

Bullying as a potential factor influencing teachers' mental health

By

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Abstract

Previous international and local research confirms the prevalence of learner-to-teacher bullying. However, no study has investigated whether there is a relationship between learner-to-teacher bullying and teachers' mental health, specifically with reference to anxiety and depression. Consequently, the current research firstly aimed to examine whether there is a significant proportion of government high school teachers, in this study's sample, who are exposed to bullying by their learners. The second aim was to investigate a possible correlation between learner-to-teacher bullying and teachers' levels of anxiety and depression. This relationship was examined utilising an overall sample of 153 participants in the Tshwane area. Through the use of quantitative research and statistical analyses, the results indicate a significant correlation between learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's mental health. These results hold certain implications for the school system as a whole since the equilibrium required for a proper functioning school may be negatively influenced by learner-to-teacher bullying.

Key terms

Anxiety

Bullying

Depression

Learners

Learner-to-teacher bullying

Mental health

Quantitative research

Schools

Teachers

Workplace bullying

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“We are all a function of what has happened before, in the past; we cannot change that. Our present is an extrapolation of the past, but the future is not; we can shape that. Being able to shape our future is a very good thing for anyone that has suffered at the hands of a bully – for them to be able to rebuild themselves.”

(Scott-Lennon & Considine, 2008, p. 30).

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction into the topic of this study, which is the relationship between learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's mental health. The current research is significantly relevant for South African schools, teachers and principals and the Department of Education in particular. These groups of people will gain knowledge with respect to the phenomenon of learner-to-teacher bullying as well as any relationship it may have with teachers' mental health. As stated by Scott-Lennon and Considine (2008) above, individuals who suffer at the hands of a bully are able to shape their future and rebuild themselves from what they have suffered in the past. This study intends effectuate awareness of the phenomenon learner-to-teacher bullying so as to aid teachers in mentally rebuilding him and herself after suffering from this bullying.

The opening chapter begins with an exploration of the aims, justification and importance of this study. These are followed by the statement of the research goal, and definitions of key terms used in the study, namely workplace bullying, mental health, anxiety and depression. Finally, a discussion of the paradigmatic point of view of the current study is presented.

1.1 Aims of the study

In short, this study aims to investigate learner-to-teacher bullying and the impact that this bullying could have on teachers' mental health. Learner-to-teacher bullying takes place on school premises, which is the place of work for the teacher. Broadly speaking, bullying at work is viewed as a non-observable (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper 2011), insidious (O'Donnell, MacIntosh, & Wuest, 2010), and silent (Kohut, 2008) occurrence. It has been found that workplace bullying causes more stress for the victim and has a severe impact on a person's mental health compared

to people who are not bullied at work (Nielsen, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2010; Notelaers, Einarsen, De Witte, & Vermunt, 2006; O'Donnell et al., 2010; Thompson, 2009; Vartia, 2001). The predominant aim of this study is therefore to examine teachers being bullied by learners in their workplace.

An additional aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's mental health. More specifically, two principal mental health areas are of concern and will be examined. These are anxiety and depression, which are separate yet related dimensions of mental health difficulties (Mykletun, Stordal, & Dahl, 2001). Anxiety and depression are among the most prevalent mental health difficulties worldwide (Alonso et al., 2011; Razzouk et al., 2010; Tempier et al., 2009). Furthermore, anxiety and depression contribute to being a continuous burden for the general South African workforce (Herman, et al., 2009; Mostert, Rothmann, Mostert, & Nell, 2008; Rothmann, 2008; Sieberhagen, Rothmann, & Pienaar, 2009). Therefore, these two mental health difficulties are considered as an important aspect of this study.

1.2 Justification of this study

In South Africa, Corene de Wet is a forerunner in the study of learner-to-teacher bullying. Through several studies De Wet investigates the following: the prevalence of learner-to-teacher bullying in the Free State and Eastern Cape (De Wet & Jacobs, 2006); the influence of school size, its location, and the learner's age on learner-to-teacher bullying (De Wet, 2007); the different types of this bullying and the negative influence it has on teachers' personal life (De Wet, 2010b); principals' perceptions of learner-to-teacher bullying and prevention strategies (De Wet, 2011a), and the risk factors associated with this phenomenon (De Wet, 2012).

The abovementioned South African studies highlight the prevalence of this form of bullying in South Africa. As this phenomenon continues to exist, the importance of this research is clear. This study attempts to build on De Wet's research by incorporating teachers' mental health into the research as well as a sample of participants in Tshwane, Gauteng. Therefore, there are differences between De Wet's research and this study. Firstly, the current research was conducted in the province of Gauteng, an area that has not as yet been researched. Secondly, the relationship between learner-to-teacher bullying and teachers' mental health was explored, which was not the case in De Wet's studies. In addition, this relationship was investigated by utilising two questionnaires. In the two previously published quantitative South African learner-to-teacher bullying studies, the impact of learner-to-teacher bullying on teachers' morale and performance (De Wet & Jacobs, 2006), and the possible trauma a teacher may experience due to learner-to-teacher bullying (De Wet, 2007) were examined. Only one questionnaire was utilised for each study (De Wet, 2007; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006) and these questionnaires did not focus on a teacher's mental health. Ultimately, as an exploratory study, this research aims to contribute to and build on the South African studies regarding learner-to-teacher bullying as well as research about teachers' mental health.

1.3 Importance of this study

This research intends to enrich the understanding of learner-to-teacher bullying among teachers, principals, learners, and the Department of Education. Moreover, this study may enlighten teachers about the correlation between learner-to-teacher bullying and their mental health. The findings could be used to assist in the promotion of teachers' mental health.

Findings from this study may consequently play a role in providing additional information about the extent of the learner-to-teacher bullying problem within a South African context, and possibly bring augmented awareness of the topic to the public. According to O'Donnell et al. (2010), in general, awareness serves as an important intervention in workplace bullying since it enables people to understand this unexpected phenomenon. An illustration of awareness which allows discussion of learner-to-teacher bullying can be seen on a YouTube video clip that demonstrates how two high school learners physically bully a substitute teacher (Teacher getting bullied at Digital Harbor High School in Baltimore Maryland, 2012).

1.4 Statement of research goal

As proposed above, the conceptualisation of a research goal and hypotheses (which are outlined in Chapter 3) could be formed based on the aims of this study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the proportion of teachers experiencing learner-to-teacher bullying as a potential factor influencing teachers' mental health. The research question is thus twofold: What proportion of teachers in this study report exposure to bullying by their learners? Is there a correlation between exposure to learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's mental health, specifically with regard to anxiety and depression?

1.5 Defining key terms

In this study a school student, pupil or adolescent will be referred to as a learner. The educator of the learner will be referred to as a teacher. For the purposes of this study, the researcher chose to name the phenomenon of learners bullying teachers learner-to-teacher bullying. In other studies, however, this phenomenon has been described using a variety of terminology, namely: teacher targeted bullying

(Pervin & Turner, 1998), educator-targeted bullying (De Wet, 2010b, 2011a, 2012; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006), students bullying teachers (James et al., 2008), bullying of teachers (Terry, 1998), as well as teacher-children bullying (Kõiv, 2011). Furthermore, the term participants will be utilised instead of the terms respondents or subjects. The reason for this choice is that questionnaires were utilised and completed, as opposed to the methods of an experimental design (Reber & Reber, 2001).

For a better comprehension of the terms used in this study, a few fundamental concepts will be defined.

1.5.1 Workplace bullying

Workplace bullying has no agreed definition since one person may perceive a situation as bullying and another may not (Coyne, 2011). However, a number of terms have conceptualised bullying at work. The term 'bullying' has been used (Coyne, 2011; Einarsen, et al., 2011) as well as mobbing (Einarsen, 2000; Leymann, 1996). Moreover, the phenomenon has been referred to as harassment (Brodsky, 1976), generalized workplace abuse (Richman et al., 1999) and workplace bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007). According to Coyne (2011), there has been a tendency among authors to use the terms mobbing and bullying interchangeably. The term workplace bullying will be utilised for this study. Scott-Lennon and Considine (2008) define workplace bullying as follows:

Repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. (p. 5)

1.5.2 Mental health

Over the years the concept of mental health has often been confused with severe mental illness and connected to negative attitudes as well as societal stigma (Lehtinen, Ozamiz, Underwood, & Weiss, 2005). Also, there is an intimate connection between mental health, physical health, and behaviour (Herrman, Saxena, Moodie, & Walker, 2005). For the purposes of this study, the definition of mental health provided in the Merriam-Webster online medical dictionary, defined as follows, will be used:

The condition of being sound mentally and emotionally that is characterized by the absence of mental disorder (as neurosis or psychosis) and by adequate adjustment especially as reflected in feeling comfortable about oneself, positive feelings about others, and ability to meet the demands of life. (Mental Health, 2012, para. 1)

1.5.3 Anxiety and depression

Anxiety and depression are similar; however, while most people with depression appear anxious, not all people with anxiety are depressed (Barlow & Durand, 2009). Depression may be categorised as a depressed mood state and anhedonia (a loss of interest or pleasure), marked by vegetative symptoms such as weight loss or gain, insomnia or hypersomnia, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness, and difficulty concentrating (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Anxiety may be defined as “an alerting signal; it warns of impending danger and enables a person to take measures to deal with a threat” (Sadock & Sadock, 2007, p. 579).

1.6 Paradigmatic point of departure

The ecosystemic paradigm underpins the proposed study. According to Visser (2007) the systems theory is grounded in the assumption that the world is complex

and consists of numerous systems at different ecological levels which interact with one another. Nworie and Haughton (2008) state that once change occurs in one part of the system as a whole, it will “affect the other parts because of the symbiotic relationship of all parts of the system that support normal functioning and maintain the necessary equilibrium” (p. 56). Bullying in the workplace, for example, not only has devastating effects on the targets or victims (personal and occupational), but also on the organisation and society as a whole (Carbo & Hughes, 2010; Sá & Fleming, 2008).

According to Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, and Wiener (2005), bullying not only occurs between the bully and the victim. In accord with the ecological systemic framework, bullying evolves in “the social context of the peer group, the classroom, the school, the family and the larger community” (Mishna et al., 2005, p. 719). In the current study, three ‘realities’ (Jordaan, 2008) are found, namely: the learner, the teacher and the contextual disturbance (trigger). Jordaan (2008) states that each reality is a subsystem within a larger system. Each of these realities is constituted within the Group System of the ecosystemic approach. For the purposes of the proposed study, the system will be named the school system. Each individual will respond differently to their realities; for example, a person’s view of political, historical, or global issues have an impact on intergroup relations and experiences at work (Lewis, Giga, & Hoel, 2011). However, it is important to keep in mind that within the school subsystem, any given reality is also interdependent. In other words, since individuals are together with other individuals within the school system, one learner’s reaction may affect another learner’s, and another, and so it revolves. All of the learners’ and teachers’ individual reactions together contribute to the larger school system.

There are triggers which cause a disturbance in the equilibrium of the school as a subsystem. These triggers, as discussed by Steffgen and Ewen (2007), may involve the school culture, the teacher's level of educational competence (teacher commitment and behaviour) or the school's socio-ecological environment. Allen (2010) is of the opinion that a teacher's classroom management determines whether bullying is either promoted or discouraged. Any disturbance concerning the class network, time constraints, competition or disintegration among learners has a rippling effect on the equilibrium of the school system (Steffgen & Ewen, 2007). More disturbances mentioned by the authors are cohesion of the class, learner participation, quality of classrooms, and disturbance relating to the ecology of the school. Moreover, school environments that are coercive, disconnected, chaotic and uncaring in nature may promote or allow the presence of antisocial, violent, or bullying cultures (Allen, 2010).

Bullying behaviour is seen as a recurring event, thus moving in a continuous cycle. The cycle starts with taunting, followed by testing, threatening, and intimidation, which could possibly lead to violence (Rademeyer, 2008). This cycle fits best within the ecosystemic trend since it views the individual as being constantly and consistently part of circular interactions between systems, specifically subsystems (Avis, Pauw, & Van der Spuy, 1999). In relation to the cyclic character of bullying, Allen (2010) speaks of a social-ecological approach which considers bullying on multiple levels. This approach suggests that it is possible for learners to bully each other in the context of a wider culture of bullying amongst adults in their environment. More specifically, if the cycle continues among adults, bullying each other and learners, then learners will bully each other as well (Allen, 2010), which may in turn lead to learners bullying adults.

Studies concerning learner-to-teacher bullying (James et al., 2008; Steffgen & Ewen, 2007), as well as principal-to-teacher bullying (De Wet, 2010), subscribe to the ecosystemic approach. If teachers are bullied (James et al., 2008) or victimised (Steffgen & Ewen, 2007) by learners, or by principals (De Wet, 2010), the underlying culture of the school may be influenced since it may lead to apathy and negative influences on teachers' professional lives.

As Frankl (2006) states, "the human being is completely and unavoidably influenced by his surroundings" (p. 65). Accordingly, personal understandings of a person's surroundings are changed if they are exposed to bullying (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002). It may be fairly expected that bullying will not only affect the learner and the teacher, but the school system as a whole as well.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter forms part of the introductory deliberation of this study. The chapter began with an explanation of the study's aims, justification and importance. This was followed by the statement of the research goal and the definitions and explanation of key terms significant to this study. The chapter concluded with the study's paradigmatic point of departure.

In the chapter to follow, the literature that forms the foundation of the current study is outlined.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the central concepts of this research and to contextualise this study in terms of existing research regarding bullying and mental health. The chapter begins with an exploration of bullying, specifically bullying in the place of work and within schools. In addition, the phenomenon of learner-to-teacher bullying is discussed. This is followed by a reflection concerning the different mental health elements of importance to the current study and a deliberation of mental health in the workplace and of South African teachers. Finally, the impact of bullying at work on an employee's mental health, specifically that of a teacher's, is reviewed.

2.2 Facets of bullying

This study focuses on bullying by learners toward teachers. In order to recognise this form of bullying, it is important to gain an understanding of what bullying entails. Bullying is a worldwide phenomenon that has received a considerable amount of attention and research over the past five decades (De Wet, 2011a; Yahn, 2012). Yahn (2012) states that "bullying is not a static, finite set of behaviors; it is an *adaptive* response to social influences and ecologies" (p. 25). Research with concern to bullying has primarily focused on children and adolescents (e.g., Espelage & De La Rue, 2012; Olweus, 1993; Smith, 2011; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010; Timm & Eskell-Blokland, 2011), adults (Collins, McAleavy, & Adamson, 2004; De Wet, 2010a; Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Kõiv, 2011; Randall, 2003), and bullying in the workplace (Bentley et al., 2012; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012; Power et al., 2013; Samnani & Singh, 2014).

Since bullying mostly occurs in the context of social interactions, it is almost exclusively studied in social settings such as schools or the general workplace (Williams & Guerra, 2011). Therefore, most studies concerning bullying have been conducted with children at school and adults in the workplace, with similar bullying incidents taking place in each context. Nonetheless, learner-to-teacher bullying has received minimal research attention (De Wet, 2012). In this study, the focus is on teachers who are bullied by their learners, and on the school setting as the workplace of the teacher.

A situation where bullying takes place most often comprises a bully, a victim, and in all probability a bystander (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2011; Obermann, 2011; Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse, & Neale, 2010). For the purposes of this study, only the role of the bully and the victim will be examined. The learner is viewed as the bully and the teacher as the victim.

A bully appears to display certain characteristics. According to Einarsen et al. (2011) a bully’s character is stereotyped as rude, domineering and aggressive. Zapf and Einarsen (2011) add that a bully’s self-esteem may be threatened or he or she may display a lack of social competencies, thus perpetrating the acts of bullying. As Yahn (2012) states, bullies are also “ever-evolving” (p. 25). Cyber bullying is, for example, a manifestation of this. Moreover, the bully usually desires to win something that he or she wants. Attaining the prize may result in the following scenarios: to find pleasure in observing another’s fear or pain; to have the approval of an attentive yet silent audience of onlookers, or to gain support from a group in order to ostracise an individual (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009; Zapf, Escartín, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2011). Research further indicates that where gender is concerned, males are more likely to be the bully than females (Zapf et al., 2011).

What exactly comprises the victim's characteristics, however, is of a controversial nature (Coyne, 2011). As far back as 1993, Olweus has offered the concept of two types of victims, namely the submissive and provocative victim (Olweus, 1993). Several scholars have built on his typology, specifically with regard to school learners, for studies relating to victims of workplace bullying (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001). These authors suggest that the submissive victim has a vulnerable disposition which leaves him or her in a socially exposed position. The provocative victim's disposition is such that he or she responds to conflict, provoking aggressive behaviour due to factors such as envy or anxiety. Zapf and Einarsen (2001) view victims as being continually insulted or teased and perceiving themselves unable to retaliate. In a study a decade later, Zapf and Einarsen (2011) suggest that persons who demonstrate deficits in self-esteem and social incompetence as well as those in conflict with group norms, may often be targeted as victims of bullying.

2.3 Workplace bullying

Bullying among adults at work has been researched as far back as the 1970s, with Brodsky's (1976) *The Harassed Worker*, and two decades later by Leymann (1996) who built on Brodsky's work (Einarsen et al., 2011). Since the 1980s and 1990s, researchers have studied workplace bullying more intensely as interest in the subject increased (Coyne, 2011). According to Notelaers and Einarsen (2012), bullying at work is a complex phenomenon which is difficult to disentangle. The following types of bullying have been found in the workplace: direct and indirect personal bullying (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; De Wet, 2012), cyber bullying (Yahn, 2012) and physical bullying such as hitting or pushing (Einarsen, 2000).

Psychological forms of bullying do, nevertheless, tend to be more prevalent than the mentioned types of bullying at work (Coyne, 2011).

Numerous forms of psychological bullying at work have been found. These include personal abuse (being attacked directly or indirectly), work related abuse (being overworked or feeling work pressure), social isolation (being ostracised) (Coyne, 2011); threatening behaviours, verbal abuse, humiliation, insults, work interference (Randall, 2003), and feelings of exclusion from their current position, the organisation itself, or from working life overall (Berthelsen, Skogstad, Lau, & Einarsen, 2011). Consequently, if the mistreatment by a subordinate, colleague, or superior occurs and continues for a certain amount of time, repeating itself persistently, it has a negative effect on the mental health of the victim (Einarsen et al., 2011).

A range of studies across nations has been conducted with regard to bullying at work in a variety of working contexts. These studies provide evidence for the incidence of bullying at work, and similarly indicate the worldwide prevalence of this phenomenon. A few of these contexts include hospitals, manufacturing companies and department stores (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001); marine engineering industries (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997); public administration and banking, social services, hotel and trade industries and construction (Escartín, Rodríguez-Carballeira, Zapf, Porrúa, & Martín-Peña, 2009); call centres (Liefoghe & MacKenzie Davey, 2001); fire-fighting services (Coyne, Craig, & Smith-Lee Chong, 2004); large organisations (Coyne et al., 2000), and public and private organisations (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Notelaers, 2009). In addition, governmental agencies (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000); nurses (Berry, Gillespie, Gates, & Schafer, 2012) and a representative sample of US workers (Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010) have been studied. In the South African

workplace, an extensive study was undertaken concerning violence in various health care facilities and settings (Steinman, 2003). Health care workers who participated in the study experienced at least one episode of psychological or physical workplace bullying in their career (Steinman, 2003).

