; four teaching grade 8 to 12 and two teaching grade 11 to 12. Participants from School B were ten, four males teaching from grade 8 to 10; two teaching from grade 10 to 12 and four females, two teaching grade 8 to 10 and two teaching grade 11 to 12. There were thus male and female teachers from each grade in each school, meaning they could provide data on bullying across the grades.

#### **4.3.4 Data collection**

Focus groups were used to collect data because it allowed interaction amongst participants enabling the collection of rich data from participants. Further questions were asked, depending upon the initial responses by participants to deeper explore the phenomenon. According to De Wet (2010:66), the goal of interviews is to, “facilitate an active discussion and the sharing of understandings and views, while at the same time ensuring that the data generated are able to meet the aims of the research”. Therefore, the participants who were selected were vital to meeting the aims of research; facilitating the conversation to generate relevant and valuable data. Furthermore, Barbour (2007:58) indicated that: “Purposive sampling allows for the data to be interrogated purposefully, that is, in order to carry out systematic comparisons”.

#### **4.3.5 Data analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to explain the findings by coding themes from data collected. Thematic content analysis involved, searching of themes that occur as being important to the explanation of the phenomenon. The procedure includes the identification of themes through “...careful reading and re-reading of the data” (Braun & Clarkes, 2006:77). Braun and Clarkes (2006:77) identified steps of thematic content analysis. The steps are as follows: Familiarising oneself with the data; creating and organising initial codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. Each of the steps was discussed below:

- i. Become familiar with the data

At the initial stage the researcher read the data repeatedly in order to familiarise with the data. The focus was on the patterns that occur. These ideas were written down.

- ii. Generating and organising initial codes

This entails the production of initial codes by identifying where and how patterns occur. This takes place through data reduction where the researcher breaks down data into labels in order to produce categories for more well-organized analysis. Data compilation was also completed here. This includes the researcher making inferences

about what the codes meant. These codes were then translated into themes that precisely represented in the data.

### iii. Reviewing themes

The researcher then checked if the themes were understandable. If the analysis seemed incomplete, the researcher revisited the data in order to find the missing information.

### iv. Defining and naming themes

This means creating clear meanings and designations for each theme, describing which aspects of data was being captured in each theme, and discovering what was interesting and relevant in terms of the research objectives, about the themes. A list of the themes was compiled and served as the basis for the logical presentation of data. (See page 46).

### v. Producing the report

This involved deciding which themes made meaningful contributions to the study. The researcher conducted a review of the data to verify if the descriptions were an accurate representation of what transpired during the interviews. The last stage was to summarise the structured themes; together with references to literature that relates to each theme. The summary included the themes that capture aspects about the quality and meaning of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon.

## **4.3.6 Procedure**

Before collecting data there were approvals that were supposed to be obtained by the researcher. First the researcher approached the Departmental of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Research and Ethics Committee for the first level of approval of the research proposal. Then the proposal was submitted to the SREC (School of Social Science Research and Ethics Committee) and then the proposal was handed over to the Faculty of Humanities Research and Ethics Committee. Final permission to conduct the research came from TREC (Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee).

The researcher was then allowed to collect data from the participants. The study was conducted at two secondary schools in the Moletjie Moshate community. Permission to conduct the research in these two schools was obtained from Department of Education, the School Governing Bodies of the schools and also from the respective principals.

#### **4.3.7 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations are crucial to the research process and ensure that data analysis and interpretations are led by the data and no other interest that could potentially be harmful or exploitative (Fisher & Anushko, 2008:97).

##### **4.3.7.1 Informed consent**

The respondents were informed about the research and about their rights. The purpose of the study was explained clearly to the participants.

##### **4.3.7.2 Confidentiality**

The confidentiality of the information provided was protected and data were not made available to anyone else. The privacy of the setting during the interviews was also ensured. The names of the schools are also not identified for ethical reasons.

##### **4.3.7.3 Anonymity**

The researcher ensured that the participant's names and other unique identities were not attached to the data. Participant's rights and wishes to remain anonymous were respected.

##### **4.3.7.4 Discontinuance**

The participants were given the assurance that they are free to discontinue their participation at any time without being required to offer explanation regarding their decisions. None of the participants withdrew from the interviews.

#### **4.3.8 Quality criteria**

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of data in this study the researcher used Guba and Lincoln's (1981:1) three criteria, namely:

- Credibility;
- Dependability; and
- Conformability.

#### **4.3.8.1 Credibility**

This study aimed to report on how participants understand their world, and it is important for the researcher to be aware that they form their own realities. “Credibility can be attained through the process of crystallisation, and by going back to the participants and having them check both the data and the interpretation thereof” (Babbie & Mouton 2001:277). Credibility was obtained by ensuring that the results were realistic from the standpoint of the participants. In other words, credibility is the degree to which interpretations and concepts have similar meaning for the participants and the researcher. The group dynamics in the focus group assisted in deliberating on phenomena until consensus was reached. This process is important to ensure credibility.

#### **4.3.8.2 Dependability**

Dependability was ensured through theoretical conceptualization to ensure that all participants understood concepts within the theoretical approach in the study. Dependability looks at whether the findings are reliable from the data produced (Merriam, 2009:220). As there is a connection between credibility and dependability, there cannot be dependability without credibility. Hence, for dependability to be found in a study, credibility should also be established (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278). Dependability involved the examination of every step of the process of inquiry, and included an analysis of whether the process was relevant to the study or not. Using two schools assisted in getting similar data for assisting with the dependability of participants’ deliberations

#### **4.3.8.3 Conformability**

Conformability refers to the, “degree to which the findings are products of the focus of the inquiry and not the biases of the researcher” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 278). Conformability was ensured by checking related studies in the literature review to determine whether results of the study conform or differ, where required explanations of non-conformity will be offered.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter, the research design and methodology were explained. Focus group interviews were identified as the technique for the collection of data in the study. The methodology of the research was explained to provide an understanding of the techniques that were followed in the collection of data. In addition, ethical considerations were emphasized. Lastly a brief discussion of creditability, dependability and conformability was provided and the data analysis steps were indicated. In short, this chapter provided a step-by-step account of the procedures which were followed in conducting this research. Chapter 5 will explain data presentation, analysis and interpretation.

## CHAPTER 5

### PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of the data collected during the two focus group sessions. Focus group sessions were held on 27 January 2017 at two secondary schools. The sample consisted of teachers at these two schools depending on their availability, to form part of the study. Approval to carry out with the research was obtained from the principals of the respective schools together with the school governing bodies and various ethical committees.

#### 5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

As mentioned, the data collection took place at two secondary schools. A focus group from each school formed part of the study served as the data collection technique. The group from School A consisted of seven females, and five male respondents teaching from grade 8 to 12, while the School B focus group was made up of six males and four females teaching between grades 8 to 12.

