BYSTANDERS' EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL BULLYING FOLLOWING A SELF-DEBASING COGNITIVE DISTORTION RESTRUCTURING INTERVENTION

BY

SEGUN EMMANUEL ADEWOYE

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Department of Educational Psychology

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

Promoter

Dr Annelize du Plessis

PRETORIA

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Adewoye Segun Emmanuel (student number 14212634) hereby declare that this thesis, Bystanders' experiences of school bullying following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention, is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree at the University of Pretoria, Department of Educational Psychology, is my own original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. All sources consulted or quoted in this research paper were indicated and acknowledged in the list of references.

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Ms Bronwynne Swarts

Dr Annelize du Plessis

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my loving parents. Thanks for inspiring me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

There is evidence from the literature that the negative emotions and behaviours that bystanders expressed in reactions to witnessing bullying could have stemmed from self-debasing cognitive distortions and errors in thinking patterns which included personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction. For this reason, the purpose of this qualitative descriptive-exploratory study was to explore and describe 10 early adolescent bystanders' experiences of school bullying following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention. Appraisal and cognitive theory were adopted as the overarching theoretical framework. This is because both theories demonstrated how individual thinking patterns could play a primary and significant role in the development and maintenance of emotional and behavioural responses to events witnessed or experienced. A descriptive-exploratory research design was used because it best suited the purpose of the study. The philosophical assumption underpinning this study emanated from an interpretivism paradigm which is a paradigm concerned with understanding the world from the perspective of people's experiences thereof. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 participants who were within the age range of 11 to 13 years for the study. Individual interviews were used as formal data collection strategies while a reflective research journal and audio recordings were used as additional data collection methods. The inductive thematic data analysis process was followed to analyse all data collected.

The data was collected and analysed in two stages. The findings of this study, from the pre-intervention phase, indicated that personalisation evoked self-blame and feelings of guilt; catastrophising amplified anxiety and fear; overgeneralisation induced and exacerbated a negative perception of school safety and selective abstraction led to indirect co-victimisation. The findings that emerged at the first stage informed the common concepts that were addressed in the intervention. The findings of this study from the post-intervention phase revealed specifically that the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention modified bystanders' experiences of school bullying. There were observable reduction in bystanders' negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying as a result of learning to challenge the validity and reality of distortions in their thinking patterns. Therefore, it is recommended that school counsellors and educational psychologists

should provide adequate support to victims of bullying by equipping them with cognitive restructuring skills to root out the source of bias in their thought patterns.

Key concepts: Bullying, bystanders, self-debasing, cognitive distortions, thinking patterns, emotional and behavioural reactions, bystanders' experiences.

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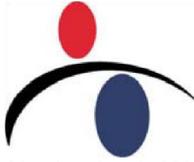
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Anna M de Wet

BA (Afrikaans, English, Classical Languages) (Cum Laude), University of Pretoria.
BA Hons ((Latin) (Cum Laude), University of Pretoria.
BA Hons (Psychology) University of Pretoria.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBT	Cognitive behavioural therapy
CR	Conditioned response
UCR	Unconditioned response
UCS	Unconditioned stimulus
SDCDRI	Self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention
SAHRC	South African human right commission
REBT	Rational emotive behaviour therapy
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
ASC	Attachment, self- regulation and competency

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1   INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Bullying at school is an aggressive behaviour considered to be destructive and can be interpreted as a symptom of an unhealthy school climate (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). The school environment is expected to be a safe place where efficient learning and teaching for learners can take place (Ebersöhn & Mampane, 2008). However, this may not be the case for learners who are emotionally and physically troubled as a result of constant thoughts and fear of being the next victim of bullying in school (De Wet, 2007; Sacco & Nakhaie, 2007).

South African school learners have reported the prevalence of bullying within South African schools (Liang, Flisher, & Lombard, 2007; Tustin, Zulu & Basson, 2014). The Youth Research Unit at the University of South Africa reported that in 2012, 34.4% of learners in schools sampled in Gauteng confirmed that they have been victims of bullying and 67.7% of participants reported that bullying had increased in the past two years preceding the report (Lass & Boezaart, 2014). The increasing rate of bullying cases in South African schools could be explained as occurring in response to the many cases of violent acts in South African communities which the in-school adolescents are conversant with and which are mimicked in school contexts (Maree, 2005; Timm & Eskell-Blokland, 2011).

The prevalence of school bullying is not a concern unique to South Africa; it is rather considered a worldwide phenomenon (Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004). For instance, a survey conducted in 66 countries and regions by Due and Holstein (2008) indicated that on average, 31% of learners had witnessed or been a victim of bullying at schools. Similarly, another survey revealed that worldwide, nearly 50% of school learners were involved in school bullying either as perpetrators, direct victims or bystanders (Swart & Bredekamp, 2009).

A preliminary observation revealed that bullying has continually been characterised as a group process that comprises not only the bullies and the victims but also a group of observers or onlookers who are classified as bystanders (Craig, Pepler &

Blais, 2007; Salmivalli, 2010; Twemlow, Fonagy & Sacco 2004). Oh and Hazler (2009) reported that bystanders constitute the majority of participants in a bullying situation.

Morrison (2006) stated that mere knowledge of or witnessing bullying could evoke negative reactions such as feelings of guilt, worry, fear, sadness or self-consciousness. Research indicated that bystanders react to witnessing bullying incidents with negative emotions and common symptoms of secondary trauma such as intrusive thoughts, sadness, emotional exhaustion, shame, anger, fear, anxiety, disbelief, numbing, upset, mood fluctuations, shock, outburst, worry and withdrawal (Batsche & Porter, 2006; Ortega, Elipe, Mora-Merch'an, Calmaestra & Vega, 2009). These reactions consequently affect bystanders' emotional and psychological well-being (American Psychological Association, 2009; Carney, 2008; Midgett & Doumas, 2019; Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Ttofi & Farington, 2011).

Bystanders of school bullying in schools in South Africa were reported to be at an increased risk of experiencing negative emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying (Boyes, Bowes, Cluver, Ward & Badcock 2014). Greeff and Grobler (2008) reported that 70% of learners in Grade 4 to 7 within South African schools, who experienced or witnessed bullying in school, exhibit symptoms of trauma.

One explanation for the negative responses associated with witnessing bullying is that bullying bystanders may encounter cognitive dissonance in a situation whereby the bystanders believe and intend to intervene on behalf of the victim but are unable to defend the victim as a result of fear of becoming the next victim, (Midgett & Doumas, 2019). The discrepancy between bystanders' willingness to intervene and their inability to do so could induce negative emotional and behavioural reactions of bystanders to witnessing bullying (Rivers, Poteat, Noret & Ashurst 2009).

Salmivalli (2014), as well as Twemlow and Sacco (2013), corroborated this explanation given for the negative responses associated with witnessing bullying by arguing that bystanders of bullying may be conscious of the fact that bullying is wrong and they may even like to intervene on behalf of the victim. At the same time, bystanders are also conscious of their own safety and vulnerability and thus, may

become fearful to intervene. As a result, bystanders can experience feelings of guilt and self-blame for not intervening for the victims or not knowing what to do in such instances (Salmivalli, 2010; Twemlow & Sacco, 2013).

Furthermore, Rivers et al. (2009) indicated that fear and thoughts of subsequent, direct victimisation might further contribute to bystanders' negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. The fear of being the next victim may also negatively influence bystanders' perceptions of school safety (Midgett, Moody, Rilley & Lyter 2017; Rivers et al., 2009). After the bullying incident is over, intrusive thoughts and images in the minds of the bystanders may cause bystanders to identify with the pain and suffering of the victim which could lead to co-victimisation or re-victimisation for bystanders (Rivers et al., 2009).

Rivers et al. (2009) alongside Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara and Kermic (2005) concurred with the viewpoint that witnessing bullying has the potential to cause emotional and psychological implications for bystanders. In addition, they asserted that it is the anxiety caused by the patterns of thoughts and fear of subsequent, direct victimisation that contributes to bystanders' emotional insecurity and uncertainty and not mere witnessing bullying *per se*.

Parallel views were echoed by Milsom & Gallo (2006) that it is the feelings of guilt and self-blame bystanders experience for their inaction while witnessing bullying and the resulting feelings of insecurity that account for bystanders internalising behaviours and negative emotional reactions to witnessing bullying. That is to say that cognition is deemed to be a determinant factor in individual behavioural and emotional reactions to events.

In view of the substantial agreement on the impact of cognition in behavioural and emotional responses to occurrences, it appears that developing negative behavioural and emotional responses to situations are also resulting from the way an individual perceives, interprets and appraises an event (Beck, 2011, Dobson & Dobson, 2016). In that case, individuals may witness or experience the same traumatic incident such as bullying, but their emotional and behavioural reactions may differ based on thinking patterns that precede the interpretation of the event (Barriga & Morrison, 2010). That is to say, negative emotional and behavioural reactions to an event

might be produced and maintained by irrational beliefs and negative thinking patterns also known as self-debasing cognitive distortions (Clark & Beck, 2010).

A self-debasing cognitive distortion is defined as unhelpful thoughts that can debase an individual in a direct or indirect way, which in turn can evoke or strengthen negative emotional and behavioural responses to events (Barriga, Hawkins, & Camelia 2008). Self-debasing cognitive distortion influences a person's interpretation and appraisal of events and increases the likelihood of negative emotional and behavioural responses to events (Akkoyunlu & Turkcapar, 2012).

A self-debasing cognitive distortion can lead to preoccupation with negative thoughts and tension that do not necessarily conform to reality and that can create a maladaptive belief system that serves as a framework for interpreting and understanding events (Barriga & Morrison, 2010; Esbensen & Benson, 2007). Negative thinking patterns and negative appraisal of events could induce psychological disturbances and negative behavioural and emotional reactions to events (Clark, 2014).

Negative thoughts that could induce bystanders negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witness bullying and which could also influence bystanders' negative perception of school safety, stemming from certain errors in cognitive patterns, including personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction (Beck, 2011; Fenel, Benneth & Westbook, 2004). In other words, self-debasing cognitive distortion includes personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction.

Personalisation is a form of emotional reasoning that involves taking excessive responsibility and self-blame for the occurrence of an unpleasant event, which leads to feelings of guilt and depression (Beck, 2011). Personalisation is a manifestation of self-blame (Wendland, 2004) and victims with self-blaming tendencies have been reported to be vulnerable to emotional and behavioural problems (Graham, 2006). Bystanders who are prone to personalisation may ascribe responsibility to themselves for the consequences of bullying on victims as a result of their inability to intervene or stop the bullying.