Learning institutions have also been investigated as a context where bullying at work occurs. International tertiary education studies report the presence of bullying among colleagues (Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Lewis, 2004; McKay, Huberman-Arnold, Fratzi, & Thomas, 2008). Pietersen (2007) employed a phenomenological method to investigate participants' experience of interpersonal bullying behaviours within South African academic institutions. In this study, four general themes were determined via the participants' experiences, namely discrimination, isolation, lack of recognition, and obstructionism. Furthermore, subordinates were found to be bullied by means of both direct and indirect bullying (Pietersen, 2007).

Similarly, bullying in the school setting among adults has been researched (De Wet, 2010a, 2011b, 2014; Kõiv, 2011). In South Africa, De Wet (2010a) conducted a study with respect to principal-on-teacher bullying. The following bullying acts made by the principal are identified: lack of empathy; setting victims (teachers) up to fail; favouritism; threats of dismissal; ignoring the thoughts, needs and feelings of teachers, as well as verbal abuse (De Wet, 2010a). In a further study, De Wet (2011b) investigates educator-on-educator bullying. It is found that the bullies form good relationships with the principals, thus causing an imbalance of power among staff members. Victims suffer through the acts and behaviours of the bullies, such as their professional competency being questioned, being belittled in front of learners, and purposefully being set up to fail (De Wet, 2011b).

Research conducted on bullying among adults in the school context has therefore explored teachers being bullied by their superiors (top down) and by their co-workers (side-ways). Yet, as previously mentioned, bullying by subordinates such as the learners (bottom up) has seen limited exploration.

2.4 Bullying within schools

The abovementioned studies illustrate the prevalence of adult bullying within various workplaces. These studies are significant for the foundation of this study. However, bullying that occurs among school children is also significant as it has been found that learners not only bully other learners, but teachers, who are at their place of work, as well. To understand how this takes place, a brief examination of bullying within schools is required.

Despite extensive research and global documentation on bullying among learners within the school context, formulating a universal definition of bullying in school is challenging since bullying varies from situation to situation and from child to child (De Wet, 2005). Olweus (1993), one of the forerunners in identifying and conducting research on bullying among school learners, however, defines the phenomenon as follows: “[A] student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (p. 9). Several authors utilise this definition in their research (De Wet, 2010b; Houbre, Tarquinio, & Lanfranchi, 2010; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011), adding the supposition that bullying is not provoked by the victim and that a power imbalance exists (Horton, 2011; Nesor, Ladikos, & Prinsloo, 2004). Studies demonstrate that bullying among learners takes place on school premises (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006; Vaillancourt et al., 2010), specifically in the classroom

(Roland & Galloway, 2002; Yoon, Bauman, Choi, & Hutchinson, 2011) or on the playground (Marais & Meier, 2010).

Numerous international studies have researched primary and secondary school bullying, declaring a high prevalence rate of bullying among school learners (Cheng, Chen, Ho, & Cheng, 2011; Hilton, Anngela-Cole, & Wakita, 2010; McMahon, Reulbach, Keeley, Perry, & Arensman, 2012; Smith, 2011; Thornberg, 2010). In these studies, and others, several types of bullying are pinpointed in the school context. These types of bullying include: physical, verbal, relational, damaging property, behavioural (coercive or disrespectful), direct, visible, indirect, secretive, emotional, sexual, exclusion/isolation, threats/bribes, and psychological bullying (Cheng et al., 2011; De Wet, 2012; Nesar et al., 2004; Rospenda, Richman, & Sharon, 2009; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009; Williams & Guerra, 2011). Moreover, cyber or technological bullying via telecommunication networks, including e-mail, text messages, or mxit (Rivers, Chesney, & Coyne, 2011; Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012) as well as Facebook (Kwan & Skoric, 2013), are identified.

In South Africa, bullying is highly prevalent in schools (Mestry, Van der Merwe, & Squelch, 2006) and on the rise (Maree, 2005), occurring daily (Marais & Meier, 2010) and in many forms (Mabatha, Magano, & Sedibe, 2014). In a study conducted by Nesar et al. (2004), 91% of the respondents report that bullying takes place in their schools. The types of bullying vary from verbal, indirect, psychological and emotional to physical bullying (De Wet, 2005; Mabatha, et al., 2014; Marais & Meier, 2010; Mestry et al., 2006). It is additionally revealed that boys are more culpable of bullying than girls (De Wet, 2005), and bullying occurs more frequently among black learners (Nesar et al., 2004).

School bullying gives rise to an array of consequences for the learner who is victimised. These consequences interfere with the victim's learning abilities and lowers self-esteem (Mabatha, et al. 2014; Whitted & Dupper, 2008). Furthermore, being bullied negatively affects a learner's mental health (Mestry et al., 2006), specifically his or her emotional, physical, social, or educational well-being (De Wet, 2005). This negative effect may, in turn, ignite feelings of anger or sadness (Neser et al., 2004) as well as symptoms of anxiety and depression (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Paton, 2001; Fekkes, Pijpers, Fredriks, Vogels, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2006). As a result, being bullied during childhood may contribute to the victim suffering from depression and anxiety in adulthood (Gladstone, Parker, & Malhi, 2006; Swearer, Song, Cary, Eagle, & Mickelson, 2001).

For the bully, there may be immediate as well as future consequences of their bullying behaviour. School bullying may lead the bully into engaging in different types of anti-social behaviour (Bender & Lösel, 2011), which in turn affects the social environment of the school. These consequences may further develop into adulthood as there are correlations between childhood bullying and adult bullying (Bender & Lösel, 2011; Hanish & Guerra, 2004). Moreover, relationships between school bullying and the development of criminality (Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Loeber, 2011) as well as between school bullying and adult intimate partner violence (Falb et al., 2011), are evident.

2.4.1 The teacher-learner relationship within a school setting

As this study is interested in the bullying of teachers by learners, the researcher finds it significant to consider the teacher-learner relationship and how this complex relationship could potentially develop into a bullying scenario. Before discussing the relationship between the learner and teacher, their respective roles in

the school setting together with the school setting itself need to be noted. The role of the teacher involves the planning and organisation of lessons and classroom management (Allen, 2010; Watzke, 2007) as well as the promotion of learners' advanced knowledge (Watzke, 2007). The role of the learner is to develop academically, behaviourally and emotionally (Wilson, 2004). Both learner and teacher "have the right to an educational and working experience in which they feel valued and respected; where they clearly and actively support learners' development and learning, and where both groups are free from fear, threat and harm" (De Wet, 2007, p. 60).

It is thus crucial for schools to offer a safe environment in which learning and growth can take place as schools play a large role in a child's socialisation and development (Neser et al., 2004). However, research indicates that a safe school environment is not only important for a child's development, but for the teacher's development as well (De Wet, 2007). It is against this background that teachers are the focus of the study. They play a role in providing a safe environment, yet that role is jeopardised when they are the victims of bullying. Consequently, teachers also have a right to a safe working environment (De Wet, 2007).

The relationship between a teacher and learner/s is not only crucial, but also complex. The complexity is characterised by two interrelated dimensions of the relationship. One entails the teacher's management of a classroom, and the other is about a teacher's response to learners.

Firstly, classroom management plays an important role in determining the behaviour of learners (Allen, 2010; Barbetta, Norona, & Bocard, 2005) together with the occurrence of learner-to-teacher bullying (De Wet, 2012). In South Africa, teachers disclose distressing tales with regard to bullying in the classroom context

(De Vries, 2005b). A large proportion (20.2%) of bullying at schools takes place in classrooms every day (Neser et al., 2004). Furthermore, teachers generally experience their classrooms as a place where learners “play with stationery, throw objects around, disobey the teacher, are inattentive, and make a noise” (Marais & Meier, 2010, p. 50). Barbetta et al. (2005) report that where teachers stick to the practical procedures during transition time and relay the procedure to the learner, class changes will run more smoothly and consistently, saving time as well. In addition, sticking to procedures may possibly prevent learner-to-teacher bullying incidents from occurring.

Secondly, a teacher’s negative response to poor behaviour has harmful consequences. Research emphasises the necessity for teachers to provide positive and proactive responses to poor behaviour (Barbetta et al., 2005; Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008). A negative attitude from the teacher’s side not only increases learners’ feelings of being defeated, but it also weakens the learner-teacher relationship (Barbetta et al., 2005). For example, when a learner’s behaviour is disruptive during a lesson, the understandably irritated teacher should not reprimand the learner in front of the class, but speak to the learner privately and calmly after class. Positive responses may improve the learner-teacher relationship as a result, and possibly prevent learner-to-teacher bullying from occurring at all (De Wet, 2011a).

An additional aspect contributing to the complexity of the teacher-learner relationship is the issue of power. As one of the first researchers to investigate learner-to-teacher bullying, Terry (1998) states that in certain situations learners have considerable power over their teachers. When this power imbalance occurs, or when power is abused by learners, potential learner-to-teacher bullying is almost

certain to follow. An example may be seen in South Africa where learners tend to challenge a teacher's authority by quoting their rights (South African Government Information, 2009). The Bill of Rights allows learners certain privileges such as freedom of speech. These privileges are, however, often abused, which then brings the learner into a power position and leads to the teacher's authority being jeopardised. As a consequence, many teachers across the country feel powerless against learners' behaviour due to certain school regulations based on South Africa's constitutional rights (De Vries, 2005a). Teachers are often uncertain about what their rights are with regard to disciplining learners, which in turn causes low morale (De Vries, 2005a). However, Terry (1998) states that a teacher does have some degree of power over the learner, especially concerning maturity, age, and education.

2.4.2 Teacher-to-learner bullying

In order to further comprehend the learner-teacher relationship, it is crucial to be cognizant of the phenomenon of teacher-to-learner bullying. Teachers are supposed to be the caring adults who provide a safe and nurturing environment for learners in a school system (Sylvester, 2011; Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, & Brethour, 2006; Whitted & Dupper, 2008). Nonetheless, studies stress that some teachers do abuse their power over learners, which may lead to teacher-to-learner bullying (Delfabbro et al., 2006; De Wet, 2007; Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2002; Sylvester, 2011; Twemlow et al., 2006; Whitted & Dupper, 2008). Sylvester (2011) propounds that there are three common ways in which teachers bully learners. These include: sarcasm, opaque name calling, or humiliating a learner if they believe that the learner will give them trouble in the classroom. Behaviours like these are often justified by teachers as appropriate discipline and instruction responses or agreeable classroom management (Sylvester, 2011). They do, however, have the exact

opposite effect of what teachers try to achieve with learners. For example, if a teacher singles out one learner, humiliating him or her in front of the entire class, that learner may feel that he or she needs to defend him or herself, thus humiliating the teacher in return.

Research shows that learners are more fearful of being bullied by teachers than by their peers, and experience greater psychosomatic health problems and depression when bullied by teachers (Pottinger & Gordon-Stair, 2009; Timmerman, 2003). Whitted and Dupper (2008) studied the extent to which teachers or other adults bully learners, either psychologically or physically, and how much this results in a learner's "worst school experience" (p. 331) (WSE). The WSE is the worst experience a learner may go through during school hours. The researchers report that learners are affected by their WSE twice as much when caused by adults as by their peers. This corresponds with Pottinger and Gordon-Stair's (2009) finding that 44.2% of the students in the study they carried out indicate that their WSE was committed by teachers. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Twemlow et al. (2006), 45% of the participating teachers admit to bullying students. Whitted and Dupper (2008) name the phenomenon of teacher-to-learner bullying a "hidden problem" (p. 338), which needs more attention and research compared to what is currently being reported.

2.5 Learner-to-teacher bullying

As mentioned, a vast number of studies have been conducted with respect to bullying in schools and the general workplace. Yet, only a limited number of studies have focussed on specific work contexts such as schools and the phenomenon of learners bullying teachers. Some of these studies were conducted internationally, for

example, in England (Pervin & Turner, 1998; Terry, 1998), Estonia (Kõiv, 2011), Ireland (James et al., 2008), and Luxembourg (Steffgen & Ewen, 2007); others were carried out locally (De Wet, 2007, 2010b, 2011a, 2012; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006; Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2002).

The prevalence rates reported by international studies state that verbal abuse is one of the main forms of learner-to-teacher bullying, and that bullying is repetitive in nature. It is important to note that the definition, types, and circumstances of learner-to-teacher bullying differ from study to study, thus the findings are not strictly comparable. According to Terry (1998), 41.6% of teachers were bullied once or more during the five days preceding their participation in the study. Steffgen and Ewen's (2007) results indicate that 23.9% of teachers are victimised by learners' strong verbal attacks several times a year. In a study conducted by Pervin and Turner (1998), 15% of teachers are exposed to physical bullying by learners. With regard to non-verbal bullying, Kõiv (2011) finds that teachers experience devaluation (4.9%), intimidation (3.1%) and public humiliation (5.4%) from learners.

These authors stress that the relationship between school violence, workplace aggression, and bullying against teachers by learners, need to be extensively examined in ongoing research since these phenomena seem to be escalating. Moreover, awareness of increased incidents will encourage schools to include learner-to-teacher bullying in their anti-bullying programmes in order for the whole school environment to be covered (James et al., 2008). In addition, more research may prevent the negative impact learner-to-teacher bullying has on teachers' morale and performance (Pervin & Turner, 1998). Continuing research may therefore aid in the prevention of learner-to-teacher bullying (Steffgen & Ewen, 2007).

The incidence of learner-to-teacher bullying has similarly been established as problematic within South Africa (De Vries, 2005a, 2005b), thus correlating with international findings. De Vries (2005b) reports findings in Free State schools where 33.4% of teachers report that they are verbally attacked by learners, 24.8% report being assaulted, and 18.1% report being sexually harassed. Learners not only attack their teachers (De Wet, 2013), but also swear at, abuse, belittle, spit at, and knock teachers around (De Vries, 2005a). De Vries (2005a) describes three such incidents. In one incident, a grade 10 learner spat in a teacher's face when she shouted at him about his poor work, which resulted in the teacher feeling traumatised and not returning to the school. In another, a pregnant high school teacher was kicked in the stomach after accusing a learner of swearing. In a third incident, a female teacher discovered a hand-drawn death certificate in a learner's journal, bearing her name. The same learner later bludgeoned her a dozen times with a hammer and cracked her skull (Bega & Ajam, 2013).

In recent times, several attacks on South African teachers have been reported to the police and consequently received media attention, specifically in newspapers. For instance, at three separate schools the following occurred. In one school a female teacher was sexually assaulted by a learner in her classroom (Zwecker, 2013b). In another, a learner pointed a pellet gun at a female teacher, who was unaware that it was a toy firearm as it looked real (Nel, 2013b). Furthermore, a learner assaulted a male teacher with a chair and broom, while another learner filmed the incident and downloaded the video clip onto the internet, which went viral (Ajam, Bega, & Monama, 2013; Zwecker, 2013a, 2013b). In another incident, a 15 year old learner planned to shoot a learner who had been bullying him, and then to shoot himself. However, he came across the deputy-principal first and for no

apparent reason pointed the firearm at her. The firearm misfired and the learner ran off, biting a teacher who tried to stop him and shooting another teacher in his left calf (Nel, 2013a).

In most of these cases, the Department of Education sent a team of competent senior officials to investigate the incidents, and assist in giving feedback and providing support. Also, a departmental psychologist was sent to the schools to give further aid and trauma counselling to the victims and bystanders (Ajam et al., 2013; Myburgh, 2013; Nel, 2013a; Zwecker, 2013a, 2013b). These episodes, however, raise questions about the safety in South African schools (Ajam et al., 2013) as bullying against teachers is on the rise across the country (Bega & Ajam, 2013).

2.6 Facets of mental health

This study seeks to examine the relationship between learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's mental health. As this study does not seek to diagnose the teachers, anxiety and depression are not viewed as disorders, but rather as mental health difficulties.

In the past, mental health has been a neglected subject for most societies and governments due to the absence of a proper definition (Keyes, 2007), and because of the false assumptions and confusion around the two concepts of mental health and mental illness (Herrman et al., 2005; Lehtinen et al., 2005). However, both the promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental health difficulties have acquired global recognition over recent years (Collins et al., 2011). For instance, mental health research conducted worldwide illustrates the growth of its global recognition (Bordin et al., 2009; Bruffaerts et al., 2008; Jenkins et al., 2010; Patel et

al., 2011; Tempier et al., 2009). Also, the recognition of mental health issues has increased in South Africa (Lund, Kleintjes, Kakuma, & Flisher, 2010b; Seedat et al., 2008).

Researchers describe mental health in different ways. According to Keyes, Dhingra, and Simoes (2010), mental health should not be defined as the absence of mental illness, but rather as an emotional vitality which contributes positive feelings towards life (Keyes, 2007). Huber et al. (2011) consider mental health as the capability of an individual to adapt to and manage in a difficult situation, thus improving well-being and engaging in a positive interaction between body and mind. According to the World Health Organisation (Herrman et al., 2005), three interacting domains, namely psychological, social and biological, determine mental health. The psychological domain may consist of self-acceptance, autonomy, and personal growth. In terms of the social domain, it may comprise social integration, self-actualisation, coherence and contribution (Keyes, 2007). The biological domain does not fall under the scope of this study. Additional domains determining mental health include individual factors and experiences, societal structures and resources, social support and interaction, as well as spiritual or religious and cultural values (Herrman et al., 2005; Lehtinen et al., 2005).

According to Keyes et al. (2010), mental health includes two groupings, namely “flourishing” (p. 2366) and “languishing” (p. 2366). The former is a combination of feeling good about life and functioning well in it. The latter is the opposite, that is to say not feeling good about life, and not functioning well in it (Keyes et al., 2010). In an earlier study, Keyes (2007) found that adults diagnosed with complete mental health, who exist free of mental illness, have the highest levels of functional goals, and experience intimacy and flexibility compared to adults with

moderate or languishing mental health. Moreover, individuals in complete mental health demonstrate the lowest levels of health limitations, perceived helplessness and missing work days.

Furthermore, mental health can be separated into two broad categories, namely positive mental health and mental health difficulties. The latter will first be explored. Mental health difficulties include, among others, alcohol dependence, post-traumatic stress, social phobia as well as depression and anxiety (Alonso et al., 2011; Collins et al., 2011; Lund et al., 2010a). In this study the focus will be on anxiety and depression as these have been found to be the most common mental health difficulties worldwide (Alonso et al., 2011; Herrmann, 1997; Razzouk et al., 2010; Tempier et al., 2009). The burden that mental health difficulties place on individuals cannot be calculated (Hock et al., 2012). However, mental health difficulties do not only involve the suffering of the individual, but also include the suffering of family members, friends, neighbours, and the community as a whole (Collins et al., 2011; Hock et al., 2012). Family members in particular bear the economic and social burden for the individual with mental health difficulties, as well as experiencing stigmatisation and social exclusion (World Health Organisation, 2010). Hock et al. (2012) call this suffering a “ripple of concentric circles” (p. 1367), consequently affecting many levels of the individual’s and the family’s system.