**5.2.1 Table 1: Demographic details of the participants**

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of all participants</b>	<b>Number of teachers from different classes.</b>
School A	Male	5	2 (8-10) and 3 (11-12)
	Female	7	1 (8-9), 4 (8-12) and 2(11-12)
School B	Male	6	4 (8-10) and 2 (10-12)
	Female	4	2 (8-10) and 2(11-12)

### 5.3 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The interview schedules were followed, but follow-up questions were asked to probe deeper anti issues raised by respondents. Once data was repeatedly read, themes started to emerge. The following main themes were identified:

- Frequency of bullying,
- Individuals engaging in bullying behaviour,
- Gender distribution,
- Types of bullying,
- Sites of bullying,
- Factors that cause bullying at schools,
- Effect of bullying on learning,
- Proposed strategies to deal effectively with bullying.

#### 5.3.1 Theme1: Frequency of bullying

Bullying is infrequently at certain locations. Roche, Tucker, Thomson and Flynn, (2004: 214), conducted a study of bullying in Sheffield schools (United Kingdom) in 1994. They found that some of the secondary school children were bullied sometimes; while others were bullied every week. The frequency of bullying at both schools differ from time-to-time because at School B, according to the participants bullying occurred every day, whereas at School A once a week. The quotes below give reference to responses of participants from both schools.

All male and female participants from School B agreed that bullying takes place every day:

*“We experience bullying every day, where learners fight with serious weapons, steal other learners’ belongings and insult other learners with vulgar words”* (Participant 3).

*“Bullying takes place on a daily basis were we hear different incidents taking place, like fighting with weapons; use of substance abuse and stealing”* (Participant 10).

Another participant further added that: *“Every day when I enter a school yard I know that I will hear a story about learners bullying others. Actually bullying in our school is*

*a daily routine activity that we experience and we try by all means to talk to learners every day” (Participant 1).*

The researcher can verify the above statement, as on the day data of collection at School B, there was a police presence at the school because some students were involved in stabbing. During the interview one of the teachers showed the researcher some of the weapons and substances that they found on learners during school hours.

Participants from School A mentioned that bullying at their school takes place at least on a weekly. Below are some of the information provided by both males and females participant:

*“Bullying in our school happens sometimes where it takes place in classrooms and during breaks; male learners bring dangerous weapons to school” (Participant 1, 3 and 6).*

*“It takes place sometimes and we realise it when learners report incidents to us” (Participant 12).*

*“Bullying takes place every week especially during breaks and in classrooms” (Participant 8).*

*“Every week learners report a different incident which include stolen property, fighting in classrooms and involves chasing them from the group discussions” (Participant 2).*

The 12 participants specified that bullying takes place “sometimes” and some said, “Every week”.

### **5.3.2 Theme 2: Individuals engaging in bullying behaviour**

Bullying can be understood in different ways; for the purpose of this study the researcher adopted the definition by Olweus, (2008:6) which says: “Bullying is a relationship based on a form of aggression, which involves repeatedly exposing an individual to negative acts”. All teachers from both schools agreed that: “bullying can be both physical and verbal, and the actions are intended to hurt the person being bullied”. (Olweus, 2008:6). The data reflect views of teacher’s conceptualisation of bullying, their differentiation between the types of bullying, the sites where bullying

occurs and individuals who participate in bullying, and they also described their own individual experience of bullying.

### **5.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Learner-on-learner bullying behaviour**

Jeffthas and Artz (2007:37) states that: "Bullying is connected to numerous factors that influence learners to be involved in bullying behaviour." Jeffthas and Artz (2007:37) contend that the bullies are often children who tend to use weapons such as knives and guns when engaging in bullying activities. According to Thornberg (2010: 320) bullying takes place as a reaction to deviance. For example, learners may be targeted because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, because these behaviours are deemed as deviant or disgusting among other learners, and are then used as stigmatising labels in bullying situations.

Learners from both schools, according to their teachers' perspectives, have the same manner of involving themselves in bullying activities, because the researcher found the same responses from teachers at both schools, on how learner-on-learner bullying took place at their schools. Below are the data that were mentioned by the participants during interviews at both schools:

Participants from School B provided perceptions on how learner-on-learner bullying takes place in their school: *"The issue of learners spending their time fighting every day at school, insulting each other and stealing other learners' belongings is a serious problem that we experience because every time when we see learners coming to us we think about these incidents"* (Participant 4).

Participants 9 further added that: *"All learners in our school, regardless of grades are more vulnerable of being targeted as victims, and they create their own groups or friendships to be involved in bullying activities"*

Participants from School A agreed by supporting School B participants as follows:

*“Grade 8 and 9 learners are more vulnerable to being targeted as victims because they are the youngest and newest learners of the school so older learners do as they wish with them” (Participant 3).*

*“Bullying within friendships takes several forms and has negative outcomes for the targeted individuals, one cause or factor, which may contribute to violence among learners, is that of peer pressure” (Participant 4).*

All 22 participants confirmed that bullying takes place at the two schools and that particularly younger learners are targets.

### **5.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Learner-on-teacher bullying**

Teachers experience bullying behaviour as learner disobedience as demonstrated by a plethora of insolent behaviours which includes:

*“... learners making noise; teasing other learners; learners leaving their seats or the classroom without permission; talking constantly or making sounds; teasing and humiliating teachers; inattention; non-cooperation; deliberately ignoring the teacher; refusing to follow instructions or failing to complete assignments; lack of preparation; insolence; intimidation; harassment; verbal abuse; destroying or defacing school or personal property; theft of personal belonging or school property” (De Wet, 2010:194; Prinsloo, 2005:455).*

Participant 7 from School B expressed an idea on the issue of learner-on-teacher bullying, she said: *“Viewing it from my own perspective, I have realised that not all the teachers observe bullying directly, but most are under the impression that it is a common occurrence in the school”.*

A participant from School A specified that:

*“One of the learners in Grade 11 in my class insulted me in front of other learners because I requested homework that I gave them, one learner did not write and insulted me saying that, “you think you are the best, sis stupid teacher, that homework is yours not mine”.*

The data above indicates that learners also bully their teachers; it indicates that it does not take place only towards learners.

This is supported by De Wet (2010:198) who said that: “Misbehaviour of learners develops into bullying behaviour when they challenge teachers’ authority in order to disempower them”.

Below are some of the views expressed by male participants from both schools on how learners bully teachers:

School B:

*“Last year December before we closed school, one of the teachers was stabbed on the arm and the shoulder by one of the learners using a knife because the teacher tried to discipline him, so the teacher became a target, and the intention of the learners was to kill the teacher. Now the teacher is afraid of coming back to school”* (Participant 5).

School A:

*“Learners from our school bully teachers by teasing them, but so far we did not experience any physical harm occurring between learners and teacher”* (Participant 7).

Teachers from both schools indicated that learners just tease them and the only incident of physical bullying that was expressed is the one that happened at School B last year December (see quotation from participant 5 above).