For instance, Batsche and Porter (2006) argue that a bullying bystander may take excessive responsibility for the bullying, leading to self-blame for not intervening on behalf of the direct victim. Meanwhile, research suggested that the low likelihood of bystanders intervening in a bullying event is generally attributed to a factor called bystander effect and not necessarily the fault of bystanders (Salmivalli, 2010).

The bystander effect refers to a situation where there is a lack of willingness on the part of bystanders to intervene on behalf of direct victims as a result of the social influence that is contingent on the presence of others (Espelage & Holt, 2007; Salmivalli, 2010). As a result of personalisation leading to cognitive error, Orpinas and Horne (2006) argue that bystanders should be helped to understand the link between thoughts, emotions, and behaviour and those strategies that directly modify such cognitive error should be used in any intervention.

Another self-debasing cognitive distortion which manifests in persons who experience negative emotional and behavioural responses to events is catastrophising (Beck, 2011; Dobson & Dobson, 2016). Catastrophising entails exaggerating the potential or real consequences of an event, causing the victim to anticipate more difficulties and become more fearful (Kottler & Shepard, 2008). Catastrophising is a form of cognitive distortion that amplifies anxiety, thereby intensifying the severity of negative emotional and behavioural responses a victim experienced.

An individual who engages in catastrophising always expects the worst to happen regardless of the situation. Witnessing peer victimisation can cause bystanders to fear that they might become the next victim, thus leading to anticipating bullying of themselves (Rivers et al., 2009). However, de-catastrophising techniques can help bystanders realise that the probability of a worst-case scenario eventuating might be generally low (Dobson & Dobson, 2016; Wenzel, Dobson & Hays, 2016).

Over-generalisation is another type of self-debasing cognitive distortion which might contribute to problematic emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing a traumatic event (Dozois 2007; Lacoviello, Alloy, Abramson, Whitehouse & Hogan 2006). Overgeneralisation is described as making up a general rule based on a negative interpretation of one or a few incidents or events (Beck, 2011; Wenzel et

al., 2016). Over-generalisation occurs when a person makes a general and overarching statement about an event or situation and draws a conclusion about all situations based on his or her view on one or a few trivial incidents (Bernard, 2009; Froggart, 2006; Wendland, 2004).

Bystanders may perceive their inability to stop or intervene in bullying as incompetence, and they then may begin to believe that their efforts to affect the outcomes of other situations will be futile as well (Roth, Coles & Heimberg, 2002). Feelings of incompetence may affect the self-esteem of bystander negatively and lead to a greater likelihood of anxiety (Smokowski & Halland, 2005).

Selective abstraction is another self-debasing distorted thought that can feed on negative emotions. Selective abstraction is the tendency to focus on the negative details of an event while making an evaluation of that event (Donely, 2014). Selective abstraction occurs when a person focuses on one particular negative aspect of an event and makes a biased judgement without considering the larger context (Freeman, Pretzer, Fleming & 2004). Bystanders who are prone to selective abstraction may be more likely to view the bullying they witness as a serious threat to their wellbeing and, as a consequence, respond with negative emotions. Selective abstraction can, therefore, contribute to psychological re-victimisation and indirect co-victimisation for bystanders (Rivers et al., 2009).

Self-debasing cognitive distortions can thus evoke and strengthen the reoccurrence of symptoms of psychological disturbances in bystanders (Dozois, 2007; Hunter, Boyle & Warden, 2006). In other words, irrational beliefs can play a major role in the evolution and maintenance of maladaptive psychophysiological responses to events (Dobson & Dobson, 2016). To this end, the ability to identify and restructure negative or faulty thinking patterns can help bystanders discard negative automatic thoughts, thereby leading to positive change in emotional and behavioural expression of bystander to witnessing bullying (Covin, Dozois & Seeds, 2011).

Bystanders could, therefore, in my view, be taught how to recognise, challenge, and reappraise negative and unhelpful thoughts and feelings related to their experiences (Covin et al., 2011; De Oliveira, 2012). Cognitive behaviour therapy can be instrumental in restructuring bystanders' self-debasing cognitive distortions.

Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) is a therapeutic intervention that is known to be effective in reducing negative emotional and behavioural responses of victims that witness similar traumatic events (Bernal, Jiménez-Chafey & Domenech, 2009; Butler, Chapman, Forman & Beck, 2006; Nicolas, Arntz, Hirsch & Schmiedigen, 2009). The goal of CBT is to facilitate change in distorted cognition through a process of reappraisal also known as cognitive restructuring (Nebolsine, 2012).

Cognitive restructuring is a therapeutic technique that can be used to recognise, challenge, and change unhelpful thoughts and feelings that can exacerbate maladaptive emotional and behavioural responses to events (Clark & Beck, 2010; Dobson & Dozois, 2010; Hollon & Dimidjian, 2009). Cognitive restructuring as defined by Clark (2014, p. 2) is "structured, goal-directed and collaborative intervention strategies that focus on the exploration, evaluation and substitution of the maladaptive thoughts, appraisals and beliefs that maintain psychological disturbance". Cognitive restructuring could also be described as a technique in cognitive behaviour therapy designed to address negative or faulty thinking commonly associated with psychological disorders (Clark & Beck, 2010).

While empirical research suggested that bystanders express negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying which significantly affect bystanders psychological wellbeing (Carney, 2008; Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Kelly et al., 2010; Moore, Norman, Suetani, Thomas, Sly & Scott, 2017; Ttofi & Farington, 2011), the studying of strategies to prevent or decrease the likelihood of such negative reactions to witnessing bullying at school has remained limited (Farrington, Gaffney, Losel, & Ttofi, 2017; Janosz, Archambault, Pagani, Alexandre & Bowen 2008; Rivers et al., 2009; Thomson, Robertson, Curtis, & Frick, 2013).

In addition, I have found that most intervention studies on victims of bullies focused primarily on strategies that are reactive in nature and not proactive. Reactive strategies only equip the victims with skills to cope or decrease the negative effect of experiencing or witnessing bullying and not to prevent the negative reactions from occurring. For instance, solution-focused therapy as a reactive strategy to decrease the likelihood of negative responses to witnessing or experiencing bullying at school

was proposed in previous studies (Hampel, Manhal & Hayer, 2009; Hopson & Kim, 2008; Owens, Skrzypie & Wadham, 2014).

Solution-focused therapy is a strength-based strategy to respond appropriately to the consequences of witnessing bullying. The goal of the solution-focused therapy is, therefore, to ensure that bystanders and victims of bullying acquire new coping skills and resources in response to the effect of witnessing bullying (Hopson & Kim, 2008). Roberts (2000) noted that the therapy has the potential to enable bystanders and learners who have been bullied into focussing on enhancing coping skills which can reduce anxiety and help stabilise bystanders' psychological functioning.

Another reactive intervention strategy that has been used to possibly mediate the effect of witnessing bullying on bystanders is the Attachment, Self-regulation and Competency treatment framework (ASC) (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010). ASC is a component-based model of intervention strategies for victims of bullying. ASC strategy outlines three areas of intervention which are attachment, self-regulation, and competency. The initial stage focuses on securing the bond between the parent or caregiver and the bystander or victim of bullying by enhancing the supports and resources available to the caregiver so that he or she can optimally support the victim of bullying or bystander through the use of psycho-education. The self-regulation component involves identifying and connecting emotions to physical sensations and linking feelings to both internal and external factors. The third component of ASC is building competency. Building competency involves developing a sense of self that includes a belief that one has the ability to make an impact on the world (Blaustein & Kinniburg, 2010).

It appears that the reactive intervention strategies mentioned above focused primarily on empowering bystanders to develop a repertoire of skills designed to cope with the problematic situations and not to mitigate or interrupt the continuity of the cognitive process that evokes or strengthens such problematic situations. Generally, these strategies could be considered less effective responses to victimisation (Edledge et al., 2010) as the regularity and the negative effect of experiencing or witnessing bullying persist (Jacobs & De wet, 2014; Mishna, 2008).

Although, the few strategies to decrease the likelihood of negative emotional and behavioural reactions of bystanders to witnessing bullying have been studied and reported (Janson & Hazler, 2004; Kanetsuna, Smith & Morita, 2006; Rivers et al., 2009), a proactive strategy such as correcting self-debasing cognitive distortion, which could probably modify bystanders thinking patterns and negative emotional and behavioural reactions has received less attention (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim & Sadek, 2010; Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012; Owens, Skrzypie & Wadham, 2014).

Hui, Tsang and Law (2011) recommended that a proactive approach as a measure to prevent negative reactions associated with witnessing bullying should focus on equipping victims with skills to root out the source of bias in their thought patterns which predispose the bystanders to negative reactions. In line with this, I am of the opinion that teaching bystanders to challenge automatic and negative thought patterns through the process of cognitive restructuring could be an effective proactive approach or strategy to prevent or reduce the negative emotions and behaviours that could emanate from witnessing bullying in school (Farrington et al., 2017; Sthembile, 2013).

Beck (2011) argued that a link exists between how an individual thinks, perceives and interprets an event and emotional reactions to such events. That is to say that emotions and behaviour often change following the reappraisal or reinterpretation of events (Baghurst & Kelley, 2014; Ellis, 2009). Despite the theoretical support for the significant influence that individual cognition has in the onset and maintenance of behavioural and emotional reactions to victimisation (Clark & Beck, 2010; Covin, et al., 2011), little research has been done on such proactive cognitive strategy to mitigate or interrupt the continuity of negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying in schools (Janosz et al., 2008; Rivers et al., 2009; Sthembile, 2013; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). I found this to be a gap which necessitates further investigation.

Therefore, I am of the opinion that intervention and treatment could be directed toward enhancing proactive strategies such as identifying, modifying and restructuring certain self-debasing cognitive distortions which are assumed to contribute to bystanders' negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing

bullying with a view to enhancing bystanders' psychological functioning. In line with this, the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention utilised in my study involved identifying participants' cognitive distortions, challenging the truthfulness of their negative thinking patterns through the use of some cognitive restructuring techniques such as Socratic questioning and helping the participants develop more rational ways of processing information.

Despite large numbers of published articles on the prevalence of bullying and its adverse effects on South African school learners (Boyes et al., 2014; Greeff & Grobler, 2008; Timm & Eskell-Blokland, 2011; Townsend, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard & King 2008), the approaches South African schools have adopted to buffer the effect of victimisation have yielded little positive outcome (Boyes et al., 2014). Although some reactive strategies, such as solution-focused therapy, have been advanced as a means of reducing the effect of experiencing or witnessing bullying (Boyes et al.,2014; Cluver, Bowes & Gardner, 2010), research has continue to indicate reported negative emotional and behavioural reactions of bystanders to witnessing bullying (Midgett & Doumas, 2019).