Conversely, positive mental health is considered by Jané-Llopis, Barry, Hosman, and Patel (2005) as a value in its own right. Over the past 30 years, positive mental health has been conceptualised as a positive emotion or affect which may include: resilience, happiness, self-esteem, and mastery of self (Kovess-Masfety, Murray, & Gureje, 2005). Positive mental health not only contributes to the optimal functioning of an individual, but also to the optimal functioning of society at

large (Herrman et al., 2005; Jané-Llopis et al., 2005). It additionally improves the quality of life and well-being of individuals as well as the economy, which in turn increases social functioning and capital (Jané-Llopis et al., 2005; Lehtinen et al., 2005).

In order for an individual to live in a positive mental health state, the stigmatisation of individuals with mental health difficulties needs to come to an end. In many countries, globalised changes in cultural beliefs have reduced the discrimination, isolation and fear about mental health difficulties, specifically with regard to depression and anxiety (Kleinman, 2009). For the stigmatisation of mental health to come to an end, the misconceptions surrounding the causes and nature of mental health difficulties need to be mainstreamed into education, and so make provision for greater awareness among society (World Health Organisation, 2010).

2.7 Mental health in the workplace

According to Rothmann (2008), there are two reasons why the workplace provides an appropriate context for the study of an individual's mental health. Firstly, work generates an income for an employee and an income may have an impact on numerous life roles. Secondly, an employee spends a substantial amount of time at his or her place of work, thus expending a significant amount of energy at work (Rothmann, 2008). The concept of mental health at work has been globally documented by a number of researchers (Brohan et al., 2012; Carbo & Hughes, 2010; Desai, 2009; Hansen, Hogh, & Persson, 2011), in various workplace settings (Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006; Reknes et al., 2014; Zafar et al., 2013), including factors such as sickness absence (Ortega, Christensen, Hogh, Rugulies, & Borg, 2011) and gender (MacIntosh, O'Donnell, Wuest, & Merritt-Gray, 2011). Mental

health difficulties such as occupational stress at work not only cause problems for the individual, but have repercussions for the organisation as well (Mostert et al., 2008). Further research shows that distressing aspects of an employee's work may spiral out into his or her personal life and infiltrate non-work situations (Ludick, Alexander, & Carmichael, 2007). As a result, it could be argued that varying levels of stress at work may impact on different systems of an individual's life.

The concept of mental health in a place of work exists in a complex relationship between psychological capacity and mental health. This is the case because a certain level of these two factors is required for an employee to participate in work (Lehtinen et al., 2005). If an employee's psychological capacity in the workplace is overloaded, mental health difficulties may follow. These difficulties may range from being in a nervous state (Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006) to exhaustion, cynicism, or a lack of professional efficacy (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Additional contributions to mental health difficulties at work include stressful work conditions; an overload of work; an increase in demands from management, and unhealthy workplace relationships between bosses and colleagues (De Wet, 2010a; Lehtinen et al., 2005).

In South Africa the study of employees' mental health in the workplace has been conducted in varying fields, namely among nurses (Van der Colff & Rothmann, 2009); claims workers (Ludick et al., 2007); police members (Rothmann & Jorgensen, 2007; Rothmann, 2008); platinum mine managers (Rothmann & Joubert, 2007), as well as individuals in higher education institutions (Mostert et al., 2008). According to the authors, factors which increase the risk of employees having mental health difficulties in South Africa include: burnout, job insecurity, scepticism, reduced

dedication, lack of organisational support, staff shortages, poorly motivated co-workers, together with inadequate salary and resources in the workplace.

Markedly, two mental health difficulties continue to burden South African employees, namely anxiety and depression. It has been found that workplace anxiety affects health and wellness (Sieberhagen, Rothmann, & Pienaar, 2009), and depressed employees' thoughts revolve around deprivation and loss (Rothmann, 2008). Furthermore, both anxiety and depression may occur among employees who are extremely overloaded with work (Mostert et al., 2008), and can impair work performance (Haslam, Atkinson, Brown, & Haslam, 2005). Also, the most claims accepted by medical schemes in South Africa include treatment for stress-related illnesses such as anxiety and depression (Sieberhagen et al., 2009). Therefore, the current study focuses on these two mental health difficulties as they appear to be the most common burden among South African workers.

2.8 Mental health of South African teachers

The working conditions that teachers have to endure are becoming more demanding and multifaceted (Jackson & Rothmann, 2006). Daniels and Strauss (2010) state that teaching in a South African school is highly stressful due to the lack of resources, fear of violence, overcrowding (large class sizes), and ever-increasing substance abuse among learners. Moreover, South African education is troubled by certain factors prevalent in public schools. Some of these factors include: antisocial behaviour, racism, learner ostracising, shortage of skilled personnel, educator strikes, and violence among learners and toward teachers (Jackson et al., 2006). The last mentioned is of specific interest to this study, particularly in government high schools.

Prevalent mental health difficulties such as anxiety (Prinsloo & Nesor, 2007) and low morale (Hendricks, 2009) among South African teachers need urgent attention in order to protect their mental health. Difficulties in this respect may result in high levels of anxiety or low morale include: excessive time demands; work overload; insufficient colleague support; isolation; limited promotion opportunities; learner behaviour problems; role ambiguity; diminutive involvement in decision making; inadequate financial support; external pressure from unions, education departments or school governing bodies; lack of community support, and a poor public image of the teaching profession (Jackson et al., 2006; Jackson & Rothmann, 2006). Additionally, extramural activities that teachers coordinate, such as sport and culture, as well as contact with parents after school hours, may cause high levels of anxiety (Jackson & Rothmann, 2006).

Daniels and Strauss (2010) state that teachers with negative and low levels of emotional mental health are either becoming less productive, less dedicated toward the profession, or passive-aggressive. They only do what is minimally required, and often resort to absenteeism due to unbearable conditions at school. All educational institutions need to highlight the importance of work-related mental health of their staff (Jackson et al., 2006). In this regard, the mental health of teachers should be a matter of priority as teachers are the persons who educate the young (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). Buijs (2009) recommends that in the school context, long-term health promotion of teachers needs to be implemented. South African researchers suggest that the relevant stakeholders, such as school and government leaders, require more decisive attitudes and open conversations concerning the handling of learner misbehaviour and violence in schools (Maree, 2005; Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2002; Van der Westhuizen & Maree, 2010). Due to the demanding work circumstances

endured by South African teachers, in addition to the prevalence of anxiety and low morale, the current study has chosen teachers and their mental health as the focus of this research.

2.9 Mental health and bullying

According to Zapf and Einarsen (2001), exposure to systematic and ongoing verbal abuse and aggressive behaviour in a place of work may have various negative mental health effects on the victim. Furthermore, a number of studies show that there are consequences of workplace bullying for an employee's mental health (e.g., Høgh, Mikkelsen, & Hansen, 2011; Nielsen, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2010; Reknes et al., 2014). Oade (2009) and Thompson (2009) argue that bullying in the workplace does not promote mental health, instead causing harm to morale and motivation among employees. Additionally, employees who fall victim to workplace bullying demonstrate a higher rate of psychological health complaints compared to those who do not (Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006; Sá & Fleming, 2008).

Some of the effects of workplace bullying on mental health may include symptoms that are consistent with suicidal thoughts and attempts (Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006) and with post-traumatic stress syndrome (Carbo & Hughes, 2010). Additional effects are: low self-confidence (Vartia, 2001); negative emotions (personally, or directed toward others) and elevated stress levels (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002); mood swings, isolation, anger, reduced self-esteem, and lack of energy, fatigue, lethargy, loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, and decreased concentration (Oade, 2009). All of the effects mentioned above may have a crippling effect on the standard of an employee's work and his or her enjoyment of it (Høgh et al., 2011).

Anxiety and depression among teachers who are confronted with learner-to-teacher bullying is the focus of this study, specifically since research has found these two mental health difficulties are the most prevalent emotional and psychological reactions to bullying at work (Hosman & Jané-Llopis, 2005; Oade, 2009). According to Oade (2009), feelings of anxiety may be acute or mild, and could range from feeling apprehensive or uneasy about going to work or having to meet with a bullying colleague, to total dread or distress at either of these scenarios. Feelings of depression due to bullying at work may also involve a victim feeling despondent about who they are and what their future holds, as well as resulting in feelings of pessimism and sadness most or all of the time (Oade, 2009).

The two mental health difficulties of anxiety and depression are clearly seen in a recent learner-to-teacher bullying incident in South Africa (Bega, 2013). This incident includes three out of the four types of bullying of concern to this study, namely verbal, physical, and indirect bullying. A teacher was continually taunted by the learners and emotionally abused. They would tell her to 'voetsek' and pushed her to her limits by punching her twice, once in the chest near her shoulder and once in the face, in her classroom. In response she started feeling anxious most of the time and found that her passion for teaching had died. Moreover, she felt humiliated, violated, and stated that her spirit was broken (Bega, 2013). Feelings of depression that she had experienced previously, also resurfaced. She did not receive support or guidance from the school, the Department of Education, nor from her union, which upset her. She felt that South African teachers do not have any rights while being abused by learners. Exhaustion and burnout were therefore prevalent due to the persistent bullying by learners (Bega, 2013).

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter included a presentation concerning the vast literature of specific interest to this study, namely the learner-to-teacher bullying and mental health. The literature contextualises this study against existing bullying and mental health research. Facets of bullying were highlighted, followed by a discussion of bullying at work, bullying at school, and learner-to-teacher bullying. A presentation of certain mental health facets was then reviewed. More specifically, an exploration of mental health in the workplace and the mental health of South African teachers was deliberated. The chapter concluded with an examination of the relationship between mental health and bullying.

In the next chapter, the research methods used in this study will be discussed.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Broadly speaking, the three recognised approaches to conducting research include: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (Ivankova, Creswell, & Clark, 2011). These approaches connect data to ideas or concepts (Neuman, 2014).

Quantitative research aims to hypothesize variables before analysing data (Neuman, 2014) and identifies the cause and effect relationship among variables (Whitley, 2002). Quantification further enables the researcher to make clear observations, manipulate these observations to describe the phenomena, and accumulate and summarise data (Neuman, 2014), thus allowing for statistical analyses (Babbie, 2005) by means of numerical information (Maree & Pietersen, 2011a). Consequently, the researcher finds quantitative methods most suited to test the hypotheses of this study since tests for equal proportions and correlations would be conducted.

Quantitative methods also aid in the generalisability of a study (Babbie, 2005). However, only a small sample of the population of South African teachers was used for this study, which does not allow for generalisability. Notwithstanding, this research study employed a quantitative research methodology in concurrence with studies that have investigated learner-to-teacher bullying (De Wet & Jacobs, 2006; James et al., 2008; Kõiv, 2011; Pervin & Turner, 1998; Steffgen & Ewen, 2007; Terry, 1998). An exploratory approach (Babbie, 2005) is utilised in this study as its main aim, the investigation of the correlation between learner-to-teacher bullying and teachers' mental health, is a novel area of research in Tshwane, Gauteng, South

Africa. A further aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of learner-to-teacher bullying (De Wet, 2011a).

In order to conduct an investigation of the relationship between learner-to-teacher bullying and teachers' mental health, certain methodological procedures were employed. These procedures firstly involve providing the hypotheses. This is followed by the various aspects of the research design, including measuring instruments, sample design and recruitment as well as the data collection process. Finally, the various statistical methods concerning data analysis and the ethical considerations are discussed.

3.2 Hypotheses formulation

As stated in Chapter 1, the research question of this study is twofold: Firstly, what proportion of teachers in this study report exposure to bullying by their learners? Secondly, is there a correlation between exposure to learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's mental health, specifically with regard to anxiety and depression? Based on these research questions, as well as the aims of this study stated in Chapter 1, null hypotheses and alternative hypotheses are suggested. According to Gavin (2008) a null hypothesis indicates that there is no significant effect between the independent (learner-to-teacher bullying) and dependent (mental health) variable. Conversely, an alternative hypothesis states that these variables have a significant effect on one another (Neuman, 2014). In statistical terms, the null hypothesis is tested and, if it can be rejected, support for the alternative hypothesis is provided (Gavin, 2008).

Null hypotheses:

- H1: There is no significant proportion of teachers in this study who report exposure to bullying by their learner/s.
- H2: There is no significant correlation between reported exposure to learner-to-teacher bullying and teachers' levels of anxiety and depression.

Alternative hypotheses:

- H1: There is a significant proportion of teachers in this study who report being exposed to bullying by their learner/s.
- H2: There is a significant correlation between reported exposure to learner-to-teacher bullying and teachers' levels of anxiety and depression.

3.3 Research design

Survey research is considered the most appropriate design to use in the current study because it is an exploratory study (Babbie, 2005). It allows the researcher to collect data by gathering information from a large number of participants (Whitley, 2002). In addition, survey research aids in conceptualising and operationalising variables (Neuman, 2014). As a result, this study favours survey research.

3.3.1 Measurement instruments

A questionnaire is a document that contains questions and items designed to solicit information from participants, appropriate for analysis (Gavin, 2008). Through the use of questionnaires, the researcher may collect information and measure people's attitudes, values, beliefs, opinions and perceptions, which are components of survey research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Due to teachers' workload and time constraints, questionnaires that are short and relatively easy to complete have

been selected (Maree & Pietersen, 2011b). The present study will make use of two questionnaires. The first questionnaire seeks to gain insight into teachers' experience of learner-to-teacher bullying (Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire) (Appendix A). The second questionnaire, constructed by Zigmond and Snaith (1983), measures the current levels of the teachers' mental health and specifically their level of anxiety and depression (The Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale – HADS) (Appendix B).

The **Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire** was constructed by the researcher for the purposes of this study. Questions were utilised and adapted from two school bullying questionnaires, namely the California Bullying Victimization Scale (Felix, Sharkey, Green, Furlong, & Tanigawa, 2011) and a modified version of the Olweus questionnaire (James et al., 2008). Permission was obtained from the authors to make use of their questionnaires. Terry (1998) found that modifying a bullying questionnaire to apply optimally to teachers allowed for more specific questions to be asked concerning learner-to-teacher bullying. The purpose of the questionnaire is to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of learner-to-teacher bullying from a teacher's perspective. Furthermore, the questionnaire aims to identify what types of learner-to-teacher bullying incidents are prominently prevalent, such as verbal or physical bullying. Additionally, the questionnaire seeks to identify how teachers perceive learners' behaviour toward them.

The questionnaire consists of a set of instructions, followed by 15 questions. Questions 1 – 6 constitute characteristics of the participants such as gender, age and the number of years of teaching experience. These questions aid in compiling a profile of the research sample. Question 6 is followed by a modified definition of workplace bullying that was provided to assist the participants in answering the

remaining questions. Carbo and Hughes' (2010) definition of workplace bullying was utilised. They define workplace bullying as the "unwanted, unwelcome, abuse of any source of power that has the effect of or intent to intimidate, control or otherwise strip a target of their right to esteem, growth, dignity, voice or other human rights in the workplace" (Carbo & Hughes, 2010, p. 397). Moreover, bullying is viewed as a process (Einarsen et al., 2011; Oade, 2009; Steinman, 2003) as it occurs over a period of time. Therefore, questions 7 – 14 measure the experience of certain forms of learner-to-teacher bullying during the twelve months preceding the completion of the questionnaire.

Question 7, which is a Likert-type scale (Maree & Pietersen, 2011b), examines the different types of bullying to which teachers may be exposed, namely verbal (gossiping, insulting, threatening), physical (kicking, punching, hitting), indirect (ostracising, excluding, rejecting), and cyber bullying (technological bullying via telecommunication networks). Questions 7.1, 7.4, 7.7 and 7.8 refer to verbal bullying, questions 7.2 and 7.6 are physical bullying questions, questions 7.3 and 7.5 concern indirect bullying, and question 7.9 relates to cyber bullying (shown in Table 1.4 in Chapter 4). A question is stated, such as how often a teacher has been called names by a learner in a mean or hurtful way, and the participant is required to choose between the following responses: 'Never in the past year'; 'At least once the past year'; 'Several times the past year'; 'At least once a month the past year', and 'Several times a month the past year'. The teachers who answered '**Never** in the past year' for each sub-question in question 7 (namely, 7.1 – 7.9) did not have to answer questions 8 – 14.

Questions 8 – 11 deal with the place, time and the number of learners involved in learner-to-teacher bullying. These questions must be answered by stating

‘Yes’ or ‘No’, thus providing data on a nominal categorical scale (Maree & Pietersen, 2011a). The questions that follow, 12 and 13, pertain to the teacher’s mental health and whether there may be a link between mental health difficulties and learner-to-teacher bullying. Question 14 is a closed ended question concerning the power imbalance between learners and teachers. The final question is an open ended question regarding any additional comments or information the participant considers to be of use to the study.

Since the questionnaire was constructed by the researcher, no study has previously utilised this questionnaire. A few teachers who work at a governmental secondary high school in Tshwane agreed to complete the questionnaire in a pilot study. They found no problems with understanding and completing the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire. These teachers did raise some points of concern about the layout of the questionnaire, but they considered the face validity of the questionnaire appropriate. Face validity plays an important role for participants to “provide responses that reflect the attributes that the test is assigned to measure” (Murphy & Davidshofer, 2001, p. 154).

The **Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale** (HADS) is a standardised questionnaire developed by Zigmond and Snaith (1983). The instrument is designed to screen clinically significant anxiety and depression among patients in non-psychiatric settings, as well as to measure the severity of these mood disorders (Zigmond & Snaith, 1983). The purpose of the HADS is not to diagnose or categorise a mental illness, but rather to provide a dimensional representation of mood (Herrmann, 1997).

The questionnaire presents a set of instructions, followed by 14 Likert-scale questions. A Likert scale yields an ordinal measure of participants’ attitudes, which

includes numeric data that are grouped into categories (Maree & Pietersen, 2011b). Participants are asked to read a statement and respond using a scale of 0 – 3. Each scale varies with responses such as 0 being ‘Not at all’ or ‘Definitely as much’, and 3 being ‘Most of the time’ or ‘Hardly at all’. The questionnaire is divided into HADS-A, the anxiety subscale, and HADS-D, the depression subscale, with both scales comprising seven intermixed items (Bjelland, Dahl, Haug, & Neckelmann, 2002). An example of an item on the anxiety subscale is ‘Worrying thoughts go through my mind’, and an example of an item on the depression subscale is, ‘I still enjoy the things I used to enjoy’. Both subscales have a score range of 0 – 21. High scores point to a greater amount of distress (Spinhoven et al., 1997). Accordingly, the score ranges indicate the following: 0 – 7 as normal, 8 – 10 as borderline abnormal, and 11 – 21 as abnormal (Zigmond & Snaith, 1983).

The internal consistency of the questionnaire by calculating Cronbach’s coefficient (α), was satisfactory values of 0.80 and 0.76, respectively (Mykletun et al., 2001). Bjelland et al. (2002) recommend that Cronbach’s alpha of a reliable self-report should be at least .60. Additionally, the authors recognised that the concurrent validity of the HADS is “*good to very good*” (Bjelland et al., 2002, p. 75). This instrument has been utilised in various South African studies as a measure of depression and anxiety (Berard, Boermeester, & Viljoen, 1998; Seedat, Fritelli, Oosthuizen, Emsley, & Stein, 2007; Stein, Ahokas, & de Bodinat, 2008; Wouters, Le Roux Booyesen, Ponnet, & Van Loon, 2012).