### **5.3.3 Theme 3: Gender distribution of bullies and victims amongst learners**

Teachers from both schools specified that both boys and girls are involved in bullying activities and they are also both victims. This is supported by Chabalala (2011:42) who points out those bullying strategies used by boys and girls differ. According to the researcher boys may be involved in physical bullying, while girls engage in verbal bullying. Girls bully in a more secretive way called relational aggression. From teachers’ perspectives from both schools they all agreed that bullying took place from

both girls and boys. Below are some of the quotes that were expressed by both male and female participants from both schools:

Participants from School B explained that bullying took place every day so below are some of the ideas that was expressed by participants:

*“Last year there was a group of girls who used to come to school to tease other learners, robbing and hitting them so now those girls are no longer at school, some of them were arrested because they were under the influence of alcohol and substance abuse”* (Participant 8).

*“Both boys and girls were involved in bullying activities because they took other learners’ belongings, beat them and use substances. Bullying behaviour is not restricted to male-on male and female-on-female bullying it is prevalent across both genders”* (Participant 3 and 6).

Participants from School A further expressed their views on when bullying took place at their school:

*“Sometimes we heard different stories from both girls and boys victimised by other groups of boys and girls, so both boys and girls are bullies and victims”* (Participant 9).

*“Both boys and girls are involved in bullying activities but when bullying was reported, girls were the victims of relational bullying, while boys are victim of physical bullying”* (Participant 5).

The above data indicate clearly that both male and female learners engage in bullying activities.

By comparing boys and girls, Nesor, Ovens, Van der Merwe, Morodi, Ladikos and Prinsloo (2004:45), Greef (2004:1), De Wet (2005:716), Baldry and Farrington (2000:1), Sapouna (2008:1), Proctor (2007:1), Smit (2003:27), and Moretti and Stewart (2006:1) found that boys tended to involve in bullying more often than girls. Both boys and girls tended to be bullied by boys; boys typically experienced physical and verbal forms of bullying.

### **5.3.4 Theme 4: Types of bullying**

Teachers from both schools identified three main types of bullying namely verbal; physical and relational bullying. These types of bullying manifests in many ways and are presented as sub-themes hereunder. Researchers such as De Wet (2005:707) and Smit (2003:27) have also identified different forms of bullying. They state that bullying can be physical; such as when a learner is kicked; pushed or punched; verbal; for example, when a learner or learners spread malicious gossip about another learner with the intention to make them suffer emotionally, it can also be relational when a person is excluded from a certain group.

Participants pointed out that physical and verbal bullying are regular occurrences. According to the data presented by participants from both schools the data agree with the literature on the phenomenon. For example, Jefthas and Artz (2007:37) contend that bullies were often children who use weapons such as knives and guns when engaging in bullying activities. The identified forms of bullying, as reported by participants are presented hereunder.

#### **5.3.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Verbal bullying**

Verbal bullying includes name-calling, whispering, joking, insulting, threatening, labelling blaming and gossiping. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the fact that verbal bullying occurred in variable degrees of severity and that the effects should not be underestimated. Sullivan (2000:26) stated that verbal bullying included abusive phone calls, intimidation or threats of violence, name calling, racist remarks, sexually suggestive or abusive language, spiteful teasing and spreading false or malicious rumours.

Male and female participants from School B expressed their views on how verbal bullying took places at their schools; some of their deliberations are:

*“Verbal bullying usually occurs on female learners in class and during breaks. They bring their issues from home and talk about them at school”* (Participant 3).

*“Both boys and girls engage in verbal bullying because in most cases when they start they exchange words and that is where the problem starts”* (Participants 8)

For instance, a learner told me that, another boy from a group said that, *“I am going to demoralise everything you do; and I will make you to feel as small as I possibly can, without harming you, because if I harm you, they will have proof against me, but if I just keep on pushing you they cannot verify that I am doing that, but if I smash you, you have a mark on your face, and people can see that I hit you. So the will be evidence to the fact that I bullied you”* (Participant 1).

*“Female learners like to gossip a lot. I had an incident in my class where I read a lot of pieces of paper where two girls where gossiping about another girl in the same class saying that she thought she was smart because she participated and they would destroy her”.* (Participant 9)

Participants from School A agreed with those of School B on the issue of verbal bullying by expressing their views: *“Girls like to gossip a lot and they like to threaten one another in words for example if you are well disciplined and teachers like you a lot you will always be a target”* (Participant 12).

*“In most cases I hear incidents in class from both boys and girls saying they were being threatened by other learners using vulgar words, and threatening them not to participate in class”* (Participant 11)

Verbal bullying is a common problem and includes direct threats, and a very disturbing fact is that threats against academically performing were used to intimidate them. Verbal bullying may also escalate into physical bullying. Learners who were threatened regarding their academic performance was a serious problem, because their marks would drop and they would start to develop a low self-esteem especially those learners who were afraid to report this kind of incident to their teachers.

#### **5.3.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Physical bullying**

According to (Harris & Hathorn, 2006: 51) physical bullying is a direct form of bullying which involves hitting; tripping other individuals on purpose; kicking; punching; damaging property; extortion or blackmail; taking other individual's belongings or stealing school property; physical assault; corporal punishment; as well as threats of physical violence.

All 22 participants agreed that physical bullying takes place at their schools, especially during breaks. Quoting from the data collected from both schools' participants physical bullying is evident:

School B:

*“Physical bullying occurs every day especially in the school yard, learners bring along dangerous weapons to school and there was a security search at the gate but learners push weapons under the school fence and take them while they were in the school’s yard, so when they fight they stab each other with them”* (Participant 4).

Participant 10 stated that: *“Learners were experiencing a problem of losing their goods because bullies searched and seize the bags of victims during breaks, in order to receive them back, victims had to pay, if not, bullies brake them or sell them because they want to show how bossy they were”*.

School A:

*“Learners were complaining that when they go to toilet they have to pay money to bullies at the toilet door, if they do not pay they are beaten up and they will never go to school toilet”* (Participant 12).

*“Learners are losing their goods sometimes and they do not get them back and if victims report them they are the target of physical abuse. I think bullies sell them to get money to buy drugs because they use them”* (Participant 11).

The data above shows how learners are being bullied physically by other learners they are at school. This is often accompanied by confiscating goods which in fact amounts to common robbery.

#### **5.3.4.3 Sub-theme 3: Relational bullying**

According to the participants, social isolation or social exclusion from a peer group is regarded as one of the most dominant forms of relational bullying. The participants conveyed that social isolation is used to make peers feel that they do not fit in another group. Moreover, laughing and the exchange of looks, sometimes referred to as a dirty look are also prominent forms of relational bullying. Lee (2004:68) describes this type

of bullying as one which includes thoughtful exclusion from a social group or intimidation from within a social group.

All ten participants from School B mentioned that some of the learners in their school no longer participated well in class:

Participants 7, 3 and 6 sum up the view in the following way: *“Relational bullying is a popular and frequently used method of bullying as, according to the participants, it leaves no physical evidence and children tend to drop out and some fear to come to school as a result of this issue this affects the learners’ academic performance”* (Participant 7).

*“When learners show their high performance in class, they are seen as different to the majority of learners, so this particular perception lends them to being targeted by other individuals; therefore, there is this perception that everyone must be painted with the same brush. When you start to show some instances of being different, then you could be bullied”* (Participants 3).

