

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACE BULLYING
IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

by

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in the

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Researcher's Declaration

I, Elizabeth H. Mollema, declare that the dissertation, **Teachers' experiences regarding workplace bullying in independent schools in Gauteng Province**, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis in Education Leadership at the University of Pretoria, is my own work. It has never been submitted in any form for a degree or diploma before in any tertiary institution. Where the work of others has been used, sources have been identified and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature: _____

Date: 8 August 2018

Ethics Statement

Elizabeth Mollema has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. I declare that I have observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's "Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research".

Signature: _____

Date: 8 August 2018

Ethics Certificate



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DEGREE AND PROJECT	M.Ed Teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in independent schools
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bronwynne Swarts'.

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Ms Bronwynne Swarts
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- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
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- Data storage requirements.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to:

My Heavenly Father, who provided me with the strength, knowledge and perseverance to complete this study - Soli Deo Gloria,

My husband Gerhard, for his support and encouragement throughout this journey,

My two sons, Stefan and Alexander, for their understanding during my years of studying,

My brother Carel and my parents for believing in me,

My sister-in-law, Nina, for inspiring me to keep on learning, for all her support, assistance, guidance and sound advice,

My supervisor for his support on this research journey.

Glossary of Terminology

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPTD	Continuous Professional Teacher Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
IEB	Independent Examination Board
HOD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources Department
ISASA	Independent Schools Association of South Africa
NPFTED	National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development
PD	Professional Development
PM	Performance Management
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	Senior Management Team

Abstract

Teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in independent schools

Workplace bullying in education is on the rise and there is limited literature on teachers being bullied in South African schools. This study will investigate teachers' experiences regarding workplace bullying. The research aims to explore the role of work relationships (as power relationships) and how the environment/ or situations in which it occurs, contribute to the bullying. With Hodson's two dimensional model of bullying as a conceptual framework, data will be gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews with teachers from different IEB schools in Gauteng. This qualitative phenomenological research asks open-ended research questions during interviews. The researcher works from an interpretative viewpoint, but in a deductive manner to determine the similarities and differences between teachers' experiences. The study also aims to determine the factors that contributed to teachers being bullied in the workplace. Recommendations are made to assist schools in avoiding situations where teachers are likely to be bullied and suggestions are made on how to support teachers who are at risk of being bullied.

Keywords

Workplace bullying; teachers' experiences; independent schools; power relationships; organisational climate/ chaos.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Bullying in schools is an ever-increasing international trend (Köiv, 2015; Pyhältö, Pietarinen & Soini, 2015; Shelton, 2015). Research on bullying in schools has concentrated on bullying between learners, and little is known about teacher-targeted bullying (Pyhältö et al., 2015). According to research conducted in South Africa by De Wet (2011b), bullying in secondary schools is a serious problem, not only amongst learners themselves, but also amongst teachers.

Workplace bullying (or workplace harassment) denotes any type of adverse and abusive conduct by one person or persons aimed at another which not only creates a hostile workplace environment, but which is also intended to pressurize the person into submission (De Wet, 2011b). It can have destructive bodily and mental (or emotional) effects on personnel and is observable in a variety of behaviours (for example: verbal abuse, intimidation, social exclusion and the spreading of rumours, to name a few) (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012).

Teachers may accordingly also be considered as victims of bullying in their workplace. As such, the bullying of teachers will hinder group communication and create a hostile work environment (with examples of anger, suspicion and distrust) (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012: 1). It is a reality and a challenge to schools because it poses a threat to effective teaching and learning.

A study of teachers' experiences of workplace bullying will not only confirm, (or not), Hodson's theory (Hodson, Roscigno & Lopez, 2006) that there is an interplay of relational power and organisational chaos (or change) that contributes or prevents workplace bullying, but it may also provide schools with an insight into possible presentational measures to be taken in order to protect young or vulnerable teachers in their school community.

1.2 Background

Workplace bullying as a violation of human dignity seems to be a global trend (Terry, 1998; De Wet, 2010a; O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire & Smith, 1998). It is on the increase as evident in Sweden, Norway, Germany, Austria and Australia. Yet there is so little research on the subject available in South Africa (De Wet, 2014b).

Teachers who struggle to fulfil their daily tasks due to bullying are not motivated or effective in the classroom (Matsela & Kirsten, 2014). Some teachers who have been bullied and who were unhappy that nothing was done to the perpetrator, have changed schools or left the profession (Miya, 2017). These teachers believed that their human dignity was not respected or protected. Workplace bullying may not be the only contributing factor, but this research is vital for the education profession in order to retain teachers. Bully-free teachers (or teachers and institutions that can cope with workplace bullying) will provide better education for future leaders. By looking at the interplay between the victims' powerlessness and the organizational climate (chaotic, unstable or organized), the researcher hopes to identify possible identifiable "red lights" to avoid workplace bullying as far as is possible.

Teachers are often bullied which causes humiliation, distress, interferes with job performance and makes the working environment unpleasant (De Wet, 2010b). Workplace bullying experienced by teachers in South African schools is therefore a problem that needs to be investigated.

1.3 Purpose and aims of study

There are many incidents of the bullying of learners (by their peers and teachers) published in newspapers, yet very few report on the bullying of teachers by their peers (Zwecker, 2013), supervisors, heads or even learners (Prince, 2014). Still, considering the fact that some teachers regularly change schools or even leave the profession, bullying may be considered a contributing factor (De Wet, 2014b). Addressing this quandary may be significant for the possible retention of teachers in the profession (Pyhältö et al., 2015).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996a) stresses the democratic core values like freedom, equality and human dignity in section 7(1) "The

Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom". This demonstrates the rights of all people in South Africa. Much has been said about the caring for children's rights with articles and books being published from across the globe (Brabeck & Rodgers, 2000; Gordon, 2006; Joubert & Prinsloo, 2001; Osler, 2005; Shumba, 2003). Has the same been said about the rights of teachers?

Teachers fulfil different legal roles at different times. Teachers as ordinary citizens of the country have certain fundamental rights but they also have certain rights and obligations (depending on their position in the education system) linked to their profession (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2001). National legislation that regulates teachers' legal-status includes The Employment of Educators Act (RSA, 1998a), The Labour Relations Act (RSA, 1995); The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996c) and The Occupational Health and Safety Act (RSA, 1993b). The above are supported by subordinate legislation/ policies, for example the Code of Conduct of Educators and school policies (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2001).

By looking at teachers' experiences, the researcher aimed at identifying power-relationships and organisational situations that may contribute to the prevalence of workplace bullying. These must also serve as warning lights for teachers to avoid certain situations or to get help before they are unable to teach due to psychosocial, psychological or physical health reasons (Blasé & Blasé, 2006; Matsela & Kirsten, 2014; De Wet, 2010a; De Vos, 2013).

Although limited in scope (due to time restrictions), this research aims to provide insight into teachers' experiences regarding workplace bullying. The objective of this research is to investigate instances of teachers being bullied at schools. The study will not attempt to provide solutions to, or criticize these bullying cases. Furthermore, even though bullying may be penalised in terms of the common law (such as assault and *crimen injuria*), and is a violation of the Constitutional rights to dignity, security of the person and fair labour practices, this study will specifically address bullying as an infringement of human dignity. As workplace bullying at schools mainly constitutes

discrimination, harassment and abuse, the broader protection of fundamental human dignity is appropriate and imperative (De Wet, 2010b).

Since starting as a teacher more than twenty years ago, I have noticed that teachers display a distinct difference in how they perceive their self-worth and dignity after being bullied. This stands in contrast to human dignity as outlined in the Constitution (RSA, 1996a). The respect for a person's human dignity, freedom and equality is not only emphasised by the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996b) but is, along with a person's right to life, one of the only two rights that may not be limited.

1.4 Research question and Sub-questions

1.4.1 Primary Research Question

How do teachers experience workplace bullying in independent schools in Gauteng?

1.4.2 Research Sub-Questions

- A) How do teachers define and describe bullying?
- B) How do teachers deal with being bullied?
- C) How does bullying affect those who are bullied?
- D) What, if any, support is provided by schools for teachers who are bullied?

1.5 Theoretical framework

In 2006 the researchers Hodson, Roscigno and Lopez published their study called "Chaos and the Abuse of Power: Workplace Bullying in Organizational and Interactional Context" (Hodson et al., 2006). They looked at the contribution that an individual's power and the culture or the state of the organisation makes to workplace bullying. This mixed method ethnographic study made use of coded content analysis in order to determine how the two-dimensions could give rise to workplace bullying. In this study, the researcher would like to make use of Hodson's two-dimensional theory to unpack teachers' experience of workplace bullying and in the same vein confirm or deny the contribution that powerlessness and chaos make in the workplace to teachers being bullied. Semi-structured interview questions were set in order to determine the contribution the feeling of being powerless and the schools' culture make.

1.6 Research methodology

1.6.1 Research Approach and Paradigm

This study was conducted as a qualitative research. Qualitative research is conducted on the linguistic meaning participants assign to an interaction in a real life situation. Numeric data or statistics are not used to collect evidence when determining participants' viewpoints or preferences (Maree et al., 2017). A variety of strategies is required when conducting a qualitative research using words in order to address issues of validity, practicality and effectiveness (Maree et al., 2017).

In the education field of study, there are many emulating opinions of social sciences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). The research paradigm encapsulates the researchers' worldview (assumptions and beliefs). Because a researcher's paradigm cannot be proven, it is important to make it known at the start of the study in order to be open about the principles by which the researcher interprets reality (Maree et al., 2017). For the purpose of this study, the researcher worked from an interpretive epistemology assumption. Cohen stated that:

"...while sharing the rigour of the natural sciences and the concerns of the social sciences to describe human behaviour, emphasizes how people differ from inanimate natural phenomena and, indeed, from each other ... stem in the first instance from different conceptions of social realities and of individual and social behaviour." (Cohen et al., 2018)

The researcher worked from the stance that teachers will have different perceptions regarding workplace bullying (as a social reality) and different perceptions regarding the bully's behaviour. Teachers who have been victims of workplace bullying will also have different viewpoints of their own behaviour and reaction towards bullying incidents.

The researcher's ontological assumptions stem from the belief that what people believe to be true (knowledge), is constructed (a post-positivist view-point) (Cohen et al., 2018).

1.6.2 Research Design

This qualitative phenomenological research originated from the researcher's belief that our way of seeing the world is grounded in our experiences and how we interpret them (Cohen et al., 2018). Each participant or teacher involved in this study has his or her own definition, accounts and interpretation of what it means to be bullied in the workplace. Cohen describes phenomenological studies as:

"Phenomenological research is based on the view that our knowledge of the world is rooted in our (immediate) experiences" (Cohen et al., 2018: 300).

The researcher is of the opinion that the phenomenon of workplace bullying is by definition rooted in the individual's own experience and interpretation.

1.6.3 Data-collection strategies

In order for the researcher to comprehend the participants' meanings, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted, because the researcher wanted to comprehend the complex character or core of workplace bullying (Cohen et al., 2018).

Cohen is of the opinion that with a semi-structured interview,

"The topics and questions are given, but questions are open-ended and the wording and sequence may be tailored to each individual interviewee and the response given, with prompt and probes" (Cohen et al., 2018: 511).

In order to understand the phenomena, interviews would help the researcher to: (1) grasp, and determine an individual's situation; (2) check various hypotheses; (3) collect data; and (4) gather a small representation of participants' thoughts (Cohen et al. 2018).

Data was assembled from the interview schedule which was created from the literature review. All interviews were transcribed and the data was then arranged by participant in order to identify the trends or patterns. The trends and patterns were

connected to the different research questions to emphasize the findings of researchers in the field of workplace bullying.

1.6.4 Sampling strategies and participants

The quality of any research can be determined by three questions: (1) Did the researcher use the appropriate methodology? (2) Are the instruments used appropriate for the methodology? and (3) Did the researcher make use of a suitable sampling method? (Cohen et al., 2018: 202). Most researchers believe saturation or sufficient data can be achieved with a small sample (Maree et al., 2017). Six participants may provide enough data if they (the participants) are selected based on their skills or experience of the specific phenomena (for example, workplace bullying).

The principals announced during the various staff briefings that the staff would receive an email regarding a research project. They explained to the staff that the project had been cleared by the Rector and had to be considered if they had experience of being bullied at any school throughout their careers. The principals then asked the teachers to respond to the email by using their private email address if possible, sending the response to the neutral email address provided by the researcher, in order for all correspondence and information to be treated with anonymity and confidentiality as prescribed by the Ethics Committee of the University. After the cut-off date, the researcher contacted the teachers who were willing to participate. A purposive selection of participants was made based on their experiences of workplace bullying. This enabled the researcher to collect rich descriptive data through semi-structured interviews.

Due to the vulnerability of teachers that have been bullied, ethical precautions were taken to insure the anonymity of the participants. Interviews were held off- campus and outside of school hours, after written consent was obtained from both the rector of the schools and the participants.

1.6.5 Data analysis

For the purpose of this study, the researcher made use of deductive theme analysis. The flexible but comprehensive process of thematic analysis enabled the researcher

to identify several cross-references between the evolving themes and data (Alhojailan, 2012). The researcher looked for evidence of themes existing in the data gathered during the literature review process (Maree et al., 2017). Crystallisation (comparing with literature), validation (rich data gathered through a transparent process) and member checking were used during the data analysis process in order to make conclusions regarding the study.

1.6.6 Trustworthiness and credibility

The participants were selected to represent teachers that would typically be found at schools. In other words, teachers with a variety of experiences and from different post levels, both male and female, teaching different subjects, of different nationalities and backgrounds, were selected. The participants had to reflect on their experiences throughout their careers at urban schools. .

The credibility or consistency of the study, the transferability, dependability and confirmability are trustworthiness issues that the researcher will further address in chapter 3 in order to make the study credible. This implies that this qualitative research can be seen as reliable because the same results would be consistently produced if the research were repeated. The findings are the result of the conducted research and not simply figments of the researcher's suppositions and predeterminations, and therefore conformable. Lastly, the research is transferable as the findings can be applied to other contexts, settings (schools) and teachers (Maree et al., 2017).

1.6.7 Limitations

The researcher encountered various limitations such as time (spent travelling, limited time due to studies and work obligations), attitude (sceptical principals and cautious teachers), ethical requirements from the university (Ethics Committee) and the Rector (only using data from teachers who were bullied 5 years prior to the research, or where bullying was resolved) and ensuring emotional or psychological support in case any of the participants needed help.

The researcher, who is also a member of staff at this particular group of schools, had to make sure that the participants came from different schools and departments. The

researcher had to guard against limitations such as impressions (body language/ dress codes) or the misinterpretation of information due to participants' culture or home language differences.

All interviews took place during the holidays in order to assist with confidentiality and provide time for the researcher to conduct the interviews and still have time to scribe and start analysing the data.

1.6.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical research encapsulates what researchers should and should not do during research (Maree et al., 2017). There are various aspects one needs to look at, or guidelines that a researcher can follow in order to do ethical research. Obtaining informed consent, protecting the privacy and anonymity of the participants by not disclosing any unique information and treating interviews with the utmost confidentiality are just a few of the precautions the researcher had to take in order to protect the participants and the sensitive information.

1.6.9 Informed consent

Due to the sensitive nature of workplace bullying, the researcher had to obtain written consent from not only the Rector or Executive Head of the group of schools, but also from the individual participants. The research can be seen as sensitive due to the possible consequences should participants' identities be disclosed or exposed, the emotional nature of workplace bullying and also due to the personal nature of this phenomenon.

1.6.10 Confidentiality

All precautionary measures were taken to ensure confidentiality. The participants' identities have to stay anonymous and the names of the various schools and other people involved have not been mentioned in the study. Participants have been referred to as 'interviewees' and a number, for example I3, when referring to the interviews or data that was extracted from the interviews. Confidentiality is the last of the ten measures taken to ensure ethical conduct on the researcher's part.

1.7 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is centred on the experiences of teachers being bullied, the types of bullying (what it is) and to identify ways of how teachers deal with bullying. This research aims to add to the body of knowledge (literature) looking at workplace bullying of teachers by various role-players (principals, SMT members, Heads of Departments, fellow teachers, parents and even learners), an issue that education leaders who strive for quality education, cannot ignore (Bloch, 2008; 2009). Relevant audiences comprise other teachers, school managements and educational institutions.

Tracy believes that by identifying the emotional and physical consequences of teacher victims of workplace bullying, as well as the effects bullying has on the organisation, an important starting point may be created to make not only policy makers but also the school management teams aware of this destructive phenomenon (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik & Alberts 2006). By examining individual teachers' workplace bullying experiences, the researcher aims to identify power relationships and organisational issues that must be avoided in order for schools to protect young or vulnerable teachers.

The researcher also hopes to identify relevant warning signs of potential bullying that teachers must avoid in certain situations, or if already in a bullying situation, ways in which to get help before they are not able to do their job (teach) due to biological, psychological or emotional reasons (Matsela & Kirsten, 2014). Addressing this dilemma may even help with the retention of teachers in the profession (Pyhältö et al., 2015). This study may help teachers and school management to identify workplace bullying and perhaps assist where a colleague or friend may be trapped in a bullying situation.

1.8 Outline of this study

CHAPTER	CONTENT
Chapter 1	Introduction of the theoretical framework and research methodology aspects
Chapter 2	Literature review of workplace bullying in education (South Africa and across the world)
Chapter 3	Research methodology and research design
Chapter 4	Presentation of the data and discussion of the findings
Chapter 5	Conclusion and recommendations

Table 1.1: Outline of study

1.9 Summary

This chapter serves as an introduction to this qualitative phenomenological research study. The researcher introduced the background of workplace bullying. The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of both the teachers feeling powerless and the schools' culture by looking at the individuals' experiences. The research questions were then mentioned and the theoretical framework (Hodson's two dimensional theory) was introduced.

Next, the researcher briefly looked at the research methodology aspects which include a qualitative approach through an interpretive epistemological lens. The research design was briefly discussed followed by the data collection strategies (semi-structured interviews), purposive selection strategy, thematic data analysis applied followed by measures that addressed the trustworthiness, the limitations and the ethical considerations taken into account. In closing, the significance of the study was discussed, followed by the outline.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Workplace bullying is a new research subject in academia (including schools) and was first developed just more than 20 years ago in Scandinavia, where anti-bullying legislation was later established (De Wet, 2011b; Cakirpaloglu, Čech, & Kvintová, 2017). Workplace bullying reveals itself in diverse behaviours (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012; De Wet & Jacobs 2013; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2011; Hodgins, MacCurtain, Mannix-McNamara, 2014; McMahon, Martinez, Reddy, Espelage & Anderman, 2017) and occurs without seeming irritation or motive (Ojedokun, Oteri, & Ogungbamila 2014).