3.3.2 Sampling design

Sampling methods fall under two main categories, namely probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling, the preferred method in quantitative research, creates a representative sample by utilising random sampling. This type of

sampling involves randomly drawing a sample from predetermined numbers (Maree & Pietersen, 2011b). This enables generalisations to be made about the population under study. Non-probability sampling, however, does not utilise random sampling. Therefore, a less accurate representation of the sample is created and no generalisation can be made to the larger population (Neuman, 2014).

Non-probability sampling, specifically convenience sampling, was used for the current study. Participants that were available were recruited to take part in the study. The results are thus valid in the specific context but cannot be generalised to the population (Maree & Pietersen, 2011c; Neuman, 2014).

3.3.3 Participant recruitment

Two criteria were used to select teachers as participants in this study. Firstly, teachers must currently teach in a South African governmental secondary school in the identified school district in Tshwane, Gauteng. Secondly, the teachers need to have a proper understanding of English. South Africa is a diverse country in terms of social class, gender, culture and ethnicity (Rothmann & Cilliers, 2007). It was therefore expected that teachers representing a multicultural spectrum would partake in the study. Consequently, the participating teachers would differ in age, gender, ethnicity, and in years of teaching experience. However, this expectation was not reached since teachers in this study were not representative to the multicultural spectrum of this country.

As the participants were teachers and data collection would take place within a school setting, approval of and permission for this study was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education (2012). This involved completing a Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) Research Request form and sending this form to the Research Co-ordination Unit who assess the proposal for ethical and GDE policy

compliance (Gauteng Department of Education, 2012). The request was granted, and the researcher allocated a district, as stipulated by the Department, in Tshwane, Gauteng, where participants could be recruited. The district was chosen in an area where the researcher thought teachers were representative in South Africa's multicultural spectrum.

The researcher then approached six schools within the selected district. A date and time was arranged with each respective principal or vice-principal of the schools to discuss the study as well as the willingness of the school to partake in this study. The principals or vice-principals were provided with the following information: a synopsis of the study, the GDE's approval letter of the study (Appendix C), the information sheet for schools (Appendix D), the consent form for teachers (Appendix E) and the two questionnaires that were to be utilised. Principals or vice-principals of five out of the six schools agreed that their teachers could participate in the study. Each principal or vice-principal then provided the researcher with a permission letter with the letterhead of their respective schools. The letter stated that the school principal or vice-principal, who had signed the letter, approved of the study and allowed the researcher to conduct research among his or her teaching staff.

The next step in the recruitment phase was to attend a morning personnel meeting at each respective school to recruit teachers and ask them if they would contribute to the study. The researcher was introduced by the principal and given a few minutes to discuss the nature of the study. The ethical principles of the study and its confidential nature, in addition to the complete protection of the participants' identities were clarified. More specifically, it was emphasised that no name of any teacher or any school involved in this research would be stated in the outcomes of the study. This process was carried out in concurrence with the safeguarding of

research participants (James & Busher, 2007) and has been utilised in former studies with South African teachers as participants (e.g., De Wet, 2010a; Hendricks, 2009; Marais & Meier, 2010; Van der Westhuizen & Maree, 2010).

The reason for anonymity is that the researcher wanted to protect the identity of the teachers. The researcher wanted to prevent teachers from knowing who in their school participated in the study and who did not. If teachers were to be identified as taking part in this study, this information might come across as a possible identification of teachers that are being bullied. In order to protect such teachers against any potential victimisation by staff members, the procedure of sealing the questionnaires and the sealed box was used.

As in similar studies of a sensitive nature (Devos, Dupriez, & Paquay, 2012; Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006), during the meeting teachers were informed of the voluntary nature of this study, which includes withdrawal at any stage of the research process and no obligation to provide reasons for such withdrawal. The study's voluntary nature rendered it impossible to ensure that all the teachers complete the questionnaires. However, the safeguards that were put into place to alleviate possible fears of disclosure may explain why a substantial number of questionnaires were returned.

After explaining the study at the meeting, the researcher provided each teacher with an envelope enclosing the two questionnaires and the consent form. A support sheet (see Appendix F) specifically designed to aid any teacher that may have fallen victim to learner-to-teacher bullying was included as well. The teachers were requested to complete the consent form if they agreed to participate in the study. They were also asked to complete the questionnaires during the time frame

each respective principal had provided them with, which ranged from 3 to 7 days. The envelope provided to each teacher, containing the relevant information, could be sealed after completion and placed in a closed box with an opening for an envelope only. The box was placed in the staffroom of each school. In this way, no other staff member of the school should know whether or not any particular teacher decided to partake in the study.

3.3.4 Data collection

After the recruitment phase was completed at the respective schools, each principal explained to the teachers how much time they would be given to complete the questionnaires. This time ranged from 3 to 7 days at the different schools, as mentioned above. Upon the day of completion, the researcher collected the respective concealed boxes. The sample size was determined by the number of teachers willing to participate in the study. Approximately 300 envelopes were distributed to the teachers in the five schools that participated in the study. Of these envelopes, 187 (62%) were returned and 153 (51%) of the collected questionnaires could be utilised for statistical analysis. Only the questionnaires that were correctly completed with a signed consent form were hand delivered to the Statistical Department at the University of Pretoria for data analysis to take place.

3.4 Data analysis

The data for this study were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Through the use of appropriate statistical tests, analysis and interpretation of the data as well as support for the hypotheses was made possible. These tests include descriptive statistics, by use of frequencies, and inferential statistics, by use of parametric statistics, supplemented with non-parametric statistics.

3.4.1 Statistical procedure

For the statistical procedure to take place, the questionnaires provided to the Statistical Department were separated into packs of each respective school for the data to be submitted in electronic format. The data were captured in Excel files by data typists at the Department of Statistics. The statisticians then imported, coded and captured the raw data from both sets of questionnaires using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22. Trochim (2006) describes this initial process of the statistical procedure as data preparation.

The statistical process began by preparing the information obtained from the questionnaires to be put into an SPSS 'codebook' (Pallant, 2007). By entering the data into the file or 'codebook', which was created for this study, the data could be screened for any errors. Once the statistical procedure was put into motion, the data analysis as presented in Chapter 4 could take place. The data was first explored by means of frequency distributions and graphically represented by pie and bar charts. Inferential statistics included the Mann-Whitney U test.

3.4.2 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics permit the researcher to gather information from questionnaires that is then recorded as statistical numbers (Gavin, 2008). The information gathered is known as the set of data or the raw scores, and can be represented as statistical summaries by use of tables and graphs, allowing the researcher to present and describe what the data show in manageable forms (Gavin, 2008; Trochim, 2006). Descriptive statistics such as the mean and median (measures of the central tendency of measurements) and standard deviation (a measure of a spread) (Gavin, 2008) were used to summarise the ages and years of teaching experience of the respondents.

Moreover, descriptive statistics utilised in this study aimed to describe the attributes of the variables under examination (Howell, 2013) such as measuring teachers' anxiety and depression levels. A single variable, however, can be described with a frequency distribution (Gavin, 2008). Through simple frequency analysis, a researcher can generate descriptive statistics (Ho, 2006). Frequencies, for example, of teachers' age, gender and years of teaching were calculated, among others. According to Ho (2006), multiple response analysis permits the researcher to analyse research questions with numerous responses. It further allows for the generation of statistics to be based on the entire group of participants (Ho, 2006). In this study, for instance, the frequencies of the four different types of bullying under examination were measured respectively.

3.4.3 Inferential statistics

Inferential statistics are concerned with the interpretation of data and testing significant relationships between variables (Welman et al., 2005). They also permit the testing of hypotheses in order to predict, within particular limits, whether something is more likely to happen again or not; thus generalising from and beyond data observations and predicting whether the change that is occurring is significant in any way (Gavin, 2008). As a result, significance allows for the generalisation from the sample (participants of this study) to the characteristics of the population (South African governmental high school teachers) (Pietersen & Maree, 2011b). Both parametric and non-parametric statistics were employed in this study.

3.4.3.1 Parametric statistics

According to Gavin (2008), descriptive statistic summaries of data allow researchers to describe and justify the choice of the inferential statistics they choose to utilise. The decision to use parametric statistics at this point of the research

process was based on the data's compliance with parametric techniques. These techniques include the use of a large sample in which case the average tends to be spread at a normal distribution (Pietersen & Maree, 2011a). In addition, parametric statistics make assumptions about the population drawn from the sample, and the shape of the population distribution (Pallant, 2007).

To test the hypotheses, appropriate statistical tests have to be performed and the corresponding p-values are then used to decide whether the null hypothesis should be accepted or rejected. For the data in this research, the proportion of teachers who reported exposure to a particular form of bullying in their work place could be found, for example. Furthermore, by use of a test for equal proportions, a parametric statistical technique, the significance of the study hypotheses of this study could be tested (Howell, 2013). The p-value is compared to the level of significance which is usually 0.05. If the p-value is smaller than 0.05, then the null hypothesis is rejected implying that the proportions are not equal. However, if the p-value is larger than 0.05, the hypothesis cannot be rejected and it can be concluded that the proportions are equal.

3.4.3.2 Non-parametric statistics

Non-parametric methods do not make assumptions about population distributions and consequently do not have requirements as stringent as parametric methods (Pallant, 2007). For this study, the Mann-Whitney U Test, a non-parametric test or distribution free test that compares medians across categories (Welman et al., 2005), was performed. This test was used to compare the HADS Anxiety and Depression scores across the two groups of bullying, namely 'Never been bullied' and 'Bullied at least once during the past 12 months'. In this calculation the test utilises the ranks across groups of data rather than raw values, thus converting

scores on a continuous variable to ranks allowing for the distribution of scores not to matter (Gavin, 2008; Pallant, 2007). The test then evaluates whether there is any significance in the ranks of the groups (Pallant, 2007). In addition, the test produces a *U*-value. A corresponding p-value exceeding the significance level, namely 0.05, provides evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis (Gavin, 2008).

3.4.4 Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the stability, repeatability and the unbiased nature of research instruments and procedures (Gavin, 2008). Reliability can be assessed by use of internal consistency, which is the degree to which the total of the items making up the instrument measure the same underlying attribute (Pallant, 2007).

To measure the internal consistency of questionnaires, Cronbach coefficient alphas are calculated. Cronbach's alpha is a statistic generally used as an estimate of the reliability or internal consistency of the instrument (Whitley, 2002), consequently providing an indication of the average correlation of the items making up the instrument (Pallant, 2007). Cronbach's values range from 0 to 1; the higher the value the greater the reliability, with 0.7 seen as the minimum level (Pallant, 2007). According to Howell (2013), a test exhibits good internal reliability when a coefficient alpha is greater than 0.7. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha could only be calculated for the HADS, but not for the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire. The reason for this is explained in Chapter 4.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The research proposal of this study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria. The Department of Education granted permission for the researcher to involve schools in a Tshwane district in the

study. The principals or vice-principals of the different schools assented to the study and allowed the researcher access to their schools.

Since the topic of bullying is highly sensitive and its exploration, as De Wet (2010a) states, even confrontational in nature, the researcher's approach is a delicate matter. It was therefore vital to deliberate two pivotal ethical themes, namely, the possible impact that the research may have on each participant, and the potential intrusive capacity that the research may hold (Duncan, 1999; Kumar, 2011).

Concerning the impact this research study may have on the participant, the researcher found it important to inform participating teachers about the potential risk of harm, either physical or psychological, as a result of their involvement in the study (Gavin, 2008). For example, some of the participants may have been reminded of or relived their bullying experiences while completing the questionnaires (Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006). Alternatively, they may only have realised that they have been bullied by learners after completing the questionnaire (Duncan, 1999). Furthermore, participants may have been affected by bullying and not told anyone (Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006; James et al., 2008), or they may have tried to forget about it (O'Donnell et al., 2010). These experiences could be associated with participants' suffering from mental health difficulties. Due to the stigma and discrimination individuals with mental health difficulties may have to face, as discussed in Chapter 2, the researcher took particular care to protect to protect the identities of teachers who potentially might endure these difficulties.

With regard to the possible intrusive nature of the study and the guarantee of complete confidentiality and protection of participants, teachers addressed in the morning meeting were informed of the strictly confidential and anonymous nature of

the study (e.g., De Wet, 2011a; Marais & Meier, 2010). Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2011) further emphasise the importance of confidentiality and protection as a safeguard of the participants' identity. In his study, Terry (1998) found that due to the sensitive nature of the phenomenon of learner-to-teacher bullying, teachers needed to be reassured that their names would not be mentioned anywhere in the findings. It was therefore communicated to the teachers that although their consent – by way of their signature – was needed for the study, no name of any single teacher would appear, be used, or be printed in the findings. The consent form allowed the participant to express their willingness to take part in the study, with the knowledge of what the study entails (Kumar, 2011). Moreover, teachers were informed of the process concerning the documentation of the data (Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006), which will be stored at a secure location at the University of Pretoria for a minimum of 15 years. Furthermore, all data regarding participants would be anonymously coded and no identifiers referring to the teachers or the respective schools would be used.

To address the sensitive nature of the study in addition to the possible risk of harm, certain steps were put in place. Firstly, all participants were provided with a support sheet, listing the details of helplines, agencies, websites and books that they could consult if needed. Secondly, due to the study's voluntary nature, excluding any form of coercion, participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any stage (Gavin, 2008). Thirdly, once their questionnaires were completed, the teachers had the opportunity to seal the envelopes, enclosing the two questionnaires and consent form that were provided to them. The sealed envelopes could then be slipped into the box that was positioned at an appointed place in the staffroom of

each school. Lastly, the boxes were collected by the researcher without having been opened by the principal or vice-principals or any other staff member.

With regard to the schools, it was important to provide the principal or vice-principal with detailed information pertaining to what the research involves, thus enabling him or her to make an informed decision as to whether or not their school would partake in the study. It was further communicated to them that their teaching staff would take part in this study on a voluntary basis and that teachers were not to be coerced by either the researcher or the principal or vice-principal to take part. Should the principal or vice-principal not have felt comfortable with an investigation of the prevalence of learner-to-teacher bullying in their school, this would be respected. Also, once the principal or vice-principal decided to partake in the study he or she had the choice to withdraw at any stage (De Wet, 2011a).

As mentioned, the researcher guaranteed complete anonymity of identity. The findings of the respective schools involved were totalled up as a whole, ensuring that no school would be singled out or stigmatised because of its particular results. Consequently, no principal or vice-principal would have access to the results of their school, so that the identity of the teachers who participated was fully protected. Feedback would be provided to the principals or vice-principals based on the results of the five schools combined. This would enable the principals or vice-principals involved to receive information that may aid in developing a better understanding and awareness of learner-to-teacher bullying, while simultaneously promoting teachers' mental health.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the research methodology followed in this research. The hypotheses were provided as well as a presentation of the research design. The chapter was concluded with an exploration of the data analysis utilised for this study, as well as the ethical considerations.

In the following chapter, the findings of the study will be reported.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report the results of this study. Firstly, the reliability of the questionnaires utilised in this study will be discussed. Subsequently, the characteristics of the participants and the descriptive findings of the study are given in the form of frequencies obtained from both questionnaires. Multiple response frequencies are then provided concerning certain questions in the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire. Lastly, the inferential findings, both parametric and non-parametric, are deliberated and followed by the central findings of the study.

4.2 Reliability of the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Questionnaire

To test for the reliability of the HADS questionnaire, the Cronbach's Alpha's for Anxiety score and Depression score were calculated separately. Cronbach's alpha for the Anxiety score was .87, and .84 for the Depression score. Both of these scores are higher than 0.7, which indicates good internal reliability of the respective scores.

4.3 Reliability of the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire

As mentioned, the internal reliability of a test can be gauged by calculating Cronbach's alpha. Calculating Cronbach's alpha for the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire, however, was not possible. One reason for this is that the results for 6 of the questions in the questionnaire (questions 8 – 13) were nominal, which required only a "yes" or "no" response.

Furthermore, the one question that potentially could have been used as an indication of internal validity for this section in the questionnaire, question 7, was not

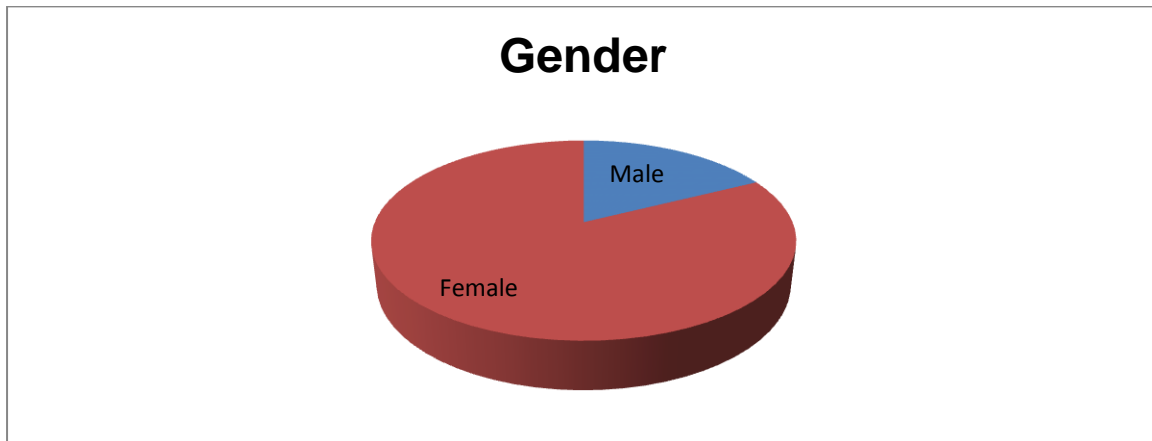
suitable. Although the categories specified in question 7 were meant to be ordinal, ranging from “never in the past year” to “several times a month the past year”, they were not exhaustive and mutually exclusive. For example, the categories “at least once the past year” and “several times the past year” are similar. Therefore, a participant who has been exposed to two incidents of bullying the past year, for instance, could have ticked any one of these two categories. The same holds for the categories “At least once a month the past year” and “Several times a month the past year”. The absence of internal reliability measurement for this part of the questionnaire, albeit necessary, is explored under the Limitations section in Chapter 5.

4.4 Characteristics of participants

All of the 153 participants in this study completed the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire. However, there were missing values in certain questions, therefore only valid percentages are provided. The participants varied with regard to gender, age, and ethnicity. Each of these characteristics is presented below.