*“Learners who are excluded from other learners, develop low self-esteem and feel as if they are useless to everything they say or do and they end up dropping out”* (Participant 6 from School B)

Participants from School A support this by agreeing with the views of School B participants in the following ways: *“Relational bullying is cruel and can be more damaging to a person’s mind than physical bullying because learners fear to come to school because of isolation that they get from other learners”* (Participant 1).

*“Relational bullying, is that impression of excluding other learners”, he mentioned that female learners like to tell other learners that they would never include them in anything they do, for example one of my learners when we group each other during group discussion in class she call herself “I am a loner, so I will do my work alone because no one wants to include me in their groups”* (Participant 2)

The above data indicates clearly that relational bullying influences learners to an extent that they are afraid of coming to school. This has serious implications for the

academic performance of the victims impacted by relational bullying and the notion that it often has more serious repercussions than physical bullying. Having looked at the reported types of bullying it is also important to look at where bullying is reported to be more likely to take place.

### **5.3.5 Theme 5: Sites of bullying**

Teachers from both schools specified that bullying took place in different places, at different times. Bullying occurred in classrooms, toilets on the way to and from home, during breaks and on the playgrounds. The phenomenon of bullying within the school context cannot be fully understood without taking the social situation in which it takes place into account (Cowie & Jennifer, 2008:7). Bullying is more prevalent during school hours, and occurs in certain public places (Vaillancourt, Brittain, Bennett, Arnocky, McDougall, Hymel, Cunningham, 2010:40).

#### **5.3.5.1 Common areas of bullying**

Participants from both schools mentioned places where bullying takes place in their schools.

Participants from School B provided insight into the places on the school campus where bullying are most prevalent. As participant 8 indicated,

One of the participants from School B expressed her view and said that: *“I observed one of the bullies hiding behind the school toilet targeting learners who were passing by the school toilets after school, so when bullies see learners pass by the school toilet they jumped the school fence to steal their property, beat them up and threatened them with dangerous weapons”*.

Participant 4, confirmed that the toilets was a critical area, but added that the classrooms and also the playgrounds regularly were places where bullying occurred.

Participants from School A agreed with those from School B that the toilets are problematic. Participant 3 and 10 summed up the views of the participants saying: *“Bullying occurred in toilets, in class and during breaks, on the way to and from school”* (Participant 3).

*“Learners who are bullied come to school with different intentions because they are no longer feeling safe, because the bullies bully them whenever they feel like, they do as they wish during class time and during breaks in the toilets” (Participant 10).*

Male participants at School B mentioned that bullying also took place in classrooms when teachers were present: Bullies also victimise learners outside the school campus. Participant 2 puts it this way:

*“Bullying occurs in the classroom with the teachers’ present and outside the school yard”.*

At School A, apart from incidences happening on campus, off-campus occurrence of bullying was also stressed:

*“I think bullying just occurs mostly anywhere because I can definitely see it in class and also, when doing playground duty, so I think basically where ever there is an opportunity for somebody to bully is where it is going to happen”. For example, there was an incident where a boy was followed home and beaten up, it was after school while I was going home, and both were learners from School A. So there are no boundaries in terms of restriction to where bullying happens”. (Participant 4)*

The researcher found that teachers all agreed on the most common places where bullying occurs. They mentioned that bullying took place in the school toilet, playground, during breaks and in classrooms but also off-campus.

According to existing research, bullying is more prevalent during school hours and occurs in certain public places Vaillancourt *et al.*, (2010:40). Participants reported that bullying also takes place off campus.

The above data indicates that all respondents from both schools reported the same common areas where bullying took place. They all mentioned that bullying took place in the school toilet, on the playground during breaks and in classrooms.

### **5.3.6 Theme 6: Factors that cause bullying at schools**

Teachers from both schools mentioned that due to children spending half of their day at school, and of the other half at home, schools can serve as the most important socialising mechanism where bullying can take place. Burton (2008:17) mentioned that: "Schools are generally seen as mechanisms to develop and reinforce positive citizens with pro-social attitudes and as sites where individuals are prepared for the role they are to play in society at large". The issue of children spending half of their day at school, schools function as the second most significant socialising mechanism after the home. According to Weeks (2001:167), bullying behaviour often first appears within the home environment where the earliest symptoms like lies; disobedience and verbal or physical aggressiveness towards family members can be observed.

#### **5.3.6.1 Sub-theme 1: Personal factors**

According to Ward (2007:17), "Violent behaviour in young people results from a complex interaction of risk and protective factors in different environments and over time, which influences how children learn behaviours." Based on this dispute, the greater the risk factors a child is exposed to; the higher the chance that the child will take part in aggressive and violent behaviour.

The following responses were given by the female participants on personal factors causing bullying:

School B:

*"Some of the learners have problems that they do not want to share with other people, so those issues affect them emotionally, psychologically and academically and immediately when they think of their problems they start to be irritated and shout at other learners without no reason"* (Participant 8)

School A:

*"Individuals with poor self-esteem, or those with certain weaknesses, have difficulty of coping with bullying". For example, I had a talk with a female learner in grade 12 she came to me and told me that I had to keep a secret, this lady was raped by her uncle at home and this issue affected her personally and academically because when she saw other learners bullying each other she cried"* (Participant 6).

The following responses were given by the male participants on personal factors causing bullying:

School B:

*“I think the problem with bullying as a whole is that there is no one pattern. There is no one type of child that gets bullied. You know, maybe you look a little different and you get bullied, maybe you are smarter than everybody else then you might be a target”* (Participants 5)

School A:

*“Individuals who are the targets of bullying do not necessarily have well-adjusted coping strategies to deal with the bullying behaviour. He further maintained that these individuals may also lack confidence or conflict management skills, For example learners are targeted because they are perceived as being either academically strong or weak”* (Participants 7)

Burton (2007:12) stated that: “There is no single cause of violence, but rather, a series of interrelated factors which impact on young people in different ways, one of which will be in the perpetrating of violent acts against other young people and society in general”.

#### **5.3.6.2 Sub-theme 2: Family factors**

According to teachers from both schools problematic home situations is a family factor that supports bullying behaviour, where a learner either observes or experiences abusive behaviour, which can probably lead to individuals engaging in bullying behaviour towards other learners at school. Ward (2007:36) contends that the everyday social contexts in which children learn and grow, play a critical role in the socialisation of children.