For the purpose of this study, an act of bullying will be constituted as negative behaviour (directly or indirectly) frequently (repeatedly) directed at one or more teachers and not just a once-off occurrence, but over a minimum period of a school term.

In most international literature, researchers investigate situations where teachers are being bullied by learners (pupils) (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012; Ozkiloglu & Kartal, 2012; Pervin & Turner, 1998). This stands in contrast to the South African studies that tend to look at teachers being bullied by either the principal (or someone superior in position) or a peer (De Vos & Kirsten, 2015; De Wet, 2010a; 2011a; De Wet & Jacobs, 2014; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2003; Shelton, 2015; McMahon et al., 2017).

Recent studies examine violence (which includes bullying and mobbing) towards teachers and the perpetrators of such violence at schools (Caldwell, 2017; Čech et al., 2017; Coetzee & Steyn, 2017; Gopal & Collings, 2017). These studies included students, fellow teachers, parents, and principals as the offenders.

McMahon has conducted various studies on this topic and researched the specific factors contributing to teachers being victimised. He points out that the role principals (management) and the community play, may serve as an important further focal

point for research because of the implications this may have for school interventions (McMahon et al., 2017).

By looking at teachers' experiences, the researcher would like to emphasise the contribution that relational power (or powerlessness) and organisational change, disruption or chaos make to workplace bullying being present in education (Hodson's two-dimensional theory). Hodson suggests with this study that these two factors contribute to workplace bullying. He also believes that schools may be able to prevent it from happening. De Wet's (2014b) study also made use of Hodson's two-dimensional theory when she completed her qualitative study with educators studying at the University of the Free State.

South African, as well as international studies, confirm the similarities across various workplaces and geopolitical divides. Bullying can be defined as repeated blatant negative acts towards an individual, emotional abuse, mobbing or any behaviour intended to intimidate (De Wet, 2011b; Cunliffe & Mostert, 2012; Hodson et al., 2006). Individuals are tormented, intimidated and pressurised on a continuous basis.

Workplace bullying is a growing international problem in education (and academia) that needs to be addressed (Cemaloğlu, 2007; Cunliffe & Mostert, 2012; Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012; Lewis, 1999; McKay, Arnold, Fratzl, & Thomas, 2008; Ojedokun et al., 2014; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012; Pervin & Turner, 1998; Pyhältö et al., 2015; Shelton, 2015; Terry, 1998), because workplace bullying has shattering physical and psychological effects on employees (Cunliffe & Mostert, 2012). Victims are exposed to a wide variety of offences and experience isolation and the undermining of their personalities and abilities (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013).

There are a number of factors contributing to South Africa's unfavourable working conditions and uncertainty in education (Grobler, Moloï & Vermeulen, 2015). The continuous changes that teachers have had to deal with in the last 20 years have been regarded as unsuccessful due to three reasons: a lack of resources; inadequate teacher training; and the top-down approach in which changes have been made. The aforementioned factors have resulted in underperforming learners in schools where uncertainty is increasing, together with a total paper-overload.

Limited resources combined with chaotic situations such as annual assessments (ANA from 2015) make teachers more stressed and unproductive.

Even though teaching has been identified as a high-risk job for bullying in the workplace (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013), there is no legal definition of workplace bullying in South African labour legislation (De Wet, 2014b). Unfortunately, bullying is sometimes categorised as an insignificant part of South Africa's violence problem (De Wet, 2011a) and very little has been researched within the South African educational context. Workplace bullying is not just a small or insignificant misunderstanding, it is serious and needs to be addressed urgently (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013).

2.2 Bullying vs. workplace bullying

The interpretation and meaning that people attach to a concept such as workplace bullying or just bullying in general have a significant influence on how people respond during research on the topic, regardless of whether it is a qualitative or quantitative study (Cakirpaloglu et al., 2017). Bullying is described as the repeated manifestation of deliberate negative behaviour that causes trouble, misery or torment to an individual who is unable to defend himself. These acts are seen as deliberate with the sole purpose of causing emotional and physical damage, hurt or injury to the victim (Caldwell, 2017).

Coetzee and Steyn (2017) define workplace bullying more specifically as the painful repeated mistreatment of a targeted individual by deliberately using different actions or methods. In doing so, the victim is marginalized into a perception of being in an inferior position of power. Grobler, Moloï and Vermeulen (2015) describe it as repeated aggressive behaviour (by one person against another) that involves physical, verbal or non-verbal actions over a period of time, aimed at inflicting injury or distress within a relationship with seemingly unbalanced power.

Čech and his co-authors mention more specifically three features of workplace bullying: (a) repeated, long-term hurting; (b) the victim's inability to defend himself (helplessness); and (c) the relational inequality, imbalance or inconsistency that exists (Čech et al., 2017). These three features make workplace bullying a serious

problem because it constitutes the violation of an individual's fundamental human rights with various consequences for the victim and the victim's personality.

The bullying attacks must secondly be systematic and take place over a long-term period (Shelton, 2015). Ojedokun, Oteri and Ogungbamila agree with this statement, but explain that various researchers have stipulated different periods. The German professor Heinz Leymann (Ojedokun et al., 2014) believed that bullying must consist of a minimum of one incident per week to be classified as such.

Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2001) disagree because they believe more rigorous criteria of two or more acts would be more accurate. Zapf, Knorz and Kulla (Ojedokun et al., 2014) again specify that the incidents must occur over a six month (or longer) period (Ojedokun et al., 2014). The above criteria have been used extensively in quantitative research and have produced diverse results.

2.3 How does bullying manifest itself?

Bullying and victimisation are almost synonymous. Victims are exposed to a wide variety of offences (De Wet & Jacobs 2013). The three elements stipulated by Shelton (2015) and the four criteria specified by Ojedokun et al. (2014) for a negative act to be called bullying overlap and will be summarised under the headings of power-relationships, time period and frequency.

In Hodson's study, 'Chaos and the abuse of power', the researchers looked at the "roles of relational power and organizational chaos in the emergence of workplace bullying" (Hodson et al., 2006). Similar to Einarsen et al. (2003) who looked at the risks of insecure targets, and Folger and Skarlicki (1998) who focused on poor leadership or mismanagement, Hodson used relational powerlessness and organizational coherence as lenses to analyse and understand workplace bullying. (Hodson, et al., 2006: 383).

The results at the end of the study suggested that if power and chaos or uncertainty play a role in the prevalence of workplace bullying, then there must be a way in which schools can lower the risk of teachers being bullied at school by principals, SMT members, fellow teachers, parents and even learners.

In 2014, De Wet's study highlighted two similar and important issues. Firstly, the victim's powerlessness and the victim being subjected to humiliation and isolation, and secondly that bullying is likely to occur in chaotic (unstable) schools with abusive (or insecure) leadership, lack of fairness and accountability (De Wet, 2014b).

Hodson also made it clear that his study did not focus on bullying at the hand of co-workers or customers, because he felt that it overlapped with important forms of "workplace power and control of resources" (Hodson et al., 2006: 384). The analysis was therefore restricted to supervisory bullying, nonsexual by nature (due to the fact that it differs from more common forms of bullying).

Bullying (which includes: humiliation, intimidation, mocking, pressure, harm to an individuals' dignity etc.) can be used as a weapon to intentionally hurt other people. It destroys trust in any organisation and can be seen as a subcategory when looking at conflict in companies, organisations or even schools (Hodson et al., 2006).

2.3.1 Power-relationships

Hodson rightfully pointed out that power or powerlessness constitutes dynamic characteristics of relationships or individuals within groups. Power relations and interactions (including relationships) hold essential interpretations when analysing any organisation. Hodson highlighted in his study how the abuse of power can be advanced or restricted within a specific context (Hodson et al., 2006). He pointed out that although job security can lead to trust, job insecurity can induce distrust and can increase the possibility of workplace bullying taking place. Job insecurity (for example, due to restructuring or outsourcing) can lead to professionalism being replaced with intimidation or bullying due to fears of what the future may hold.

Shelton (2015) agrees and states that there must be a power disparity between the perpetrator and the victim to constitute bullying. She adds that the victim is often unable, or finds it difficult to defend himself against the perpetrator. Ojedokun also agrees with this finding and adds that the victims feel helpless due to the hostile work environment (Ojedokun et al., 2014). The risk factor of being bullied stems from

the relationship between the powerful bullies and the powerless victims (De Wet, 2014b; Hodson et al., 2006).

De Wet believes that:

“Characteristics believed to be present in victims of bullying are a passive and/ or submissive personality, low self-esteem, being members of vulnerable groups, being a member of the ‘out-group’ versus the powerful ‘in-group’, a lack of political influence or skills and having adopted a learnt helplessness and acceptance of their victimisation.” (De Wet, 2014a: 6).

Hodson pointed out that employees’ “level of power” will differ even in the most consistent environment. Employees with less power (for example at a lower post-level) or being part of a minority group (for example race or ethnicity), may leave one more vulnerable (Hodson et al., 2006: 386). However, he stated that gender may not increase or decrease the likelihood of being bullied. Due to a degree to isolation (being new, or from a different race), may make it easier for a bully to ostracize a victim.

Low post-level workers are also often subjected to dominant or high-handed supervision and this may lead to personality clashes. Hodson suggests that employees with less power are therefore more prone to becoming targets of bullying (Hodson et al., 2006: 387). It is interesting that Hodson believes that this power game also applies to competitors. Bullies may prey not only on the less powerful, but may even target fellow employees who jeopardise their sense of dominance or authority.

De Wet agrees with the aforementioned - in a school environment, principals enjoy a position of power. Their bullying tactics will, for example, materialize in the form of ignoring teachers’ ideas, thoughts, feelings or accomplishments, especially if they feel threatened. They will verbally abuse staff members, be extremely critical and set teachers up for failure (De Wet, 2010a). Verbal abuse, public ridicule, unwarranted

criticism, social and professional isolation, lack of empathy, and favouritism are just a few indicators of workplace bullying carried out by school principals.

If workplace bullying takes place in a school, the various positions of power will be abused; victims will be discriminated against with the resultant potential mental, psychosocial, psychosomatic and economic issues (Čech et al., 2017). All of this can lead to not only serious personal problems, but will definitely impact on the quality of teaching, the teacher's performance as well as the teacher-student interaction and relationships.

Ojedokun (Ojedokun et al., 2014) believes that in some severe cases the bullying can escalate in such a manner that the victim ends up in an inferior position. This is in line with Hodson's theory (Hodson, et al., 2006) that workplace bullying can be minimalised by organising a school well (planning for periods of change), by open decision making and clear leadership roles with channels of communication, all of which will protect the weak and low-status workers.

Hodson et al. (2006) two dimensional model of bullying is going to be used to support the study. Both elements of relational powerlessness and lack of organisational coherence will be looked at as it transpires in the workplace, or in this case, schools.

2.3.2 Organisational milieu and chaos

When looking at the environment within a school, principles of transparency, accountability and capacity are useful starting points when trying to understand or comprehend the organisations' milieu or context (Hodson et al., 2006). If the daily actions at an organisation are transparent, it will increase the visibility of bullying and it will stand out. If people are held accountable for their actions, there will be issues or consequences for all behaviour (good and bad). Schools should use rules and visible rewards in order to motivate and manage their employees.

By increasing these three principles, the need to bully will be reduced (Hodson et al., 2006). Bullying can be reduced if: (a) schools are well-run, organised spaces with good leadership and clear goals; (b) bureaucratic principles are used to motivate

employees; and (c) employees can work in teams to increase transparency and accountability. Therefore, management should maintain coherence through facilities, technology and productive activities. This should enhance mutual respect and increase professionalism within the school environment.

Hodson is of the opinion that competence and coherence are required components of professionalism. Bureaucratic procedures can also contribute to motivating employees. Team-based organisation can lead to increased participation in decision-making (Hodson et al., 2006).

Hodson further stated that:

“SES (socio-economic status) ... has a significant negative effect on bullying, indicating that people in higher status occupations are less likely to be bullied. This finding suggests that the absolute power of one’s occupation in a hierarchy provides significant protection against abuse from superiors. It thus appears that positional and relational power may be a significant determinant of bullying.” (Hodson et al., 2006: 397).

The fact that some South African companies such as Profmed do not regard teaching qualifications as a professional qualification, adds to the perception that being a teacher is not a professional career. According to the website *Indeed.co.za* which advertises teaching positions, the current average teacher salary amounts to R 10 166.00 per month. If one compares this to a truck driver earning R 9 351.00 per month or a junior secretary earning R 10 123.00 per month, teachers do not get the recognition and accreditation as professionals. If one takes Hodson’s findings into account, this may be a significant contributing factor as to why teachers are often bullied by parents and management alike.

Hodson’s study revealed that bullying is most likely to happen where an individual finds himself in a powerless-situation in an organisation where there is a lack of accountability, transparency and capacity (Hodson et al., 2006). Although there is a correlation between the size of the organisation and bullying, the findings were not significant. A worker’s socio-economic status had the largest impact, implying that

“interactional and relational powers are important protections against bullying” (Hodson et al., 2006). The study also revealed that job insecurity and organizational chaos are the biggest contributing factors when it comes to workplace bullying.

2.4 Types of bullying

De Wet's (2011b) narrative analysis into the professional lives of teacher-bullying victims provides valuable information on the personal experiences of two teachers and reveals some of the different types of bullying. Although Georgakopoulos, Wilkin and Kent (2011) divide workplace bullying into three categories (threat to personal standing, threat to professional standing and tactics of control and manipulation), both Bartlett and Bartlett (2011) and Cunniff and Mostert (2012) identify direct and indirect bullying. However, Bartlett and Bartlett (2011) also identify work related bullying, but do not explain what they mean by this. For the purpose of this study the researcher made use of the classification of workplace bullying by Cunniff and Mostert (2012) who divide workplace bullying into two broad types or categories, namely direct and indirect bullying.

2.4.1 Direct bullying

Face-to-face or direct bullying occurs on an interpersonal level. This type of bullying includes incidents of verbal abuse such as inaccurate accusations, public humiliation, criticism or even belittling remarks (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012). This behaviour can manifest itself in being constantly evaluated for performance and the undermining of both teachers' status as educators and their personality (De Wet, 2011b). Direct bullying may include ridiculing or demeaning comments made to the victim, being ignored, verbal harassment which includes abusive language, isolation, teasing or name calling, shouting swearing or directed sarcasm and being talked down to. It may also include physical attacks and other forms of aggression (Čech et al., 2017; Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011).

2.4.2 Indirect bullying

Colleagues are often the culprits with indirect bullying, which is more common. Mobbing, insulting remarks, gossiping, ridicule, spreading of rumours, social exclusion or excluding victims from social events are only a few signs thereof. This

type of bullying may be subtler, but it harms people on an emotional level and intentionally manipulates relationships (Čech et al., 2017; Cunniff & Mostert, 2012).

Indirect bullying may include bypassing hierarchy for complaints, gossiping or spreading malicious rumours about a victim, lies, ignoring or overlooking the victim, blocking a person from a promotion, isolation, and setting the victim up for failure, to name but a few. Although these mental attacks are less conspicuous, they can often lead to mental and psychosomatic injuries (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Čech et al., 2017; Cunniff & Mostert, 2012).

2.5 Various coping mechanisms for workplace bullying

Čeck identified four categories of coping mechanisms with which teachers would attempt to cope with bullying behaviour (Čeck et al., 2017). Figure 2.1 was adapted from their analysis.

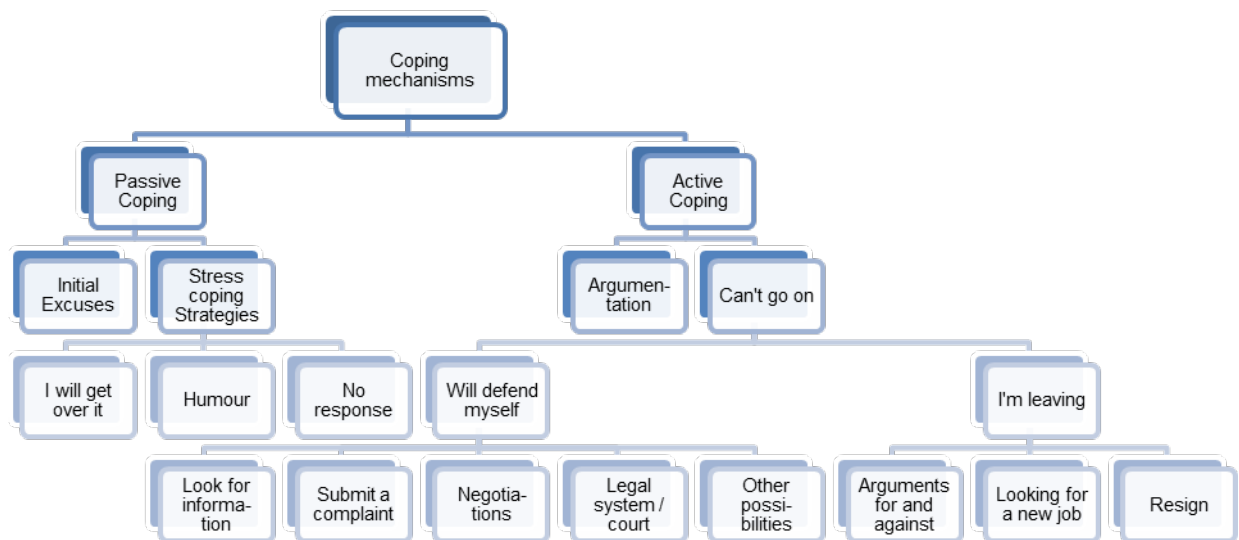


Figure 2.1: Categories and sub-categories of how people try to cope with bullying (adapted from Čech et al. 2017)

Passive coping mechanisms include initially making excuses for the bully, or refusing to believe that he/ she is capable of manifesting such behaviour, and that things may change for the better (Čech et al., 2017). This belief is normally based on the expectation that the perpetrator is actually good. Other stress-coping strategies that

Čech mentions, include the acceptance of authority in the hope that one will get over it, not responding at all or by using humour and laughter to deal with the situation.

The two main active coping mechanisms include either reasonable argumentation or the realisation that things cannot continue like this. By rationalising the situation, the victim will try to interpret the circumstances and in a way determine acceptable conditions for everyone involved. Unfortunately, this does not often happen (Čech et al., 2017). The victim's sense of "I cannot go on" has a negative effect on the victim's physical and mental health because it is believed that they have to do something if they do not want to be destroyed. This may include resigning and looking for a new position somewhere else.

If the victims want to defend themselves, they will start collecting information or evidence in order to stand up against the bully. According to Čech's study, victims may submit a complaint to the school authority or in rare instances consider legal action (Čech et al., 2017).

2.6 Effects of workplace bullying

Non-verbal and verbal intimidation, as well as physical and psychological abuse are normally indicators of an educator being bullied (De Wet, 2010a). Jacobs & De Wet (2015) found three main side-effects of workplace bullying: psychosocial effects; psychological reactions; and the effect on productivity. Although Moayed agrees with De Wet's findings, the authors add health-related issues as another effect of workplace bullying (Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell & Salem, 2006).