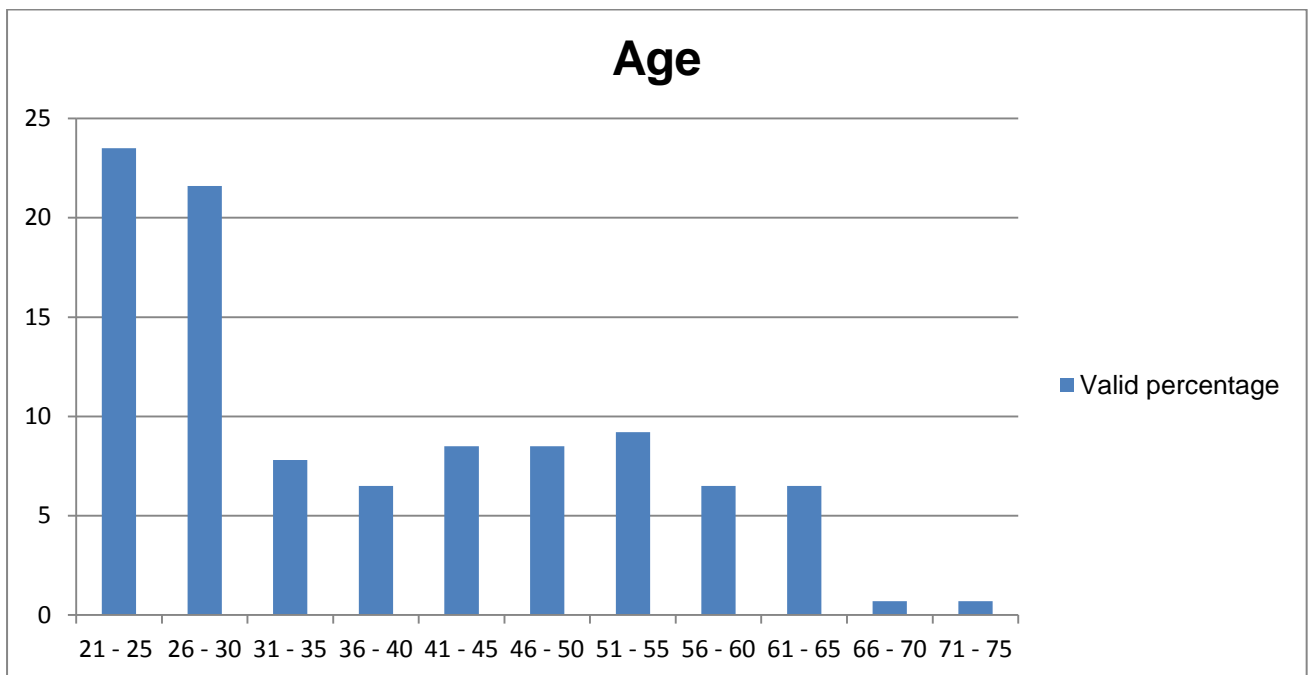
Figure 1.1 illustrates that there were 27 males (17.6%) and 126 females (82.4%) in the sample group. The majority of participants involved in the study are thus females, which is quite representative of the ratio of male and female teachers in the five schools.

Figure 1.1



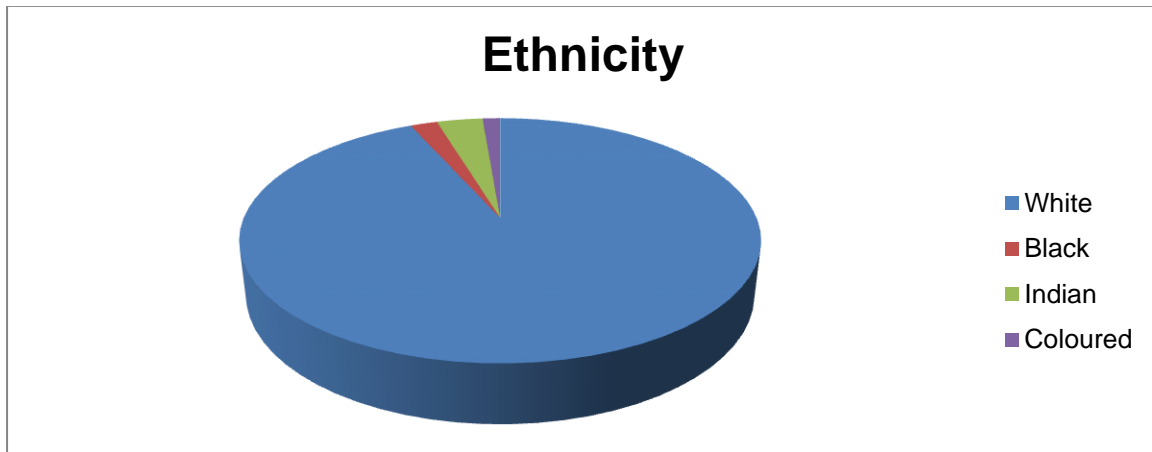
According to Figure 1.2, the participants' age ranged between 21 and 75. Most of the teachers (45.1%) were in the age group 21 – 30 years. The percentage of teachers between the ages of 31 and 50 was 31.3, and between 51 and 65 teachers fell at an average of 23.6%.

Figure 1.2



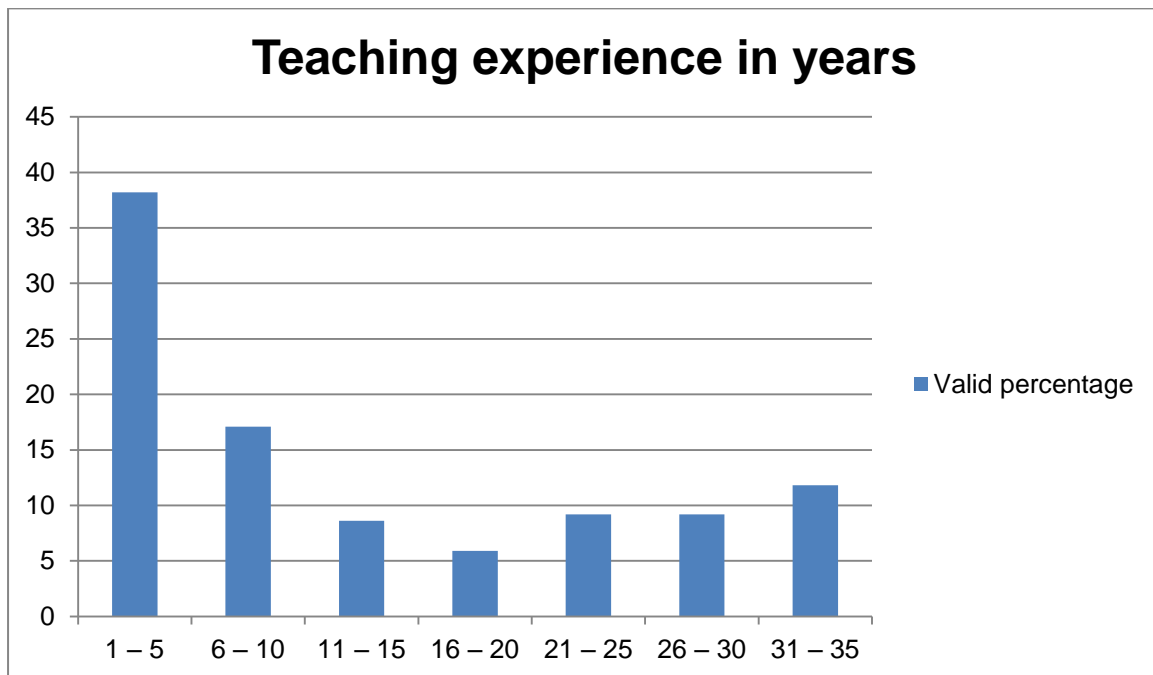
Regarding ethnicity, Figure 1.3 illustrates the large majority of White participants (93.9%) who took part in the study; followed by Indian (3.4%), Black (2.0%), and Coloured (1.3%) participants, who are all in the minority.

Figure 1.3



In terms of the participants' years of teaching experience, slightly more than one third of the participants (38.2%) have been teaching between 1 and 5 years, and 17.1% between 6 and 10 years, as presented in Figure 1.4. Close to half of the teachers (44.7%) have had more than 10 years of teacher experience.

Figure 1.4



Questions concerning the number of subjects taught by teachers, and the number of classes given, were open ended. Consequently, some missing values were found regarding these questions as it seems the questions were misinterpreted. This is explored in Chapter 5 under the limitations section. However, the averages of these questions could be calculated and are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

	Number of subjects you teach	Number of classes you have
Mean	1.39	7.05
Median	1.00	5.00
Standard Deviation	.594	14.411

4.5 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics form the foundation of quantitative data analysis (Trochim, 2006). Descriptive statistics summarise, organise and simplify information gained from data collection (Welman et al., 2005). For the purposes of this study, only the median and mean are provided in the findings.

4.5.1 HADS Questionnaire initial frequencies

As stated earlier, five high schools in Tshwane, Gauteng, agreed to participate in the study. The final sample comprises 153 teachers who teach at governmental secondary high schools. Out of the 153 participants who completed the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire, two did not complete the HADS questionnaire. Thus, the scores of the HADS are calculated with a total number of 151 participants. The two HADS scores, namely anxiety and depression, had to be calculated separately so that the descriptive statistics of the HADS questionnaire could be computed.

As shown in Table 1.2, participants had an average Anxiety score of 7.95, with a standard deviation of 4.478. The Depression score average was 5.08, with a standard deviation of 4.016.

Table 1.2

	HADS Anxiety score	HADS Depression score
Mean	7.95	5.08
Median	8.00	4.00
Standard deviation	4.478	4.016

The results of the HADS scoring are shown in Figure 1.5 and Figure 1.6. With both anxiety and depression scores, the highest percentage (48.3%) was in the “Normal” category for anxiety (N=73) and the “Normal” 68.2% for depression (N=103). This result was followed by “Borderline abnormal” with 20.5% for anxiety (N=31) and 21.9% for depression (N=33). About a third of the respondents (31.1%) reported an “Abnormal” level of anxiety (N=47) and 9.9% reported high levels of depression (N=15).

Figure 1.5

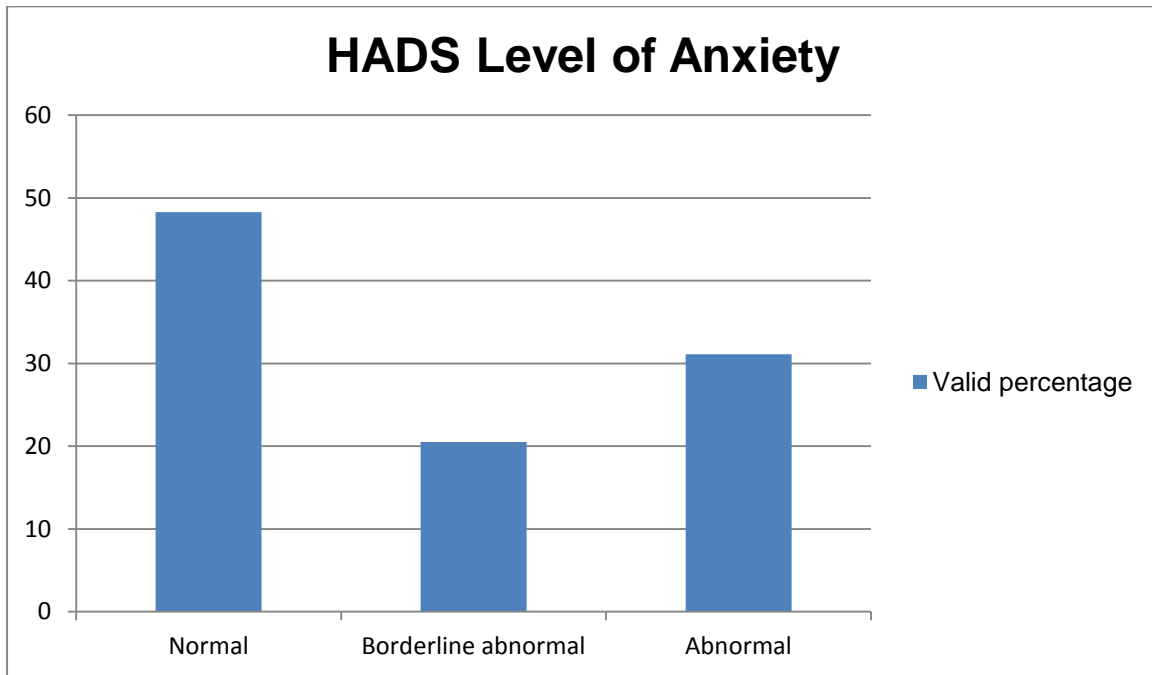
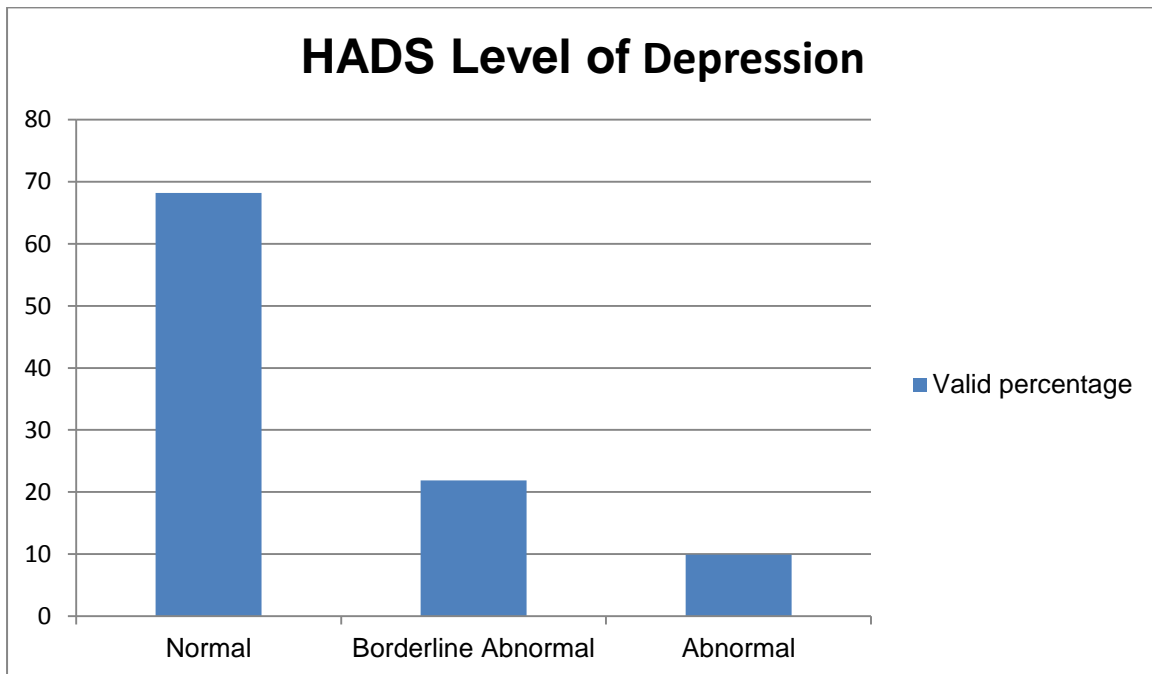


Figure 1.6



4.5.2 Types of bullying

The Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire is in part concerned with the types of bullying teachers experience by learners as well as with the time period in

which the bullying occurs. In Table 1.3 percentages are provided indicating how often the four types of bullying occurred in the past year.

Table 1.3

7. The following are some things that can happen at your school. Please answer how often each of these things has happened/not happened to you during school hours .	Never in the past year	At least once the past year	Several times the past year	At least once a month the past year	Several times a month the past year
How often have you ...					
7.1 Been called names by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	55.6	24.8	15.0	2.0	2.6
7.2 Have had your belongings stolen/taken or damaged by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	69.3	18.3	11.8	0.7	0
7.3 Been ignored by a learner after conveying a reasonable request?	12.4	22.9	30.7	8.5	25.5
7.4 Been threatened by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	65.8	22.4	8.6	2.6	0.7
7.5 Had rumours or gossip spread about you by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	73.0	15.1	7.9	2.6	1.3
7.6 Been hit, pushed or physically hurt by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	90.8	7.2	2.0	0	0
7.7 Been teased by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	71.3	20.7	6.0	0.7	1.3
7.8 Had sexual comments, jokes or gestures made to you by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	69.1	21.1	7.2	2.0	0.7
7.9 Been teased, had rumours spread, or threatened through the Internet (like MySpace, Facebook or e-mail) or text messaging by a learner at your school in a mean or hurtful way?	93.4	4.6	1.3	0.7	0

In order to utilise the results presented in Table 1.3, the sub-questions and responses were grouped respectively. Each sub-question is associated with a certain type of bullying. As mentioned, four types of bullying were utilised in this research, namely verbal, physical, indirect, and cyber bullying. The sub-questions that follow each reflect one of the four types of bullying, as shown in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4

Verbal Bullying	7.1 Been called names by a learner in a mean or hurtful way? 7.4 Been threatened by a learner in a mean or hurtful way? 7.7 Been teased by a learner in a mean or hurtful way? 7.8 Had sexual comments, jokes or gestures made to you by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?
Physical bullying	7.2 Have had your belongings stolen/taken or damaged by a learner in a mean or hurtful way? 7.6 Been hit, pushed or physically hurt by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?
Indirect bullying	7.3 Been ignored by a learner after conveying a reasonable request? 7.5 Had rumours or gossip spread about you by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?
Cyber bullying	7.9 Been teased, had rumours spread, or threatened through the Internet (like MySpace, Facebook or e-mail) or text messaging by a learner at your school in a mean or hurtful way?

Data was re-organised to determine the number of teachers who reported being bullied by learners and those who did not report bullying. A participant who was not bullied falls into the 'Never in the past year' category. A participant who has been bullied falls into one of the following four categories: 'At least once the past year'; 'Several times the past year'; 'At least once a month the past year', and 'Several times a month the past year'.

4.5.2.1 Types of bullying initial frequencies

The percentages of the different types of bullying could be calculated by the use of frequencies, as shown in Table 1.5.

With regard to verbal bullying, it was found that although 37.9% of the participants have not been verbally bullied, 19.6% have been called names by a learner in a mean or hurtful way. Moreover, 17.6% have been threatened by a learner in a mean or hurtful way. A further 17.0% have been teased by a learner in a mean or hurtful way, and 7.8% had sexual comments, jokes or gestures made to them by a learner in a mean or hurtful way.

In terms of physical bullying, 65.4% of the sample group have not been physically bullied. Less than a third (29.4%) of the participants have had their belongings stolen/taken or damaged by a learner in a mean or hurtful way, and 5.2% have been hit, pushed or physically hurt by a learner in a mean or hurtful way.

A high percentage (62.1%) of teachers reported being ignored by a learner after conveying a reasonable request, and 26.1% have had rumours or gossip spread about them by a learner in a mean or hurtful way.

Concerning cyber bullying, it was found that 93.4% of the participants did not experience cyber bullying. However, 6.6% were either teased, had rumours spread about them or were threatened through the internet or text messaging by a learner at their school in a mean or hurtful way.

Table 1.5

	N	Valid Percentage
Verbal final group		
Not verbally bullied	58	37.9
7.1 Been called names by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	30	19.6
7.4 Been threatened by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	27	17.6
7.7 Been teased by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	26	17.0
7.8 Had sexual comments, jokes or gestures made to you by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	12	7.8
Physical final group		
Not physically bullied	100	65.4
7.2 Have had your belongings stolen/taken or damaged by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	45	29.4
7.6 Been hit, pushed or physically hurt by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	8	5.2
Indirect final group		
Not indirectly bullied	18	11.8
7.3 Been ignored by a learner after conveying a reasonable request?	95	62.1
7.5 Had rumours or gossip spread about you by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	40	26.1
Cyber final group		
Not cyber bullied	142	93.4
7.9 Been teased, had rumours spread, or threatened through the Internet (like MySpace, Facebook or e-mail) or text messaging by a learner at your school in a mean or hurtful way?	10	6.6

Table 1.6 presents the final group totals of participants who have been bullied during the past 12 months in addition to those who have not been bullied. The table also provides the final groups of different bullying categories.