The following responses were given by the female participants on how family contribute towards learner bullying at schools:

School B:

*“Learners bully other learners because they lack discipline from their parents, poor family backgrounds, emotional disturbance at home, and some of the single parents are very lenient towards their children” (Participant 2).*

*“Often it is factors at home that cause learners to bully others. I think that it could possibly be aggressive behaviour that they see at home and they are imitating that behaviour” (Participant 7).*

School A:

*“Parenting style is one of the factors that can maintain the behaviour of the children on bullying activities. The child that stands a chance of bullying other children is the child who might have been raised in a home where parents fight in front of children and who is abused by their parents or siblings” (Participant 9).*

*“The child that stands a chance of being bullied is the child who might have been raised differently. Their parents have raised them differently from other children at home, so they get treated differently. And you can pick up those learners. They come into the classroom and they get mocked” (Participant 6).*

The following responses were given by participants on how family can contribute towards learner bullying at schools:

School B:

*“There is a relatively large body of research which finds that the relationship between the victims and their parents is very strong, with parents being over involved in their children's lives. Negative family experiences carelessly increase the probability of children displaying behaviours during peer interaction that invite abuse from aggressive peers” (Participant 6).*

School A:

*“The economic status of parents may have an impact on bullying”. These participants further stated that: “Bullies generally come from poor households; in most cases bullies in their schools who are coming from poor families were coming to school to get food from the daily lunches provided by the government's feeding scheme.*

*Whereas some of the participants showed sympathy for poverty stricken bullies who took their peers' lunchboxes because they were hungry, others judged this kind of behaviour and suggested that these bullies were thieves” (Participant 5).*

The above responses from the participants indicated that family can affect learners to be a target of bullying, depending on how those learners were raised.

### **5.3.6.3 Sub-theme 3: Community factors**

Teachers from both schools highlighted group dynamics as an important environmental factor. Group dynamics play a big role in who is targeted, and by whom. Teachers observed the group dynamics of bullying to involve the following: groups of learners who target other learners; one learner who targets a range of other individuals; and older learners who target younger individuals. Cohen and Felson, (1979:588) indicated that the places we go to, the people we interact with and the events we attend influence the likelihood of criminal behaviours.

The following responses were given by participants from School B regarding the community factors causing bullying of learners:

*“Violent acts which are observed in the communities are brought with learners to school, and then acted out in the school setting” (Participant 7).*

*“The community can influence children’s behaviour for instance if a child grows up in a community where their elders sell or use substance abuse in front of them those learners can end up using them” (Participant 2).*

This is supported by Ward (2007:36) who contends that: “The everyday social contexts in which children learn and grow, play a critical role in the socialisation of children”.

Below are the views that were expressed by School A participants and agreed to by School B participants on the issue of community factors causing learners to bully.

*“Learner bullying behaviour is more prevalent against grade 8 and 9 learners being bullied by older learners from grade 10 to 12, because the weak is exploited. I think*

*this is the one influencing bullying factor at our school where older learners practice it to young ones” (Participant 8).*

Male participants from School B further expressed the ideas in the following manner:

*“The issue of substance abuse and use of weapons is influenced by people from the community where learners copy their behaviour and practice it at school” (Participant 9).*

Participants from School A added that:

*“Learners of both genders associate themselves with older brothers and sisters in the community they live in and they copy their behaviour and practice it at school” (Participant 11)*

Clearly, the violence and criminal activities in communities (such as drug abuse) set a predisposing environment that can be copied by learners and acted out in school. Theoretically, this falls within Bandura’s (1977:22) notion that behaviour is learned from the environment, through the process of observational learning. Children learn by observing other people’s behaviour and they display what they have seen other people do.

### **5.3.7 Theme 7: Effects of bullying on learning**

Teachers identified numerous effects caused by bullying. These results are presented according to these observed effects by the teachers such as academic performance; truancy and leaving the school; and extreme acts of violence. According to (Sullivan, 2004:6) state that: “Victims of bullying also often feel insecure and think there must be something wrong with them. They may become anxious, cautious, withdrawn, and isolated from their peers”.

### **5.3.7.1 Sub-theme 1: School truancy and leaving the school**

Teachers gave different reasons regarding the effect of bullying that can lead children to leave school. Below are the reasons that were indicated by the participants from both schools:

School B:

*“One learner in my class approached me and told me that she was afraid of coming to school because during break she did not eat her food because bullies took it and her money”. She said: “The learner did not cope with the situation that is why she could not return to school” (Participant 8).*

*“Some of the learners are bullied and we as teachers sometimes do not know about this kind of, so learners just decide not to come to school because they are afraid of bullies and their parents then bring them to school” (Participant 7).*

*“From my experience since bullying is occurring every day in this school, I know that victims are afraid of bullies when they do not come to school until their parents accompany them, and bullies just come to school for having fun not for education because sometimes some of them spend the whole time not coming in to the school, but waiting outside the school yard” (Participant 10).*

School A teachers related much the same experiences:

*“School truancy and leaving the school are common effects of bullying, learners do not want to come to school because of the bullying that they suffer at school, and ... learners are afraid of bullies” (Participant 10)*

*“Learners who bring along dangerous weapons to school are the ones who make others afraid of them, because when they see the weapons they see those weapons they become afraid and do not report it to us and decide to stay at home [the next day] or go home during breaks” (Participant 11).*

*There is a learner in my class in grade 9 who does not come to school every day, one day I called him and asked what his problem was and he said: ‘I am afraid of other groups of boys in Grade 12 because they give me their drugs during break and they*

*force me to use them because if don't they beat and threaten me with their hidden weapons like knives'* (Participant 2)

According to Sullivan (2004:6), victims of bullying may feel “angry, scared, depressed, disempowered, hateful, hurt, hopeless or vengeful”. Pretending sicknesses is the most noticeable reason for learners to stay away from school. This they do to get away from bullies and this is a serious situation that impacts negatively on learners' academic endeavours which is unpacked hereunder.

### **5.3.7.2 Sub-theme 2: Academic performance and bullying**

Some of the children feel pressure to fit in with their peers, which in some cases leads to a decline in their academic performance. Majority of teachers from schools indicated that their pass rate is low because this issue of bullying affects the school and learners are no longer feeling safe and they are no longer performing well. Participants expressed their views on this issue:

School B:

*“There have been incidences where learners were bullied because of their participation in class, expressing their opinions and for being academically strong. These learners were forced to stop answering questions and stop achieving academically”* (Participant 3).

*“Bullies in our school do not bring along their school work and they do not write their test so the academic performance is always low and immediately when you talk to them about their performance they are offended and threaten other learners”* (Participant 8).

*“I think learners cannot cope with daily bullying because they cannot express their knowledge in class because they know that they might be a target, and we have a low pass rate in our school”* (Participant 10).

Participant 12 from School A shared the story about one female learner that she teaches. The teacher specified that the learner started failing in some of her subjects

to fit in with her peers. She said: *There was the time where I got a note on her script saying: Ma'am I am afraid to come to you personally but I cannot participate because some of the learners hurt my feelings and beat me up and that all this hurtfulness and bullying is affecting my achievement in classes.*

*“When learners are bullied at home, school and people around them they cannot cope, what they do is to sleep in class while we teach and this issue affect them psychologically and emotionally so they will have a poor academic performance”* (Participant 4).

Victims of bullying at school often suffer from a number of psychological complications. These may include sleep disturbances; psychosomatic complaints; irritability; an increased frequency of illness and diseases related to chronic stress; and regression to more immature behaviour such as nail biting (Marais & Meier, 2010:41). In order to avoid bullying, learners deliberately do not participate in class and do not perform well in tests. It is also clear that, although participants are aware of bullying and its negative effects, the strategies to combat it is not very effective. This is addressed in theme 8.