Sadness, inclination to cry, depression, anxiety, discontent, lack of trust, humiliation, powerlessness, feeling betrayed, guilty, a lack of self-confidence and self-respect are a few of the psychosocial effects that victims may experience. In the studies conducted by Jacobs and De Wet (2015), 19.3% of the participants indicated that they were receiving or had received treatment or support from a professional (psychologist or doctor) as a result of being bullied. Workplace bullying has a negative effect on the victims' private lives because families may fall apart due to the person's emotions, lack of trust and lack of self-confidence (Jacobs & De Wet, 2015). Victims who are suffering from anxiety and depression may even commit

suicide (De Wet, 2010b). Moayed et al. (2006) agree with this and mention “low self-confidence (and) higher general stress” as examples.

Blasé and Blasé (2007) found that 26.7% of their participants suffered from depression, 57.4% from headaches and 47.3% from insomnia. Substance abuse as a result of workplace bullying was recorded in 16.7% cases. Psychological reactions such as headaches and negative sleeping patterns (Blasé & Blasé, 2006; De Wet, 2010b; De Vos, 2013; Matsela & Kirsten 2014) are in line with the study carried out by Jacobs and De Wet (2015). Also, 47.3% of the participants indicated that they seldom sleep well and experience regular nightmares or violent dreams. This can lead to insomnia, and other serious problems that will contribute to a lower quality of life. Both Jacobs and De Wet (2015) and Matsela and Kirsten (2014) reported eating disorders (either too much or too little) due to workplace bullying. Substance abuse (smoking, alcohol or medication) was statistically significantly higher with victims of workplace bullying than that of non-victims (Jacobs & De Wet, 2015; De Vos, 2013).

Workplace bullying also impacts negatively on educators’ productivity due to absenteeism, and on levels of job satisfaction, creativity, innovation and commitment. It can lead to decreased performance, missed deadlines and workplace errors. (Barlett & Barlett, 2011; Hoel, Sheehan, Cooper & Einarsen, 2011). Jacobs and De Wet (2015) found that more than a third of all victims feel less dedicated to their work while 30.8% find it hard to concentrate which may lead to mistakes, reduction in output and quality (productivity). Mistakes may also lead to accidents (Hoel et al., 2011). The above-mentioned impact on productivity and lead to cost or financial implications in terms of “recruiting, turnover/retention, worker attribution, worker compensation claims and wrongful discharge lawsuits” (De Wet, 2014b:13). Workplace bullying also impacts on the culture of the organisation for example with “ineffective interpersonal relationships, ineffective teamwork, lower morale, (and) lack of organisational commitment” (De Wet, 2014b: 13).

While De Vos’ (2013) study found that victims of workplace bullying may lose their passion and loyalty towards teaching, he argues that teacher-victims may also (on an emotional and psychological level) withdraw from professional activities to avert further bullying (Blasé & Blasé, 2006; 2007; De Wet, 2010a; De Vos, 2013).

Badgering behaviour can destroy the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom - something South Africa cannot afford. It can also lead to a breakdown of relationships within the school community in which it occurs. As mentioned before, workplace bullying also leads to health or physical related consequences such as chronic diseases, cardiovascular diseases, burnout, or absences due to general 'sickness' (De Wet, 2014b).

2.7 Prevalence of workplace bullying

There are few international studies that provide evidence of teacher-targeted bullying. From European and Asian studies, the following statistics have been drawn up. One in five participants from Spain indicated that they were being bullied while 50% of Turkish primary school teachers have been bullied. At least once in the last 12 months, 32% of Croatian teachers have witnessed bullying while 22% have been exposed to bullying themselves (Kõiv, 2015). Almost 20% of teachers from Estonia reported repeatedly being bullied at school. Čech et al. (2017) reports that in the Czech Republic, 33.9% of participants experienced mobbing and 43.3% were subjected to bossing for a period exceeding a year.

Statistics from the United Kingdom reveal that 67% of teachers either witnessed bullying, or have been bullied themselves in the 12 months leading up to the study being conducted. In the United States of America, the situation is not much better with almost 50% of participants reportedly being victimized in the 12 months prior to the survey being carried out. The circumstances in Australia seem the worst with approximately 99% of teachers indicating that they have experienced some form of bullying during their current employment (Kõiv, 2015).

De Wet reported in 2006 that 50% of secondary school teachers in South Africa admitted to being the victim of workplace bullying (Kõiv, 2014). However, in 2013, De Wet and Jacobs found an even higher prevalence of work-place bullying in South African schools. Almost 90% of their participants were bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey. If one compares these statistics, workplace bullying is currently on the increase.

As stated earlier, bullying is a violation of an employee’s fundamental human and labour rights. Unfortunately, there is still very little research available in South Africa on the topic (De Wet, 2014b).

By conducting a qualitative study focusing on the incidence of workplace bullying of teachers at schools, the results may contribute to increasing the body of knowledge and the awareness of the phenomenon.

If one takes current research into account, approximately 90% of South African teachers may have experienced being bullied in the workplace (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013). Louw (2013) summarises this situation as follows:

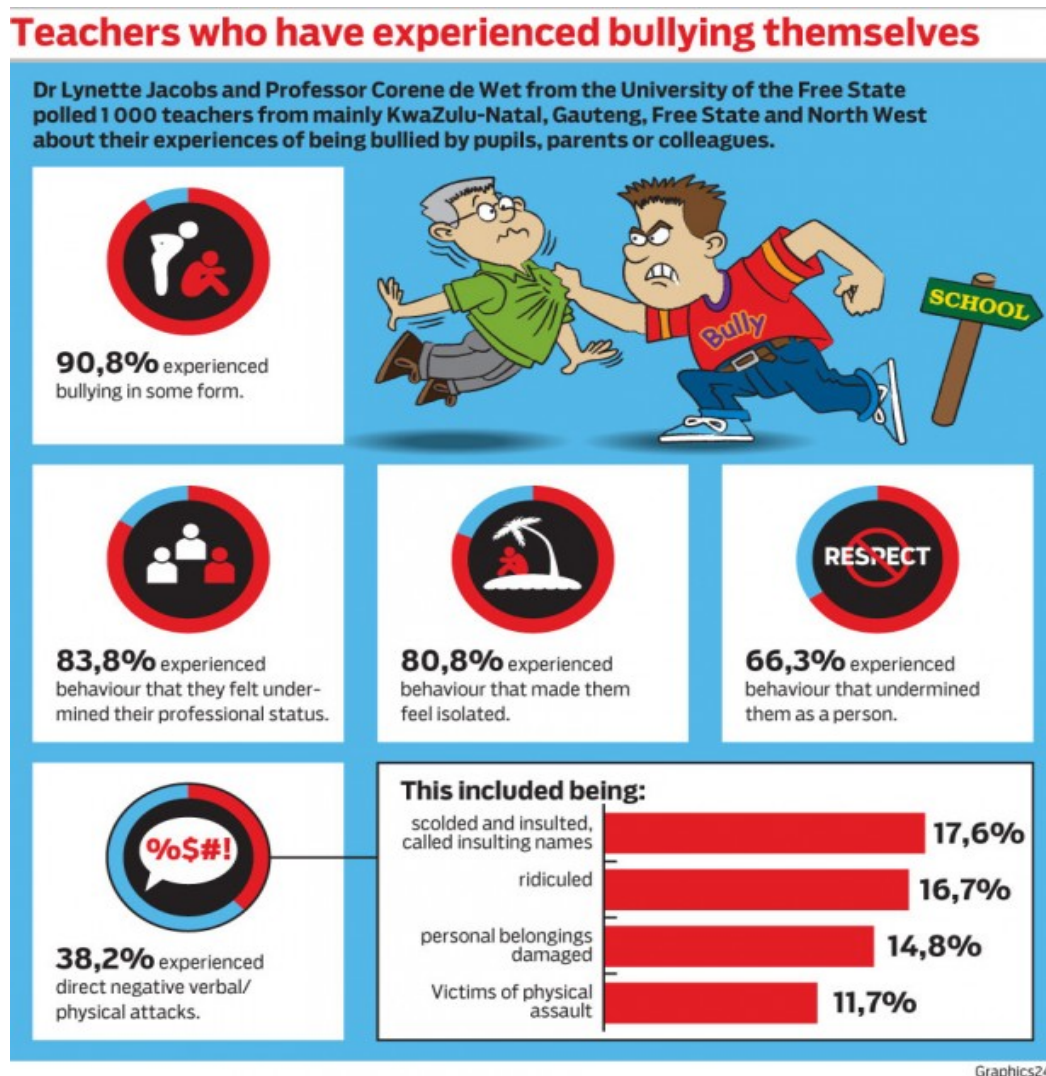


Figure 2.2: Statistical illustration of teachers who experienced bullying themselves (Louw, 2013)

2.8 Legislation relating to workplace bullying

The attention paid to workplace bullying is understandable when one keeps the seriousness of the results or outcomes of workplace bullying in mind. In 2002, the House of Lords passed anti-bullying legislation in the United Kingdom (Hodson et al., 2006). In South Africa, the situation looks somewhat different.

Teachers fulfil different roles at different times. Teachers (as normal or ordinary citizens of the country) have certain fundamental rights. They are also subject to more specific rights and obligations (depending on their position in the education system) which are linked to the teaching profession (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2001).

Democratic core values like freedom, equality and human dignity are underlined in section 7(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996a:

“The Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It sanctifies or enfolds the rights of all people (including teachers) in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom”.

Different national legislation relates to the legal status of teachers. The Employment of Educators Act (RSA, 1998a), the Labour Relations Act (RSA, 1995); the South African Schools Act (RSA,1996c), and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (RSA,1993b) are a few of the South African statutes that concern the teaching occupation in various ways. The above laws are supported by subordinate legislation or policies, for example, the Code of Conduct of the South African Council of Educators (SACE) whereby teachers are ethically and lawfully required to maintain the discipline and the safety of learners (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2001).

Workplace bullying is not defined at all in the South African labour legislation apart from the definition of ‘occupational detriment’ (Le Roux, Ryncroft & Orleyn, 2010). This is of great concern to the workplace bullying victim. Smith (2014) confirms that workplace bullying is not attended to by current legal approaches, especially victimisation-based constructs, and as such, a legal void exists. Harassment and victimisation are some of the terms used to describe workplace bullying but they do

not fully encapsulate the term workplace bullying. The South African legislation only acknowledges bullying if it happens during a promotion, demotion, training or granting of a benefit process. Whenever it falls outside these boundaries, there is no legal avenue to follow (Smith, 2014).

Although the Employment Equity Act (RSA, 1998b), the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, (RSA, 1993), the Protection from Harassment Act (RSA, 2011) and the Labour Relations Act (RSA, 1995) can be used to deal with workplace bullying, Smith (2014) believes these Acts were not drafted to specifically address workplace bullying, but may help teachers who have been bullied at work.

Three of the six guidelines for teachers laid down in the Code of Professional Ethics (SACE, 2002) by the South African Council of Educators deal with core values and respect and are interrelated with workplace bullying: Promoting gender equality and resisting any form of sexual harassment; the use of correct or suitable language when interacting with fellow teachers; and the avoidance of all forms of humiliation or any other form of abuse (including physical abuse) towards fellow teachers. Procedures are in place to address these forms of workplace bullying (Jacobs & De Wet, 2015).

De Wet (2006) states that bullying behaviour targeted at the teacher should not only be viewed as an infringement on an educator's human rights (Constitution sections 9-12), but it is also in violation of the Guidelines for the consideration of governing bodies when passing a code of conduct for learners (RSA, 1998a) when applied to learners bullying teachers. It could be debated that, despite the fact that these guidelines do not make reference to teacher-targeted bullying, learners may be suspended or expelled through a case of *mutatis mutandis* (when applied to teacher-targeted bullying).

Grobler is of the opinion that our legal system may be flawed when it comes to top-down bullying (by higher ranking members of staff) due to the hierarchical structure within schools, and the power levels within the education system, which are all supported by legislation, regulations and processes. For example, when a teacher

starts working at a new school, it is not appropriate to question the established authority or the legitimate power held by the principal (Grobler et al., 2015).

This hierarchical system is reflected by the South African public education system. Our country is governed by the government who in turn is governed by the ruling party. Political decisions are made at macro level and filter through to provincial level. Directives are then handed down to districts and principals who in return add pressure to school leaders and teachers (Grobler et al., 2015).

2.9 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher did a literature review in order to establish the prevalence of workplace bullying in the education sector. Workplace bullying stems from ordinary bullying and is a phenomenon that is widespread in South African schools. Further studies are needed to establish the similarities across workplace and geopolitical spheres (De Wet, 2014b).

Workplace bullying manifests through persistent, intentional and aggressive behaviour, and involves an imbalance of power between the powerful bully and the victim (power relationships), which may include unprincipled leadership. It is not a once-off incident but a recurring trend that may occur as often as once a week (over a long period of time) in an organisation where transparency and accountability are not part of the school culture (De Wet, 2014b; Hodson et al., 2006).

Different kinds of workplace bullying manifest through both direct (more physical) and indirect workplace bullying with a variety of effects (psychosocial effects and psychological reactions) that not only affect the victims' lives but also their work environment (through lower productivity etc.) (Blasé & Blasé, 2007; Jacobs & De Wet, 2015; De Wet, 2010a; De Vos, 2013; Matsela & Kirsten 2014).

Victims try to cope in a variety of ways, ranging from passive coping strategies (for example, doing nothing) to active coping strategies where the victim sees no other way out than to resign (Čech et al., 2017). Psychosocial, psychological reactions, lowered productivity and health related issues are some of the effects that workplace bullying may have on the victim (Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell & Salem, 2006).

Although workplace bullying in education is a relatively new research topic, incidences have been reported worldwide (Spain, Turkey, Croatia, Estonia, Czech Republic, India, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, the USA, Australia and even Lesotho (Čech et al. 2017; Kõiv, 2015; Matsela & Kirsten, 2014; Sinha & Yadav, 2017; Qureshi, Rasli & Zaman 2014). De Wet determined that an estimated 90% of teachers may have had an experience of being bullied in the workplace (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013).

Although workplace bullying is a widespread dilemma, even in South Africa, there is no dedicated or specific legislation that addresses the problem directly. The Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996b) protects all citizens including teachers' human dignity, and a variety of other national legislation relating to the status of teachers. However, the difficulty for a victim of workplace bullying is that workplace bullying is not defined in the South African labour legislation (Le Roux et al., 2010). If one looks at the Code of Professional Ethics laid down by the South African Council of Educators, (SACE, 2002), only three of the six guidelines deal with core values and respect that may curb workplace bullying with procedures that are in place (Jacobs & De Wet, 2015).

There are not many studies focusing on the factors contributing to workplace bullying. Therefore, Hodson et al. (2006) are of the opinion that it is important to look deeper than the generalised idea that an organisation's culture and individuals' low morale are the most likely factors promoting workplace bullying. He believes that organisations can prevent workplace bullying by eliminating the factors contributing to it. In support of this statement, De Wet (2010a) recommends that organisations institute support for victims of workplace bullying. Further studies are not only needed to identify and eliminate contributing factors in order to avoid workplace bullying in education, but also to determine possible solutions and coping strategies for victims.

De Wet's study supported the two dimensional model of bullying of Hodson et al. (2006) as it identified relational power and organisational chaos and its interaction as risk factors of workplace bullying in schools (De Wet, 2014b). She is of the opinion

that schools should be complying with laws that offer sound and just working conditions, but also that:

“The Department of Basic Education should lead the design and development of training programmes that are compliant with the law that schools must follow with regard to workplace bullying ... Specific policy needs to be in place to allow the victims and the other employees to report such behaviour ... Unions should also play an active part in safeguarding the interest of their members.” (De Wet, 2014b: 27)

In the same manner as De Wet (2014b), the researcher will also make use of Hodson’s (2006) two-dimensional model of bullying to evaluate teachers’ perceptions regarding workplace bullying, by focusing on the powerlessness of the individual in relation to organizational chaos.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on bullying of educators in the workplace. In chapter three, the research methodology and research design are discussed and motivated. Attention is given to interviews as the instrument or method of data collection. The sampling method relevant to this study, as well as procedures followed to analyse and interpret the data, is discussed.

The chapter concludes with a short discussion of ethical considerations taken into account during the study, as well as the limitations of this study.

3.2 Research Questions

3.2.1 Primary Research Question

How do teachers experience workplace bullying in independent schools in Gauteng?

3.2.2 Research Sub Questions

3.2.2.1 How do teachers define and describe bullying?

The researcher was interested in not only how teachers define workplace bullying, but also what they have experienced workplace bullying to be. In other words, what is the nature of workplace bullying, or what kinds of behaviour have they experienced?

The researcher was also trying to determine the possible influence the school milieu/ culture (transparency or accountability) had on the various bullying incidents, and whether the teachers' position in the school contributed to their falling victim to workplace bullying. The researcher was also looking to see if a teachers' position in the school had an impact on how he or she interacted with colleagues and whether this contributed to the situation.

3.2.2.2 How do teachers deal with being bullied?

The researcher was interested in how victims deal with workplace bullying and whether they make use of active or passive coping mechanisms to resolve the problem.

3.2.2.3 How does bullying affect those who are bullied?

The teachers' feelings and the consequences of bullying were looked at here. It did not only include psychological (any mental health) and psychosocial effects but also the impact on productivity (absenteeism, resignation, transfer; retaliation). The researcher tried to determine how workplace bullying impacts the teachers and their direct surroundings.

3.2.2.4 What, if any, support is provided by schools for teachers who are bullied?

The researcher was interested in how, if at all, schools are supporting victims of workplace bullying or how schools' leadership supports victims of workplace bullying? The participants also had to indicate what they knew of their current schools' support system.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

Grant and Osanloo (2014) brilliantly compare a theoretical framework to the blueprint of a building. It not only provides structure or an anchor point for the literature review, but also determines the methods used and how data is analysed.

Hodson started his research, 'Chaos and the abuse of power', by explaining that the organizational context plays an important role. He indicated that it is important to dig deeper in order to identify the two important dimensions that are likely to increase or decrease the possibility of bullying in an organisation (Hodson et al., 2006: 382). Hodson's two-dimensional model of bullying will be used in this study in order to determine whether teachers' experiences regarding workplace bullying confirm the contribution that the individuals' powerlessness and the organisation's lack of order or stability make to them being bullied. Hodson suggested at the end of his study that organisations can protect the weak and vulnerable individual by limiting chaos which opens up the possibility of power being abused.