Therefore, there is a need to consider alternative approaches or strategies that could be used to modify bystanders' experiences of bullying in school, particularly their thinking patterns as well as their emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying in schools (Doumas, Midget & Watts, 2019; Farrington et al., 2017; Janson, Hazler, Carney & Oh, 2009). The present study aimed to address this observed gap in the literature by shifting attention to the cognitive process that has a significant impact on the onset and maintenance of bystanders' behavioural and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim & Sadek, 2010; Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012; Owens, Skrzypie & Wadham, 2014). The study purported to explore the possibility of correcting self-debasing cognitive distortions as an alternate approach of responding to the reported negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying in schools.

The motive of advancing the use of Self-debasing Cognitive Distortion Restructuring (SDCDR) as a strategy for mitigating bystanders' negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying emerged from the core premise of

Cognitive and Appraisal theory. Both theories emphasise the fact that individual thinking patterns play an important part in the emergence of behavioural and emotional reactions to life occurrences (Clark & Beck, 2010).

The rationale for my study developed after I had established that the current body of research suggested that the effect of bullying had far-reaching negative consequences on bystanders as well. Midgets and Doumas (2019) alongside Farrington et al., (2017), made it clear that witnessing bullying could also negatively impact bystanders' psychological well-being and create a climate of pervasive fear among bystanders, inhibiting their ability to concentrate on their academics tasks in school.

Thereafter, I decided to engage in an informal way with some learners who had a re-occurring experience of witnessing bullying in school. During the informal conversations, most learners indicated that bullying was actually prevalent in their school and as bystanders, they felt uncertain and insecure as a result of the thoughts and fear of being the next victim. In addition, a range of maladaptive emotional display and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying were identified and noted.

Based on my encounter with the learners, I started enquiring about various existing strategies to effectively respond to the adverse effect of witnessing bullying and reduce bystanders' likelihood of experiencing negative emotional and behavioural responses. As mentioned earlier, I realised, firstly, that little attention has been given to the contributory impact of self-debasing cognitive distortion in the emerging process of negative emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying while designing strategies to help victims of bullying in school (Ann & Sherin, 2016; Sthembile, 2013).

The rationale for my study was further based on the fact that the efficacy of such cognitive approaches in reducing or even preventing negative emotional and behavioural responses among victims of other samples in other contexts has been reported (Roman et al., 2012). Consequently, I posited that it is possible that self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring might have potential as a strategy for affecting bystanders thinking patterns and interrupting the circle of negative emotions and behaviours that bystanders express in reactions to witnessing bullying in school.

It is, therefore, important to ascertain whether the efficacy of cognitive approaches in changing the thinking patterns and reducing or preventing negative emotional and behavioural responses to events, could be applicable to culturally diverse samples, specifically, with learners in the age group bracket of 11 to 13 years. This is due to the fact that a high rate of bullying is reported among early adolescents of this age group (Greeff & Grobler, 2008).

In addition, Yerger and Gehret (2011) stated that an intervention to modify the thinking patterns, emotions and behaviour directed at late childhood or early adolescents' learners have a more lasting impact than those aimed at late adolescents or adults. This may be because early adolescence is considered as formative years and patterns of appraisal and interpreting events acquired during this stage could be consolidated upon during late adolescence and sometimes during adulthood (Kjeldsen et al., 2016). This, again, strengthens the rationale for directing the intervention in this study towards Grade 6 and 7 learners in the age bracket of 11 to 13 years.

1.2   STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE

The three central purposes of research, according to Babbie and Mouton (2010), are exploration, description and explanation. Exploratory research is utilised if the aim of a research study is to describe, explore and document a phenomenon in its natural settings (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The main purpose of this descriptive exploratory qualitative research study was to qualitatively explore and describe 10 early adolescent experiences of school bullying as bystanders before and after a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This descriptive-exploratory research was informed by the primary research question given below:

> *How do early adolescents experience school bullying as bystanders following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention?*

The secondary research questions were:

- What are bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?

- How can self-debasing cognitive distortions contribute to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?

- How can cognitive restructuring as a cognitive behavioural therapy technique possibly change bystanders thinking patterns?

- How can the compilation of a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention assist in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying?

- How can self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring possibly change bystanders behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?

1.4   WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

The SDCDRI was designed to purposely assist in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying and to probably restructure bystanders' self-debasing cognitive distortion with a view of possibly changing, firstly, bystanders' thinking patterns and secondly, preventing or reducing bystanders negative emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying. Based on the literature, the assumption was that by influencing bystanders' maladaptive cognition, bystanders may realise the irrationality in their thought patterns and may devise rational alternatives to these patterns, thus reducing the likelihood of experiencing negative emotional and behavioural reactions if they witness similar traumatic events in future. Specifically, the assumptions in this study were that:

- Cognition is assumed to be a determinant factor in individual emotional and behavioural reactions to events.

- Self-debasing cognitive distortions may be present, which influence bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying.

- Guiding bystanders to realise the errors and irrationality in their thinking patterns while reacting to the bullying they witness, may modify bystanders' feelings, emotions and behaviours and subsequently prevent or reduce negative emotional and behavioural responses which could result from witnessing traumatic events such as bullying.

1.5   CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The main concepts utilised in this study were described below:

1.5.1   School bullying

For the purpose of this study, school bullying is described as any form of intimidation, physical or verbal aggression that is directed towards a victim which is aimed at causing fear, distress or pain to such a victim within a school context (Farrington & Ttofi, 2011). The three main components of the definition are the intention to cause pain or harm to another person, inequality of power and tendency of the aggressive behaviour to re-occur over a period of time (Salmivalli, 2010). Orpinas and Horne (2006) maintain that bullies repeatedly and intentionally use aggression towards others with less power. School bullying involves a group of participants that is not limited to the bullies or direct victims alone but also includes a group of observers or onlookers classified as bystanders (Craig, Pepler, & Blais 2007; Salmivalli, 2010).

1.5.2   Bystanders of school bullying

Bystanders of school bullying are groups of individuals who are not involved in bullying situations as either the perpetrators or the direct victims but who are present at the scene of the bullying as observers or witnesses (Oh & Hazler, 2009; Salmivalli, 2010). Bystanders of school bullying may constitute the majority of those present in a bullying situation (Rivers et al., 2009). The thought and fear of subsequent direct victimisation can lead bystanders to experience high levels of negative emotional and behavioural reactions such as frustrations, anger, reduced self-esteem, reduced school attendance, sensitivity, distress, and feelings of guilt (Rivers et al., 2009). The bystanders in this study were young adolescents between the age of 11 and 13 years and in Grade 6 and 7.

1.5.3   Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are irrational and negative thinking influencing a person's interpretation and appraisal of events that may increase the likelihood of maladaptive emotions and behaviour (Clark & Beck, 2010). Negative thoughts are believed to precede most emotional and behavioural disorders (David & Szentagotai, 2006).

Distorted thoughts have a significant influence in the cause, precipitation and sustenance of negative behavioural and emotional reactions to events (Clark, 2014; Dobson & Dobson, 2016).

1.5.4 Self-debasing cognitive distortions

Self-debasing cognitive distortions are unhelpful thoughts such as personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction which inform a wide variety of internalising disorders which include anxiety, depression and low self-esteem among others (Barriga et al., 2008).

1.5.5 Cognitive behaviour therapy

Cognitive behaviour therapy is a psychotherapeutic intervention for modifying distorted thoughts and inaccurate beliefs. Cognitive behavioural therapy utilises cognitive and behavioural strategies to effect modification in thought patterns. The modification process could be facilitated through a cognitive restructuring intervention (Clark, 2014).

1.5.6 Cognitive restructuring

Cognitive restructuring is a psychotherapeutic process designed to identify and challenge irrational thoughts which could inform negative emotional and behavioural responses to events such as guilt, anxiety, depression, chronic fatigue, shame, insecurity, sadness, detachment, anger, emotional exhaustion, poor concentration, and fearfulness (Dobson & Dozois, 2010; Hollon & Dimidjian, 2009). Engaging a person in a psychotherapeutic process such as cognitive restructuring often changes negative cognitions to more realistic, more rational and more balanced thinking resulting in greater individual functionality and adaptability (Dobson & Dobson, 2016).

1.5.7 Self-debasing Cognitive Distortion Restructuring Intervention (SDCDRI)

For reasons explained earlier, a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention (SDCDRI) is an intervention designed by me and implemented by a registered educational psychologist. The intervention was developed to assist me capture bystanders' experiences of school bullying following participation in the

SDCDRI. The SDCDRI in this study was presented in 11 sessions. Each session lasted for 60 minutes.

1.5.8 Early adolescent

Early adolescence is the age period between 11 and 13 years in which physical, psychosocial and intellectual development occurs. Caskey and Anfara (2007) described intellectual development in an early adolescent as the changing ability to comprehend, learn, adapt and apply new ways of processing information. Early adolescence is regarded as a period of time during which children experience a significant change in the way they perceive and view the world. This involves moving away from concrete thinking to more abstract and logical thinking.

1.6 UNDERLYING THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

1.6.1 Introduction

A theoretical framework provides lenses through which research can be conducted and a particular phenomenon is explained (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). With reference to Kerlinger (1973, p. 73) "A theory is a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena." In line with this, a theory is thus an essential tool for driving the process of research and providing a structure for understanding the phenomenon under study (Inglis & Maclean, 2005; Kawulich, 2009).

In this study, I adopted both appraisal and cognitive theories as overarching theoretical frameworks. The reason was that both theories demonstrated how individual thinking patterns could act as an influencer of divergence in emotional and behavioural responses to events witnessed or experienced. Having established that both theories have linking qualities, I integrated the two theories in my conceptual framework for understanding bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. However, only a brief review of these theories will be presented in the section to follow.

1.6.2 Cognitive Theory

The fundamental principle of cognitive theory is that individual cognitive processes such as perception, interpretation, and assessment of an event play a determining role in the emanation and sustenance of behavioural and emotional responses to events (Dozois & Beck, 2008). The cognitive theory emphasises that unhelpful thoughts or negative thinking patterns and feelings can exacerbate maladaptive emotional and behavioural responses to events (Clark & Beck, 2010; Dobson & Dozois, 2010; Hollon & Dimidjian, 2009). Clark and Beck (2010) asserted that the fundamental assumption of cognitive theory is that the main determinant of one's emotions and behaviour in response to a stressful event, lies in cognitive procedures in the form of meaning, assessment, judgments and assumptions one attaches to such an event. This can either promote or hamper the adaptation process.