### **5.3.8 Theme 8: Proposed strategies to deal effectively with bullying**

Teachers from both schools identified several strategies which may assist them in dealing with bullying in their schools. These include a whole-school approach; the design and implementation of procedures and policies; disciplinary committees; facilitating awareness of bullying; and the use of discussion forums. Prinsloo (2008:27) mentioned that: A safe school environment is characterised by a humane and caring character permitted from judgement, prejudice and violence.

#### **5.3.8.1 Sub-theme 1: Whole-school approach**

Teachers from both schools emphasised that a whole-school approach to managing bullying encourages the involvement and participation of external agencies alongside learners, educators, governors, non-academic staff and parents. The teachers specified that a whole-school approach is required to address bullying within their schools. This perception was reinforced by various teachers who suggested that stakeholders and the schools need to stand together as an integrated force against bullying. According to Cowie and Jennifer (2008:24), a whole-school approach should

emphasise the involvement of external agencies through the creation of partnerships aimed at reducing and preventing bullying in schools. Out of 22 participants from both schools all agreed with the points expressed by the following quotations:

*“It will be necessary for us to stop bullying, to change the culture in the school and that will not just come from a group of teachers, but rather we should workshop the entire staff and perhaps include this whole process in the way we teach, see how we can fit it into our subjects, if possible”* (Participant 4).

*“Although not all the teachers observe bullying directly, most are under the impression that it is a common occurrence in our school because it happens every day so we need to take care of the situations as teachers because it will affect future generation”* (Participant 7).

*“There is a disciplinary committee in our school where we selected some of the teachers and School Governing Bodies to help maintain the issue of bullying in our school; For example when a learner bullies others they take him or her to the disciplinary hearing, punish them and call upon their parents”* (Participant 1).

*“The disciplinary committee had an effect on the school climate and our children because bullying does not occur on a daily basis it takes place sometimes and learners are now able to talk to us”* (Participant 6).

Some of the teachers from School B added that some of the learners disrespect their parents in front of them as teachers, he said: *“We call upon parents to school when learners bully others, but one day a parent of one learner came to school, so when the parent arrive at school when she talk to her child the child stared to pull his mother with clothes in front of staff members at school so the child was suspended for a period month because it shows that the child does not have any discipline because he disrespect his mother so we as teachers meaning we are nothing”* (Participant 2).

### **5.3.8.2 Sub-theme 2: Procedures and policies**

The perception that was expressed during the interviews was that the school has formal policies or procedural strategies targeting bullying. Zeelie (2004:66) notes that schools are “accountable and need to be proactive in behaviour policy and

implementation thereof'; however; educators need training to develop and implement educational policies and practices (Prinsloo, 2005:464).

All teachers from School B indicated that a formal structure exists at the school to deal with reported cases of bullying. However the structure is not representative of all staff at all levels. Policies and procedures are in place and minutes of meetings are kept.

There are policies in place that included:

- A definition of bullying;
- The different types of bullying;
- The role-players involved in bullying behaviour;
- What the possible causes were; and
- Possible intervention strategies that could be utilised when incidences occurred.

#### **5.3.8.3 Sub-theme 3: Facilitating awareness**

Teachers from both schools mentioned that there was an awareness campaign that took place in their schools where they advised learners about the risk of being involved in bullying activities and how victims could report bullying. According to Cowie and Jennifer (2008:24), a whole-school approach should emphasise the involvement of external agencies through the creation of partnerships aimed at reducing and preventing bullying in schools

Participants from School B agreed that:

- The principal of the school together with the SGB were working together with the police to tell children about the consequences of bullying;
- The police also brought along criminals to talk to the children; and
- Workshops and talks by knowledgeable professionals, not only for the learners but for the whole staff.

The teachers proposed that slogans; posters; essays and poetry can be useful in raising awareness and would help to include the learners in anti-bullying campaigns” (Participant 9).

Participants from School A said that *there is a need to:*

- Create awareness amongst the learners;
- Be made aware that there are consequences for certain kinds of behaviour; and
- Be dedicated to a commitment by the school management “...and teachers to act according to procedures” (Participant 3).

Learners who are bullies should be aware of school policies and the code of conduct, and should be held responsible when they fail to comply with the rules. Behavioural contracts and social skills training can also be helpful (Smokowski & Kopasz 2005:106). It is also clear that where policies exist, they do not deter bullies from engaging in this devastating behaviour.

#### **5.4 Table 2: Summary of emerging themes**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
1. Frequency of bullying		The theme frequency came from teachers; response on how times bullying takes place at their school environment.
2. Gender distribution of bullies and victims		This theme arose from respondents indicating which gender is involved in bullying.
3. Individuals engaging in bullying behaviour		The theme originated after the participants' mentioned how bullying took place towards learners and teachers.

	3.1 Learner-on-learner bullying	This sub-theme was mentioned when the participants were showing how learners bully others.
	3.2 Learner-on-teacher bullying	The sub-theme arose when the participants were indicating how teachers are being bullied by learners at schools.
4.Types of bullying		Respondents mentioning different types of bullying that occurred at their schools.
	4.1 Verbal bullying	Verbal bullying arose from the respondents on how bullies insulted and threatened other learners with words at their school.
	4.2 Physical bullying	The theme physical bullying arose from participants mentioning physical bullying that learners practice towards other learners, for example fighting using dangerous weapons.
	4.3 Relational bullying	Participants mentioned relational bullying indicated how other learners are being isolated at school.

5. Sites of bullying		The theme sites of bullying which were mentioned by teachers mentioning the places where bullying takes place.
6. Factors that cause bullying at schools		The theme was mentioned while participants were indicating causes of bullying by learners at schools.
	6.1 Personal factors	The participants were indicating how personal characteristics can influence an individual to be part of the bullies or being a victim of abuse.
	6.2 Family factors	Participants indicated that the family can contribute towards learner's behaviour for example a poor family background and lack of parental discipline affect children to bully others.
	6.3 Environmental factors	The sub-theme was indicated by the respondents showing how environmental factors can contribute towards children's behaviour towards other learners.

7. Effect of bullying on learning		The theme was indicated by participants showing how bullying can affect learners.
	7.1 School truancy and leaving school.	The sub-theme arose when the participants indicated how learners drop out of the school and how they fear to come to school because of bullying.
	7.2 Academic performance and bullying.	Participants stated that bullying at school affect learners' academic performance.
8. Proposed strategies to deal effectively with bullying.		The participants indicated that there are strategies that they are using to deal with bullying like disciplinary committees.
	8.1 Whole-school approach	The sub-theme arose when participants stated that parents, teachers and school governing bodies should help each other to deal with bullying at schools.
	8.2 Procedures and policies	Participants indicated that school policies and procedure should be followed by teachers to deal with bullying.