The preference for Hodson’s two-dimensional theory is motivated by the formulation to explore workplace bullying within the context of the organisation and the interaction taking place. Both Shelton (2015) and Ojedokun et al. (2014) identified elements contributing to possible situations in which an individual may be subjected to bullying (and not just a negative act). Hodson encapsulates all these elements into two dimensions. Hodson’s findings indicate that schools can lower the risk of their teachers being bullied, and need to act on it (Hodson et al., 2006: 382).

How do teachers experience workplace bullying in independent schools in Gauteng?	
Relational Power in Organisations and Powerlessness	<p>How do teachers define and describe bullying?</p> <p>Examples of probing questions:</p> <p>How do you define bullying?</p> <p>What are your experiences of bullying?</p> <p>What was the relationship between you and the bully?</p> <p>The researcher was trying to determine the participants’ understanding and experiences of workplace bullying.</p>
	<p>How do teachers deal with being bullied?</p> <p>Examples of probing questions:</p> <p>How did you deal with the bullying?</p> <p>What did you do about it?</p> <p>The researcher looked at the different ways in which the participants tried to deal or cope with being bullied at work.</p>
	<p>How does bullying affect those who are bullied?</p> <p>Examples of probing questions:</p> <p>How did it make you feel?</p> <p>What did you do to try and deal with these emotions?</p> <p>The researcher wanted to find out how the participants were affected by being bullied.</p>

Organisational context/ chaos	<p>What, if any, support is provided by schools for teachers who are bullied?</p> <p>Examples of probing questions:</p> <p>How did the leadership/ or HR at the school support you?</p> <p>Does your current school have any support structure in place for teachers being bullied?</p> <p>The researcher tried to determine what support (if any) is available to victims of workplace bullying.</p>
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Table 3.1: Outline of questions according to Hodson's two-dimensions

As such, this study aims to uncover how teachers experience workplace bullying in schools and focus on the interactions within the school environment which have an influence on behaviour.

According to Hodson's two-dimensional model of bullying, there are two interlinking dimensions at work. The first dimension refers to the relation of powerlessness within the organisation. The second dimension is referred to as organisational coherence.

Power and powerlessness are fundamentally linked. The workplace is filled with various power relationships. If you are less powerful (influential with a minority status, insecure job or low-skilled worker), you run a greater risk of being bullied. Secondly, the model seeks to highlight how the abuse of power can manifest or be controlled in specific organisational contexts. Bullying is, according to Hodson, less likely to happen in a work environment with accountability and transparency (Hodson et al., 2006). Graeme Bloch believes that there is a "toxic mix" that prevents South African schools from becoming better. This includes job insecurity (powerlessness) and continual changes (organisational coherence) in education (Bloch, 2008: 12). This, according to Hodson, leads to workplace bullying.

According to Moayed et al. (2006), absenteeism is the most common result of workplace bullying. If a person is often absent, it leads to a decrease in performance and productivity. This in return may make a person more vulnerable and insecure. Other possible concepts that the researcher will look at are missed deadlines or

workplace errors, turnover and wrongful discharge, as well as ineffective teamwork, lowered morale and lack of organisational commitment (De Wet, 2014b). These elements may all have a snowball effect and in return influence the organisation as a whole in a negative manner.

If you are working in an organisation where there are organisational problems (for example mismanagement, poor leadership or an insecure job environment), it will lead to higher general stress, which in turn can lead to lower job satisfaction and low self-confidence or low productivity and sickness. This in turn can not only make the person more weak or powerless (more likely to be bullied) but also have an impact on the productivity, cost, culture and reputation of the school or workplace (De Wet, 2014b). We have more than twelve million learners, attending 27 000 schools, with approximately 400 000 teachers in South Africa. Unfortunately, due to a shortage of managers who are capable of running our schools well, chances are that there are many schools with organisational problems (Bloch, 2009). With so many dysfunctional schools (on more levels than just organisational problems), Hodson's two-dimensional theory is possibly the best method to study workplace bullying in schools.

These dimensions function as lenses for understanding, comparing and analysing workplace bullying. Hodson et al. (2006) evaluated existing studies of organisational life to try and test models of bullying. Ethnographical work was utilised to uncover the informal, elusive forms of behaviour in the workplace. According to Willis and Trondman, "Ethnography is the disciplined and deliberate witness-cum-recording of human events" (Willis & Trondman, 2000: 5). Many variations were introduced - some previously only used by studies of single organisations/workplaces. This led to in-depth, content-coded data about bullying. Certain organizational patterns were also revealed (Hodson et al., 2006).

Bullying was defined as something that can involve blatant emotional abuse, humiliation and tormenting by a person in a superior position. This can in turn be devastating for the trust relationships within an organisation. The study completed by Hodson et al. (2006) employed in-depth observations to unravel the nature of bullying. Bullying is often done in a subtle and secret or concealed manner. The

linear model utilised, allowed for general trends regarding bullying. When De Wet used Hodson's two-dimensional model of bullying to study the risk factors for workplace bullying, she found that certain elements (aspects within an organisation) contribute to further chaos or problems (De Wet, 2014b), and in turn make the person responsible for bullying more powerful and the victim almost voiceless. By looking for aspects (concepts) such as absenteeism, job satisfaction, low morale and disrespect, the researcher will be able to identify and describe the full extent of teachers' experiences of workplace bullying. The mismanagement of schools, poor leadership or changing environment due to new policies or legislation, are also aspects that can contribute to workplace bullying. The two-dimensional model will assist in looking into teachers' experiences regarding workplace bullying, by investigating "the roles of relational power and organisational chaos" (De Wet, 2014b: 13).

If powerlessness and a mismanaged or unstable school are the main contributing factors to the possibility of being bullied, then schools need to look at possible ways of stabilising their schools and eliminating mismanagement in order to close possible opportunities that perpetrators (mostly in superior positions) use to bully the young or insecure teachers.

3.4 Research Methodology

3.4.1 Research Paradigm

Research has to do with how we understand the world. It includes our beliefs and assumptions and explains how we see our world, our perception, what we perceive as understanding, and the reason for understanding (Cohen et al., 2003; Maree et al., 2017). Paradigms come from our specific worldview and consist of what we know, see and identify through our core ontological and epistemological assumptions. The purpose of doing critical research is the researchers' desire to change the existing forms of social organisation (Briggs, 2012).

3.4.2 Research Approach

The way in which a researcher collects, extracts and orders data is a result of the lens through which you see the world around you. Ultimately this will also determine the manner you will use to analyse or approach the data (Maree et al., 2017).

Qualitative research addresses subjective, personal experiences and emotions (Patten et al., 2015), but focuses on natural settings or social environment (Maree et al., 2017). The researcher's choice to undertake a qualitative study stems from the verbal nature of victims' accounts and description of their experiences of being victimized. As a qualitative researcher, I am interested in what teachers experienced, how they see themselves and their work environment (settings) as well as how teachers make sense of their situations through social structures and social roles. Open-ended questions were necessary to gain an understanding of their experiences in this phenomenological study.

3.4.2.1 Epistemology assumption

My epistemological assumption stems from my belief that people understand experiences and construct reality in diverse ways and that their behaviour can be interpreted in terms of cause and effect (Maree et al., 2017). This interpretive outlook implies that the researcher is part of the topic under investigation. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will look at the perspective (experiences and interpretation) of participants' (research subjects) experiences. Their experiences of workplace bullying will be the result of their own interpretation of the world.

As a researcher with an interpretive outlook, the researcher needed to be careful not to alter the participant's version of his/her experiences (Briggs, 2012), because the participants' reality was socially constructed from their environment and social context. As a person looking from the outside, the researcher may have had the opportunity to discern their experiences.

According to Maree (2017), interpretivism is based on five assumptions: The first assumption made is that the characteristics of society can only be understood within the individual and cannot be observed externally. The researcher believes that the characteristics of workplace bullying and the individuals' experiences cannot be fully

observed from the outside. The second assumption is that social interaction is a uniquely human action. The third assumption made is that human intelligence (the brain) is the intended root of meaning. The fact that behaviour is shaped by knowledge of our social world is the fourth assumption and lastly the assumption is made that our social reality depends on our understanding or convictions (Maree et al., 2017). The researcher therefore needs to gather data directly from the victim of workplace bullying and not just from any bystander.

3.4.2.2 Ontological assumption

My ontological assumption is constructivism. Individuals actively construct meaning to their environment (Cohen et al., 2003). All truth is constructed by humans and situated within a historical moment and social context. Multiple meanings can exist for the same data (Cohen et al., 2003). In this study, the researcher will attempt to view workplace bullying from the perspective of the participants, because their experiences are constructed as a result of their own interpretation or reality. The researcher is interested in the participants constructed experiences in terms of workplace bullying.

3.4.3 Research Design

For the purpose of the study, the researcher decided to do a qualitative phenomenology study and not a case study. A case study is an experiential exploration focusing on current events or incidents which are confined or restricted to an organization, a behavioural condition or even a person (Maree et al., 2017). Case studies are conducted within specified boundaries of space and time, looking into interesting aspects and within its natural context (Briggs, 2012). In order to explore or discover and to create a reasonable interpretation, sufficient data must be collected from enough interviews, records and observations.

In contrast to a case study, this qualitative phenomenology study attempts to understand teachers' experiences of workplace bullying and to give insight into the issue (Maree et al., 2017). The data needed consists only of scribed interviews (oral conversations) and does not include any written reports or recorded observations from day-to-day activities which is the case with case studies.

A phenomenologist works from an academic perspective and encourages the study of straightforward experiences (Maree et al., 2017). Behaviour is seen as something that can be influenced by how things look or how the incident appears to be, rather than the physical or external reality. Husserl (1859 - 1938) (Cohen et al., 2003) focused on what the phenomena means to individuals and therefore it is important for a researcher using the phenomenological approach to be aware of his/her own personal judgments or feelings, but to put them aside.

General pointers that points towards a phenomenological study, will include: (a) the researcher's belief that people's subjective consciousness is important; (b) the researcher's understanding that consciousness gives meaning to events and experiences; and (c) the researcher's claim that individuals gain knowledge through reflection determined by their structures of consciousness (Cohen et al., 2003).

A researcher doing a phenomenological study will aim to determine what is similar or common when looking at the participants' experiences (e.g. universally experienced phenomena like bullying) (Maree et al., 2017). The purpose of this phenomenological study is to reduce and condense the teachers' experiences into a description of the essence of the phenomenon. Data therefore needs to be collected from individuals who have experienced or lived in/ through the phenomenon. Thereafter the researcher needs to develop a description of the essence of all participants' experiences (Maree et al., 2017).

3.5 Data Collection Strategies

Interviews were conducted (semi-structured questions) during one or more sessions (interviews) per participant. Maree defines interviews as a dialogue or two-way conversation during which the researcher or interviewer asks the interviewee questions in order to collect data. With a qualitative interview, the researcher aims to see their world or experience through the participant's eyes. If the data is used in the correct manner, valuable information regarding ideas, beliefs, experiences, views and behaviours can be extracted, especially if the participant believes the topic is important (Maree et al., 2017).

Interviews are aimed at answering research questions and give the researcher an insight into a particular problem (Briggs, 2012). Interviews are the best way of collecting data about experiences because the participants can explain what they have said if the researcher does not understand their responses (or framework of knowledge and social truth or reality) (Maree et al., 2017).

Semi-structured interviews are often used to confirm emerging data from another data source (for example, data gathered somewhere else in the world or more specifically South Africa) and do not extend over a long time period. The interview is based upon a line of questioning or open-ended questions. It includes probing questions, formulated before the interview by the researcher, to clarify information. The researcher needs to be mindful of the responses of the interviewee in order to identify new lines of questioning arising that may be related to the phenomenon, so that it can be explored and examined (Maree et al., 2017). However, the researcher needs to guard against being side-tracked by unimportant aspects not related to the study. If this happens, the researcher needs to help the interviewee to stay focused on the research topic. The interview schedule (a few major questions with sub-questions and possible follow-up questions) appears in Appendix A of the study.

The researcher had to include the following three probing strategies during the interview process. Detailed-oriented probes were used to clarify the 'who', 'where' and 'what' of bullying incidents that the interviewees were talking about. Elaboration probes were also used to gather more information in a sensitive manner, without forcing participants to answer questions they did not want to answer (Maree et al., 2017). Clarification questions (probes) were also used by paraphrasing participants' responses to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's understanding of what had been said.

All interviews were digitally recorded (with the written permission of participants) while written notes were taken during each interview in order to review the answers. All interviews were transcribed and shown to the participants as soon as possible. They then had the opportunity to comment on the transcribed text. No real names were used in order to protect the anonymity of the participants. For the purpose of

the study, participants are called 'interviewees' and allocated a number. For example, the first interviewee is called I1.

3.5.1 Participant selection criteria

Using convenient sampling (Cohen et al., 2003) one group of independent schools was selected as the site for this study. After meeting with the Rector (the Executive Head of the School), the Heads (principals) of the different schools were approached in order to secure permission to conduct the interviews. The chair of the Independent Examination Board was also approached in order to secure permission from that organization governing private schools in South Africa.

Eight participants were initially purposively identified (Silverman, 2000) as having the information required to answer the research questions. One teacher withdrew from the study due to his unwillingness to be digitally recorded while discussing his experiences of bullying. A second teacher was also excluded from the process due to the fact that she is still going through the bullying and is trying to sort it out. The Rector's permission was granted on condition that only bullying cases older than five years or bullying cases happening at other schools were taken into account for the purpose of this study. Six participants from the different schools within the independent school group were interviewed. For the purpose of this study even principals will be referred to as teachers.

Teachers were approached via e-mail to explain the purpose and process. Teachers interested in participating in the study, were asked to send an email or sms indicating their intent to participate. Teachers were emailed from an independent email account to make appointments and to discuss the details including the consent form. Participation was based on voluntary participation and on the basis of being informed about what the study entailed. The interviews took place off-campus and only after consent was given by the participants.

The sample can also be seen as a homogeneous sample (Maree et al., 2017) because the participants all belong to a similar sub-culture, namely teachers or educators. Some people may even describe it as a heterogeneous sample because

all the participants have experienced bullying in the workplace. The sample can also be described as intensity sampling due to the strong focus on teachers who experienced the phenomenon and not just unusual cases of bullying. The sample can also be described as critical case sampling because the participants are critically important in the understanding that they can offer in terms of bullying as a phenomenon because of their personal experiences (Maree et al., 2017).

Shelton (2015) believes that if a person is not personally experiencing bullying, the chances are good that they do not even know it is taking place. By approaching experienced teachers with experience of workplace bullying, the sample was purposive because they already have experience of workplace bullying (Briggs, 2012). It also proved to be more cost effective because the six teachers from the different schools within one school group took part in the study. The research interviews were conducted outside of school hours and off-premises in an interview room rented exclusively for the purpose of the interviews.

3.5.2 Sampling strategy and participants

An important aspect of qualitative research is data saturation (Maree et al., 2017). Some researchers believe that six participants are enough for phenomenological studies. Other researchers agree that small samples can produce sufficient, complete and accurate information when conducted in a specific environment on condition that the participants have a degree of experience or expertise regarding the topic of enquiry (Maree et al., 2017). If samples are too big it is difficult to extract rich data, but if a sample is too small it becomes difficult to achieve data saturation.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher decided to select 6 participants for individual interviews due to the limited time available for the study. Teachers, and not learners, were the subject. Teachers' specific experiences of bullying at schools, (personally or informed by others) were the focus. In order to encompass as many viewpoints as possible, a broad-spectrum of interviewees was selected which included both male and female persons of various ages and nationalities. Therefore, teachers from Gauteng employed at one IEB accredited school group, with personal experience of workplace bullying were considered, and teachers with various levels of teaching experience in both government and private or IEB schools were

approached. Current research indicates that approximately 90% of teachers in South Africa may have experienced being bullied in the workplace (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013).

Participants were selected purposively (Silverman 2000) in order to help collect rich descriptive data through interviews. In other words, the participants of this purposive sample were all selected due to their knowledge and experiences of the phenomenon workplace bullying, as informed by the research questions. Rich data relating to this phenomenon was collected due to the teachers' experience of bullying. The sample aided in improving the transferability of the findings because the interviewees were teachers from different backgrounds, who had all experienced bullying. From their recollections (emotions, tears) during the interviews, it was clear that the data covered real life descriptions of events (Maree et al., 2017).

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

3.6.1 Interpreting of data: Thematic analysis

Because phenomenology focuses on rational reflection of a human's existence and his or her lived experiences, the reflection and the observation (thinking and studying) must also be rational and unrestricted by theoretical prejudice and assumptions.

Researchers using phenomenology are interested in the meaning; therefore, the data analysis will be motivated by their interest in how individuals experience the world around them or what it means. Each individual will attach his or her own meaning to phenomena, so the researcher needs to see the world through the participant's eyes (Maree et al., 2017).

Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis are sets of methods used to analyse text or data by using a systematic process. This may consist of coding and exploring of meaning. However, researchers using thematic analysis will consider both the hidden content as well as the obvious as themes or categories when submerged with data analysis. Similar to content analysis, theme analysis also

searches for themes, making use of coding and collecting codes under themes or subthemes. In other words, it makes use of the same “set of analytical interventions used in qualitative content analysis” (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016: 101) with the researcher as the key for success in both the analysis and in the presenting of the data and the results. Thematic analysis of the interviews helped the researcher to gather descriptive information on workplace bullying.

The various ways in which teachers may have been bullied were identified, how teachers are dealing with workplace bullying reflected on, and correctional measures in which schools can support victims of workplace bullying suggested. Key words indicating that powerlessness (humiliation, intimidation, tormenting, pressuring or mocking) of the individual or the instability or chaos within an organization (transparency or the lack thereof, accountability, coherent workplace team) contribute to the researcher’s goal of proving its contribution and increase the likeliness of workplace bullying.

In the endeavour, no statistical analysis or objective measurements (in other words, quantitative research methods) were used. Key words were used to determine whether relational power is unhealthy, whether or not the school is well managed and how much this contributes to the teacher’s experience of workplace bullying. By working from a constructivist or an interpretive outlook, the researcher aimed at giving an accurate account of the participant’s experiences and identifying to what extent teachers are bullied at schools.

Deductive, thematic analysis was used to analyse the teacher’s descriptions and to find the underlying thread from the teachers’ experiences (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). By using Hodson’s two-dimensional model of bullying theory and earlier research about incidents of workplace bullying, some incomplete elements were identified that will benefit from further research (Hodson et al., 2006). The goal of this study was to validate a theoretical framework within Gauteng schools, but also to grow a conceptual understanding of how bullying manifests itself in the education workplace.

Prior research (De Wet, 2014b) was used to identify key concepts/ themes as initial coding categories. Definitions for each of the categories were clarified by using theory. The interviews were used to specifically explore the participant's experience of workplace bullying. The transcripts were read and all experiences/ emotional reactions were highlighted. Highlighted passages were powerlessness of a worker with maybe lower status, and a structurally weak school (mismanagement/ chaotic/ school going through rapid changes).