That is to say, in accordance with the cognitive theory, human beings are directly responsible for generating their own emotions. The meaning one ascribes to an event after cognitive appraisal of the event, and not the event itself, determines one's emotional and behavioural response. This is because cognitively appraising an event makes it possible to construct and attach relational meaning to the event, and such meaning determines a person's emotions and behaviour (Lazarus, 2006). This study, therefore, explored the specific appraisals that the participants in the study attached to the bullying events that they had witnessed.

The cognitive appraisal of an event involves assessing a situation to determine the severity of the threat it may pose. A person may make a positive cognitive appraisal and ignore the situation if he or she appraises the situation as posing little or no threat (Beck, 2011). Conversely, a person may make a stressful or negative cognitive appraisal after evaluating a situation, if he or she considers it to be stressful, harmful and threatening to his or her wellbeing. Hunter et al. (2006) added that negative cognitive appraisal of a stressful situation (i.e. presumed higher level of threat) and perceived low self-competence could influence the choice of a maladaptive response to the event or situation.

However, cognitive theory also holds that negative cognition can be intentionally targeted and modified (Squires & Caddick, 2012). Engaging a client in a

psychotherapy process such as cognitive restructuring can facilitate the change of negative cognitions into more rational, realistic, and balanced thinking, leading to improved psychological functionality (Dobson & Dobson, 2016).

1.6.3 Appraisal theory

In this study, appraisal theory was also considered as a theoretical framework for comprehending variations in behavioural and emotional reactions to events. The appraisal theory proposed by Lazarus (1999) could also offer an explanation as to how varying emotions may emanate from individuals who experience or witness the same event. The appraisal theory complements the cognitive theory because it is also based on the premise that emotions are informed by ones' judgement, interpretation and evaluations of the meaning that is attached to an event (Roseman & Smith, 2001). The implication is that emotion is not self-starting but rather could be generated based on an individual's perception and interpretation of events. Appraisal theory attaches significant importance to the decisive role of cognition in elicitation, differentiation and intensity of emotions (Smith & Kirby, 2001).

The assumption of appraisal theory is that ones' emotion could be modified as long as one can re-appraise or re-evaluate the interpretation assigned to an event. By doing so, the response to an event could change because the interconnection between thoughts- feelings and behaviour is altered. The new interpretation, thoughts, feelings and actions could lead to a differentiation of emotions (Smith & Kirby, 2001).

Lazarus (1999) had earlier stated that emotions are determined by the cognitive process, specifically evaluations and judgement of an eliciting stimulus. He proposed that emotions will change when the contents of the judgement about a stimulus change. Proponents of appraisal theory are of the opinion that thoughts and emotions are interwoven, in other words, it is believed that emotions emanate from individuals' view and interpretation of their experiences (Aronson, 2005).

According to Lazarus (1999), one important factor that can inform appraisal of a situation is a person's perception of accountability for the occurrence of an event. Lazarus (1999) stated that a person could attribute the causality of an event to himself or herself or to an external factor. In situations whereby an individual holds

himself or herself responsible for the occurrence of a situation, such an individual might assume self-blame. On the other hand, if an individual views the occurrence of a situation as due to circumstances, such a person could attribute blame to external factors. This implies that the perception of an individual with regards to the causality of an event could give a pointer to the emotions that will be elicited after experiencing an event (Smith & Haynes, 1993).

In summary, the appraisal theory proposes that a researcher could evaluate an individual's interpretation of an event with a view to predicting the emotional experiences of such an individual depending on his on her underlying views of the event (Smith & Haynes, 1993). For instance, fear and anxiety may come when an individual evaluates a situation as stressful and perceives feelings of vulnerability (Lazarus, 1999).

1.7 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES

1.7.1 Philosophical paradigm: Interpretivism

A paradigm is a philosophical assumption that guides a researcher's way of viewing reality (Mertens, 2012). A paradigm influences a researcher's ontological and epistemological perspectives. The philosophical paradigm which a researcher positions him or herself in is informed by his or her ontological, epistemological and methodological stance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Wahyuni, 2012). The ontological and epistemological perspectives of a researcher determine the paradigm within which a research study falls (Bryman, 2015; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

The philosophical assumption underpinning my study emanated from an interpretivism paradigm, which is a paradigm with the aim of understanding the world from the perspective of people's experiences thereof (Morgan & Pretorious, 2013; Sefotho, 2015). Interpretive researchers base their judgments of a phenomenon on the participants' views of the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Myers (2009) argued that the underlying assumptions of interpretive researchers are that comprehension of reality is possible only through social constructions. Maree (2016) believes that the interpretation of situations depends on the subjective experiences of an individual, how the social world is constructed through the sharing of meaning, and how they connect or relate with each other. In interpretive research, all the

participants involved bring their own unique interpretations of the world or their own unique construction of a situation to the table.

The purpose of my study was to qualitatively explore and describe 10 early adolescent experiences of school bullying as bystanders before and after a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring. The participants were asked to reflect on the cognitive interpretation and the meaning they attached to the bullying incidences they witnessed in school. The ontological assumption underpinning my study, therefore, was that reality is a social construction and is not independent of the researcher (Nieuwenhuis, 2014). The epistemological assumption of an interpretivism paradigm is that reality is known and can be understood only through the exploration of people's stories, experiences, and voices (Nieuwenhuis, 2014).

Researcher subjectivity is a major criticism leveled against interpretive inquiries as the findings of a study may be influenced by the opinions of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2011). However, in my study, I followed Creswell's (2009) injunction that a researcher should be indifferent to the research topic so as to be unbiased in assessing the topic. Furthermore, in order to avoid bias in my study, I continuously and carefully bore in mind my role, beliefs, and opinions that could have potentially influenced my interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2014b). At the same time, I also consulted closely with my supervisor throughout the study.

1.7.2 Methodological paradigm: Qualitative approach

According to Myers (2009, p.1), "qualitative research are tools used in understanding and describing the world of human experiences". Qualitative research aims at exploring and understanding participants' experiences of a particular phenomenon under study (Fouche & Delport, 2011; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). A qualitative approach to research enables researchers to uncover multiple perspectives, provide holistic pictures, and report detailed views of participants' experiences (Creswell, 2014b). Niewenhuis (2007), too, states that a qualitative research approach affords researchers the opportunity to gather rich, descriptive data so as to understand a particular phenomenon better. In qualitative research, participants reveal their views and perceptions of a phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009). I adopted a qualitative

strategy to explore and describe adolescent bystanders' experiences of school bullying following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention.

The experiences of the participants may vary depending on their perceptions and interpretations. A qualitative research approach helped me to gain insight into the participants' multiple realities and cognitive interpretation of the bullying incidences they witnessed in school (Myers, 2009; Patton; 2015). Because the research questions were descriptive, exploratory, and open-ended, a qualitative research approach that reflects a comprehensive, holistic, and unique view of individual participants seemed appropriate (Myers, 2009; Patton, 2015).

A major advantage of a qualitative research study is the inductive nature of the accompanying data analysis, which limits the influence of any preconceived ideas (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Many researchers believe that preconceived ideas detract from data quality (Andrade, 2009). The interactive feature of qualitative research, however, facilitated my in-depth understanding and description of a holistic picture of how early adolescents experience bullying as bystanders (Creswell, 2011). Qualitative research is subjective as a result of the possible influence of bias (Bryman, 2015; Houser, 2015). I was, nevertheless, able to check the likely influence of bias through reflection. My supervisor and I regularly engaged in a briefing on the research process providing the opportunity for continuous reflection.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

1.8.1 Research design: Qualitative descriptive-exploratory design

A research design is a "plan or strategy moving from underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, data gathering techniques to be used and data analysis to be done" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 70). Cohen et al. (2011) stated that adoption of research design should be informed by the fitness of purpose, in other words, the purpose of the research coupled with the research questions should determine the methodology and research design (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007b).

In line with the purpose of my study, I concur with Creswell (2014) that a qualitative descriptive-exploratory design should be used to explore a phenomenon as the

participants narrate it. Creswell (2014, p. 4) defined descriptive exploratory research as "a qualitative approach for exploring, understanding and describing the meaning an individual or group of individuals ascribe to a phenomenon through detailed data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observation, interview, reports)".

I chose a qualitative descriptive-exploratory research design for my study because it best suited the purpose of my study. Such a design complements the epistemology of the study in terms of which the realities of a particular phenomenon are assumed to be knowable through the exploration of an individual(s) with experience of the phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2014). A descriptive-exploratory research design was therefore considered appropriate to describe how early adolescents experienced school bullying as bystanders (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

1.8.2 Sampling Strategies: Purposive Sampling

Sampling is referred to as a logical process utilised in selecting a portion of a population for a research study (Babbie, 2010; Wahyuni, 2012). I used purposive sampling to select the participants for the study. Rule and John (2011) stated that purposive sampling is suitable for a qualitative descriptive-exploratory research while Cohen et al., (2011) stated that purposive sampling enables the researcher to decide what is needed to be known and finds participants who are in possession of reliable information and are ready to share such information based on their knowledge and experience. The community members of an interested group under investigation who are familiar with the practice of the community and are prepared and capable to share their understanding of the subject under investigation are typical key participants (informants) in a study that utilise purposive sampling techniques (Bernard, 2009).

Although research participants are easy to recruit using purposive sampling techniques, the downside of this sampling technique is that the sample may or may not depict the entire population accurately, thereby compromising generalisation of the results to the entire population (Gay, Mills, & Airasian 2011). However, a major reason for the preference of purposive sampling is that a researcher can quickly select a predefined sample group (Thamaga, 2008; Wahyuni, 2012).

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to recruit participants for this study:

- Learners who were in primary school.
- Learners who have not experienced bullying as a direct victim but only witnessed bullying in school were identified by means of a request to participate in a research study through an invitation letter.
- The other selection criteria for participants in the study were bystanders who were early adolescents (within the age range of 11 to 13 years), and who were in Grades 6 or 7.
- Learners who indicated that they have not previously been exposed to a similar intervention.
- Participants who could not understand or communicate in the English language were exempted from participating in the study.