	8.3 Facilitating awareness	Participants from both schools indicated that awareness campaigns are done at their schools to educate learners about consequences of bullying for example the police come with criminals to talk with learners about bullying.
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## 5.5 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the researcher presented the data collected from two secondary schools in Moletjie-Moshate. The chapter contains a detailed analysis of the findings as well as an outline of general themes. Data collected is thoroughly organised into themes, thus bringing meaning to data by telling a story and writing it all down so that others can understand the teachers' perspective on learners at secondary school and understand the experiences of bullying as a bully and victim. The main themes which occurred during data analysis included types of bullying; factors that maintain bullying, the effects of bullying and suggested strategies to deal with bullying. Chapter six will focus on the concluding remarks, recommendations, limitations and strengths related to the study, and suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSIONS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

It is important, before introducing the discussion of the research findings, to revise the problem statement within the background of its theoretical framework, literature and the aim of this study which was the phenomenological description of learner bullying at two secondary schools at Moletjie Moshate. The study used a phenomenological approach to explore the live experiences of bullying at secondary schools in the Moletjie Moshate community. The findings were discussed according to the emerging themes which was identified and elaborated in chapter five. Chapter six discusses the findings of the study in relation to the literature review and other related information.

### **6.2 TYPES OF BULLYING**

The majority of the participants mentioned the types of bullying that were taking place at their schools which included verbal; physical; and relational bullying. This is in relation to the definition of bullying adopted by the researcher Lidzhegu (2012:13) who describes bullying as a combination of verbal and physical aggression and aggravations directed from an agent (the bully) towards a target (the victim).

### **6.3 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AT SCHOOLS**

Data presented show that male and female learners were both aggressive at both schools using different types of bullying. Some of the learners were being bullied because of their good behaviour and attitude while they were at school. As reflected in chapter five, participants indicated that bullying occurred in various places at different times. It took place in the school toilets, during breaks, classrooms, on the way to and from school. Literature suggests that bullying takes place in areas which were not well supervised, while other studies found that it occurred in the classroom with the teacher present (Sahin, 2010:131; Thornberg, 2011:263). The teachers, who participated in this study, expressed that they have personally experienced bullying during their classes and after school. Observing and experiencing bullying seemed to affect them on an emotional level because some of them were afraid to come to work because learners used dangerous weapons to fight teachers and learners.

## **6.4 EFFECTS OF BULLYING**

The teachers identified numerous effects which they perceived to be the cause of bullying. It is argued that some learners do not come to school, or that they create reasons to stay away from school because they were trying to avoid bullying at school. Additionally, bullying takes place to learners leaving, or having the intention to leave the school because they could not manage with bullying. Further implication of bullying is that learners feel under pressure to fit in with their peers, and this may lead to a decrease in their academic performance. As it is evident in the research findings, these learners are sometimes forced to stop expressing their ideas, speaking up in class and achieving academically (Thornberg 2011: 262).

## **6.5 FAMILY FACTORS**

The data that was collected indicated that the majority of learners were influenced by their family background and so got involved in bullying activities. The Participants from both schools indicated that lack of parental discipline and poor family background in most cases is what encouraged learners to be involved in bullying behaviour.

## **6.6 COMMUNITY AS AN INFLUENTIAL FACTOR OF BULLYING**

In response to the question of what could be the influential factors that lead to bullying, some teachers indicated that environment is one of the most significant factors that lead to bullying activities at school. They also stated the fact that peer pressure in the community they are living in is another factor that influences learners to be involved in bullying. This is also supported by Bandura (1977:22) who states that: "behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning". This theory implies that individuals learn certain behavioural patterns by imitating other people's behaviours.

## **6.7 EFFECTIVE PREVENTION STRATEGIES AT SCHOOLS**

In response to the question: "Is the prevention of bullying strategies effective at your school"? The findings based on the data collected shows that the school principals of both schools together with teachers and SGB implemented strategies that help to prevent bullying at schools. Those strategies are as follows:

- Disciplinary committee;
- Punishment;
- Parental meeting; and
- Awareness campaign for example police and criminal visit to schools;

This is supported by (Rivers, Duncan & Besag 2007:38), indicating that school character is very important in opposing bullying because helpful school should have general principles, for example treating everyone with respect that should be obeyed by all learners. However, it is clear that this is not enough and that bullying still continues, mainly due to under-reporting as a result of fear. Even teachers seem to be afraid and bullying takes place in their presence in the class. They themselves also are being victims on occasions. Furthermore, bullying also takes place outside the school grounds, requiring a different response than on campuses.

## **6.8 CONCLUSIONS**

The researcher concludes that at schools where this research was conducted, majority of male learners engaged in physical bullying than female learners. Types of bullying that they like to use is physical, relational and verbal bullying. The findings indicated that the different types of bullying took place on a daily basis at School B. The researchers used both the literature and the data collected through focus group interviews to generate findings on the perceptions of teachers' perception on learner-on-learners bullying behaviour among secondary schools. Teachers from both schools indicated that awareness campaigns and disciplinary committees help them with the reduction of bullying behaviour among learners at their schools.

## **CHAPTER 7: STUDY STRENGTH, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 7 gives a brief discussion of the following; study strength, limitations, recommendations and conclusion of bullying at schools. The main summary of the study will also be highlighted.

The findings of the present study indicate that learners bully other learners during breaks, in their classrooms and on their way to and from home. The researcher's aim and research questions of the study have been answered, because the data collected indicate that:

- Learners got involve in bullying activities because of different situation;
- The types of bullying, the effects, and the risk factors have been stated from the data collected; and
- The preventative and awareness campaigns would continue to be taken into consideration in order to educate learners about the consequences of being involved in bullying activities.

### **7.2 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH**

Chapter one stated the general aim of the research which was the phenomenological approach of teachers' the perspective on learner bullying at selected secondary schools at Moletjie Moshate Community. It also dealt with the research methodology.

Chapter two provided a discussion of the literature review supporting bullying activities in other areas. The discussion focused on the causes of bullying, type, effects, and risk factors of engaging in bullying and preventative methods that can help to reduce bullying at schools.

Chapter three mentioned and discussed the theoretical framework that would support the study.

Chapter four described and explained research methodology that has been used in this research study.

Chapter five mentioned and explained the presentation, analysis and interpretations of the findings where the researcher coded themes.

Chapter six discussed the brief summary of the findings of this study and,

Chapter seven discussed the limitation, recommendations and conclusion of that study.

### **7.3 STUDY STRENGTHS**

The major strengths of the study are as follows:

- The study used focused group session to interview participants. The decision to use focus group sessions gave participants the opportunity to reflect on their answer
- The use of focus group sessions permitted the researcher to acquire more information from a large number of the participants within a short period of time.

### **7.4 STUDY LIMITATIONS**

The major limitations of the study are as follows:

- Some of the teachers were not interested in taking part of the study because the researcher was using focus group to interview the participants, as some of them did not feel free to express their opinions in front of other people.
- The study was confined to two schools only and the findings, although supported by literature from other studies remain localised.

### **7.5 IMPLICATIONS**

My research suggest that more educational programmers need to be introduced in the high school setting in order to teach learners and personnel how to deal with bullying. Bullying outside the school grounds necessitates a strategy involving the police and the communities (Roelofse 2007). Community problems, such as domestic violence, general violence and drug abuse need specific attention.