Prior research and theory guided the findings. This led to a couple of challenges that had to be addressed. The researcher had to guard against only 'finding' evidence that supported the theory. Probe questions were set in such a manner that they did not lead the participant to answer in a specific manner. The researcher had to guard against overlooking information while being submerged in the theory. These limitations relate to the trustworthiness of the study. Therefore, the researcher kept a clear audit trail (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) coded by using the initial coding categories. Data that was not immediately coded was identified in order to create new and sub-categories or themes. Supporting and non-supporting evidence was identified in the research.

In this study the researcher was aiming at defining a phenomenon by looking for possible categories describing teachers' experiences in the workplace. Categories such as school structure, absenteeism or health-related issues, emotions (anxiety), power relationships, and support or lack thereof, were identified.

3.6.2 Validation

The validation of qualitative research is determined by solid descriptive data that will enable the reader to understand the full extent of the experience. Only by following transparent research procedures, with an open audit trail of interpretations, questions and decisions during the research process, can this be achieved (Maree et al., 2017). The purpose of the audit trail is not to enable other researchers to assess the researcher's interpretation. It only allows the reader to follow the line of enquiry and assist in determining whether the process followed meets the demands or conditions of valid research. In other words, the procedures need to be transparent in order to demonstrate that the analysis was reasonable.

3.6.3 Reaching conclusions

The researcher tried to draw conclusions while interpreting the data. These conclusions were based on information taken from transcribed interviews in comparison with literature, and mostly confirmed existing theory. However, new themes were identified that may be worth looking into for future studies. Conclusions were based on the current literature available on workplace bullying in education and schools (Maree et al., 2017).

3.7 Trustworthiness and credibility

In order to determine the trustworthiness or credibility of any qualitative study, one needs to look at the data analysis and the findings and conclusions made by the researcher (Maree et al., 2017). The following four sub-sections seek to substantiate the trustworthiness of this study.

3.7.1 Credibility

The consistency and relevancy of the study can be determined by looking at the research design. The research questions were in line with the qualitative research design, and based on Hodson's two-dimensional model of bullying theory (Hodson, et al., 2006). In other words, participants' experiences were collected during interviews. During informal conversations prior to the interviews, the participants' initial understanding of workplace bullying was discussed. After the interviews, the researcher reflected on field notes taken during the interviews. The participants were also handed a copy of the transcription in order to verify the information or correct errors as well as add information where necessary. The transcribed text reflected a rich description of workplace bullying.

3.7.2 Transferability

With transferability, other readers and researchers are invited to make connections with their experiences or studies (Maree et al., 2017). Transferability was increased for this qualitative study by (a) selecting participants who are typical of the context being studied. The participants represented a typical group or array of teachers, from young teachers with little experience to well-experienced teachers, and teachers from different post-levels, gender and nationalities. Table 4.1 provides a detailed

summary of teachers who took part in the study. Secondly, (b) the context to which the findings apply is also transferable because the participants were reflecting on their experiences throughout their careers in urban, independent and government (ex-model C) schools.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability is normally illustrated through the research design, the application (or how it is implemented) and the operational data (of how the data was collected). The researcher tried to keep a journal to keep track of what and why, and changes that were made to the original research design (Maree et al., 2017). The researcher also used the journal to try and keep track of observations and themes during the analysis process.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability has to do with the neutrality of the researcher, and the extent to which participants' information shaped the findings (Maree et al., 2017). The more a researcher gets involved with the participants, the more likely the chance of the researcher becoming biased and the greater the risk of 'missing' information.

The researcher has herself experienced workplace bullying in education and had to guard against not reading more into the interviews than what was said. Because all participants came from the same group of schools, each participant had to guard against showing emotions or sympathising with the teachers.

As a teacher who has been bullied herself, the researcher had to guard against bias creeping in. It was therefore important to include numerous quotes from the various interviews to illustrate the various points or conclusions. The researcher had to be very cautious about not using any quotations out of context just to prove a point.

The researcher had to be extremely careful not to disclose the identities of the participants. Nobody from within the school may find any reference in the study that could point to a specific school, department or person.

The researcher did all interviews out of school time and off-campus to protect the identities of the different participants. The interview process started at the end of an examination period (for the two colleges) and lasted up to the end of the following holiday (about six weeks), which allowed the researcher to make appointments off-campus with the various participants.

Interviews were done off-campus, within a 2 kilometre radius from school, in an interview room that was acquired specifically for this purpose. None of the staff (receptionists or cleaners) working at this venue, had any knowledge of who came for interviews, or what the purpose of the interviews was. None of the employees have children (no connection to the school) they all live far away (\pm 15 kilometres) from their place of work (Alexandra, Soweto and Krugersdorp/ Noordheuwel).

Each interview was transcribed by the researcher after which the typed interviews were handed back to the relevant participant to comment and check on the accuracy of each transcription (member checking).

Sufficient data needed to be collected (enough interviews) in order to explore/ discover and to create a reasonable interpretation which could be tested for trustworthiness. This needs to relate to relevant literature and needs to be a worthwhile argument but should also provide an audit trail (Briggs, 2012). All transcribed interviews must be kept systematically, indicating the time and place in order to keep an audit trail by which other researchers may validate the findings. This would allow another researcher to track the steps of the research, by looking at decisions made and procedures followed.

3.7.5 Validation through crystallisation

The aim for most qualitative researchers' studies is for the researcher to immerse themselves in the data and to probe for deeper meaning instead of looking for casual relationships or perspectives because reality is constantly changing. Multiple realities exist in people's minds, and our reality is ever-changing. Therefore, each participant's understanding or comprehension will give a different description of the participants' different insights or perceptions which will reflect their unique identity and reality (Maree et al., 2017).

In this study, respondent validation or member checking took place after the various interviews were conducted and data was cross-checked to identify any discrepancies. The participants were asked to check the transcribed interviews (once) and make sure their words were not misrepresented (narrative accuracy checks and interpretative validity), and to check the authenticity and interpretation.

Richard suggests that there are more than two or three sides to any story (Maree et al., 2017). Crystallisation would give us a complex and deeper understanding of workplace bullying. Although a reality will be identified through data gathering and data analysis, the researcher still needs to interpret the data in order to make sense of it. This interpretation will still be the researcher's own interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon, as the findings crystallise from the data. The researcher needs to make sure that her own assumptions and bias do not cloud the reality becoming as clear as crystal (Maree et al., 2017), because the findings will represent the researcher's own reinterpreted understanding of workplace bullying. The essence of validity lies in the transparent nature of the process. A clear audit-trail of interpretations allows the reader to follow the process.

A researcher's crystallised data is only credible when those reading and analysing the data see the same information arising. If this occurs, it contributes to the trustworthiness of the study (Maree et al., 2017).

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are important because of the sensitive nature of the research. The researcher guarded against betraying her participants when using sensitive information where the details could be connected to a specific participant. The participants may be deemed vulnerable because the research may generate greater risk of harm if they are identifiable. This may have added to the participants' psychological stress (Briggs, 2012: 93).

Although the participants came from different schools in the Gauteng area, the researcher still had to guard against disclosing specific detail that may make the participant identifiable, because the teachers all teach at a one-of-a-kind school.

3.8.1 Informed Consent

For this study, ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. Written consent was given by the individual teachers who participated in this study. An example of the consent form will appear in Appendix B of the study.

Although the respective heads of schools agreed to this study, precautions were taken to stay off the schools' network and emailing system. Teachers may not be identifiable to the management because this could cause a situation where individual teachers are victimised even further. If the perception existed that any of the bullies/perpetrators were involved in the study in any way, it would also have compromised the honesty and openness of answers given during the various interviews.

It was important for the researcher to explain the purpose of the research to the participants, what role they were asked to play and also to explain how the data was to be managed (Briggs, 2012). The above explanation was accompanied by consent forms given to potential participants when they were asked to take part in the research. The research questions utilised for the study were ethical.

3.8 2 Confidentiality

The researcher guarded against betrayal, in other words, not to betray the trust and confidentiality that participants had vested in them to keep their identity a secret. At the same time, the researcher tried not to deceive the participants, for example, not to deceive the participants by encouraging them to say what she wanted to hear or by disclosing their identity once they had agreed to take part in the study. The aim of the study was not to name and shame teachers, principals or any schools, and therefore pseudonyms were used. If a participant was identifiable because of how the situation was described and interpreted, the existing bullying problem could just be made worse. The topic of the research is highly sensitive in nature. Participants were granted access to the transcribed interviews and given the opportunity to voice their concern about any misrepresentation of information.

Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by using pseudonyms for participants (and the names of their schools) in order to protect their identity and prevent further victimization at their respective schools - especially where they may still be teaching at the institution where the mentioned bullying was taking place.

3.9 Limitations

The first limitation that the researcher encountered at the start of the study was that in order not to have to take leave from school or spend time travelling to the various schools or areas, the researcher had to approach a school not too far away.

When the researcher initially approached schools in the area regarding the research, principals were sceptical about the study. Some found the topic amusing while others became defensive once the topic was revealed. After a long discussion with the Executive Head of the group of schools where the researcher is a teacher, the Head requested that the topic first be introduced at a meeting of the various principals of the schools. Only after the Executive Committee agreed to the study being conducted at the school, did the Executive Head or Rector give his permission to go ahead.

Permission was given on condition that no current or unsolved workplace bullying cases were discussed. The request was also made that if any participants needed help to work through their emotions because of the bullying incident, that they must be referred to the Head of the schools Psychology and Student Support department or else to an independent psychologist to assist them in this regard. Two of the teachers who initially volunteered to participate in the study had to be excluded due to the fact that their experiences were still ongoing. The researcher referred them both for assistance in this regard to the school's psychologist.

It was important for the researcher not to have had any prior relationships with the participants. All the participants came from different departments, areas or schools but worked on one campus, under the same brand of schools. There are currently over 600 education and support staff (full- and part-time) working on the premises.

Another limitation to this study was that the researcher was the main research tool. With face-to-face interviews, both the researcher and the participant formed an impression of each another. The researcher must therefore guard against their body language, behaviour and dress code offending the participant. This may have a negative impact on the quality of the interview. Observation of the body language may also be misinterpreted, especially if the participant is from a different culture (for example Zulu) than the researcher (Briggs, 2012).

When conducting interviews, the researcher had to be aware of all possible factors that could influence the participants and the researcher. Language was an important factor to consider as the questions were prepared in English and would be answered in English. The researcher had to guard against misinterpreting the responses of a non-English home language speaker. The one participant emigrated from America and used different terminology which may have led to possible misinterpretation of the questions and answers. The questions had to be very clear.

In doing the interviews over the holiday period, it granted the researcher time to transcribe the interviews soon after the interviews had taken place. It was beneficial for the researcher to transcribe the interviews herself. In doing so, it helped her to become familiar with the content and start identifying the different themes.

3.10 Summary

In order to discover and unlock teachers' experiences of workplace bullying, phenomenology research was conducted within qualitative boundaries at a Gauteng based group of schools.

A semi-structured interview schedule (questions) was created. The questions were formulated based on the main research question: How do teachers experience workplace bullying in independent schools in Gauteng? The four sub-questions asked broader questions: (1) How do teachers define and describe bullying? (2) How do teachers deal with being bullied? (3) How does bullying affect those who are bullied? and (4) What, if any, support is provided by schools for teachers who are bullied?

The necessary permission was obtained from the Executive Head of an IEB group of schools in the Gauteng region. The IEB, however, indicated that there was no need to give permission for a study that did not focus on assessment, but that they took note of the study being conducted.

Although all teachers from the various schools were approached, only a small number of teachers indicated that they were willing to participate because of their experience of being bullied in the workplace (purposive sampling). Interviews were conducted off-campus to gather valuable information regarding their experiences. The researcher used the two dimensions (powerlessness and school culture or chaos) from Hodson's theory to determine if they contribute to teachers' experiences.

After all the interviews were typed, they were handed back to the relevant interviewees to check. Data analysis only started after member-checking had taken place. A themed data analysis process was followed. Trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, ethical considerations, informed consent, confidentiality and various limitations were discussed.

The next chapter presents the data and provides a discussion on the findings.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Data and Findings

4.1 Introduction

In chapter 3, the research methodology of this study was discussed. This included the research process, the data collection and the data analysis process. The data that was gathered during the semi-structured interviews with teachers will be presented and discussed in this chapter.

This chapter is divided into five sections. A brief overview of the research methodology, sampling and data analysis of the study is provided in the first section. The purpose of the study and research questions is shortly discussed in Section 2. Section 3 presents the biographical details and background of the participants. The following section of this chapter will present the collected data per research sub-question and is collated in table 4.1. A general discussion of the themes and findings is presented in the last section.

4.2 Purpose of the study and Research Questions

Although limited in scope (due to time restrictions), this research aimed to provide insight into teachers' experiences regarding workplace bullying. The objective of this research was to investigate instances of teachers being bullied at schools. The study did not attempt to provide solutions to, or criticize these bullying cases.

Bullying may be penalised in terms of the common law (such as assault and *crimen injuria*). It is also a violation of the Constitutional rights to dignity, security of the person and fair labour practices. This study specifically addressed bullying as an infringement of human dignity by looking at what teachers experience and how bullying personally affects them, whether emotionally or psychologically. The study was directed by the following primary research question:

How do teachers experience workplace bullying in independent schools in Gauteng?

The secondary questions that guided the study were:

1. How do teachers define and describe bullying?

2. How do teachers deal with being bullied?
3. How does bullying affect those who are bullied?
4. What, if any, support is provided by schools for teachers who are bullied?

4.3 Biographical overview/ background of participants (including selection)

In this study, teachers who had encountered or are still encountering bullying at schools whether personally or informed by others were of the essence. For the purpose of this study even deputy-principals or heads of schools will be referred to as teachers. In order to encompass as many viewpoints as possible, a broad-spectrum selection of interviewees was made, which included both male and female persons of various ages, post levels and nationalities.

Interviews were conducted and data collected from four schools within the same larger brand in Gauteng province. Teachers from Gauteng IEB schools with various levels of teaching experience in both government and private schools were approached, and asked to participate in the study if they had been or were still victims of workplace bullying. This was the requisite condition of participation in the study. Participation took place on a voluntary basis.

After meeting with the Executive Head of the selected IEB accredited school group, the Heads (principals) of the various schools were approached during a meeting. The study was presented and explained in a Power Point format and time for questions was given. The University of Pretoria initially also required permission from the Independent Education Board, but after careful consideration, the IEB indicated that no permission was needed because the study did not focus on assessment.

Initially the researcher intended to have eight to ten participants as the study group sample, but after obtaining permission from the Executive Head, the request was made not to take current unresolved bullying information into account, but to refer them to the relevant psychologist at their respective schools. Consequently, two teachers were referred and interviews were conducted with the remaining six participants.

The selection of these participants was convenient (but also opportunistic and purposive) because they were all working for a specific brand of schools and have experience of workplace bullying (Maree et al., 2017). It was also more cost effective to have access to over 400 teachers (a variety of teachers) in close proximity, but from different schools. This also helped in keeping participants anonymous because their respective principals were not aware of their involvement in the study.

Teachers were approached via an email which explained the purpose and process of the study. An informed consent form was handed to each participant. Teachers interested in participating in the study were asked to send an email to an email address specifically set up for the purpose of the study indicating their intent to participate. Teachers were also contacted for the purpose of making appointments and to discuss the content of the consent form and any questions relating to the form the teachers may have had. Participation only took place after the participants were fully informed about what the study entailed and only after giving their respective consent. Preliminary interview dates and times were scheduled.

Because open and honest communication of information regarding the teachers' account of bullying at school is very important, teachers would only have responded openly away from the workplace. For this specific reason, an office space off-campus (within a 2 kilometre radius) was hired where interviews were conducted. The interviews were also conducted outside of normal school hours.

Interviews were aimed at answering research questions. The interview schedule (a few major questions with sub-questions and possible follow-up questions) will appear in Appendix A of the study.

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were considered the best way to collect data about experiences because the researcher had the opportunity to ask the interviewees to explain what they have said if their answers were not fully understood by the researcher.

Interviews were conducted with six teachers: two novice teachers with one to five years' experience, two experienced teachers (post level 1 - 2) with 10 - 20 years'

experience, as well as two very experienced teachers (20 - 30 years' experience) from post level 2 and 3.

All interviews were digitally recorded (with the permission of the participants) while brief notes were taken during each interview. The data was transcribed and shown to interviewees as soon as was possible. No real names were used for the purpose of this study in order to protect the anonymity of the participants. The data was thereafter analysed by using content analysis. Content analysis is a technique that allows researchers to discover people's lived experiences and describe events and actions being taken (Maree et al., 2017). It was used to systematically sift through a relatively large volume of data and focus on the manifest content or what was obvious from the interviews.

A short summary of each participant's biographical information is provided below in tabular format. All participants received a code according to the order in which the interviews were conducted, for example the first participant, is referred to as I1 with the capital "I" referring to interviewee.

Table 4.1 Biographical information of Interviewee		
Interviewee 4 (I4) Female	Interviewee 5 (I5) Female	Interviewee 6 (I6) Female
1 – 5 years	10 – 20 years	20 – 30 years
BSc Accounting + PGCE	+BA Fine Art + HDE	MEd
UJ	Wits	Rhodes
IEB & GDE	IEB & GDE	IEB & GDE
Both IEB and GDE schools	and GDE school	Both IEB and government schools (Gauteng and in Cape)
Leadership senior teachers	& HOD & Deputy Head	Principal (Cape) Fellow teacher/ parents
Engaged	Not married	Married with two children

	Interviewee 1 (I1) Female	Interviewee 2 (I2) Male	Interviewee 3 (I3) Female
Experience	1 – 5 years	20 – 30 years	10 – 20 years
Training	BEd + PGCE	BMus + HDE	BA + HED + Honours
Where trained?	Wits	USA	UJ
Experience at	IEB Gauteng	IEB & GDE	IEB & GDE
Being bullied at...	IEB school	Both IEB & GDE	IEB school
Bullied by whom?	HOD & senior teacher	Owner and Principal	HOD & Deputy Head
Situation at home?	Engaged	Going through divorce	Married with two children

Table 4.1: Biographical information of Interviewees

4.4 Presentation of Research data

The participants described their experiences of bullying and a number of themes emerged when the interview data were analysed.

The research findings are ascertained (presented) according to the different research sub-questions and themes that were identified and linked to each question. Responses from interviewees or participants were analysed and interpreted in line with the literature on workplace bullying in education. The findings are presented per research sub-question which highlights the various themes identified. Each theme ends with a short summary and discussion on the preliminary findings in relation to the theoretical framework.

4.4.1 Research sub-question 1 - Participants' understanding and experiences of workplace bullying

The following data reflects the data collected for the research sub-question: "How do teachers define and describe bullying?"