Almost two thirds of the teachers reported some form of verbal bullying (62.1%). 34.6% have experienced some form of physical bullying. With concern to the indirect bullying group, 11.8% of participants have never been indirectly bullied and very few teachers reported cyber bullying (6.6%). To conclude, in the Total Bullying group, a percentage of 9.8% of the participants have never been bullied and 90.2% of the participants have been bullied at least once during the past 12 months. It is important to note that the teachers reported different types of bullying that they experienced, and that the amount of times that the bullying occurred varied between participants. Therefore, this finding needs to be considered with caution.

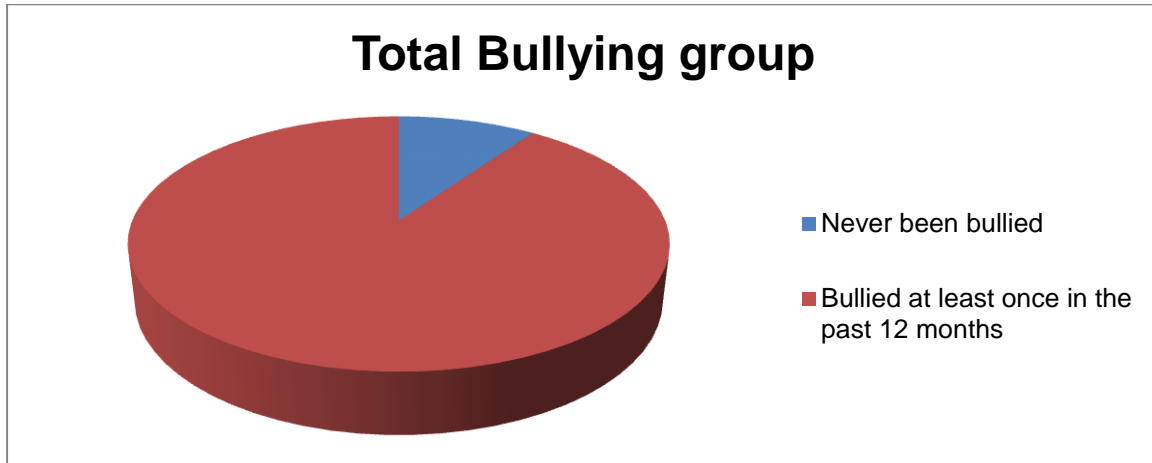
Table 1.6

	N	Valid Percentage
Verbal final group		
Never been bullied	58	37.9
Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	95	62.1
Physical final group		
Never been bullied	100	65.4
Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	53	34.6
Indirect final group		
Never been bullied	18	11.8
Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	135	88.2
Cyber final group		
Never been bullied	142	93.4
Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	10	6.6
Total Bullying group		
Never been bullied	15	9.8
Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	138	90.2

Figure 1.7 illustrates that the majority of the participants (90.2%) have been bullied in one or several ways during the past 12 months and that 9.8% of the participants have never been bullied during the past 12 months. The past 12 months

refer to the year preceding the date on which the questionnaires were provided to the participants.

Figure 1.7



4.5.3 Descriptive statistics for HADS scores across the bullying types

As discussed, the average scores for Anxiety and Depression according to the HADS for the two groups, namely 'Never been bullied' and 'Bullied at least once during the past 12 months', were computed for each of the four respective types of bullying. These scores are shown in Table 1.7.

According to the group that reported some form of verbal bullying the past 12 months (N=94), the average score for Anxiety is 9.00 and for Depression it is 6.00. This is matched to the group that has not experienced bullying in the past 12 months (57 participants) who have an average score for Anxiety of 6.21 and 3.56 for Depression.

With regard to the group that reported some form of physical bullying, the 99 participants who have never been bullied have an average score of 6.85 for Anxiety, and 3.90 for Depression. These scores are compared to participants (N=52) who

reported being bullied at least once during the past 12 months, namely 10.04 for Anxiety and 7.33 for Depression.

According to the group that reported some form of indirect bullying during the past 12 months (N=18), there is an average score of 4.22 for Anxiety and 2.44 for Depression. The average for the group who reported being bullied at least once during the past 12 months (N=133) is 8.45 for Anxiety and 5.44 for Depression.

With concern to reports on cyber bullying, an average of 7.75 is found for Anxiety score, and 4.85 for the Depression score for the 140 participants who have not reported bullying. Out of the 10 participants who have reported being cyber bullied at least once during the past 12 months, the average score for Anxiety is 10.70 and 7.80 for Depression.

Table 1.7

		N	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Verbal final group					
HADS Anxiety score	Never been bullied	57	6.21	6.00	3.463
	Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	94	9.00	10.00	4.706
HADS Depression score	Never been bullied	57	3.56	3.00	2.897
	Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	94	6.00	5.00	4.325
Physical final group					
HADS Anxiety score	Never been bullied	99	6.85	6.00	4.107
	Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	52	10.04	11.00	4.446
HADS Depression score	Never been bullied	99	3.90	3.00	3.409
	Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	52	7.33	8.00	4.157
Indirect final group					
HADS Anxiety score	Never been bullied	18	4.22	3.50	3.370
	Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	133	8.45	8.00	4.379
HADS Depression score	Never been bullied	18	2.44	1.00	2.749
	Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	133	5.44	5.00	4.036
Cyber final group					
HADS Anxiety score	Never been bullied	140	7.75	7.50	4.495
	Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	10	10.70	11.00	3.622
HADS Depression score	Never been bullied	140	4.85	4.00	3.964
	Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	10	7.80	7.00	3.824
Total Bullying group					
HADS Anxiety score	Never been bullied	15	4.40	3.00	3.602
	Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	136	8.34	8.00	4.402
HADS Depression score	Never been bullied	15	2.60	1.00	2.898
	Bullied at least once during the past 12 months	136	5.35	4.00	4.038

4.5.4 Characteristics of learner-to-teacher bullying

Multiple response frequencies were conducted with questions 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13 of the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire. All of these questions have response options of “No” or “Yes”, thus providing two possible values. To perform the most suitable frequency run for these types of responses, the multiple-dichotomy method, which adds up the “Yes” answers, was utilised (Ho, 2006).

In terms of questions 8 (Where on the school grounds do/did these things happen to you?), 9 (When do/did these things happen to you?), 11 (Who have you talked to about these things?), 12 (Have you suffered from any of the following difficulties in the past year?) and 13 (Have you suffered from any of the following difficulties in the past year as a result of being bullied by a learner/s?), there was a certain number of missing answers as seen in Table 1.8. This may be due to the fact that the participants could only answer “No” or “Yes” for each option. This phenomenon is further explored under the Limitations section in Chapter 5.

Table 1.8

	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Question 8	120	78.4	33	21.6	153	100.0
Question 9	119	77.8	34	22.2	153	100.0
Question 11	114	74.5	39	25.5	153	100.0
Question 12	100	65.4	53	34.6	153	100.0
Question 13	61	39.9	92	60.1	153	100.0

Nonetheless, frequencies could still be worked out for the participants who did answer the questions. Table 1.9 provides the three highest frequencies. Classrooms have the highest percentage (49.3%) of where learner-to-teacher bullying occurs at school, followed by school grounds or sport fields (22.5%) and hallways (15.8%). The bullying occurs mostly during class time (39.9%), between classes (17.6%) and

during breaks (17.2). Most participants will talk about the bullying, either to a colleague (29.3%), or with a family member (24.5%) or a friend (23.8%). Stress (34.1%), anxiety (15.7%) and depression (15.7%) are the mental health difficulties most experienced by the participants. Fifty-five participants indicated that they suffer from stress (40.4%) due to learner-to-teacher bullying, followed by 33 participants suffering from anxiety (24.3%), and 21 participants suffering from depression (15.4%) because of the bullying.

Table 1.9

	N	Percentage
Question 8 Where on the school grounds do/did these things happen to you?		
8. a) Classrooms	103	49.3
8. c) On the school grounds or sport fields	47	22.5
8. b) Hallways	33	15.8
Question 9 When do/did these things happen to you?		
9. b) During classes	95	39.9
9. c) Between classes (passing periods)	42	17.6
9. d) During breaks (on break duty)	41	17.2
Question 11 Who have you talked to about these things?		
11. b) A colleague at school	85	29.3
11. e) A family member	71	24.5
11. a) A friend/s	69	23.8
Question 12 Have you suffered from any of the following difficulties in the past year?		
12. c) Stress	89	34.1
12. a) Anxiety	48	15.7
12. b) Depression	41	15.7
Question 13 Have you suffered from the any of the following difficulties in the past year as a result of being bullied by a learner/s?		
13. c) Stress	55	40.4
13. a) Anxiety	33	24.3
13. b) Depression	21	15.4

4.6 Inferential statistics

Thus far descriptive statistics has given us information about the patterns in the data. Inferential statistics will be used to test whether differences observed in the data are statistically significant.

4.6.1 Parametric statistics

By returning to the two groups of bullying, namely 'Never been bullied' and 'Bullied at least once during the past 12 months', the proportions in the two categories could be tested by means of a test for equal proportions. Table 1.10 indicates the p-value of each bullying category, as well as the level for the Total Bullying group. As is shown in the table, the proportions of never been bullied and been bullied at least once in the past 12 months differed for all categories of bullying (p-value<0.001), with the exception of physical bullying (p-value=0.5762). The proportions across all types of bullying who have never been bullied and who have been bullied are also significantly different (p-value <0.001).

Table 1.10

Bullying type	Proportion who have Never been bullied	Proportion who have Been bullied at least once in the past 12 months	p-value of test for equal proportions
Verbal	0.379	0.621	<0.001*
Physical	0.653	0.346	0.5762
Indirect	0.118	0.882	<0.001*
Cyber	0.934	0.066	<0.001*
Total Bullying group	0.098	0.902	<0.001*

* The significance level is 0.05

4.6.2 Non-parametric statistics

The correlation coefficients between the two HADS scores and the overall bullying scores (Total Bullying score) were computed, using the non-parametric Spearman's rho. As seen in Table 1.11, there are positive correlations between the HADS Anxiety score and the HADS Depression score (0.737), the HADS Anxiety

score and the Total Bullying score (0.427), and between the HADS Depression score and the Total Bullying score (0.461). In order for the correlation scores to be significantly different from zero, the significance (2-tailed) needs to be compared to a p-value of 0.05. Consequently, all of the correlation coefficients are significantly different from zero ($p < 0.0001$).

Table 1.11

			HADS Anxiety score	HADS Depression score	Total Bullying score
Spearman's rho	HADS Anxiety score	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1.000 . 151	.737** < 0.0001 151	.427** <0.0001 151
	HADS Depression score	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.737** < 0.0001 151	1.000 . 151	.461** <0.0001 151
	Total Bullying score	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.427** < 0.0001 151	.461** < 0.0001 151	1.000 . 153

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The average HADS Anxiety and Depression scores were also compared across the two groups 'Never been bullied' and 'Bullied at least once during the past 12 months'. This was done to test the null hypothesis claiming that the HADS Anxiety and Depression scores do not differ across the two groups of bullying. This was tested by means of the Mann-Whitney U Test.

As shown in Table 1.12, the null hypotheses are both rejected. This is due to a p-values of p-value=0.001 for the comparison of the HADS Anxiety score across the two groups of bullying, and p-value=0.006 for the comparison of the HADS Depression score across the two groups of bullying.

Table 1.12

	Null hypothesis	Test	Significance	Decision
1	The distribution of HADS Anxiety score is the same across categories of the Total Bullying Group	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.001*	Reject the null hypothesis
2	The distribution of HADS Depression score is the same across categories of the Total Bullying Group	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.006*	Reject the null hypothesis

*The significance level is 0.05

4.7 Central findings

Based on the aims and hypotheses of the study, the statistical procedures discussed above were implemented. The results of this implementation will now be filtered into central findings. Only the most significant findings of this study are highlighted, as deliberated below.

4.7.1 Descriptive findings

In terms of participants' anxiety and depression levels, the average score for anxiety was 7.95 (SD=4.478), and 5.08 (SD=4.018) for depression. In the sample group, females were in the majority (82.4%) and in terms of age, the highest percentages of age groups were 23.5% (21 – 25) and 21.6% (26 – 30). A major proportion of white participants (93.3%) took part in the study. Pertaining to their years of teaching experience, participants varied, with 38.1% having taught between 1 to 5 years, and 8.6% between 11 to 15 years. However, the averages of the number of subjects they teach (mean=1.39 and SD=0.594) and the number of classes they have (mean=7.05 and SD=14.411) seem consistent.

With concern to the four types of bullying, two groups, 'Never been bullied' and 'Bullied at least once during the past 12 months', were formed out of the responses provided in question 7 of the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire.

This question also entailed the different types of bullying assessed in this study, as shown in Table 1.5. As the questions about different types of bullying in question 7 add up to 9 in total, a score of 0 means that the participant was not bullied. Yet, if the score is between 1 and 8, it means that the participant has been bullied (at least once in the past 12 months).

Regarding verbal bullying, 95 participants reported that they had been bullied at least once during the past 12 months (62.1%). The four different types of verbal bullying shared similar percentages. More than half of the participants have never experienced a form of physical bullying (65.4%). Ninety-five of the teachers who participated in this study have been ignored by a learner after conveying a reasonable request (62.1%); and 40 participants have had rumours or gossip spread about them by a learner in a mean or hurtful way (26.1%). Most participants have never experienced cyber bullying (93.4%). In the Total Bullying group, most participants, with a percentage of 90.2, have been bullied in the past 12 months. A low percentage of 9.8 of participants have never been bullied by a learner/s.

With regard to the location on the school premises where learner-to-teacher bullying mostly occurred, classrooms (49.3%) were predominant. Being asked when they were bullied by their learners, most participants answered that it occurred during classes (39.9%). Participants mostly talked to a colleague at school (29.3%) when they were bullied by a learner. According to the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire, 89 participants (34.1%) suffered from stress in the past year, followed by 48 (15.7%) suffering from anxiety and 41 (15.7%) from depression. Furthermore, when participants were asked whether they suffered from anxiety, depression, stress or physical health problems as a result of being bullied by a learner/s, the

predominant three difficulties arising from this question were stress (40.4%), anxiety (24.3%) and depression (15.4%).

4.7.2 Inferential findings

As mentioned in Chapter 3, a hypothesis formally provides a question as a prediction of a study's variables and their interrelationship, which can then be tested (Gavin, 2008). To follow are the significant findings regarding the two hypotheses of this study.

4.7.2.1 Hypothesis 1

The hypothesis that a significant proportion of teachers in this study is exposed to bullying by their learner/s was tested. Since all the data for each bullying category, with the exception of physical bullying (0.5762), had a p-value less than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

4.7.2.2 Hypothesis 2

The hypothesis that there is a correlation between learner-to-teacher bullying and teachers' levels of anxiety and depression was tested through correlations between the HADS scores and bullying groups (Total Bullying score). Positive correlations were found between the HADS Anxiety score and the HADS Depression score (0.737), the HADS Anxiety score and the Total score (0.427), as well as between the HADS Depression score and the Total score (0.461). Moreover, each of these correlation coefficients is significant at <0.0001 , thus rendering it possible to reject the second null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the reliability of questionnaires, the characteristics of the participants, and with the findings of the descriptive statistics and inferential analyses. The selection of the statistical procedures used and reported in this

chapter was determined by the aims of the study and the research questions. The chapter concluded with the central findings of the study.

In the next chapter, a discussion of the results as well as of the limitations and recommendations concerning the study will be presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion, limitations and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4 the central findings of the data analyses were presented, thus addressing the study's research problem, hypotheses and aims. This chapter encompasses an overview of the study's findings as summarised in the discussion. The implications of the findings will then be deliberated. Lastly, certain limitations will be pointed out, followed by recommendations with concern to future research.

5.2 Discussion of central findings

An exploration of the central findings examined in Chapter 4 allows for the discussion of the research problem of this study. As mentioned, this research firstly proposes to explore the proportion of teachers who are bullied by their learners in a school district of Tshwane, Gauteng. Secondly, the study aims to investigate a possible correlation between this type of bullying and teachers' mental health, specifically regarding teachers' anxiety and depression levels. To support these aims and the findings of the study, comparisons to previous, similar studies undertaken concerning the subject of learner-to-teacher bullying need to be made and elaborated on. After comparison, differences can be established as well as any possible gaps or similarities in the studies relating to learner-to-teacher bullying (De Wet, 2010a).

5.2.1 Teachers reporting bullying

The findings indicate that a proportion of teachers who took part in this study have reported verbal, physical, indirect and cyber learner-to-teacher bullying. These findings are comparable to findings in both international and local studies that conducted learner-to-teacher bullying research.

The majority of participants who partook in this study (90.2%) reported to have experienced some form of bullying during the 12 months leading up to the completion of the questionnaires. This finding is substantiated by 91% of Pervin and Turner's (1998) participants who have been victims of learner-to-teacher bullying at least once in their teaching career. Also, in the last five days preceding the implementation of his research, 41.6% of participants in Terry's (1998) study were bullied once or more and 20.8% were bullied twice or more. About three quarters of De Wet and Jacobs' (2006) participants, in their investigation on the subject, indicated that they have experienced learner-to-teacher bullying (76.7%). In a later study conducted by De Wet (2010b), she found that teachers are repeatedly exposed to various types of bullying over time. These results confirm that learner-to-teacher bullying is prevalent in schools. Moreover, as is evident considering the results of the research mentioned above, this phenomenon has been occurring for over 17 years, with a ratio either remaining the same or escalating.

Four types of learner-to-teacher bullying were explored in this study. These include verbal, indirect, physical and cyber learner-to-teacher bullying. Findings concerning verbal bullying are confirmed by the following studies: 23.90% of Steffgen and Ewen's (2007), 32.7% of Terry's (1998) and a notable percentage of 62.1 of Pervin and Turner's (1998) participants indicated that they experienced verbal bullying from their learners. In the current study, 62.1% participants reported that they were verbally bullied at least once in the past 12 months.

The verbal bullying reported in this study took on many forms. Participants had been called names by a learner in a mean or hurtful way (19.6%), been threatened by a learner (17.6%), and had been teased by a learner in a mean or hurtful way (17.0%). These different forms of verbal bullying confirm previous

findings in similar studies. For instance, in Steffgen and Ewen's (2007) study, 19.4% of their participants experienced defamation from their learners. Similarly, 26.7% of Terry's (1998) participants received deliberate and repetitive disrespect from their learners and 23.8% experienced unacceptable name calling. Kõiv's (2011) study found the following types of verbal bullying: belittling opinion (2.62%), devaluation (4.9%), insults (14.0%), intimidation (3.1%), name calling (8.5%), offensive remarks (18.85%), shouting (20.77%), and slandering (7.99%). Kõiv's (2011) results may not be as noticeable as those in other verbal bullying studies mentioned, including this study, but it seems clear that verbal bullying takes on many forms. Moreover, various studies (e.g., De Wet, 2007; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006; Kõiv, 2011; Pervin & Turner, 1998; Terry, 1998) identify verbal bullying as the predominant type of learner-to-teacher bullying.