## **7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The following recommendations are put forward:

- In order for management to prevent bullying activities at school the school policies that are implemented should be known by every teacher so that they will know how to deal with bullying;
- There must be strong educational campaigns at schools that can help learners, parents and teachers to know about the consequences of bullying;
- The research was only done in only two secondary schools setting, I think looking at other rural and urban school districts as well will be better;
- School workers must get more involved in the welfare of learners in order to deal with bullying;
- Learners should be encouraged to report the incidences of bullying to their teachers and report of bullying have to be taken into consideration even if the incident is minor, because failure to do so would advise the bullies that their behaviour is acceptable;
- Communities and the police should jointly develop a strategy to counter bullying outside the school grounds;
- Uplifting communities to reduce violence is essential; and
- Anti-drug strategies are also necessary.

## **7.7 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS**

The aim of the study was a phenomenological description of teachers' perspectives on learner bullying at two secondary schools. The qualitative approach was used to gather data. Focus group interviews were used to collect data. The sample for the research consisted of teachers at the selected schools at Moletjie Moshate. Availability sampling was used to select participants. Thematic analysis was used to explain the findings.

The following findings emerged from the study:

- Learners bully other learners in classrooms, school toilets, on their way home;

- The environment that people live in can influence learners to be involved in bullying activities;
- Family factor is one of the influential factors that lead learners to be engaged in bullying activities;
- Physical, verbal, and relational are bullying activities that occur mostly at schools;
- Teachers indicated that learners who are being bullied do not feel safe while they are at school and absent themselves to avoid being bullied;
- Learners deliberately, under the threat of bullying, do not participate in class and perform poorly;
- Male and female learners from both schools are involved in bullying activities while teachers are also subjected to it.

## **7.8 CONCLUSIONS**

The researcher used both the literature review and the data collected through focus group interviews to produce findings on the teachers' perspectives on learner bullying at selected schools at Moletjie Moshate community. Bullying behaviour among secondary school learners should be dealt with inside a cooperative strategy. This is because, as revealed by the researcher in chapter two, bullying takes various forms. The management structures of the schools need to take bullying seriously. The management of the school need to be proactive in the elaboration and implementation of anti-bullying policies and the creation of support programmes. Bullying off campus cannot be dealt with effectively unless the community and police are involved. Dealing with domestic violence, general violence and crime and drug abuse in communities surrounding schools is a necessary element of reducing bullying.

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## **APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW**

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What is the frequency of bullying at these schools?
- What are the causes of bullying at these schools?
- How is gender represented in bullies and victims?
- What types of bullying are the most serious/detrimental in these schools?
- Is the prevention of bullying strategies effective at these schools?

Thank you

## **APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM**

My name is Kgopyana Josephinah Kwena. I am currently registered for the degree Masters in Criminology and criminal justice at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). I am conducting a study on “Teacher’s perspective of learners bullying at selected schools at Moletjie Moshate community”. I hereby request you to be part of the study.

The participation will take place by teachers who are available to take part in the study. If you agree to be part of the study, please note that everything that you say will be written down to ensure that important information must not be lost or missed. The information that you will provide will be used solely for the purpose of the study. You are allowed to withdraw at any time and you can also ask question where you do not understand. The study will be confidential where you will not write your name. The interview will only take 30 minutes of your time.

Date:.....

Researcher’s signature.....

## Appendix C: Request letter to the Department of Education

P.O BOX 6438  
MUSHUNG  
0709  
01 AUGUST 2016

CNR 113 BICARD AND 24 EXCELSIOR STREET  
PRIVATE BAG X 9489  
POLOKWANE  
0700

Dear Sir / Madam

**TO: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

I am a University of Limpopo Master Student in Criminology, school of Social Science.

I am conducting a research about teachers' perspective on learner bullying at selected Secondary School at Moletjie Moshate Community. I am writing this letter requesting a permission from Department of Education in order for them to show that they allow me to collect data from teachers at Boetse and Seshigo Secondary Schools. This letter from Department of Education will be attached with my research proposal to apply to TREC (Turloop Research Ethical Committee) in order for them to give me clearance letter for data collection.

I hope that my request will be taken in to consideration.

Yours Faithfully

  
KGOPYANA J.K

Email: jkkgopyana@gmail.com  
Contact: 072 4037820



**LIMPOPO**  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**

Ref: 2/2/2      Enq: MC Makola PhD      Tel No: 015 290 9448      E-mail: [MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za](mailto:MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za)

Kgopyana JK  
P O Box 6438  
MUSHUNG  
0709

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: **“TEACHERS PESPCTIVE ON LEARNER BULLYING AT SELECTED SCHOOLS IN MOLETJIE MOSHATE COMMUNITY.”**
3. The following conditions should be considered:
  - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
  - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the schools concerned.
  - 3.3 The conduct of research should not anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
  - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.
  - 3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).

*Request for permission to Conduct Research: Kgopyana JK*

CONFIDENTIAL

Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700  
Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494

***The heartland of southern Africa - development is about people!***



**University of Limpopo**  
Department of Research Administration and Development  
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
Tel: (015) 268 2212, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email:noko.monene@ul.ac.za

**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS  
COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**MEETING:** 03 November 2016

**PROJECT NUMBER:** TREC/175/2016: PG

**PROJECT:**

**Title:** Teachers' perspective on learner bullying at selected Secondary Schools in Moletjie Moshate Community  
**Researchers:** Ms JK Kgopyana  
**Supervisor:** Prof CJ Roelofse  
**Co-Supervisor:** Dr CE Oliver  
**School:** Social Sciences  
**Degree:** Masters in Criminology

  
**PROF. TAB MASHEGO**  
**CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: **REC-0310111-031**

**Note:**

- i) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
- ii) The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.  
**PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.**



**University of Limpopo**  
**Faculty of Humanities**  
**Executive Dean**

Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
Tel: (015) 268 4895, Fax: (015) 268 3425, Email: richard.madadzhe@ul.ac.za

**DATE: 29 July 2016**

**NAME OF STUDENT:** KGOPYANA, JK  
**STUDENT NUMBER:** [201116140]  
**DEPARTMENT:** MA – Criminology  
**SCHOOL:** Social Sciences

Dear Student

**FACULTY APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL (PROPOSAL NO. FHDC2016/1875)**

I have pleasure in informing you that your MA proposal served at the Faculty Higher Degrees Meeting on 26 June 2016 and your title was approved as follows:

**TITLE: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON LEARNER BULLYING AT SELECTED SCHOOLS IN MOLETJIE MOSHATE COMMUNITY**

Note the following:

<b>Ethical Clearance</b>	<b>Tick One</b>
Requires no ethical clearance Proceed with the study	
Requires ethical clearance (Human) (TREC) (apply online) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	√
Requires ethical clearance (Animal) (AREC) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	

Yours faithfully

**Prof RN Madadzhe**

**Executive Dean: Faculty of Humanities**

**Director:** Prof SL Sithole

**Supervisor:** Prof CJ Roelofse

**Co-supervisor:** Dr CE Oliver

*Finding solutions for Africa*