4.4.1.1 Theme 1: Participants' understanding of workplace bullying

Five of the interviewees reported that bullying is taking place when another person makes you feel as if you are not good enough or makes you think less of yourself (less of an individual) by putting you down because of choices that you made or because of what you are doing, as in the following excerpts:

"If any one person can make another person feel or think less of themselves."
(14)

"...to make you feel bad about your choices, what you are doing ..."
(15)

Although the background and experiences of the participant differ, there were four interviewees (I1; I2; I3; and I6) who all reported an element of power being present (over a period of time) in the bullying situations. This is evident in the following excerpt:

"...systematic and ongoing abuse of power, or ... someone who doesn't hesitate to, on a regular basis, to undermine you, or leave you feeling anxious or uhm, or in any way emotionally undermined ... when a person knows that they have the power ..."
(13)

The two teachers who are the most experienced of the interviewees (I2 and I6) both reported that they define bullying to take place when power is used to either prove a point or to undermine you and what you stand for. This 'power' can reside in position/ authority, age, gender and even money, as seen in the following examples:

“...when one person has more power than the other and that kind of power is not necessarily age or gender, it is...it could be but it is not necessarily just age or gender. Certainly on our case, it’s (sometimes also) money ...”
(I6)

“...when another teacher begins to order me around as though they have now taken over the authority position... ”
(I2)

4.4.1.2 Summary of theme 1 under research sub-question 1

The participants agreed that bullying has a negative impact on how you see and think of yourself. In other words, it affects your human dignity and self-worth. Most of the participants mentioned that power (relationships) plays an important role. The foundation to power can be authority (someone in a higher managerial role), gender (male vs. female), age (experience and knowledge), but also money.

4.4.1.3 Theme 2: Participants’ individual and personal experience of bullying

When asked what their experiences of workplace bullying are, the majority of the interviewees reported that their bullying experience started when they started working at a new school. Most of interviewee I2’s recollections of being bullied started at new schools, except for one incident. He had already been teaching at this school for over a year when a new teacher was appointed in another department. I2 stated that:

“...she came in and she was an imposing person and a very interesting lady. I got along with her initially.”
(I2)

But this positive opinion of the teacher soon changed:

“I was walking through the one hall, when this woman who had begun to be rude with me, ordered me around like a servant in the presence of other

teachers. She put her hand on me and I said: 'Get your hand off me!' and she said: "Just don't tell me what the fuck to do." So I had enough."

(I2)

Later this teacher (the bully) laid a charge against I2 for causing her emotional harm. He could see that the poor police officer who investigated the case had also experienced the full wrath of this woman. Nothing came of the case.

Interviewee I3 reported that her bullying incident began about a year after she started at the school, when she stood up for a colleague that was bullied by the same person. She recalls the situation where her colleague's mother passed away during a mid-year examination and I3 knew that she would not be able to complete the marking because of her mother's passing. Everyone at the school knew she was very close to her mother.

"...my HOD did nothing. In fact, her exact words where: 'That bitch can ... I don't care who does that bitch's marking. I'm not doing it.' And I said: 'Well then I'm going to do it ... so that was the catalyst.'"

(I3)

The two young teachers (I1 and I4) had similar experiences. Both of them felt insecure and that they had to do what it takes to prove themselves or to impress the more senior teachers. They felt as if they were under a microscope.

"...you feel people are judging every move that you make, trying to find something wrong. It puts a tremendous amount of pressure on you..."

(I4)

All of the interviewees reported that they had experienced bullying at the hand of their line-manager (either their HOD, the Deputy-principal or the Headmaster). Four of the interviewees (I1; I3; I5; and I6) stated that their bullying originated from work performance. I3 explained that she first witnessed her colleague being bullied, but did not understand the full extent thereof, until she was bullied by the same person.

“So the woman being bullied was Jewish and it’s my belief that part of the uhm, part of the bullying had to do with the fact that the HOD, the bully, was deeply “Christian” and I think she used to, she sometimes used some anti-Semitic language. I feel that there was a link between those two things but she found this person that she bullied very offensive on a number of levels. Uhm, and she was doing her very best to undermine this person, uhm and because of the nature of their relationship, all of our departmental meetings and experiences were incredibly stressful. The conflict between the two of them was so, uhm horrible, and the levels of stress in those meetings were so intense, that I used to come out with my jaw, like (show clinched) and I’d have, I’d have a headache from clenching my jaw.”

(I3)

Later on in the interview, she further explained the situation as follows:

“We had our first departmental meeting and it was so awful. Instead of welcoming us back and saying I hope you all had a nice rest and let’s have a good term, she basically told us what a shit department we were, uhm, she pulled out forms about how we had to, before we set a test or finished marking, we had to fill in a hundred tick boxes and write a bloody thesis about our marking approach. The implication was that we were crap, oh, and that we were also very lazy because we had requested in the juniors to have one paper for the 8s and 9s rather than two, which she insisted upon. We also wrote three-hour exams, two three hour exams for the grade 10s, 11s and 12s and so the marking load was like a matric load for all three grades. Anyway, so she basically said that the only reason we wanted one paper, was because we were all lazy and crap. Anyway, so that was the start.”

(I3)

I3 went on to explain how she got called into the principal’s office, just because she did not expect the matric pupils to bring seven set work books to school for a final oral examination. She knew they may have borrowed the books from the library, a friend or even read it on the Kindle and did not expect them to have all seven

physical copies at school on the day. Later on in the interview, she had the following to say:

“She (the HOD) told me that that was gross incompetence on my part not to deliver accurate instructions.”

(I3)

When I6 started at a new school in the Cape (after her husband was transferred) she was threatened by the Principal himself because of the content of question papers.

“He has the ability to stop my career right there and then so there would be no chance of me going anywhere.”

(I6)

The manner in which the participants were bullied is very similar. I2, I3 and I5 were shouted at, even sometimes in front of other staff, sworn at and threatened:

“During that time, she used to swear at me. She used to call me a fucking bitch ... the verbal abuse continued...”

(I3)

“She (Deputy-principal) will come, if she had an issue with something that I’ve done, she would confront me and shout at me in front of all the staff in the staffroom so that kind of abuse of power, emotional abuse, ja, she used to do things like this regularly.”

(I5)

The two interviewees, who were new to the profession, described their bullying incidents.

“If I did something wrong, then I would be sometimes be shouted at like I was a student, which was very belittling...”

(I1)

Later on in the interview, she went on to explain:

“Like putting you down, you know reprimanding you in front of students ... or during appraisals sometimes or any kind of management discussion of your work, and even in department meetings...”

(I1)

The experience I4 had made her feel like a school child again:

“I felt like a 13-year old child all over again with you know ... with braces and acne and mousy coloured hair and everybody’s got something to say and looking at you...”

(I4)

Both direct and indirect bullying was mentioned. I1, I2, I3, I5 and I6 all experienced face-to-face or direct bullying which materialised on an interpersonal level.

“She called me a fucking bitch, she called me ‘Judas’, because, like she’s ‘Jesus’ and ... and she was like: “This is God’s work we’re doing. That woman is evil” ... the verbal abuse continued ... She would like come into my classroom and scream at me...”

(I3)

“She treated me poorly ... ordered me around like, like a servant in the presence of other teachers.”

(I2)

“She was addressing me in the staffroom and basically everyone could hear ... (in an) aggressive or condescending (manner).”

(I5)

I2, I3, I4, I5 and I6 all reported experiencing indirect bullying, in other words gossiping, spreading of rumours, excluding participants from meetings, etc.

“It was the way I was excluded from things, not told about ... you know. And it affected my teaching.”

(I6)

I6 later mentioned further:

“I think it’s so ... subversive, it’s ... an undertone, it’s ... you know if it was overt, we can deal with it, then we could sort it out, but it’s always this sort of hidden agenda ... pushed underneath things.”

(I6)

“I would literally sit in my classroom ... extract myself completely from everybody, you know, just so they didn’t have anything to be able to say about me...”

(I4)

The experiences of the various bullying victims are very comparable in act and content, and will be summarised succinctly in the next section.

4.4.1.4 Summary of theme 2 under research sub-question 1

Most of the participants were bullied after starting in a new position. Being new at a school is under normal circumstances stressful enough. With the added pressure of your line-manager shouting at you, it is understandable that they felt anxious. Both direct and indirect bullying was recollected. However, the two elements that stand out are the vulnerable position the teachers found themselves in and secondly the fact that their HODs, Deputy-Principals or Headmasters (people in authority) were in most cases responsible for it.

4.4.1.5 Theme 3: Power relationships

The people responsible for bullying or the relationship between the bully and the victim was briefly mentioned under theme 2 where the researcher discussed the various experiences of the interviewees. All the participants reported being bullied by one (or more) person who was in a higher position than themselves. It is also noticeable that in most of the examples mentioned, the bully does not act alone.

The two young teachers felt they were bullied by not only their HOD, but also other senior staff members.

“...you know generally, during appraisal sometimes or any kind of management discussion of your work, you know and even in department meetings...”

(I1)

Later on in the interview, she went on to say:

“So, it’s me and management...”

(I1)

I4 felt that:

“They were senior, respected individuals in the teaching industry which does make it difficult...”

(I4)

Interviewees I2 and I6 were bullied by the principal:

“I spent a week in bed on doctor’s orders. When I got back the principal was alarmed that I’ve had that week off, because they were away on tour, but I was sick, sick, sick nearly in hospital sick...”

(I2)

For I5, the bully was present in the position of the Deputy Principal of the school who was good friends with her HOD. Matters concerning her would be discussed and then afterwards she would be called in to be informed about decisions.

“...she (HOD) was best mates with my Deputy Principal and there was obviously a conversation that took place about me, without me knowing. And the Deputy Principal called me in for a review ...”

(15)

For I3 matters were far worse as she recalled:

“This woman’s husband was the Deputy Head. She was the HOD of the subject and he was the Deputy Head ... uhm, and he had been the previous HOD ... of the subject ... anyway ... So then they called this emergency meeting. We had to vote. Basically to say whether the Jewish lady or the HOD was the problem and to basically vote for one to go, because our situation was so severe that we were dysfunctional while they were both there, and the unanimous feeling amongst the department was that she was the problem, not the Jewish teacher. The HOD had to go ... of course her husband did not vote against her and so ...”

(13)

She goes on to say that even though the HOD was voted out, she stayed on at the school as the HOD, so I3 resigned.

From the interviews it also became clear that the bullies are often supported by someone higher-up or of more seniority at the school or in education and are therefore seen as untouchable. Figure 4.1 is an attempt to visually illustrate the hierarchical nature of each one of the interviewees’ situations.

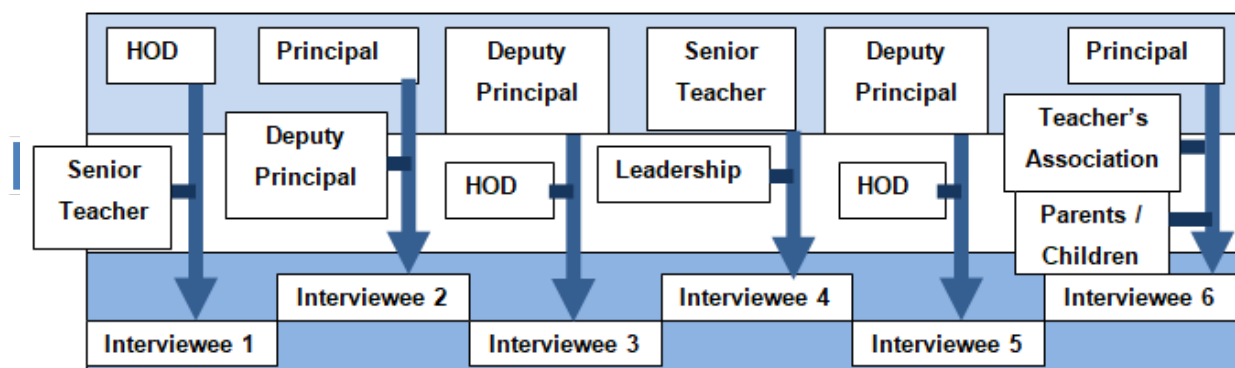


Figure 4.1: Illustration hierarchical nature of support of the bully within the different organisations

The figure illustrates the circumstances of each interviewee. In every situation, they were in a lower position than the bully, and if they followed the standard reporting procedures of laying a complaint, they ran the risk of being bullied even more.

4.4.1.6 Summary of theme 3 under research sub-question 1

The participants all reported on their position in the organization and how the person responsible for bullying was on a higher level of authority. Many of these responses are in line with Hodson's two-dimensional model of bullying (Hodson et al. 2006) where it is argued that there are two interlinking dimensions at work. The first dimension refers to the relation powerlessness within the organisation. The second dimension is referred to as organisational coherence.

Schools are permeated by various power relationships. If you are less powerful (for example, non-influential, possessing a minority status, or a new or insecure job) you will be at risk of being bullied. .

Secondly, the model seeks to highlight how the abuse of power can manifest or be controlled in specific organisational contexts. Although the responses of the teachers did not specifically mention this fact, some of the interviewees were new in their positions (a changed environment) and I3 for example mentioned things changing after she stood up for her colleague whose mother had passed away and her colleague was unable to be present at school (also an uncertain situation).

4.4.2 Research sub-question 2 - Ways in which victims deal/ cope with the situation

The following data reflects the findings for the research sub-question: "How do teachers deal with being bullied?"

4.4.2.1 Theme 4: Ways of dealing with workplace bullying

In theme 3, it was pointed out that the bullies are often supported by someone who is higher in the school hierarchy which makes dealing with the bully harder. I3, I4 and I5 reportedly did nothing to fight back.

“...specifically as a new teacher, with very little teaching experience, how do you go to a senior person, ... and now you go and say that “I think you’re a bit of a stirrer and you’re causing nonsense and you are saying things that are untrue ... It’s hard ... It’s something that just ... it’s impossible.”

(14)

I5 recalled feeling so powerless, that she could not do anything:

“I didn’t ... I didn’t do anything. I am quite ashamed to say that. I think that’s how they make you feel, because I felt absolutely powerless ... I obviously can’t confront her... nobody would actually speak out against her, because ... if you get on her bad side, she would make your life a living hell, so everyone avoided basically pissing her off, upsetting her, because she would make your life hell.”

(15)

Or, as I3 stated in her recollection:

“I found it extremely difficult to have any kind of frank honest conversation with her. She was so ... defensive and aggressive...”

(13)

Later on I3 wrote her bully a letter because she was desperate to move on:

“...at the end, I wrote her a letter to say I have really tried to behave with integrity, but I can’t anymore ... I can’t defend you ... she never responded in any way to that...I mean even still now, years later, she will see me, ... oh and her husband, they just walk straight past me. They don’t greet me. They won’t look me in the eye.”

(13)

I3’s Jewish colleague took steps by reporting it to management and she filled in all the necessary reports.

“She filled in reports, and nothing ever happened and nothing ever changed. So I also did kind of feel like ... there was no point ... I was this paralysed victim...”

(I3)

When I1 approached the principals regarding her issues, she initially felt heard:

“So they did try and assist me in trying to create a job profile ... and sort of gave me some specific profile to keep me away from things ... but because I wasn't dealing with it, I actually went to go and see a psychologist.”

(I1)

Another participant who had similar experiences also approached the management, but nothing was done:

“They were being bullied too, by the same person, so I think they found it difficult.”

(I6)

When discussing the incident in the Cape where she was bullied by the principal, she recalls:

“So fortunately and lucky for me I was able to show him, in those days the curriculum statement that we had to ...comprehensions had to be taken out of current affairs... (but) he was more concerned about parental backlash.”

(I6)

I6 ended up resigning from her post within 3 months because she still felt powerless.

4.4.2.2 Summary of theme 4 under research sub-question 2

When asked how they dealt with being bullied, most of the interviewees recalled being unable or powerless to do something about it, due to where the bullying came from. The two (I1 and I6) who did try to speak up, did not benefit from trying to

address the situation. Table 4.2 is a short summary of what the participants ended up doing because of not being able to speak up or not being heard:

Actions taken	
Interviewee 1	Resigned after 3 years. Not teaching currently. She will only return once her own children are at school.
Interviewee 2	Resigned. Feeling disappointed and reluctant to be as involved in current school as he used to be In previous school.
Interviewee 3	Resigned after HOD came back. Currently teaching at a neighbouring school.
Interviewee 4	Resigned after two years. Currently working outside education in a finance department.
Interviewee 5	Resigned after three years. Currently teaching at a neighbouring school.
Interviewee 6	Resigned in the Cape after three months. Currently still teaching at a school where she had to overcome another colleague bullying her.

Table 4.2: Summary of actions taken after being bullied

I2 rightfully mentioned that he was alarmed about the number of teachers who are changing schools or who are leaving the teaching profession:

“You know, I understand people are leaving an organization ...surely the goal of the school should be to maintain their people and to cultivate ... to cultivate a kind of permanence in your staff and kind of sense that you will be rewarded.”

(I2)

It is clear from table 4.2 that teachers will resign (an active coping mechanism) if they feel they have the opportunity to work somewhere else under better circumstances. The two questions that spring to mind are: What would they have done if they had not been able to resign because of financial implications; and

secondly; are schools supporting teachers enough when they are faced with issues like bullying?

4.4.3 Research sub-question 3 - Effects of workplace bullying

The following data reflects the findings for the research sub-question: “How does bullying affect those who are bullied?”

4.4.3.1 Theme 5: Feelings associated with bullying, and how relationships and health are influenced by these feelings/ experiences

A wide spectrum of feelings and emotions were mentioned during the interviews. The feelings and emotions varied from basic negative emotions like feeling bad or negative about themselves, being unhappy, emotionally very low, depressed, and alone and ostracized, to feeling intimidated and insecure.

“I started to become quite bitter ... and negative towards the school ... it just kind of blend into all aspects of life. If you are not happy at work ... you carry it with you.”

(15)

I5's feeling impacted on her productivity in the classroom.

“I went through a lot of emotional turmoil ... quite a lot of depression. I was very unhappy...”

(11)

I1 on the other hand was more impacted on a psychological level.

These emotions have led to some teachers feeling that they do not want to give maximum dedication to their jobs or that they do not care about their work anymore:

“It makes me feel bridled, in the school situation. It makes me, and I'm being honest with you, it makes me feel as though I don't want to give my all ... why should you contribute to the whole rainbow ideology when your own colleague slaps you back?”

(12)

I3 mentioned that she was highly stressed, paralyzed with anxiety, could not breathe, had panic attacks and woke up at night in a cold sweat.

"I was finished hey. I was, I was ... I had permanent migraines. I went onto heavy anti-depressants ... I used to have full-blown panic attacks and anxiety attacks. I'd wake up in the middle of the night gasping for air."

(I3)

I4 describes it as being close to breaking point.

"Yes, at one point I was literally, I was at breaking point ... I was at breaking point. And I think, if I hadn't ... I think, that was one of the reasons why I had to extract myself from the environment."