Verbal bullying, however, is not the predominant form of bullying in this study as 88.2% of the participants revealed that they have been indirectly bullied in the 12 months prior to this study. The type of indirect bullying most represented in this study together with other studies is a teacher being ignored by a learner. 62.1% of the participants reported being ignored by a learner after conveying a reasonable request. In the study conducted by James et al. (2008), 54% of the male and 59% of female learners ignored their teachers. This finding is similar to that of 48.3 % of De Wet and Jacobs' (2006) participants who were being ignored by their learners. In further results of the current study 26.1% of participants reported that they experienced rumours or gossip spread about them by a learner in a mean or hurtful way. This finding corresponds with De Wet and Jacobs' (2006) findings (28.7%).

The results of physical bullying research seem to be quite similar across learner-to-teacher bullying studies. In this study, 5.2% participants have been hit,

pushed or physically hurt by a learner in a mean or hurtful way. These findings are similar to the results of Steffgen and Ewen's (2007) study, which found 4% of participants confronted with physical assault by their learners. Furthermore, some of Kõiv's (2011) participants were physically attacked (0.96%) and threatened with violence (2.24%). In De Wet's (2010b) qualitative study on learner-to-teacher bullying the following was found regarding physical bullying. Teachers experienced threats of violence, objects being thrown at them, and being slapped in the face. Learners threatened to kill teachers' children, trashed classrooms with water, spray painted teachers' cars and slashed their tires (De Wet, 2010b). These studies, including the present one, reveal that physical bullying does occur. It does not, however, do so to the same degree as verbal and indirect bullying.

A prominent finding of this study was that 29.4% participants have had their belongings stolen/taken or damaged by a learner. This result is noticeably higher compared to Terry's (1998) results (11.9%) and Steffgen and Ewen's (2007) findings (9.30%). The findings of this study concerning stolen or damaged property of teachers may be higher compared to the abovementioned findings due to the rising crime rate in South Africa. However, the verification of such an assumption falls beyond the scope of this study.

The least reported type of learner-to-teacher bullying was cyber bullying. A low percentage of participants (6.6%) reported having been teased, had rumours spread about them, or were threatened via the internet or text messaging by a learner in a mean or hurtful way. A similar percentage is found in Steffgen and Ewen's (2007) study, which indicated that participants experienced what they termed as "telephone terror" (p. 86) (5.8%).

The results of the research on the different types of learner-to-teacher bullying confirm that there exists a proportion of teachers who are bullied. From the findings of this study and related studies it is clear that verbal and indirect bullying are the main types of learner-to-teacher bullying that take place. It may be possible that these two forms of bullying are rather easy for the learners to commit. For example, in a class environment, one learner, surrounded by fellow learners, could comfortably insult or ignore the teacher and even be joined by other learners. Conversely, physical bullying may be risky for the bully as it allows for more evidence against the learner and transpires into heavier consequences if he or she is caught. A possible reason why the occurrence of cyber bullying towards teachers in the current study is low may be because learners do not have teachers' personal contact details such as phone numbers or email addresses.

With concern to where learner-to-teacher bullying takes place, participants who took part in Pervin and Turner's (1998) and Terry's (1998) studies indicated that they were mostly bullied by learners in the classroom. This is in line with findings from this study in which 39.9% of the participants identified learner-to-teacher bullying occurring during class time. The majority of time spent by learners and teachers together is in the classroom, in a confined space. A classroom setting provides an audience of bystanders, instigators or supporters of the bully, which may make it more compelling for the learner to bully the teacher.

If a teacher has experienced learner-to-teacher bullying, he or she would mostly talk to a colleague at school (29.3%), a family member (24.5%) or to a friend/s (23.8%) about the occurrence. This finding is substantiated by Pervin and Turner's (1998) study, in which 41% of the participants discussed their experience of learner-to-teacher bullying with friends and colleagues.

Reflecting on the above, the paradigmatic view of the study needs some deliberation. The findings about the proportion of teachers who took part in this study indicate that different types of learner-to-teacher bullying do occur in several areas of the school. Thus, the three realities (sub-systems) of concern to this study, namely the learner, the teacher and the contextual disturbance (trigger) are all present and all play a part in learner-to-teacher bullying. All three of these realities form part of the school system (Jordaan, 2008).

However, learner-to-teacher bullying not only affects teachers and learners, but also possible bystanders, or colleagues to whom learner-to-teacher bullying stories are confided. Bystanders could include other school members or teaching staff as well as learners who are not part of the bullying, any of which may be influenced by the bullying situation (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2011; Obermann, 2011). Consequently, many systems in the school may be negatively affected by learner-to-teacher bullying. What such impact exactly entails is uncertain and requires more research. Nonetheless, that bullying, due to its cyclic nature (Allen, 2010), has an effect on our past, which in turn affects our present and future, is certain (Scott-Lennon & Considine, 2008).

5.2.2 The relationship between learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's level of anxiety and depression

De Wet (2010b) describes learner-to-teacher bullying as “malicious acts to disempower them [teachers] as professionals and human beings” (p. 195). This disempowerment has shown to implicate additional consequences for teachers such as deciding to teach at another school (Kõiv, 2011), or finding a different type of job (De Wet & Jacobs, 2006). Further disempowerment is shown in the correlation between reported learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's mental health. There

were significant relationships in this study between teachers' reported experience of bullying and anxiety and depression respectively.

This correlation is confirmed by Vartia (2001) who states that being bullied at work threatens the psychological health of the employees who are the targets of bullying. Moreover, after possible connections of work environment factors are controlled, a significant relationship between bullying and both stress symptoms and health risks is shown (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; O'Donnell et al., 2010). This study found positive correlations between bullying and mental health difficulties. For example, when the participants were asked whether they suffered from anxiety, depression, stress or physical health problems as a result of being bullied by a learner/s, the predominant difficulty found was stress (74.2%). This finding correlates with Pervin and Turner's (1998) study which found that teachers who are victims of learner-to-teacher bullying suffer from stress. The scope of this study, however, did not allow for the incorporation of this aspect of mental health since the HADS questionnaire focuses on anxiety and depression only. In the HADS questionnaire results, 41.4% participants indicated that they suffered from anxiety in the past year, followed by 37.6% suffering from depression.

In accordance with the second hypothesis of this study, participants were specifically asked whether or not they suffered from anxiety or depression as a result of learner-to-teacher bullying. 28.0% reported that they suffered from anxiety and 18.6% revealed that they suffered from depression due to this bullying. These results were validated by the positive correlations found between the Total Bullying score and the HADS scores, which were all significant. Furthermore, these results reveal that teachers do suffer from anxiety and depression, and that there exists a

relationship between learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's anxiety and depression levels.

5.3 Implications of the findings

The predominant aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's mental health. Since a relationship between these two variables has been found, the implications of the findings need to be considered.

The prevalence of learner-to-teacher bullying in South African schools is a cause for concern. The high proportion of teachers reporting being bullied by learners in this study alone highlights learner-to-teacher bullying as a significant problem in Tshwane schools. Learner-to-teacher bullying is harmful to teachers as it has been found that bullying at work negatively affects mental health and causes harm to morale and motivation among employees (Oade, 2009; Thompson, 2009). Consequently, teachers' moderate to high levels of anxiety and depression are further cause of concern. Teachers with negative and low levels of emotional mental health are less productive, less dedicated toward their profession, may be passive-aggressive in nature, doing only what is minimally required and may resort to absenteeism (Daniels & Strauss, 2010).

South Africa is now faced with the challenge of protecting teachers and creating adequate resources to eliminate learner-to-teacher bullying in addition to improve teachers' mental health. Such a pro-active approach can begin with providing the support that the teachers require. Support may range from psychological services made available to teachers, such as a consultant psychologist being available for teachers, to workshops or training seminars

addressing the problem of learner-to-teacher bullying. These forms of support can increase awareness and knowledge of the phenomenon and encourage the development of coping skills. Should teachers have access to such resources, they will stand a better chance to function optimally in their profession (De Wet, 2010b). Moreover, the school system will function at a more productive level as teachers will be able to focus on teaching, which will have a ripple effect on the learners, enabling them to learn in an environment free of learner-to-teacher bullying.

The findings of the study will be compiled into a document and distributed to each school who participated in the study. This may help empower and assist principals and staff in this Tshwane district in the recognition of learner-to-teacher bullying and the possible harmful effects of this phenomenon. Furthermore, programmes may be developed and implemented in these schools to support teachers who are bullied by learners and to guide teachers in the experience thereof, as mentioned. In terms of an all-inclusive anti-bullying school policy, the occurrence of learner-to-teacher bullying needs to be recognised as a fundamental part of such a policy (De Wet & Jacobs, 2006).

5.4 Limitations of the study

The findings of this study are indicative of the strengths on which this study is based. One such strength is the value and applicability of this study. The values, such as the importance of teachers' mental health, are stated in Chapter 1 under the aims, justification, and importance of this research. The applicability refers to the quintessence of this research, which has gained much media attention. Learner-to-teacher bullying is a problem in South Africa that can severely jeopardise a teacher's mental health. However, the researcher is aware that there are factors which limit the

validity and reliability of this study. The limitations of this research will therefore be deliberated.

To start with, the current research is based on the researcher's selection of five schools in Tshwane, Gauteng, as stipulated by the Department of Education. The results of this study are thus not representative of the whole of Gauteng or South Africa. They cannot be generalised and considered applicable to other populations (e.g., James et al., 2008; Klusmann et al., 2008; Whitted & Dupper, 2008). Moreover, non-probability sampling was utilised, allowing for a group of similar participants appropriate for a study (Black, 1999), which entailed the 153 participants from five schools in a particular district of Tshwane. Therefore, a representative sample could not be established as random sampling was not used. This study's sample is consequently limited to participants who teach in a certain Tshwane area and who were mostly between the ages of 21 and 30 (45.1%), mainly female (82.4%), and predominantly white (93.9%). In Kõiv's (2011) learner-to-teacher bullying study, schools were selected from the 16 different districts in Estonia, randomly selecting one school from each district, which makes the study acceptably representative.

With regard to the sample group, some teachers may be embarrassed about being or having been bullied, and thus might not reveal an accurate version of their learner-to-teacher bullying experience/s. On the other hand, the teachers may exacerbate their interpretations of the bullying events (Whitted & Dupper, 2008). When meeting with the teachers at each respective school, it may have been more conducive to discuss learner-to-teacher bullying directly instead of broadly naming this particular phenomenon 'bullying'. Also, the study would have benefitted by distinguishing and emphasising the difference between learner-to-teacher bullying

and learners' misbehaviour during these meetings (Pervin & Turner, 1998). Then teachers would have had a clearer idea of what exactly is meant by bullying.

As to the learner/s, this study does not include research about the bully, consequently excluding input from learners. The input from learners was considered in the study by James et al. (2008) who examined the "nature of other [bullying] relationships" (p. 160) existing in school. The learners who participated in the study completed a questionnaire with concern to learner-on-learner bullying as well as additional items regarding learner-to-teacher bullying (James et al., 2008). However, De Wet (2012) states that research regarding South African learners' input is a difficult task as learners who knowingly bully their teachers may not volunteer to partake in a study about the subject.

A further limitation of this study is that it cannot predict whether learner-to-teacher bullying causes low levels of mental health among teachers, which Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Zink, and Birchmeier (2009) and James et al. (2008) deem impossible to predict. Therefore, it is uncertain whether or not the anxiety and depression levels shown in the sample of this study affect teachers due to circumstances other than their work at school. As noted in the study by Notelaers et al. (2006), "the cross-sectional nature of the survey data does not allow for causal interpretations of the observed relationships between exposure to bullying and lack of well-being" (p. 301).

5.4.1 Limitations of the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire

The Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire was developed by the researcher for this research. However, several factors could be improved upon.

Concerning questions 1 to 6 a couple of limitations were found. The biographical details should have included the teachers' home language or the preferred language of their choice. In addition, questions 4 and 5 needed to be phrased more clearly. These questions are composed as follows: 'Number of subjects you teach' and, 'Number of classes you have'. Consequently, they were misunderstood by some participants and could be reformulated as: 'Indicate the number of subjects that you teach in a weekly/two-week timetable cycle' and 'Indicate the number of classes per week that you are teaching this year'.

After question 6, a definition of workplace bullying was provided to assist the participants in completing the remainder of the questionnaire. This definition encompassed many factors similar to learner-to-teacher bullying and was used as a definition in workplace bullying questionnaires in general. However, instead of providing the teachers with this definition, a definition of learner-to-teacher bullying specifically, as was done by Pervin and Turner (1998) in their study, might have been more valuable.

One of the main limitations of the questionnaire was the phrasing of the responses for question 7, as seen in Table 1.14. These responses were adapted from the California Bullying Victimization Scale (Felix et al., 2011) to complement responses to learner-to-teacher bullying questions as this instrument is originally utilised for peer bullying. The responses provided for the questions form part of the crux of this study's findings.

A first limitation in this respect was that the response options offered to participants were too broad and vague. "Several times in the past year", for example, could be interpreted as many times in the past month or in the past year, making it

unclear to participants. Furthermore, these responses were not grouped proportionally with the two groups that were formed, namely 'Never been bullied' (referring to "Never in the past year"), and 'Bullied at least once the past twelve months', which included the following responses: "At least once the past year"; "Several times the past year"; "At least once a month the past year", and "Several times a month the past year". Therefore, the results of this study need to be examined with caution as only the first response ("Never in the past year") meant that the teacher was never bullied and ticking any of the other four responses indicated that the teacher was being bullied at least once in the past twelve months. Consequently, the total score of bullying for this study, namely 90.2%, does not mean that most teachers were bullied several times in the last year or month, for example.

A limitation similar to the above is that the various bullying types did not have the same number of items. Verbal bullying had four, both physical and indirect bullying had two, and cyber bullying only had one. The results from these four types of learner-to-teacher bullying are thus not equal. In addition, the level of seriousness of these different types of bullying was not included in question 7, or anywhere else in the questionnaire.

With concern to question 7.9 ('Been teased, had rumours spread, or threatened through the Internet (like MySpace, Facebook or e-mail) or text messaging by a learner at your school in a mean or hurtful way?'), the researcher cannot assume that all the participants know what MySpace and Facebook is or make use of them.

Regarding questions 8 – 14 which included yes/no responses, it appears as if the participants were cautious to answer them. They may have felt threatened or confused by the yes/no style of questioning or did not understand that they had to answer yes or no to every sub-question provided. The instructions concerning the yes/no questions could have been clearer. For instance, they should have read: Circle each question with no or yes. The confusion arising from this type of questioning may explain the missing values, for questions 9 to 13 specifically, and why they occurred.

As some of the participants seemed confused about the yes/no responses, question 10's responses (shown in Table 1.13) in particular ought to have been on a Likert scale or there should have been an empty space or a block provided to fill in the answer. As most participants seemed to find these responses unclear, the average number of children who were doing 'these things' to the teachers needed to be added up together in order to get an estimate.

Table 1.13

Question 10	Responses	
10. HOW many learners have done these things to you?		
a) 1	No	Yes
b) 2	No	Yes
c) 3	No	Yes
d) 4	No	Yes
e) 5 or more, Please specify _____	No	Yes

As a final point, regarding the properties of the questionnaire, no Cronbach's alpha could be calculated as the questionnaire contained both nominal ("yes" and "no") and ordinal questions. The latter type was not exhaustive and mutually exclusive. Therefore, no internal reliability could be obtained. Moreover, the validity

(other than face validity) of the questionnaire could not be attained since this questionnaire has never been utilised in previous studies. Thus, there is no study available as yet with which the results of this study's Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire findings may be compared.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

Firstly, following the discussion of the limitations of the current study, it would be recommended that the limitations explored be taken into consideration and improved on in future studies about the correlation between learner-to-teacher bullying and teachers' mental health in South Africa. Future studies on the subject may benefit by the acknowledgement of limitations mentioned, and build on this study. Also, the limitations rising from the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire need to be rectified in order to improve results in future studies. Further research is consequently recommended to gauge the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Moreover, a qualitative approach may be more conducive to this type of study as it will allow for different information to be obtained (De Wet, 2010b, 2011a, 2012).

Secondly, it is recommended that this research be conducted in a South African school setting using a larger representative sample. Schools randomly selected and representative of each province in South Africa can take part in the research, for example. It is furthermore suggested that topics closely related to this research be studied in South Africa. For instance, more research into teacher-to-learner bullying should be conducted (De Wet, 2012) as well as research into the behaviour of the bully (Yahn, 2012) who is the learner/s in this study. Research about these two phenomena may expand knowledge and awareness among various systems as bullying influences the individual, family members, peers, the school

system, the community and the media (Cushman & Clelland, 2011). If these phenomena are made aware of and better understood, steps may be put into place to ensure their intervention and prevention.

Thirdly, this study advocates further studies regarding the mental health of teachers. Future research into the mental health of teachers needs to apply a life-course approach. This approach acknowledges that mental health difficulties may either originate in early life, or risk factors may occur in the course of a teacher's life to instigate mental health difficulties (Collins et al, 2011). Additional mental health factors about teachers may also be included in future learner-to-teacher bullying studies, where this study focussed only on their anxiety and depression. Stress, for instance, was one of the mental health difficulties not under investigation in this study. However, the significant findings concerning the large amount of stress teachers experience, including the stress they undergo due to being bullied by their learners, indicate that this mental health difficulty needs to be an important aspect of learner-to-teacher bullying research in the future.

Fourthly, there exists a lack of research focusing on the relationship between learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's mental health in the South African context. This research study has attempted to address the gap in South African research by identifying a relationship between learner-to-teacher bullying and a teacher's mental health. However, more research in this area is needed in order to find further correlations between learner-to-teacher bullying and teachers' mental health. While this study is an attempt to address this gap, future research about this topic, building on the current research, is recommended. Furthermore, future research may include intervention, prevention and coping strategies designed specifically for teachers.

Lastly, although workplace bullying may cover an array of verbal and non-verbal acts in the workplace, with different consequences, there is no consensus regarding the definition of workplace bullying, only about how it is manifested (Randall, 2003). However, when more research with concern to bullying at work is conducted, constructs may become more refined (Coyne, 2011).

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, a discussion of the central findings was deliberated. This discussion involved the findings with regard to learner-to-teacher bullying in the sample of the study. Also, the finding concerning the relationship between this type of bullying and a teacher's mental health was explored. The discussion was followed by a presentation of the implications, limitations and recommendations regarding the current research.

In the final chapter, the researcher's reflections about the findings of this study are reviewed.

Chapter 6: Researcher's reflections on this study

6.1 Background to the study

The current research study is part of the requirement for completing an MA in Counselling Psychology at the University of Pretoria. Since the phenomenon of bullying has always been of interest to me, I was eager to explore it in more detail as a topic for my mini-dissertation. What fascinates me about bullying is that it occurs in a vast diversity of circumstances and contexts, within any age group worldwide. However, the phenomenon of learner-to-teacher bullying was especially significant to me as I personally experienced this type of bullying while teaching at an ex-model C government high school for three years.