Leonardo and Hen (2008) stress the importance of altering negative appraisal of events in early adolescence, thus preventing such patterns from consolidating during late adolescence, which is a critical period. This was the rationale for choosing Grade 6 and 7 learners as the participants in this research study.

1.8.3   Research participants and research site

The research participants for this study were 10 early adolescents' bystanders who indicated interest in participating in the study and were purposefully selected. Eight of the participants were in Grade 6 and the remaining two participants were in Grade 7. Out of the 10 participants, eight were girls while two were boys. Interviews and intervention sessions were conducted in the classroom so that participants could respond in a normal and honest manner. I adopted convenience sampling technique to select the research site. The research site is located within the locality of participants. As such, the proximity of the school to participants home further motivated participants to attend the intervention and interview sessions.

1.8.4   Data collection and documentation analysis

Multiple means of collecting data were used in this study (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). Data for the study was collected using multiple data sources such as individual semi-

structured interviews, activities completed during the SDCDR intervention sessions, audio recordings, field notes and a reflective research journal (Cohen et al., 2011). A primary source of data collection in a qualitative descriptive-exploratory study is an interview. According to Babbie (2010), a qualitative interview is a dialogue between an interviewer and a participant in which the interviewer has a general framework for inquiry. As noted by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 45), "an interview is literally an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual benefit".

An interview facilitates a wider scope of asking questions and using probing questions to follow up interesting avenues that emerge in the interviews (Neuman, 2011). A face-to-face individual open-ended semi-structured interview was implemented to investigate and describe the participants' experiences of school bullying as bystanders before and after the intervention. The emerging themes from the semi-structured interview conducted before the intervention informed the content of the SDCDR intervention that was designed.

1.8.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are non-formal, in-depth qualitative interviews considered appropriate for a qualitative descriptive-exploratory research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Such interviews are semi-structured because they combine the features of structured as well as unstructured interviews and thus contain closed as well as open-ended questions. Semi-structured interviews afford interviewees the possibility of elaborating and providing more appropriate data (Boeije, 2010). I conducted open-ended semi-structured interviews to evaluate participants' experiences of school bullying as bystanders before the implementation of the SDCDRI and also after the implementation of the SDCDRI to assess changes (if any) in participants' experiences of witnessing school bullying as bystanders.

1.8.4.2 SDCDR techniques and activities completed during the intervention sessions

The self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention consisted of 11 sessions of CBT implemented by a registered Educational Psychologist. The aim of the intervention was to expose participants to cognitive restructuring strategies which could be used to recognise and refute negative thought patterns which are presumed

to exacerbate negative emotional and behavioural reactions to events. During the sessions, participants completed some cognitive restructuring exercises such as filling a dysfunctional thought record worksheet, a cognitive restructuring worksheet, Thoughts-Feeling-Action worksheets and participating in reframing self-talk exercise and role play. At the end of each session, a homework assignment was given to the participants in which they had to practise the lessons learnt at the session. At the end of the intervention, all exercises completed by the participants were collected and analysed

1.8.4.3 Reflective research journal

To achieve a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the cognitive interpretation and the meaning bystanders attached to the bullying incidences they witnessed in school, I utilised a reflective research journal to document the daily activities of the participants as observed during the period of the intervention sessions and data collection (Cruz, 2015). A reflective research journal enabled me to record on-the-spot data. According to Payne and Payne (2004), such a journal can be a rich and primary source of data that contributes to triangulation, especially when used alongside other data.

1.8.4.4 Audio recordings

An audio recording of the interview contributes to the credibility of a study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Audio recordings were used to document conversations during interviews, which were later transcribed verbatim into a written form. The audio recordings enabled me to capture all the details of my interviews with the participants without constantly having to make notes. A challenge I envisaged with audio recordings was a loss of essential data as a result of possible technology failure. However, I endeavoured to duplicate all records to minimize the risk of loss.

1.8.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis is the procedure of coding and categorising data for the purpose of analysing and identifying patterns that emerged as themes (Denzin, 2016; Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit 2004; Ravitch & Carl, 2106). The qualitative data was analysed through inductive thematic analysis. The data analysis included the transcription of my notes and the audio recordings of the interviews. The data

obtained at this stage was grouped into themes, and inductive thematic analysis was used to establish categories of meaning in the data.

Inductive thematic analysis is done to identify themes of importance to the description of the phenomenon under investigation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldana, 2016). Inductive thematic analysis is a common form of analysis in qualitative research, whose aim, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is to pinpoint, examine, and record patterns in data. In order to establish and create meaningful patterns, theme analyses were carried out through a coding method in six phases. These phases, as highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2006) will be discussed in the following segment, namely a) familiarisation with the data, b) generation of initial codes, c) checking for themes, d) scrutinising the themes, e) defining and naming the themes, and 6) making the findings available.

- During the first phase, I familiarised myself with the data by reading through the interview transcripts and reading it again, at the same time, I started developing codes.

- During the second phase, I generated initial codes from the data with reference to the research questions. This systematic classification method and identification of meaningful data as it relates to primary and secondary research questions are referred to as coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

- The third phase included the search for themes to identify what is relevant in the themes and what is not. This prepared the foundation for me to begin the analysis of potential codes. In the process of developing themes, I described the meaning of the different themes.

- During the fourth phase, I searched for data that support the answers to my research questions. This provided room for further development and review of the themes as they evolved. During this process, some themes that emerged earlier caved-in into each other while other themes were compressed into smaller units.

- During the fifth phase, I defined and named each theme as well as the data that was being captured. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the process of defining and refining the themes that will be included in the final analysis assists researchers in analysing the data within each theme.

- During the last phase, I decided, after a comprehensive evaluation, on the themes that contribute significantly to the answer of the research questions and thereafter wrote the report.

I endeavoured to produce a report that is clear, concise, and straightforward for readers to understand. I equally ensured that the report contains sufficient evidence to show that the themes generated from the data are relevant to answering the research questions. Lastly, the report included member checking as a means of ensuring credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

1.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Creswell (2014), as well as De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2009), affirmed that trustworthiness in qualitative research could be achieved if the following conditions were fulfilled: credibility, dependability, authenticity, transferability and confirmability.

1.9.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the strategies that the researcher used to establish trust and assurance that the outcome of a study stemmed from the data received from participants of the study (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2010). Credibility relates to the extent to which the findings of a research study can be perceived as truthful as possible (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). It is synonymous with internal validity, that is, to what extent the data and data analysis are credible and reliable.

I ensured the credibility of the study through the inclusion of member checking, which meant getting feedback on the data, the interpretation of the data, and the conclusions from the participants themselves. I also used triangulation to check the data further. Triangulation is the application of different sources and methods to integrate concepts (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Shenton, 2004).

1.9.2 Transferability

Transferability is synonymous with external validity, which is the extent to which a study's finding can be perceived as applicable to a similar context or situation using different samples (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Research findings can

be said to be transferable and generalisable if the findings can fit new contexts outside the actual study context.

My research study was not aimed at generalising the findings because the small number of participants could not be said to be representative enough of the entire population. However, I increased the transferability of the research findings by providing details of the research methods, procedures, contexts, and assumptions underlying the study to give readers sufficient information to assess to what extent the findings may apply to other settings (Shenton, 2004). I also used multiple sources to collect data namely, individual semi-structured interviews, a reflective research journal, transcribed audio recordings and activities completed during the intervention sessions to enhance triangulation which further supported transferability.

1.9.3 Dependability

Dependability can be compared to the reliability, that is, the degree to which the same results will be derived in other comparable conditions (Rolfe, 2006). Houghton, Casey, Shaw and Murphy (2013) asserted that an audit trail could be used to strengthen the dependability of a study. Therefore, I maintained an audit trail by keeping a detailed record of all the activities and processes of the research, the data collection and analysis, and emerging themes and categories.

1.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent to which other researchers can confirm or corroborate the findings of a research study (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Confirmability is achieved when the outcome of a study reflects the aim of the study and not the preconceived opinion of the researcher (Maree, 2016). In other words, interpretations of the data were not based on my own imagination or perspectives rather, on the data itself. To achieve confirmability for the study, I archived all collected data in an organised and easily retrievable format so that others can access the data collected and track the procedures leading to the conclusions reached (Lincoln & Guba, 2005).

I ensured that my own religious, cultural, and personal opinions did not influence any of the conclusions reached during the interviews. The validity and reliability of the

interview questions used during the research were ascertained by experts in the Department of Educational Psychology. The validity of an instrument or interview questions is ascertained if it measures what it should measure (Cohen et al., 2011).

1.9.5 Authenticity

Authenticity is the degree to which a researcher accurately and fairly describes participants' different points of view and experiences without bias so as to ensure that their true voice and perceptions are properly reflected (Mertens, 2014). Authenticity is required to ensure the replication of interventions with similar conditions in other settings (Shenton, 2004).

To establish the authenticity of the data collected, I verified my data interpretation with the participants (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). I also ensured that the participants had a proper understanding of their involvement in the research before consenting to the research. I provided opportunities for the participants to clear their doubt about the research and the intervention process by allowing them to ask questions. I also ensured authenticity by collecting data using multiple means such as individual semi-structured interviews, exercises done in the intervention sessions, audio recordings and keeping a researcher journal (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The research adhered strictly to the research and ethics code of the University of Pretoria. Miller and Bell (2012) state that the onus is on the researcher to ensure academic integrity, honesty and respect for other people while conducting research. I accordingly fulfilled the following ethical requirements:

- Obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education (EP/17/11/01 (See pg. iii);
- Obtained permission from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) to work and undertake research study in School (See Appendix B);
- Obtained approval from the principal of the selected school to conduct research with learners in the school (See Appendix D);
- Obtained informed assent from the participants (See Appendix G). I notified the participants in detail about the reasons, nature, purpose and methods that

will be used to collect data before commencing the research. I also explained clearly to the participants what their typical roles would be and what would be expected of them. To this end, I obtained their informed assent in written form.

- I obtained informed permission from the legal guardian(s) or the parents of the participants. A consent letter for approval was sent to the parents or legal guardians of the learners who participated in the research. The letter covered issues such as confidentiality, voluntary participation, research location, and purpose of the study.

- Granted freedom to withdraw from the research: I informed the participants that the main purpose of the study was for scholarly research and that no one would be forced to participate. Any participants who agreed earlier to participate in the research would have the freedom to withdraw at any time if they wanted to (Creswell, 2014).

- Guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity: Confidentiality refers to the restriction of access to the data collected and names of the participants that were included in the research study. Anonymity, on the other hand, implies the use of pseudonyms and disguised locations to protect the identity of the data source and the research participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I gave assurance to the participants that their personal information would not be revealed. Their names or information revealing their identities were not shared, and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality further.