(I4)

Two other strong themes that emerged relating to feelings was relationships at home and the impact bullying had on their health.

I5 mentioned earlier that emotions are something one takes home with one. As an unmarried lady, she said:

"If you are not happy at work, you're not going to go home and have a party."

(I5)

For I1 it also had a negative effect on her personal life (psychosocial effect):

"I completely bombed out and I couldn't deal with anything and that's when things happened, like I've missed one of my friend's weddings. I just didn't see people for a few months and I got really sick as well, like kept on getting sick all the time..."

(I1)

In the same manner it affects people's homes and families if they are married.

"In terms of my marriage, it wasn't great, because all I did was bring home all this anxiety and negativity and ... I mean, I'd like come home and would have to 'download' like for 40 minutes just to try and get things off my chest."

(I3)

I3 explained that she observed a similar scenario with her Jewish colleague:

"And I saw a very similar thing in my colleague, whose husband at the matric dance actually approached her, and started shouting at her, I mean the HOD, because ... I think just because he had watched his wife come home in such a reduced state, over and over again."

(I3)

In contrast to the previous observation, I6 said that she is grateful for being married to an ex-teacher because:

"...he listens, he thinks logically. He knows what it's like ... I often take things home, abuse I can't discuss stuff ... some of the stuff here ... He knows everything and he has given me such grounding, such sound advice."

(I6)

Later on in the interview, she went on to say:

"I feel sorry for teachers who don't have that, because I think if you go home ... well I'd be actually interested to know how many teachers are on anti-depressants ... I think we are manipulated and bullied all the time and if we don't have someone who reminds us of our call and who we are, and the essence of ourselves, we are bugged."

(I6)

Four of the participants mentioned how bullying influenced their health negatively. I1 had to get the help of psychologists:

"I got really sick as well, like kept on getting sick all the time."

(I1)

I2 went to the doctor:

"I was so sick in that period 1999, the pressure made me so ill. I spent a week in bed on doctor's orders."

(I2)

I3 reported that:

"I had permanent migraines. I went onto heavy anti-depressions ... Physically I was just completely overwhelmed and there were times that I would sit in my classroom for like 20 minutes, paralysed with anxiety, just by the thought of her walking past my window ... I sometimes just used to go and sit in her (the teacher from next-door) classroom just to try and calm down, because I could not breathe."

(I3)

I4 also felt she was at the point of burning out and had to go for help:

"I was at burnout, honest of goodness, between the pressures of having to participate in every extra mural under the sun ... and the day to day stresses of dealing with children having (big) classes, from Gr. 8 to Gr. 12, all the lesson plans. Then it's expected of me to introduce the skills development aspect in teaching ... all these added on administrative issues ... ahm, I was at burnout."

(I4)

4.4.3.2 Summary of theme 5 under research sub-question 3: Destructive feelings associated with bullying and how relationships and health are negatively impacted

The interviewees reportedly experienced a wide variety of negative emotions that influenced their relationships at home as well as negatively impacting on their health.

The participants experienced the bullying as a personal attack on them as human beings, impacting on their human dignity. Over all they had low self-esteem, did not believe in themselves and even questioned their own actions.

This had a noticeable negative influence on their relationships at home. One interviewee (I6) stated that she does not know what she would have done if her husband was not an ex-teacher himself, because people outside the teaching profession do not understand the pressure you have to work under. I3 recalled her Jewish friend's husband screaming at the HOD, and then said that she can imagine her husband doing the same thing because:

"...he ... just watch me come home in tears and just so devastated."
(I3)

Four of the participants recalled seeking professional help from either a doctor or a psychologist in order to try and cope with what they were experiencing (anxiety, having panic-attacks, etc.) and had to deal with in the work environment.

The question arises: What was management's role in all of this?

4.4.4 Research sub-question 4 - Available support

The following data reflects the findings for the research sub-question: "What, if any, support is provided by schools for teachers who are bullied?"

4.4.4.1 Theme 6: Support from school leadership

None of the participants felt that their schools' leadership (at that time) supported them. Although I1 felt better after seeing the principals, she felt that things just carried on in the same manner:

“...definitely giving me an idea of what I’m supposed to be doing, but it didn’t help me with my department.”

(I1)

I2 is of the opinion that the school’s leadership either did nothing to prevent the bullying taking place, or to fix the situation. In fact, the one principal even begged him not to go to the CCMA:

“The principal at that time had said: ‘don’t take this to the CCMA, you will ruin me’. In other words, it would cast negative aspersions against the whole school.”

(I2)

He later added:

“Obviously, I think because of me going (resigning), she (the principal) was caught between a rock and a hard place. Me going to the CCMA would have placed her management of the thing, uhm, in a bad light.”

(I2)

In a similar response, interviewee I3 explained how the principal started the same year as she did and could not stand up against the HOD and her supportive Deputy Principal (her husband). Even after an emergency meeting for the department to vote on a way forward, the principal did not follow through on what he said he would in dealing with the situation. She felt that management failed her and her Jewish friend so much that she had to resign.

“They failed to follow through on anything that they promised us. He failed to discipline her, or anybody else. He failed to take the situation in hand ... until it reached such a crisis point that he brought in external arbitrators to come in and ... (by) then, it was just so far, so far gone and so far too late.”

(I3)

I5 was faced with a similar scenario in that the Deputy Principal and her HOD were in cahoots when it came to bullying her:

“My HOD is best friends with her, so I can’t go and say anything to her, because it would go straight back to her, the Deputy. And obviously can’t confront her and she had such a ... hold on everyone. Like, nobody would actually speak out against her.”

(I5)

I4 felt that it would not help to talk to management, because the same senior teachers who were bullying her were part of the leadership team. I6 reported that the principal was responsible for her one experience of bullying, and because he was on the board of a well-known teacher association, she had nothing else to do but to resign.

*“He (the Principal) said, implying, but not saying it straight out, but implying that he has the ability ... because he was also on **** (the board of a teacher association). He has the right and ability to stop my career right there and then and so there would be no chance of me going anywhere.”*

(I6)

Later on in the interview, she had the following to say:

“I was there for three months and I left because of that. I could not stand the way he treated me and spoke to me and I’d been teaching for years before then ... and I thought ‘I can’t do this, can’t teach in this environment.’”

(I6)

It was only with her second encounter that she felt that management was bullied by the same person, almost as if she had a hold over them and therefore, she also received no support or help from management.

“They were being bullied too, by the same person, so I think they found it difficult to [...] made me think. She does this to everybody.”

(16)

Later on in the interview, she went on to say:

“I think it was because it was just too difficult for the leadership at that time, to deal with it ... it was complicated.”

(16)

In the end, none of the participants felt that the management/ leadership at their respective schools did anything to resolve the situations; in fact, I2 was even persuaded not to approach the CCMA.

The second contributing factor that Hodson talks of in his study is organisational chaos. When a school supports the school's bully, it means that the bully is not held accountable for his or her actions. This implies that there will be no repercussions for negative bullying behaviour, even if the management of the school is aware of it. I3 experienced such a situation after she laid a complaint against her HOD.

“They failed to follow through anything that he promised us. He failed to discipline her, or anybody else. He failed to take the situation in hand. There was such, there was really this political minefield in place, between my HOD, this woman that she hated, this Jewish woman and her husband who also hated that woman and there was a very huge, there were two like factions in the staffroom, so he ... I really, look, I really felt for him, but he, he totally failed to intervene there ... uhm, or to put anyone in their place...”

(13)

This will in turn have a huge influence on the professional conduct of all staff members at a school. If staff members are not held accountable for their behaviour (positive or negative) it will appear that schools are protecting or even supporting staff members who are guilty of overstepping the educators' code of conduct and ill behaviour.

Five of the six interviewees were still actively teaching at the group of schools at the time of the interviews. Interviewee I4 had resigned a month prior to the interviews being conducted, but still wanted to be a part of the research.

I3 and I5 do not know of any formal school support available. Both of them have been in a fortunate position in that they believe there are a number of people in leadership that they can approach if need be.

“If I’m honest, I actually don’t know, because I’m fortunate enough that I haven’t had to make it my business to find out. I know of a code of conduct that I can have a look at and ... I also feel there are a number of people that I can approach ...What action they would or wouldn’t take, I cannot say, because I haven’t been in a position to ever ask.”

(I3)

“Well, I was never briefed on what kind of support is available, ever, I just whenever I have had a struggle, I’ve gone straight to the Deputy Principal. I know there’s a psychologist available on campus.”

(I5)

I2 knows of the support available from the school psychologist. He has approached her (the psychologist) in order to help him work through bullying scars that he still carries with him.

“...is great. The school’s psychologist is helping me with my own personal issues. She’s been tremendous. Uhm, you know, and some of the things she deals with, with the other staff as well ... I’ve seen her as a tremendous help and somebody who would get involved ... the school is committed to that kind of thing.”

(I2)

I1 also mentioned the school's psychologists who are available for assistance, but mentioned that she is also aware of the HR department which she is willing to get involved if necessary. .

"I wasn't dealing with it, I actually went to go and see the school's psychologist. I went and spoke to her first and explain the whole situation."

(I1)

In the same manner, I6 feels that she can not only approach leadership, but also the HR department if necessary.

"I think our Deputy Principal is very approachable, so if somebody is being bullied ... but I don't know how much will get done. It depends who the bully is too. You know, I think if the parents are bullying, we often let it happen ... I'm aware of it (HR)."

(I6)

4.4.4.2 Summary of theme 6 under research sub-question 4

None of the participants felt that their school's leadership (at that time) supported them. I1 went to see the principals, felt better, but nothing changed. I4 realised that it would not help to speak to management if the same senior teachers were responsible for bullying you. I6 was in a similar position because it was the principal who bullied her into teaching a watered down syllabus. I2, I3 and I5 felt that management failed them and did not support them.

Five of the six interviewees were still actively teaching. When asked if they knew of any support at their current schools, I3 and I5 did not know that there was help available. Both I1 and I2 are currently seeing the school psychologist in order to help them deal with issues that are founded in bullying. Although I6 is aware of help available, she feels comfortable approaching leadership if she needs help.

None of the participants sought outside legal help or followed any legal action through SACE or any other organization.

4.5 Findings

From the aforementioned themes on teachers' experience of workplace bullying in independent schools in Gauteng, the researcher identified the following preliminary findings. These findings are briefly touched on below, but will be fully discussed in the following chapter.

4.5.1 Teachers' understanding of what constitutes workplace bullying

Although the teachers have a sound understanding of what bullying in the workplace is, and have experienced it themselves, they still hold different viewpoints. When asked to define what their perception of bullying is, the participants agreed that bullying has a negative impact on how you see and think of yourself (self-worth and human dignity). A number of the participants felt that power (in its different forms) plays a significant role. Authority, gender, age, money and knowledge (experience) can all form the foundation of this power relationship.

Most of the participants were bullied after starting in a new position. Being new, the added pressure they experienced from their direct managers made most participants anxious. Both direct and indirect bullying was recalled but there were two elements that stood out:

1. The teachers were in vulnerable positions; and
2. Line-managers were in most cases responsible for bullying them.

These two elements correlate with Hodson's two-dimensional model of bullying (Hodson et al., 2006). These two interlinking dimensions refer to the relation between being in a powerless situation in an organization / department and change in that department. Although the responses of the teachers did not specifically mention this, a number of teachers were in new positions which meant changes in how things were done with new people starting.

4.5.2 Teachers feel powerless to deal with workplace bullying

A number of the interviewees recalled feeling powerless. Although two did try to speak up, they did not benefit from speaking up. All six interviewees resigned because they believed they could not do anything to change their situations (an

active coping mechanism). Due to our current teacher shortage, no school can afford to lose qualified and experienced teachers.

4.5.3 Workplace bullying affects the victim negatively

A wide variety of negative emotions were experienced which not only affected the victims' personal lives, but also their health. Low self-esteem and questioning yourself are just two of the negative emotions that were carried home. When you are emotionally drained, it is hard to relax and to forget what is happening at work. At least four of the interviewees also reported seeking professional help due to the effect of workplace bullying and the stress they experienced on a daily basis. Bullying also had a serious impact on the participants' ability to work effectively.

Due to low self-esteem and morale at work, they felt too tired to try and do something about it.

4.5.4 Little is known about available support from schools for victims

Management did not play their part. A number of interviewees reported that their schools' leadership (at that time) supported them. After I1 met with the principals nothing changed. I4 and I6 realised it would not help to discuss it and I2, I3 and I5 felt that leadership did not support them.

When the interviewees were asked if they knew of any support at their current schools, two interviewees knew nothing regarding support available, two are currently seeing school psychologists and I6 does not currently see the need because she feels supported in her current teaching role.

In hindsight, two other themes emerged without directly asking any questions regarding these matters. Four participants (I1, I3, I4, I5) mentioned that the bullies were hard workers who poured their hearts and souls into their careers.

“One of the reasons why I felt so awful is that ... this is a woman who is exceptionally good at her job, and I do mean exceptionally good at it. And I found for years that I couldn't bring myself to criticize her, or to speak a word against her, because I really admired her work ethic. She is 1 million % committed to her job, bizarrely so actually. She really didn't have much of a

life outside her work ... Uhm ... she had a family but they didn't have a lot of friends, uhm ... I noticed, like, they were quite insular. She lived for work. She was defined by this job and you know, by all of that. I think there was part of me that tried to pro ... for many years I actually did protect her. I mean, at that one point, she was so unpopular in the staff room. I would be the only person who would sit next to her, for a very, very long time. And I really tried to support her but eventually I just couldn't ..."

(13)

I5 recalled the characteristics of her bully:

"..she's probably in her 50s but she has had every form of cancer like under the sun and she's really ill and ... but she is one of those people that will literally show up at school like in skeleton form and work and; ... very aggressive person, very ... ja, so I'm sure that maybe that impacted on the whole thing."

(15)

Another positive theme that emerged was the lessons participants (I3 and I6) learned from being bullied.

"I think the biggest thing I have learned is that, I would ... I now understand the importance of saying: "You are currently making me feel this way. You need to step up and own that. It's not my fault, it's your fault." And I have learned ... if I take ... If I took anything from that: I will never let myself be bullied again. That is the biggest lesson I have learned, is to not take other people's shit on ... to board, onto my head, but to put it straight back at them and say: "This is the way you have behaved. This is the effect your behaviour is having on me ... In my opinion, there is no professional grounding for it, no rational reason for it and I'm not prepared to accept it." And if that doesn't work, then I will take the necessary steps, in terms of disciplinaries and things."

(13)

In a similar manner I6 has learned:

"I've learned to speak back ... well I certainly second-guess myself and then I'll go back and check and make sure that I have ... you know, have I done this right, have I done it wrong? Do I deserve to be spoken to in that way... obviously there are times that you are, that I am, deserve to be spoken to, that I have made a mess, but I'm quite prepared to go and apologize if I have."

(I6)

Bullying in the workplace is something that people do not really want to talk about. People say that they cannot imagine teachers being bullied. As I1 said during her interview:

"...that (bullying) could never happen. This is a school environment you know, school, it's nice yea, and then it happens again, even worse ... I'm very sad that ... there's no protection ... it's very sad, because this is a school environment."

(I1)

Interviewee I4 had similar thoughts:

"...it's difficult. I think some schools get it right because they may have better policies and procedures in place to manage these things because it's something that they've been through before, ... nothing was ever done about it and I think this is exactly it ... In the teaching world amongst staff, it's kind of never spoken about or addressed."

(I4)

Workplace bullying in education is a real problem that needs to be addressed. Teachers are also human and from these experiences, it is clear that they are also negatively affected by bullying behaviour. Not only does it influence what happens in the classroom, but it also affects the teacher's private lives at home and can also negatively affect their health. School leadership needs to acknowledge how it can influence the academic staff. People in authority/leadership need to support staff that

may be vulnerable in the ever-changing education sector, otherwise they (teachers being bullied) will resign and find employment somewhere else.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher started by giving a short introduction to the background and purpose of this study. Workplace bullying is a growing phenomenon that has only been researched in the last 20 years, mostly in the health profession. In the education sector, most studies of bullying have focused on children being bullied, and not the teachers. In South Africa, only a few researchers have studied how workplace bullying manifests itself in education.

The data was presented in the order of the four sub-questions with the various six themes as they unfolded. The four findings were then briefly mentioned.

In the last chapter the researcher will conclude by briefly looking at the background of the study followed by a discussion of the findings. Possible recommendations will be followed by the limitations and delimitations of the study and then suggestions for future research conclude chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion of the findings, conclusions, recommendations and limitations

5.1 Introduction

Just over 20 years ago, researchers from Scandinavia and other European countries started looking into workplace bullying (De Wet, 2011b; Cakirpaloglu et al., 2017) and it is therefore seen as a relatively new research topic. Workplace bullying has been defined in various ways, with the most common definition describing it as ill behaviour towards another individual, recurring over a period of time.

The objective of this study was to get a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences of workplace bullying and to find out if there is any support available when needed. The findings and conclusions in this chapter assist in answering the research question: "How do teachers experience workplace bullying in independent schools in Gauteng?"

As a result, this chapter also presents the recommendations extracted from the study. Limitations are shortly accounted for, followed by a brief conclusion that summarises the study.

5.2 Discussion of the research findings

The primary research question asked was how teachers experience workplace bullying in independent schools in Gauteng. In the following section the researcher gives an account of the findings that came out of the primary and secondary questions and topic of this study.

5.2.1 Finding 1: Teachers' understanding of what constitutes workplace bullying varies

Five of the participants believe that an individual is bullied in the workplace when other peoples' behaviour or comments (over a long period) make you think less of yourself and negatively impact on your self-worth. This belief is in line with Coetzee

and Steyn (2017) who describe it as repeated painful mistreatment that creates a feeling of inferiority or as Grobler et al. (2015) describe it: aggressive behaviour aimed at inflicting injury or distress over a period of time.

To add to these feelings of being less of a person, the element of power was present. Four of the participants mention that there was an element of power at play during the bullying incidents. Čech agrees that elements of repeated, long-term hurting, the victim's inability to defend him/herself and an imbalance (or inconsistency) in a relationship contributes to workplace bullying occurring (Čech et al., 2017).

The two most experienced interviewees reported that they are of the opinion that workplace bullying is evident/ apparent when an individual makes use of power to either prove a point, or to undermine a staff member. The bully's power can come from a position of authority such as position in the organization, age, gender or money. This element of power correlates with Čech et al. (2017) and De Wet's (2011b) views.

5.2.2 Finding 2: Teachers feel powerless to deal with workplace bullying

The majority of participants reported that their experiences started when they started at new schools. Because they wanted to prove themselves they ended up being bullied by either a more senior teacher, or another teacher who had been at the school for a long period of time. Four of the participants acknowledged that workplace bullying became evident when they were criticized by their line-managers, for their work performance. The ways in which they were treated were very similar. Most of the participants reported being shouted at or threatened. This is in line with Hodson *et al.* (2006) but is not limited to these examples.