Following my decision to pursue the topic of learner-to-teacher bullying, I emailed various local and international academics who have researched workplace bullying, learner-to-learner bullying, and a few who have researched learner-to-teacher bullying. I asked them to convey their opinion on the viability of such a topic for the purpose of a research study. The response from researchers was overwhelmingly positive. Thus, after extensive research on this phenomenon, it was decided that learner-to-teacher bullying and the impact it may have on a teacher's mental health would be the two-fold topic of this study.

6.2 Researcher's reflections on the research process

The research process was a challenging task. A mini-dissertation encompasses reading, scientific writing, methodology, statistics, conducting of research, self-discipline and a large amount of time, to name a few. Initially, I had to push myself to limits I did not believe I could reach, but I did. I was able to approach the schools and build relationships there, to construct my own questionnaire, to

improve my understanding of statistics and scientific writing, as well as learning to be patient with myself. In reflection, it was a process well worth going through.

6.3 Researcher's reflections on the correlation between personal learner-to-teacher bullying experiences and this study's findings

The findings of the current study not only substantiate studies previously conducted on learner-to-teacher bullying, but also the personal experiences I had when teaching. A few of such bullying incidents included being ignored countless times; called names ("Bitch"); threatened with my life ("I will burn the whole school down and make sure you're here when I do it"); having water bombs thrown into my classroom through the windows; being sang to mockingly by an entire class I was substituting ("You're a dog" in a language I could not understand, but the song was translated to me by other learners), and at times running out of my class, crying uncontrollably, due to the way some of the learners had spoken to me and treated me. While I experienced this phenomenon myself, I also witnessed other teachers being bullied and I heard the stories of how learners treated some of my colleagues. One of my colleagues' children had been threatened via the internet ("We will put your new-born baby in the microwave"), another's tires were slashed, while countless others were ignored, verbally abused or mocked on a daily basis.

These experiences are parallel with the findings on learner-to-teacher bullying from this study. Verbal, physical, indirect and cyber learner-to-teacher bullying took place when I taught and continued to occur. I find this shocking and sad at the same time. It is a cause of grave concern that minimal research or funding is invested into the phenomenon of teachers who are bullied by learners or into the state of teachers' overall mental health. For learners to be educated properly they need teachers who are sound and able to provide them with knowledge. This will have a constructive

ripple effect on the learner's future and on the people who are involved in the learner's life. If teachers are enabled to teach as they are supposed to, free from the threat of learner-to-teacher bullying, this will have a constructive ripple effect on their own lives and their mental health as well.

6.4 Closing

I agree with Scott-Lennon and Considine's (2008) statement that individuals who have suffered from bullying are able to rebuild and shape their future. Despite the fact that they were difficult times and a constant challenge, I have grown and gained huge experience in life skills during my three years of teaching, for which I am grateful. However, the phenomenon of learner-to-teacher bullying, as it continues to exist, will not cease to fascinate me, and I want to be involved in this matter on any possible level in future to the best of my ability.

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Appendix A

Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire

- ✓ Please answer each question honestly and accurately by **circling** the number in the appropriate **box**.
- ✓ **Please complete *all of the items*.**
- ✓ Please remember, the information will be treated confidentially.
- ✓ **Your responses are private and cannot be identified by anyone at your school.**
- ✓ Remember that the questions concern **learners' behaviour towards you**.
- ✓ Thank you for being willing to complete this questionnaire.

Items 1–4 refer to **information about yourself**. **Circle** the number that matches the appropriate response.

1. Gender

Male	1
Female	2

2. Age

21 – 25	1
26 – 30	2
31 – 35	3
36 – 40	4
41 – 45	5
46 – 50	6
51 – 55	7
56 – 60	8
61 – 65	9
66 – 70	10
71 – 75	11

3. Teaching experience in years

1 – 5 years	1
6 – 10 years	2
11 – 15 years	3
16 – 20 years	4
21 – 25 years	5
25 – 30 years	6
31 – 35 years	7

4. Number of subjects you teach

--

5. Number of classes you have

--

6. Ethnicity

White	1
Black	2
Indian	3
Coloured	4
Other, Please specify _____	5

A definition of bullying is provided to assist you in answering items 7.1–7.9.

Bullying may be defined as the unwanted, unwelcome abuse of any source of power that has the effect of or intent to intimidate, control or otherwise strip a teacher of his/her right to esteem, growth, dignity, voice or other human rights in the school.

Items 7.1–7.9 refer to **learners' behaviour towards you**. Please **circle** the number that matches the appropriate response.

7. The following are some things that can happen at your school. Please answer how often each of these things has happened/not happened to you during school hours .	Never in the past year	At least once the past year	Several times the past year	At least once a month the past year	Several times a month the past year
How often have you ...					
7.1 Been called names by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	1	2	3	4	5
7.2 Have had your belongings stolen/taken or damaged by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	1	2	3	4	5
7.3 Been ignored by a learner after conveying a reasonable request?	1	2	3	4	5
7.4 Been threatened by a learner	1	2	3	4	5

in a mean or hurtful way?					
7.5 Had rumours or gossip spread about you by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	1	2	3	4	5
7.6 Been hit, pushed or physically hurt by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	1	2	3	4	5
7.7 Been teased by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	1	2	3	4	5
7.8 Had sexual comments, jokes or gestures made to you by a learner in a mean or hurtful way?	1	2	3	4	5
7.9 Been teased, had rumours spread, or threatened through the Internet (like MySpace, Facebook or e-mail) or text messaging by a learner at your school in a mean or hurtful way?	1	2	3	4	5

Please think about the **MAIN learner/s** that did these things to you in the past year.

Circle No or Yes for each option. Alternatively, if you have responded “Never” for all of questions 7.1–7.9, then please proceed to question 15.

8. WHERE on the school grounds do/did these things happen to you?		
a) Classrooms	No	Yes
b) Hallways	No	Yes
c) On the school grounds or sports fields	No	Yes
d) Bathrooms or locker rooms	No	Yes
e) On the bus (school bus or public transportation)	No	Yes
f) Somewhere else, Please specify _____	No	Yes

9. WHEN do/did these things happen to you?		
a) Before school	No	Yes
b) During classes	No	Yes
c) Between classes (passing periods)	No	Yes
d) During breaks (on break duty)	No	Yes
e) After school cultural or sport activities	No	Yes
f) After school at gate duty	No	Yes
g) Some other time, Please specify _____	No	Yes

10. HOW many learners have done these things to you?		
f) 1	No	Yes
g) 2	No	Yes

h) 3	No	Yes
i) 4	No	Yes
j) 5 or more, Please specify _____	No	Yes

11. WHO have you talked to about these things?		
a) A friend/s	No	Yes
b) A colleague at school	No	Yes
c) An HOD	No	Yes
d) The principal	No	Yes
e) A family member	No	Yes
f) No one knows about these things. I keep it to myself.	No	Yes
g) Someone else, Please specify _____	No	Yes

12. HAVE you suffered from any of the following difficulties in the past year?		
a) Anxiety	No	Yes
b) Depression	No	Yes
c) Stress	No	Yes
d) Physical health problems	No	Yes
e) Any of the above requiring medication	No	Yes
h) Any other difficulties, Please specify _____	No	Yes

13. HAVE you suffered from any of the following difficulties in the past year as a result of being bullied by a learner/s?		
a) Anxiety	No	Yes
b) Depression	No	Yes
c) Stress	No	Yes
d) Physical health problems	No	Yes
e) Any of the above requiring medication	No	Yes
f) Any other difficulties, Please specify _____	No	Yes

14. WOULD you say that there is a power imbalance between learners and teachers, the power being held by the learner?	No	Yes
--	----	-----

15. If you have any comments or further information that you feel could be relevant to this study would you please fill it in in the space provided.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study!

Appendix B

Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale (HADS)

- ✓ Please answer each question honestly and accurately by **circling** the number in the appropriate **box**.
- ✓ **Please complete *all of the items*.**
- ✓ Please remember, the information will be treated confidentially.
- ✓ **Your responses are private and cannot be identified by anyone at your school.**
- ✓ Also, please remember that this questionnaire is designed to help in knowing how **you** feel.
- ✓ Thank you for being willing to complete this questionnaire.

Please read each item and **circle** the number under the response which comes closest to **how you have been feeling** in the **past month**.

Don't take too long over your replies; your immediate reaction to each item will probably be more accurate than a long thought-out response.

1. I feel tense or 'wound up':

Most of the time 3	A lot of the time 2	Time to time: occasionally 1	Not at all 0
-----------------------	------------------------	------------------------------------	-----------------

2. I still enjoy the things I used to enjoy:

Definitely as much 0	Not quite so much 1	Only a little 2	Hardly at all 3
-------------------------	------------------------	--------------------	--------------------

3. I get a sort of frightened feeling as if something awful is about to happen:

Very definitely and quite badly 3	Yes, but not too badly 2	A little, but it doesn't worry me 1	Not at all 0
---	--------------------------------	---	-----------------

4. I can laugh and see funny side of things:

As much as I always could 0	Not quite so much now 1	Definitely not so much now 2	Not at all 3
-----------------------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------------	-----------------

5. Worrying thoughts go through my mind:

A great deal of the time 3	A lot of the time 2	From time to time but not too often 1	Only occasionally 0
-------------------------------	------------------------	--	------------------------

6. I feel cheerful:

Not at all 3	Not often 2	Sometimes 1	Most of the time 0
-----------------	----------------	----------------	-----------------------

7. I can sit at ease and feel relaxed:

Definitely 0	Usually 1	Not often 2	Not at all 3
-----------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------

8. I feel as if I am slowed down:

Nearly all the time 3	Very often 2	Sometimes 1	Not at all 0
--------------------------	-----------------	----------------	-----------------

9. I get a sort of frightened feeling like 'butterflies' in the stomach:

Not at all 0	Occasionally 1	Quite often 2	Very often 3
-----------------	-------------------	------------------	-----------------

10. I have lost interest in my appearance:

Definitely 3	I don't take so much care as I should 2	I may not take quite as much care 1	I take just as much as ever 0
-----------------	--	--	----------------------------------

11. I feel restless as if I have to be on the move:

Very much indeed 3	Quite a lot 2	Not very much 1	Not at all 0
-----------------------	------------------	--------------------	-----------------

12. I look forward with enjoyment to things:

As much as I ever did 0	Rather less than I used to 1	Definitely less than I used to 2	Hardly at all 3
----------------------------	---------------------------------	-------------------------------------	--------------------

13. I get sudden feelings of panic:

Very often indeed 3	Quite often 2	Not very often 1	Not at all 0
------------------------	------------------	---------------------	-----------------

14. I can enjoy a good book, listening to the radio or watching a TV programme:

Often 0	Sometimes 1	Not often 2	Very seldom 3
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Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study!

Appendix C



GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department of Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For administrative use:
Reference no. D2014/009

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	5 April 2013
Validity of Research Approval:	5 April 2013 to 20 September 2013
Name of Researcher:	Woudstra M.H.
Address of Researcher:	P.O. Box 775 Irene 0062
Telephone Number:	012 667 2507 / 076 142 1253
Email address:	mhwoudstra@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Bullying as a potential factor influencing teachers' mental health
Number and type of schools:	SIX Secondary Schools
Districts/HO	Tshwane South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

- The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this

Making education a societal priority

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Makhado
2013/04/08

- letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
 3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
 4. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
 5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
 6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
 7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
 8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
 9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
 10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
 11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
 12. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
 13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
 14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Dr David Makhado
Director: Knowledge Management and Research

DATE: 2013/08/08

Making education a societal priority

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9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za

Appendix D

Information sheet for schools

1. Title of research project

Bullying as a potential factor influencing teachers' mental health.

2. The potential value of addressing this issue

The purpose of this study is to investigate and discuss the prevalence of learner-to-teacher bullying. Moreover, there is a need for research to determine whether bullying is a potential factor in influencing teachers' mental health, especially in South Africa. Findings from this study may possibly bring awareness of the topic to the public, which may be an important intervention of workplace bullying since it enables people to understand new and unexpected phenomena.

3. The potential value for the school

This research could also benefit the school system as a whole and the persons involved, ranging from the principal and staff to the learners. Teachers with negative and low levels of emotional mental health are becoming less productive, less dedicated toward the profession, passive aggressive, and only do what is minimally required, resorting to absenteeism due to unbearable situations at school. If bullying by learners is found to be related to a teacher's well-being, measures may be put into place to prevent this phenomenon from occurring. Following completion of the study, a written synopsis of the study's results will be provided to the principals of the schools. The synopsis will supply each school with valuable information regarding the prevalence of learners bullying teachers as a potential factor influencing teachers' mental health. It is important to note that individual results of the teachers' well-being will not be released to the schools.

4. Participants

Public high schools in Pretoria, within a certain district, will be approached and asked whether they would like to partake in this study. A detailed layout of the aim of the study, the confidentiality clauses as well as the procedure to be affected will be explained to the principals in order to obtain permission for the schools to participate in the study. When permission is obtained, teachers within the school will be

provided with information regarding the study. Teachers of different gender, age, years in/of experience and ethnicity will be recruited. Consent to participate will be obtained from each teacher willing to participate in the study.

5. What would be asked from the participants

Teachers will be asked to anonymously complete two questionnaires, namely the Learner-to-teacher Bullying Questionnaire and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (Zigmond & Snaith, 1983). Both questionnaires together should not take longer than half an hour to complete. A time and place for teachers to complete questionnaires will be agreed upon with the respecting principal. Teachers may withdraw from the research at any stage.

6. Procedures to ensure confidentiality and data protection and obtaining consent

Teachers involved in the proposed study will be well informed of the confidential and anonymous nature of the questionnaires. Anonymity allows protection of their identities. The process regarding the documentation of the data will be discussed as well. All data regarding participants will be anonymously coded and no identifiers will be used. The data will be stored at the University of Pretoria for a minimum of 15 years from the commencement of this study. Each participant will be asked to complete a consent form prior to filling in/completing the questionnaires.

7. Who is organising this research

The current research study is part of the requirement for completing a MA degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Pretoria. The study leader for this project is Dr Estie Janse van Rensburg. You will be able to contact her via email at estie.jansevanrensburg@up.ac.za or telephone at 0124023430. The researcher for this project is Marit Woudstra. You will be able to contact me via email at mhwoudstra@gmail.com or telephone at 0761421253.

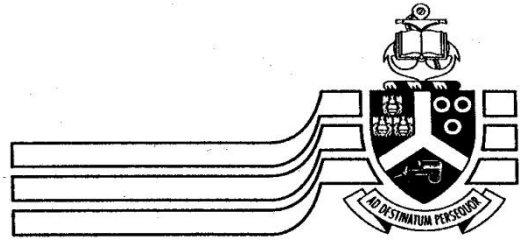
Researcher: _____ (Ms Marit Woudstra)

Date: _____

Research Supervisor: _____ (Dr Estie Janse van Rensburg)

Date:

Appendix E



University of Pretoria

2013/08/30

Dear Teacher

Nature of the study

I would like to invite you to participate in my study as part of the requirement for a MA degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Pretoria. The purpose of this study is to investigate the prevalence of learners bullying teachers and to explore the effect that learner-to-teacher bullying may have on the emotional wellbeing of teachers.

What is expected of you

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to complete two questionnaires that should not take longer than 30 minutes to complete.

Anonymity

As these are sensitive subjects, it is important to know that complete anonymity is ensured regarding all of the information that you share. Fictitious names (pseudonyms) will be used and your identity will not be revealed in any dissertation or report pertaining to this study. Information regarding your well-being will not be provided to the principal of your school or anyone else. Furthermore, your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any stage without giving a reason.

Ethical clearance

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethical clearance through the Ethics Committee by the faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria as well as by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). However, the final decision to participate is yours.

Data collection

The data collected during this study will be retained for fifteen years in a locked safe and only researchers associated with this study will have access to them. Moreover, once the dissertation is completed and a degree is obtained, an electronic and hard copy is provided to the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) Director of Knowledge Management and the Research Co-ordination Unit, which will become available to the GDE Head Office Library. The research will be published in a mini-thesis and a peer review journal.

Anticipated risks or discomfort partaking in this study

If any discomfort occurs as a result of taking part in this study, more specifically, if you have experienced this type of bullying and feel uneasy about it, a support sheet is provided to assist you as a way to possibly deal with the discomfort.

Benefits/advantages of study

No remuneration is provided for participating in this study. However, you will know that you have participated in a study that could benefit teachers who may have experienced learner-to-teacher bullying. Furthermore, the hope is that this study could serve to increase awareness of the incidence of teachers being bullied by learners. Consequently, schools may be motivated to put measures into place to prevent this type of bullying from occurring, thus, aiding in a conducive school environment.

Feedback to schools

No principal will have access to the results of their individual school, thus protecting your identity as well as the identity of all teachers who participate. Feedback will be provided to the principals based on the results of the schools combined. This will enable the principals to still receive some feedback that may aid in developing a better understanding and awareness of learner-to-teacher bullying, while also protecting the teachers who participate.

Further questions

If you have any questions pertaining to this study or you would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me, Marit Woudstra, at 0761421253 or at mhwoudstra@gmail.com. Or you can also contact my supervisor, Dr Estie Janse van Rensburg, at 012 420 3430.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this study.

Kind regards

Marit Woudstra

Informed consent:

I _____ hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, conduct, risk and benefits of the study. I agree to voluntarily participate in this study.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F

Support sheet for teachers

Books

- ✓ *Adult Bulling: Perpetrators and Victims* by Peter Randall (1997)
- ✓ *Bullying in Adulthood: Assessing the Bullies and Their Victims* by Peter Randall (2001)
- ✓ *Workplace Trauma: Concepts, Assessment and Interventions* by Noreen Tehrani (2004)
- ✓ *Promoting Workplace Well-Being* by Neil Thompson & John Bates (Eds.) (2009)
- ✓ *The Anti-Bullying Handbook* by Keith Sullivan (2010)
- ✓ *Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace* by Ståle Einarsen, Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf & Cary Cooper (Eds.) (2011)
- ✓ *Preventing workplace bullying* by Carlo Caponecchia and Anne Wyatt (2011)
- ✓ *Using Psychology in the Classroom* by Stephen James Minton (2012)
- ✓ *Workplace bulling: Symptoms and solutions* by Noreen Tehrani (Ed.) (2012)

Helplines

- ✓ Lifeline Pretoria
 - (012) 342-2222
- ✓ National Lifeline
 - 0861 322322
- ✓ SA Depression & Anxiety Group
 - (011) 262-6396 (8am - 8pm, seven days a week)
- ✓ Depression & Anxiety Support Group
 - (011) 783-1474

Psychological Services

- ✓ If you think that you would need to talk to someone regarding the difficulties that you may have experienced regarding learner-to-teacher bullying, you can ask your General Practitioner to provide you with information concerning psychologists practicing in your area.

Web addresses

- ✓ [Website regarding how to deal with workplace bullying:](http://www.bullyonline.org/action/action.htm)
<http://www.bullyonline.org/action/action.htm>
- ✓ [Website regarding updated bullying news:](http://www.beatbullying.org/?gclid=CODijNlybUCFZTHtAodCycAOg)
<http://www.beatbullying.org/?gclid=CODijNlybUCFZTHtAodCycAOg>
- ✓ [Website regarding adult bullying and mental health:](http://www.mentalhealthsupport.co.uk/AdultBullying.html)
<http://www.mentalhealthsupport.co.uk/AdultBullying.html>