- Acted with honesty and integrity: I acted with honesty and integrity in accordance with the code of ethics of the University of Pretoria throughout the research. I did not fabricate data nor manipulated or alter any data obtained.

In addition to adhering to the above ethical principles, I involved an independent registered Educational Psychologist to facilitate the debriefing session at the end of each data collection session as some participants might have been traumatised by the memory and narration of the bullying events they witnessed. The purpose of the debriefing sessions was thus to ensure the participants' emotional well-being. As the need arose, individual counselling sessions were arranged and discussed with the participants' parents or legal guardians.

Although the ability to understand and communicate in the English language was one of the criteria for inclusion as participants in this study, I equally utilised the service of a trained Sepedi language translator during the data collection. The reason was to ensure that participants understood the questions asked and responded freely to the questions without misconceptions.

The translator translated from English to the participants' mother tongue, which was Sepedi, and what the participants said was again translated to English. Wong and Poon (2010) recommended the use of translators in a multilingual research community to enhance meaningful and reliable data collection. The translator and the Educational Psychologist who served as a therapist agreed that all information obtained from the participants would remain confidential. To this end, a confidentiality form was signed by both the translator and the therapist.

1.11 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

I was responsible for designing the intervention, while the intervention itself was implemented with the assistance of an Educational Psychologist registered in South Africa. I was also responsible for analysing the data generated in the study during the course of which I consulted my supervisor for guidance. The literature review on the research topic was conducted by me. More specifically, I was responsible for the following activities in line with Maree's suggestions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Maree, 2016):

- Developing the content of the intervention;
- Preparing the interview questions and conducted the interviews;
- Triangulating the data;
- Analysing the data collected;
- I familiarised the Educational Psychologist who served as the therapist with the content and mode of delivery of the SDCDRI; and
- I identified a suitable translator and ensured that transcription was effectively conducted.

1.12 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

The scope of this research study was confined to school learners who were bystanders of bullying in school and who were in Grade 6 or 7 in a primary school in Mamelodi. Therefore, learners who are non-observers of bullying in school or who are themselves perpetrators of bullying in school, were not included in this research. The rationale for limiting the scope of participants to Grade 6 and 7 was predicated on the assertion that the highest rate of bullying is reported among early adolescents of this grade group (Greeff & Grobler, 2008).

In addition, the choice of confining participants within Grade 6 and 7 was also predicated on the assumption that bystanders in this grade group might be able to offer answers to research questions of this study. Furthermore, having resided in Mamelodi for a while, I found my proximity to the research site and participants to be advantageous to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

1.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One potential constraint of this research study was that there were relatively few participants in the study. Therefore, the findings may not be widely generalisable and moreover, the findings of this study depend predominantly on self-reported data. However, the aim of this research was not to generalise the finding but to explore and describe bystanders' unique responses to observing bullying in school.

Another challenge that I experienced in this study was the difficulty in persuading more bullying bystanders to participate in the study. This could be because they were afraid that their identity might be revealed considering the sensitive nature of bullying in school. However, I tried to overcome this challenge and got a few numbers of participants by promising participants that their personal information remained a secret.

In addition, the benefit of other predetermined interventions not explored in this study might have influenced the findings of the interventions of my study. To avoid interference of benefits of any previous intervention, only participants who had not earlier been exposed to any intervention were purposely selected to participate in this research study.

1.14 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A research study that focused attention on how early adolescents experienced school bullying as bystanders following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring is particularly significant. This is because most studies on bullying have only emphasised and reported the negative reactions of bystanders to witnessing bullying, but the cognitive process that leads to the onset and maintenance of these negative reactions to witnessing bullying has received less attention (Farrington et al., 2017; Sthembile, 2013; Carney, 2008).

The findings of my study were geared toward discovering cognitive strategies that could be used to mitigate or interrupt irrational thinking patterns which are presumed to be a determinant of bystanders' negative reactions to witnessing bullying in school. It is anticipated that the findings of this study might be of value to teachers, counsellors, bystanders and educational planners in both the planning and execution of a bullying intervention. In particular, the findings of the study might be helpful to school counsellors to fully comprehend the nature and influence of distorted thoughts in the onset and sustenance of negative behavioural and emotional responses while designing strategies to help victims of bullying and bystanders in school.

As for the bystanders, the findings of this study might bring them to the awareness of the relationship among their thoughts, feelings and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying in school. This awareness may reveal the link between the irrationality in their thought patterns and their reactions to witnessing bullying.

I intend to disseminate the findings of my study and to also provide it as feedback to bystanders of school bullying and other readers by publishing the findings in national and international journals.

1.15 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 provided a comprehensive layout of the study in which the introduction, background and rationale of the study were sketched. The statement of the problem was then divided into primary and secondary research questions that indicate the aim of the study. The key terms used in the study were clarified to familiarise readers with the study content**.**

Chapter 2 discusses the literature review and theoretical framework of the study, which, among other things, covers cognitive and appraisal theory as a theoretical framework for the study. It covers the descriptive part of the study in which approaches, techniques, and activities that could inform the design of the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention are reviewed.

Chapter 3 reviews the compilation of the SDCDR to assist with the capturing of bystanders experiences of school bullying. It also shows the detailed activities that were performed in each session of the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention. This chapter also discusses the cognitive restructuring strategies that were used in the intervention sessions.

Chapter 4 covers the paradigmatic perspectives, research design, plan, execution and data collection. It also covers the strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the research in addition to the ethical requirement guiding the study**.**

Chapter 5 focuses on data analysis and interpretation as well as the findings of the research against the background of the existing literature. Emerging themes from the data analysis are discussed as well.

Chapter 6 summarises the research findings. The contributions and limitations of the study are discussed. This final chapter also offers suggestions for further research**.**

1.16 CONCLUSION

In chapter 1, I discussed the background and rationale of the study, the statement of purpose and the underlying theoretical perspectives. I argued that, although, stressors such as experiencing or witnessing bullying in school may present a risk to the subjective emotional welfare of bystanders (Midgett & Doumas, 2019), an important factor in explaining the heterogeneity of behavioural and emotional reactions of bystanders might be the ability to re-appraise the situation (Hofmann, Asnaani, Vonk, Sawyer & Fang, 2012). This is because emotions and behaviour also change in line with reappraisal or reinterpretation of events (Ellis, 2009; Baghurst & Kelley, 2014). I drew my assumption from the principles of cognitive and appraisal theories which contend that the events an individual experience or witness should not necessarily elicit negative emotional or behavioural reactions, but the appraisal

or interpretation an individual attach to such an event. In addition, I provided the research design and the methodological strategies used in the research study, in terms of the strategy used to choose research participants, to collect and document data, as well as the data analysis and interpretation procedure which involves an inductive thematic analysis. I further highlighted the process to achieve the trustworthiness of the research and ethical considerations. In the next chapter, chapter 2, I will review related literature, discuss a number of theories that formed an integral part of the study and close out with a conceptual framework for understanding bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter provided the reader with an overview of the introduction, background and rationale of the research study. This chapter reviews the available related literature. Firstly, I present an overview of bullying in school with a focus on bystanders and a discussion on the pervasiveness of bullying behaviour in school, the categories and typology of bullying acts. Secondly, studies on bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying are reviewed. The concept of cognitive distortions is examined with a focus on self-debasing cognitive distortion.

The efficacies of cognitive behavioural therapy in the treatment of various emotional and behavioural disorders are reported. Lastly, I consider cognitive and appraisal theories as theoretical frameworks for this study. Both theories confirmed bystanders' potential to modify their thinking patterns in a bid to change their emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. I examine and describe the relevance of these theories to this study. Significantly, this chapter answers the first, second and third secondary questions as listed below for ease of reference:

- What are bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?
- How can self-debasing cognitive distortions contribute to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?
- How can cognitive restructuring as a cognitive behavioural therapy technique possibly change bystanders thinking patterns?

An overview of the concept of bullying and the negative consequences of witnessing bullying on bystanders were first explored to address these research questions. This provided the background against which the thinking patterns of bystanders and how it triggers emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying or not were reviewed and discussed.

2.2   AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF BULLYING

Bullying has been described as the most prevalent form of aggression and victimisation that school-age learners experience (O'Brennan, Bradshaw & Sawyer, 2009; Waasdrop, Pas, Zablotsky, Bradshow 2017). Several definitions of bullying seem to be prominent in the literature. For instance, Farrinton and Ttofi (2009) define bullying as a physical or verbal attack directed towards the victim that is intended to cause fear, harm or inflict pain harm to the victim. In a similar manner, bullying is also defined by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) (2008, p. 6) "as an aggressive behaviour consisting of repeated physical, verbal and non-verbal acts displayed repeatedly over a period of time by one person against another, that are intended to inflict injury or discomfort and take place in a relationship marked by a real or perceived imbalance of power."

The three main components included in the definition of bullying, as shown above, are the motive to hurt someone else, power inequality and recurrence of the aggressive behaviour for a certain time period (Englander, 2013; Jordan & Austin, 2012). Intent to harm describes the bully's expectation that his or her action will cause harm to the victim which suggests that the bully is not cruel by accident. Age differences, size, strength, verbal skills, social skills, race and gender, create power inequality, which gives the perpetrator of the bullying act an advantage over the victim. Coloroso (2003) asserted that the possibility of the acts happening again and not being part of a once-off event characterises the third component of bullying which is that the aggressive behaviour must be repeated over an extended period of time.

The prevalence of bullying in schools has been highlighted in many research studies carried out locally and internationally (Lass & Boezaart, 2014; Salmivalli 2010; Tustin et al., 2014). For instance, research in primary schools in Germany discovered that 10% of the learners can be categorised as bullies who are the perpetrators of the acts of bullying; 17.4% as victims, the target of the bullies; and 40.5% as bystanders which comprise those who are observers or witnesses of bullying (Von Maree & Peterman, 2010).

Based on the assessment of two sizable international studies in 66 nations and provinces, the results indicated that 31% of learners had witnessed or experienced bullying at least once within the preceding two months with the rate of bullying going up to 60% in countries such as Lithuania and Zimbabwe (Due & Holstein, 2008). Cunningham (2007), as well as Undheim and Sund (2010), reported the prevalence rate of bullying victimisation among school-aged learners as being between 27% and 39%.