Both direct (swearing, screaming, being threatened, etc.) and indirect bullying (gossiping, spreading of rumours, etc.) were reported. According to Cunniff and Mostert (2012), Čech et al. (2017) as well as Bartlett and Bartlett (2011), examples of direct bullying may include ridiculing or demeaning comments and verbal harassment but does not exclude shouting, swearing or physical attacks and other

forms of aggression. Indirect bullying in the workplace may be subtler and can often lead to mental and psychosomatic injuries (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Čech et al., 2017; Cunniff & Mostert, 2012) just as I1, I2 and I5 mentioned.

Three of the participants were bullied by their HODs while I5 experienced it at the hand of the deputy-principal and I6 by the principal himself. In figure 4.1 the researcher tried to visually illustrate the relationships in order to emphasize the teachers' vulnerability. It is not going to help a victim to try and address being bullied, if firstly the person to whom they are reporting it is supporting the bully, and secondly if the bully is their direct line-manager responsible for assessing their performance as a teacher. In fact, it will just make matters worse. This contributes to the victim feeling vulnerable or less of a human because their line managers (supported by principals or people higher-up in the organisation) will reiterate the negative dialogue which can sometimes put victims in a negative spiral.

It is clear that most of the participants reported that the bully did not act alone, but that they were supported by other members of staff (as seen in Figure 4.1) who were mostly more senior in post-level. Although none of the authors refer to the support that a bully may have, it may contribute to their not being held accountable for actions as mentioned by De Wet (2014b) and Hodson et al. (2006). If professionalism and accountability are not part of a school's culture, it may contribute to the chaos or instability that falls under Hodson's second dimension of his workplace bullying theory. This contributing factor will be discussed under the fourth finding.

5.2.3 Finding 3: Workplace bullying affects the victim negatively

Three of the participants (I3, I4 and I5) were paralysed with fear and too scared to do anything about their situations. They felt powerless and were scared that they would aggravate the situation, even if they tried to have an honest conversation.

In order for I3 to move on with her life, she wrote her HOD (the perpetrator) a letter explaining how she felt. The HOD never responded and even today, years later, ignores her at conferences and in other public places.

Both I1 and I6 tried to speak up, but did not benefit from trying to address the situation. Most of the participants resigned after being bullied, which is in line with Čech et al. (2017) who stated that people will resign if they feel they do not have any other way out of the situation.

Besides feeling powerless, the participants reported a number of negative emotions (being unhappy, depressed, etc.) which impacted on their productivity at school.

These negative feelings are in line with Jacobs and De Wet (2015) who found that 19.3% of their participants were so badly affected that they sought professional help. Moayed et al. (2006) agree with these psychological reactions as do Blasé and Blasé (2007) whose participants suffered from depression (26.7%), headaches (57.4%) and insomnia (47.3%) which includes nightmares and violent dreams.

Although none of the participants mentioned substance abuse such as alcohol, smoking and other types of medication, it has been recorded (16.7 %) by not only Blasé and Blasé (2007), but also by Jacobs and De Wet (2015) as well as De Vos (2013). Both Jacobs and De Wet (2015), Matsela and Kirsten (2014) and De Vos (2013) also reported eating disorders (either too much or too little) due to workplace bullying.

Psychological reactions such as headaches and negative sleeping patterns (Blasé & Blasé, 2006 and 2007; Matsela & Kirsten 2014; De Wet, 2010a; De Vos, 2013) are in line with the study carried out by Jacobs and De Wet (2015). The aforementioned are in line with the participants' comments on how their sleeping patterns were disrupted.

Relationships at home were also affected. I1 was so depressed that she missed her friend's wedding. I3 mentioned that she suffered from anxiety. A spouse took out his frustration over how his wife was treated when he saw the bully at a matric dance.

I6 mentioned how grateful she is for being married to an ex-teacher. He has helped her in so many ways with valuable, sound advice, because of his knowledge of the schooling system.

Four of the participants admitted that their health was negatively affected and that they had to seek medical help. I3 also reported regularly getting migraines and being on anti-depressants. All these health issues are in line with Moayed et al. (2006). The effects included higher general stress, headaches, and eating disorders. De Wet (2014b) also included health or physical related consequences such as chronic diseases, cardiovascular diseases, burnout, or absences from work.

Hoel et al. (2011), as well as Barlett and Barlett (2011) commented that if teachers are regularly absent due to the effects mentioned above, there will be a decline in productivity.

Jacobs and De Wet's (2015) findings are in line with this as they reported that 30.8% of all victims feel less dedicated to their work and 30.8% find it difficult to concentrate, which may lead to mistakes and lower productivity.

5.2.4 Finding 4: Little is known about available support for victims, from schools

None of the participants is of the opinion that their schools supported them at the time of the bullying in any way. All of the participants mentioned how the bully was supported by another person in a higher post level (for example, a deputy-principal, principal or even a union) which made them powerless (discussed under second finding).

A good example was I3's experience. Her HOD was supported by the deputy-principal (her husband). Although more than one staff member complained, the HOD was not held accountable for what was going on in the department. The principal called an emergency meeting to discuss and vote on some of the issues that came to his attention. Although the HOD was voted out and had to leave by the end of that year, she returned the very next year. The principal was new at the school (may create uncertainties) and maybe did not stand up against the HOD and her husband (the deputy-head). Although all the participants indicated that the perpetrators were supported by another higher-ranked staff member, the researcher did not come

across other similar findings. Hodson's et al. (2006) second dimension that forms part of his theory may be the closest explanation. Hodson mentioned that if an element of chaos is present in a school, it may be the second contributing factor that makes workplace bullying flourish in an organisation.

If people are not held accountable for their actions (for example, bullying behaviour) they will carry on doing what they have always done even if it means hurting people. Principles of transparency and accountability need to be applied in practice. By increasing transparency, it will highlight wrongdoings like workplace bullying. If staff members are held accountable for their actions/ behaviour (good and bad) it would eliminate any uncertainty about what is allowed and what not. In doing so, professionalism and a feeling of coherence would lead to stability, and in return, limit the possibility of teachers being bullied, even if they are vulnerable or new at a school (Hodson et al., 2006).

Participant I6 mentioned that she is aware of her current school's policy and that an individual can approach the Human Resources Department (HR) if one believes one is the victim of workplace bullying. This is another way of contributing to the accountability and professionalism suggested by Hodson, a step in the right direction.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the semi-structured interviews that took a closer look at teachers' experiences regarding workplace bullying.

- a) It is recommended that teachers should be made aware of workplace bullying through staff development. Teachers need to know that it is a real problem with more than 90% of teachers having experienced workplace bullying (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013).
- b) Line managers should be made aware of how they interact and give feedback to both new or young (inexperienced) teachers and other staff members, in order to re-evaluate their interactions. People's behaviour or tone of voice can

sometimes be misinterpreted, and line managers need to know if people experience them as abrasive or mirroring bullying behaviour.

- c) It is recommended that line managers (including deputy-principals and principals) are on the lookout for situations that may make teachers feel vulnerable. This includes fulfilling new portfolios, the implementation of new procedures, and health related issues or things happening at home (death in the family). Being supportive during such times, may help teachers feel more supported.
- d) Schools should encourage a culture of open and honest communication in the staffroom amongst all teachers, across all departments and levels of seniority. This may help a teacher to be brave enough to speak out when they feel they have been bullied.
- e) It is further recommended that a channel of communication be created for teachers in order to try and address the situation, or to get assistance with issues when needed. Teachers will need a safe space and assistance if they are being bullied, and they need to know who to contact whenever they feel powerless.
- f) Teachers in higher post levels must observe the possible victim's behaviour for irregularities such as often being absent or regularly sick if uncertainty exists regarding possible workplace bullying taking place, and strive for professionalism at all times.
- g) Accountability and transparency need to be instilled as the way things are done at schools. In other words, all staff members need to be held accountable for their actions and transparent decision-making needs to be the norm.
- h) Professional development and mentoring must be an ongoing process to empower teachers, not only in their subject, but also on a more personal level

for self-empowerment and growth (to feel stronger and to know how to stand up for yourself or say 'no' when needed).

5.4 Delimitation of the study

Although the study was conducted at a group of private schools in Gauteng (operating under the same banner) the teachers reported on experiences throughout their careers at private and government schools, mostly in the Gauteng area. The study focused on the teachers' experiences of workplace bullying. All participants were selected based on their experience of the phenomenon.

5.5 Limitations

The study was limited to a group of private schools in the Gauteng province. The study was further limited to teachers who have experienced workplace bullying in the past and have either changed schools or resolved the issues. This proved to be a limitation, because some teachers, who have not resolved the issue of being bullied, volunteered to be a part of the study. Unfortunately, the data could not be included due to the request from the Executive Head of the group and the teachers were referred to the school psychologists for assistance.

Although there are approximately 600 staff members on campus, it was important for the researcher not to have had prior relationships/ friendships with any of the participants who represented different departments and different schools (primary schools and colleges) under the same brand of schools. This was also deemed to be a limitation, because four teacher friends of the researcher were willing to take part in the study due to their previous experiences of being bullied.

The study was conducted from a qualitative research paradigm and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data during the school holiday. In order to ensure anonymity, all interviews were conducted off school property, at a predetermined neutral venue. Other limitations included face-to-face interviews which may lead to judging a person and their body language on face value (for example when from a different culture etc.). The researcher had to guard against language being a limitation, because neither the researcher, nor some of the participants were English home language speakers.

5.6 Suggestions for future research

The following aspects need further investigation:

- A similar study may be carried out in other provinces of South Africa in order to limit generalisation. This would also serve as a mechanism to monitor the extent of workplace bullying in the different provinces.
- Further studies may be conducted at government and private schools in the same district or province to determine whether the nature of workplace bullying (who, when and how workplace bullying takes place) is comparable at the different schools.
- A qualitative study may be conducted to determine how many teachers are getting professional help (psychologists, anti-depressants etc.) to help them cope with work-related stress and workload, or workplace bullying.
- Further studies may also be conducted to statistically determine the contribution various role players (line-managers, senior management, parents or children) make to current statistics available on the percentage of teachers being bullied at work (school).
- Further research could explore the different channels available at schools to resolve issues such as workplace bullying or conflict management.
- In a similar manner, action research could be conducted at schools with reported workplace bullying cases to determine if professional development, accountability and open transparent decision-making combined with processes to follow when unhappy or being bullied, would make a difference in the experiences of and effects on victims of bullying.

5.7 Conclusion

Workplace bullying in education is a relatively new field of study. Teachers are seen as educated people who should not be bullied. Statistics from across the world are

proving otherwise with up to 90% of teachers in South Africa having experienced workplace bullying (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013).

Although the South African Constitution promotes core values such as freedom, equality and human dignity, teachers are often on the receiving end of bullying. Because teachers' human dignity is infringed upon, this study is important. The research focused on teachers' experiences of workplace bullying with the factors contributing to workplace bullying in mind. If the contributing factors can be determined, it may help school management to minimise situations that may serve as the breeding ground of bullying.

Due to the nature of experiences, the researcher used a qualitative phenomenology study with interviews to gather the data. The researcher worked from an interpretive stance in a deductive manner. From a theoretical framework, the researcher made use of the Hodson, Roscigno and Lopez (2006) study "Chaos and the Abuse of Power: Workplace Bullying in Organizational and Interactional Context". Semi-structured interview questions were used in six interviews with purposively selected teachers from a group of schools in Gauteng. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data after the interviews were scribed. Issues of credibility and trustworthiness, limitations, ethical considerations and informed consent were addressed in Chapter 3.

The researcher found that victims of workplace bullying experienced very similar behaviour in both act and content. Their understanding of what constitutes workplace bullying is similar. They experienced feelings of powerlessness and were affected in a negative way, either emotionally or physically due to stress-related illnesses. It was also determined that very little is known about support or help for victims of workplace bullying. The researcher recommended that teachers should be made aware of workplace bullying; line-managers should be made aware of how their behaviour (including tone of voice) can be seen as bullying, but that they should also be on the lookout for possible situations where teachers may feel vulnerable. Professionalism should be encouraged through accountability and transparency, with regular professional development opportunities at hand to support, empower and help grow teachers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in independent schools

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of teachers regarding workplace bullying and to try and identify factors that must be avoided in order to protect teachers against possible bullying situations. The study will not attempt to criticize or comment on these bullying cases. The researcher would like to gain a deeper understanding of how teachers deal with being bullied, and what schools can do to help teachers to restore their well-being once bullying has been experienced.

This study will specifically address bullying as an infringement of human dignity. Workplace bullying at schools mainly constitutes discrimination, harassment and abuse, therefore the broader protection of fundamental human dignity is appropriate. Teachers, who struggle to fulfill their daily tasks due to bullying, are not motivated or effective in the classroom.

SOURCES OF DATA TO BE COLLECTED

Data will be collected by conducting semi-structured interviews as part of a qualitative case study in order to attempt to understand teachers' experiences of workplace bullying.

ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

All participants are assured that their identity as well as their responses will be regarded as completely confidential at all times and will not be made available to any unauthorized user. The participation of individuals in this study is completely voluntary. Should any participants wish to discontinue their participation during the course of the research project, he or she will be free to do so at any stage, up to and including after the completion of the actual interview.

Precautions will be taken to ensure that no participant will be harmed in any way by this research or their participation therein. No participant or school will be named or identified in any way - should the researcher wish to quote from an interview transcript, a pseudonym will be allocated to that particular participant.

Every participant will be given an opportunity to verify the transcription of the discussion/ his or her interview.

DURATION OF INTERVIEW

This individual interview should take no longer than 2 hours (120 minutes). Please note that the discussion will be recorded and then transcribed. Every participant will be given the opportunity to validate the transcription as an accurate reflection of the discussion and of their individual part therein.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How would you define bullying of teachers in the workplace/ school?

What is the nature of teacher's being bullied in the workplace? (What do teachers experience as the nature of teacher bullying in the workplace?)

What are your experiences of bullying? When did it happen, over what time period (for how long)?

What was the relationship (in the school/ organisation) between the "bully" and you (the teacher being bullied)?

Does/How does the hierarchy or power relationship in a school contribute to the bullying?

Did the school's management structure contribute to the bullying?

How did the structure or situation within the school contribute to the bullying?

How does the school's current situation (in terms of organisation/ leadership structures) contribute to bullying taking/ not taking place?

How did you deal with being bullied? How did it make you feel?

What else did this do to you?

What do teachers experience as the effects (results) of workplace bullying?

How, if at all, is/are HR or the individual schools supporting victims of workplace bullying?

Appendix B: Participation Letter and Letter of Informed Consent



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

17 July 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY ON WORKPLACE BULLYING

I am currently enrolled for a Master's degree in Education, Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. Part of the requirements for the awarding of this degree is the successful completion of a significant research project in the field of education.

The title of my approved research study is *"Teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in secondary schools."* This study is therefore concerned with the investigation into the experiences of teachers of bullying in the workplace. Bullying in schools is an ever increasing international trend and little is known about teacher-targeted bullying. Workplace bullying (or workplace harassment) consist of any type of adverse and abusive conduct by one person or persons aimed at another, creating a hostile workplace environment, and intended to pressurize the person to submission.

It is therefore my great honour and privilege to be able to invite you as an individual to become a voluntary participant in this research project.

Please allow me the opportunity to explain the scope and responsibility of your participation, should you choose to participate. It is my intention to gather the information I require for this research project by interviewing teachers who have experienced workplace bullying - I have included here for your information a schedule of the interview questions I intending using to collect the data I require.

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

questions I intending using to collect the data I require.

Please understand that the decision for you to participate is entirely voluntary and that permission for this study has already been obtained from the Rector of the College. Please also be assured that the information obtained during the research study will be treated confidentiality, with not even the school having access to the raw data or the personal details of the participants. At no time will either you as an individual or your school be mentioned by name or indeed be allowed to be identified by any manner or means whatsoever in the research report.

At the end of the research study you will be provided with a copy of the research report containing both the findings of the study and recommendations. This research study presents a unique opportunity for you to get involved in the process of research aimed at exploring ways and means to improve relationships among educators and thus preventing bullying. If you decide to participate in this research study, kindly indicate this by completing the consent form at the end of this letter.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in service of education,



Mrs EH Mollema

Student researcher

082 820 2021



Dr. E. Eberlein

Supervisor

eric.eberlein@up.ac.za

LETTER of INFORMED CONSENT

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED
Teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in secondary schools**

I, _____, hereby voluntarily and willingly agree to participate as an individual in the above-mentioned study introduced and explained to me by Mrs EH Mollema, currently a student enrolled for an MEd degree in Management, Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria.

I further declare that I understand, as they were explained to me by the researcher, the aim, scope, purpose, possible consequences and benefits and methods of collecting information proposed by the researcher, as well as the means by which the researcher will attempt to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information he collects.

Full name

Date

Appendix C: IEB Letter of Consent



5 Anerley Road, Parktown, 2193
P O Box 875, Highlands North, 2037
2037 Telephone: +27 11 485 9700
Facsimile: +27 11 486 2654
Email: assess@ieb.co.za
Website: www.ieb.co.za

Ms E Mollema
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms Mollema

Request to conduct research

I have read through the brief description of the focus of the research you wish to undertake. It appears to me that it is focussed on bullying and does not deal with the curriculum and assessment. Hence while I am aware of the research project, I am of the opinion that the permission granted by the Rector of [REDACTED] is sufficient for the project to go ahead.

May I take this opportunity to wish you well in your studies.

Yours sincerely

Anne Oberholzer
CEO
2 May 2017

Appendix D: Editor's Certificate

1380 Andes Road, 39 Forest Gate
Berghron, 1709

from the desk of
**WYNANDT
VERSTER**

Date

June 29, 2018

To

Elizabeth H. Mollema

Project

Technical Editing for Master's
Degree dissertation

Dear Elizabeth,

This letter serves to confirm that a technical editing exercise was concluded on 29 June 2018 on your dissertation titled "Teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in independent schools" toward the achievement of your Master's Degree in Education from the University of Pretoria.

Technical editing was done on the entire document. The focus was specifically on formatting and packaging the document with necessary appendix records. Editing was done by Wynandt Verster, who has provided technical care to numerous Masters and Doctoral dissertations in South Africa. The technical editing exercise did not include language-, graphic-, or reference editing.

I would like to congratulate you on getting this far in your post graduate studies and wish you all the best with the approval process from here on.



Kind regards,
Wynandt Verster

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

11 January 2019

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I have completed the language editing of the dissertation **Teachers' experiences of workplace bullying in independent schools** by Elizabeth Hendrina Mollema submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Educationis in Education Leadership in the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria

Yours faithfully

Ailsa Williams