Recent cross-sectional research on the prevalence of bullying in 11 European countries reveals that an average of 20.6% of children aged 8 to 11 years reported witnessing bullying or being bullied (Analitis et al., 2009). In addition, Macintrye (2009) reported that internationally, 27% of early adolescent school learners have witnessed or have been victims of bullying by a group of peers who made concentration in school difficult for them.

In South Africa, a study conducted in 2012 at the Youth Research Unit of the University of South Africa (UNISA) on the extent of bullying among Gauteng high school learners, found that of the study sample of 3,371 learners, 1,158 learners (34.4%) witnessed or were victims of bullying (Laas & BoeZaart, 2014). In a study carried out by de Wet (2005) in some Free State high schools, 83.78% of the respondents indicated bullying was a problem at their respective schools.

A survey was conducted by the consumer insights company, Pondering Panda, in 2013 to assess the pervasiveness of bullying in schools in South Africa. The participants included 2,064 learners aged 13 to 21 years. The results of the study revealed that 57% of South African learners indicated they had experienced or witnessed bullying in school during 2013. These findings point out that bullying behaviour in schools has continued to be a major problem among school-age learners worldwide (Pondering Panda, 2013).

The literature described four bullying categories which include relational, verbal, physical and cyberbullying (Stassen Berger, 2007; Wang, Iannotti & Nansel, 2009). Physical bullying relates to an assault unleashed on a victim by deeds such as stabbing, punching, hair pulling, pushing and kicking (Jordan & Austin, 2012). Flint

(2010) and Wang et al. (2009) reported that boys engage in physical bullying more frequently than girls.

Verbal bullying involves inflicting harm on the victim by humiliating and verbally abusing the victim (Jordan & Austin, 2012). Four types of verbal bullying were also identified by Salmivalli (2014), namely gossip, swearing, teasing and ostracism/shunning. Relational or social bullying is indirect bullying which includes isolating a person from a group, unfriending such a person or making obscene gestures (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008; Prinsloo, 2008;). Flint (2010) reported that relational bullying is more prevalent among girls, although boys also experience this type of bullying.

Cyberbullying is a more recent kind of bullying, which includes using electronic devices to create havoc in the lives of the victim and to perpetrate aggression. Hinjuda and Patchin (2010) reported that 20% of youth sampled reported being bullied through computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices and avenues such as email, text messages social networking and online chats (Kowalski, Morgan & Limber, 2012).

Bullying does not usually involve only the bullies and the victims, but also a group of observers who are classified as bystanders (Craig et al., 2007; Salmivalli, 2010). Twemlow et al., (2004) define a bystander as a person who is not involved in bullying situations as a bully or as a direct victim but who is present at the scene of bullying as observer or witness. Oh and Hazler (2009) stated that onlookers are usually the majority in a bullying situation. Rivers et al. (2009) also reported that 63% of learners witness bullying at school.

The most common bystander roles in bullying identified in the literature were outsider (i.e. an observer who does nothing, and stays outside the bullying situation); reinforcer (i.e. an observer who assists and encourages the bully by their action such as laughing); and defender (i.e. an observer who makes active effort and expresses willingness to intervene on behalf of the victims (Oh & Hazler, 2009; Padgett & Notar, 2013). The group of bystanders in this study were identified and referred to as defenders because of their demonstration of willingness to defend and stand up for

the victims (Salmivalli, 2014). In the next section, I review bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying in school, as reported in the literature.

2.3 BYSTANDERS' EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL REACTIONS TO WITNESSING BULLYING

Research has revealed various reactions and responses of bystanders to witnessing bullying (Aloe & Swearer, 2015; Midgett & Doumas, 2019; Werth, Nickerson, Rivers et al., 2009), one of which is bystanders' expression of willingness to intervene for victims (Almedia, Correia & Marinho, 2010; Cappadocia, Pepler, Cummings & Craig 2012; Nickerson & Taylor, 2014; Thornberg, Tenenbaum, Varjas, Meyers, Jungert & Vanegas, 2012).

In a study done by Nickerson and Taylor (2014) consisting of 262 participants, it was found that 49% of the participants who were bystanders of bullying reported feeling sorry and willing to help the victim. Gini, Albiero, Benelli and Altoe (2008) reported similar findings among 318 bystanders who indicated that watching bullying is dehumanising and that they sympathised with the victims.

Thornberg et al. also (2012) examined sympathetic responses of bystanders to witnessing bullying by conducting a qualitative study that used an open-ended semi-structured interview. The study involved 30 participants who were in Grade 4 to 8. Findings of the research revealed that bystanders had highly sympathetic reactions towards the victims of bullying. Participants demonstrated a willingness to stand up for the victims, even if they did not like them because they felt bad for them.

Cappadocia et al. (2012) investigated bystanders' reactions to witnessing bullying in terms of the level of sympathy towards victims in bullying situations. A total of 108 participants aged 8 to 16 years were sampled to participate in the study. A self-reporting measure was used to examine their sympathetic responsiveness to observing bullying in school. The study found that bystanders reported high levels of sympathy and they expressed willingness and intention to intervene.

Similar to previous findings, Almedia et al. (2010) also examined the attitudes and reactions of bystanders to witnessing bullying in school among 292 Portuguese students who were 10 to 18 years old. The result of the study indicated that

participants showed higher sympathy while they expressed their intention to defend the victims. However, Rigby and Johnson (2006), as well as Gini et al. (2008), explained that whilst most bystanders feel uncomfortable for not intervening and feel sympathetic towards victims, the fear of becoming the next target of bullying overshadows their feelings of willingness to intervene and defend the victims.

As a result of fear of becoming the next victims, bystanders in most cases of a bullying incident fail to defend or intervene on behalf of the victim hence; they react by apportioning self-blame to themselves and consequently feel guilty (Salmivalli, 2014; Milson and Gallow, 2006). According to Salmivalli (2014) bystanders often experience feelings of guilt, self-blame and anger towards themselves as a result of their failure to intervene on behalf of the victim.

Hutchinson (2012) also noted that bystanders might experience increased levels of stress and guilt for not standing up to the bully on behalf of the victim. Batsche and Porter (2006) argued that when bystanders take excessive responsibility for the bullying they witness, they experience guilt and self-blame. Frey, Hirschstein, Edstrom and Snell (2009) buttressed that bystanders often experience feelings of guilt and anger towards themselves as a result of their failure to intervene on behalf of the victim.

Shore (2009) reported that bystanders might react to witnessing bullying with fears and worry, which could cause bystanders to feel intimidated; hence, contributing to difficulties in focusing attention in class. Whitted and Dupper (2005, p. 171) asserted that bystanders might be "fearful" and become distracted in school thereby, making concentration in school activities difficult.

Research has also indicated that bystanders could exhibit negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying depending on how the bystanders perceived and appraised the bullying they witnessed (American Psychological Association, 2009; Carney, 2008; Glew et al., 2005; Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Ttofi & Farington, 2011). The expression of negative emotions which includes sadness, fear, depression, anxiety, insecurity and low self-esteem seems to be the most significant reaction of bystanders to witnessing bullying in school (Hutchinson, 2012; Visconti, Sechler & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2013).

Kelly et al. (2015) conducted research to examine the level of negative emotional and behavioural responses in adolescents who witnessed bullying. The objective of the research was to investigate if bystanders reported a higher level of anxiety and secondary trauma after observing bullying in school. The results showed that bystanders who witnessed bullying reported a higher level of internalising behaviour such as anxiety, depression and traumatic symptomatology than students who did not observe bullying.

In a related study, Rivers et al., (2009) conducted a research on the reactions of bystanders witnessing bullying as it relates to their mental health. The participants consisted of 2002 school learners whose age ranged from 12 to 16 years. The results of the study indicated that witnessing bullying predicted risk to mental health as bystanders expressed reactions such as difficulties concentrating, feelings of inferiority, nervousness, annoyance, irritation and restlessness in reaction to witnessing bullying.

Milson and Gallow (2006) reported that bystanders of school bullying are more likely to react to witnessing bullying with symptoms of secondary trauma stress like depression, anxiety and insecurity than either the bullied or direct victims. A study of emotional and behavioural reactions of bystanders witnessing bullying in 14 public schools revealed that witnessing bullying was associated with expressions of negative emotional and behavioural responses such as fear, anxiety, shock, disbelief and depression (Janson et al., 2009).

In recent research, Midgett and Doumas (2019) investigated the correlation between witnessing bullying, depressive symptoms and anxiety among intermediate phase school learners. One hundred and thirty Grade 6 to 8 learners responded to questionnaires assessing bystanders' experiences of witnessing school bullying, depressive symptoms and anxiety. The result of the study revealed that even after controlling for the frequency of being a bully-victim, witnessing bullying accounts significantly for depressive symptoms and anxiety in the eyewitness of bullying. Research findings of similar studies conducted by Lambe, Hudson, Craig and Peplar (2017) in Canada and that of Wu, Luu and Luh (2016) in Taiwan indicated that

learners who observe bullying experience internalising symptoms such as anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation.

In addition, research suggested that bystanders reacted to witnessing with feelings of insecurity at school as a result of fear of subsequent, direct victimisation (Dinkes, Kemp & Baum, 2009; Nansel et al., 2008). For instance, Arostegui and Arraez (2006), as well as Beaty and Alexyev (2008), reported that bystanders who witnessed bullying might not feel safe in the school and might also show reluctance to attend school because they foresee being the next victim.

A minimal sense of school safety and concerns about the vulnerability of being the next victim of bullying may affect bystanders' readiness to learn and school the attendance rate (Dinkes et al., 2009; Kohut, 2007). Elinoff, Chafouleas and Sassu (2004) noted that learners in school with a negative climate might lack feelings of safety necessary for effective teaching and learning. In addition, Varjas, Henrich and Meyers (2009) carried out a study on bullying in school and learners' perception of school safety. The findings of the study revealed that witnessing or experiencing bullying relates to a negative perception of school safety.

Dinkes et al. (2009) stated that experiencing or witnessing bullying in school can make learners fearful and feel insecure in school and this can affect learners' preparedness and learning capacity. According to Heydenberk and Tzennova, (2006), continuous stress and fear reduce activity in the brain cortex - the brain area required to perform cognitive duties. In line with this, Dinkles et al. (2009) further recommended that schools should find avenues to allay fear and anxiety related to bullying in school to enhance learners academic performance, attendance rate and sense of safety while in the school.

Meyer-Adams and Corner (2008) reported that witnessing bullying in school might negatively impact bystanders' perception of school safety, which in turn may lead to behavioural reactions such as avoiding or skipping school. Nishina and Juvonen (2005) analysed the daily reports of learners who witnessed bullying in two different schools. In the first school, 42% of participants reported witnessing bullying in a four day period while 66% of participants reported the same in the second school. The

findings of the study revealed that witnessing bullying may lead to a significantly increased report of anxiety and school dislike.

Furthermore, Varjas, Henrich, and Meyers (2009) also examined learners' perceptions of bullying and safety in school. The participants included 478 middle school learners. The findings of the study revealed that learners who witnessed or experienced frequent incidences of bullying reported not feeling safe while at school. Berkowitz and Benbenishty (2012), as well as Bradshaw, Wasadrop, Goldweber and Johnson (2013), also noted that bystanders of school bullying appeared to lose interest in going to school and were most likely to miss school as a result of feeling afraid or anticipating direct bullying victimisation.

Studies have shown that the fear or anticipation of being the next target of bullying causes bystanders to feel unsafe and become fearful of attending school (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008; Meyer-Adams & Connor, 2008). Elinoff et al., (2004) added that learners in a school with a negative climate might lack feelings of safety necessary for effective teaching and learning.

However, there were differences in the report of the few studies on the emotional and behavioural reactions of bystanders to witnessing bullying (Glew et al., 2005; Juvonem, Wang & Espinoza, 2011). For instance, Juvonem et al. (2011) found that sixth-grade bystanders did not experience common negative emotions such as anxiety and loneliness to the same degree as the direct victims. Also, Glew et al. (2005) reported from their study that bystanders were less likely to feel unsafe in their school and less likely to frequently feel sad, unlike findings from other studies.

The discrepancy in the findings of these studies with regards to bystanders emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying may be due to several causal factors such as thinking patterns, that is, how bystanders perceive and appraise the bullying they witness (Ttofi & Farington, 2011). In other words, the commonalities and discrepancy in bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying could be connected to the thinking patterns that bystanders demonstrated after the bullying incident was over (Rivers et al., 2009; Werth, Nickerson, Aloe & Swearer, 2015).

To substantiate this assertion that the thinking patterns of bystanders with regards to the appraisal of the bullying incident they witness could influence their emotional and behavioural reactions, Sthembile (2013) explored the experiences of learners who witnessed bullying in a school in Umlazi. The result of the study revealed that the meaning bystanders attached to experiencing and witnessing repetitive bullying triggered a high level of negative emotions such as frustration, anger, sadness and fear. I support the views of Barriga and Morrison (2010) as well as Freeman et al. (2004) that negative bias in thinking can lead a person to misinterpret or misperceive a situation or event and consequently may contribute to responses that are emotionally and behaviourally maladaptive (Barriga & Morrison, 2010).

Midgett et al. (2017) further clarify that thinking patterns may contribute to negative emotional and behavioural reactions among bystanders by asserting that it is the thoughts and fearful anticipation of future victimisation (catastrophising) that lead to the expression of negative emotional and behavioural responses and psychological re-victimisation for bystanders. Rivers et al. (2009) also re-affirmed that thoughts and fear of subsequent, direct victimisation may account for bystanders' higher level of secondary trauma, sensitivity, distress and depressive feelings.

Furthermore, Rock and Baird (2012) as well as Rivers and Noret, (2010), emphasised that negative thinking patterns predict bystanders negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. According to their findings, bystanders identify bullying as wrong and intend to intervene, nevertheless they fail most of the time to intervene on behalf of the victims. Bystanders may then begin to overgeneralise their inability to intervene or to affect the outcome of the bullying they witness as general incompetence (Roth, Coles & Heimberg, 2002). Consequently, bystanders may perceive feelings of incompetence which could affect their self-esteem negatively and lead to a greater likelihood of anxiety (Smokowski & Halland, 2005).

Bias in thinking patterns could also make bystanders ascribe excessive responsibility to themselves for the bullying they witness, thereby leading the bystanders to engage in personalisation and self-blame (Batsche & Porter, 2006). That is, bystanders may feel guilty for not being able to defend the victim (Salmivalli, 2010).

As bystanders live with the thoughts of shame and guilt of not helping in a bullying situation, their self-confidence may erode which may further trigger emotional and behavioural problems such as withdrawal, avoidance, difficulties concentrating and feelings of inferiority (Kohut, 2007; Marini, Dane, Bosacki, & CURA 2006; Yang, Kim, Shin, & Yoon, 2006).

Therefore, it is clear that cognitive distortions or biased thinking patterns serve as the basis for generating or triggering negative emotional and behavioural responses to events. Although I acknowledge that stressors such as experiencing or witnessing bullying in school may signal a danger to the emotional safety of bystanders (Newman, Holden & Delville, 2005), I do, also, acknowledge that an important factor in explaining the heterogeneity of behavioural and emotional reactions of bystanders might be the ability to identify and correct distorted thoughts which precede negative reactions to events (Hofman et al., 2012). In the section that follows, I will address the concept of cognitive distortions.

2.4   CONCEPTUALISING COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Cognitive distortions is a negative bias in a thinking pattern that produces adverse thinking, that in turn arouse or reinforce early signs of psychological discomfort as well as an emotional and behavioural disorder (Dozois & Beck, 2008; Najavits, Gotthardt, Weiss & Epstein, 2004). Cognitive distortion, also known as irrational thought, plays a critical role in setting and maintaining negative behavioural and emotional reactions to events (Abramson et al., 2002).

Cognitive distortions, which are not evidence-based and which do not reflect reality, are considered the source of most emotional and behavioural disorders (David & Szentagotai, 2006). Individual(s) who are preoccupied with negative thinking or irrational thoughts are assumed to have a maladaptive belief system that serves as a framework for interpreting and appraising issues and events (Esbensen & Benson, 2007). Such individuals are likely to experience feelings of incompetence, worthlessness and low self-esteem which make them vulnerable to emotional and behavioural disorders (Alatiq, Crane, Williams & Goodwin, 2010; Beck, 2008; Ingram, Nelson, Steidtmann & Bistricky, 2007).

In my view, to further understand the influence of distorted thoughts as the basis for negative and emotional responses to events, I believe it is important to examine the theory associated with faulty thinking as the mechanism for generating cognitive distortion. This is because the theory of cognitive distortion outlines the mechanism that generates distorted thoughts as a result of bias in the information processing by the cognitive system, which in turn affects the cognitions, emotions and behaviour displayed by an individual in reaction to events. Thus, Ward, Gannon and Keown (2006) described cognitive distortion theories as single-factor theories which can be considered suitable in multi-factorial explanations for eliciting emotional and behavioural responses to events.

I am of the view that the information processing model of cognition could be subsumed in the cognitive and appraisal theories which serve as the philosophical frameworks for this research study. The Information processing model of cognition is intended to provide a road map for explaining how cognitive distortion develops and its role in triggering a variety of emotions and behaviour in reactions to events.

The basic tenet of information processing model of cognition as propounded by Crick and Dodge (1986) is that a person's processing of cues determines his or her behavioural and emotional responses to events (Lemerise & Arsenio 2000). Information processing indicates how a child perceives, interprets and responds to situation and events. The information processing explains the cognitive mechanisms and processes that an individual pass through when interpreting and reacting to situations (Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey & Brown, 1986).

The way an individual processes information and perform cognitive tasks affect all aspects of behaviour and emotion. Cognitive tasks involve "how information about the world is acquired by means of senses, how such information is processed and interpreted and how such information is stored and retrieved for use to inform behaviour" (Louw & Kail, 2007, p.7). Dysfunctional cognition is as a result of maladaptive cognitive processing reflected as cognitive distortion (Barriga et al., 2008).

Crick and Dodge (1986) stated that the process of cognition, which culminates in emotional and behavioural responses to events, consists of six components. The

components are a) putting external and internal cues into codes, b) interpreting and mental depiction of the encoded cues, c) clarification or choice of objectives, d) searching for response evaluation, e) reaction decision and f) behavioural and emotional execution. Zwierzynska, Wolke & Lereya (2013) noted that response evaluation informs response decision and response decision influences the behavioural and emotional enactment stage.

Cognitive distortions are evident in social information processing steps (Barriga et al., 2008). According to Zwierzynska et al. (2013), defects in information processing steps set the stage for irrational or inaccurate thoughts. In other words, the way and process in which information is filtered and organised affects cognition, behaviour and emotion (Alford & Beck, 1997). Bias in information processing steps such as wrongly encoding cues, misinterpretation and mental misrepresentation of cues may prepare the victim for vulnerability (Zwierzynska et al., 2013). That is to say, a person who experiences negative emotional and behavioural responses after witnessing events such as bullying might have experienced errors in specific stages of social information processing.

I proposed a scenario to illustrate the stages of information processing of a bystander who witnesses bullying further. Larry watched helplessly as his friend Billy was being bullied in school. Larry thinks the bully knows that they are friends (encoding of cues). Larry further thinks that since the bully knows that he is a friend of Billy, the bully might want to do the same to him (interpretation and mental representation of cues). Larry said he would have loved to defend his friend but he is conscious of his own safety and vulnerability (clarification or selection of goal). Larry feels really sad for his inability to defend his friend (empathic responsiveness and interpretation). Larry thinks he will be the next victim of bullying because he thinks the bully knows he is Billy's friend (assessment of threat) and the bully might be after him for that reason (response evaluation). Larry said he would skip school or continue to hide to avoid being bullied (response decision).

The preceding five steps in the information processing stages set the stage for Larry's subsequent behaviour and emotional enactment, which is the last step in the model proposed by Crick and Dodge. Larry's reactions to witnessing bullying were

evidenced in his emotional and behavioural response. "I feel guilty and I blame myself. I wish I could have done something to help Billy. I am so mad at myself. I feel stressed anytime I think about it that one day I will be a victim. I feel uncomfortable. I feel unhappy in school. I always imagine that I will be bullied the same way Billy was bullied. Sometimes I will be shaking and restless. I also feel worried because I always think that one day I will also be bullied as my friend was bullied. Because of this, I feel restless in school".

I considered extrapolating the information processing model to this study so as to understand how encoding of cues, assessment of threat as well as the interpretation and mental representation of the cues could generate distorted thoughts which in turn could influence bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying.

For instance, bystanders may encode self-blame emotion cues for not being able to stop the bullying and feel guilty (Hutchinson, 2012). A different bystander may attribute his inability to stop the bullying to bystanders' effect. That is to say, selective attention can influence bystanders' internal and external encoding of cues and its interpretation. Therefore, bystanders can theoretically engage in thoughts that could lead to continued or discontinued traumatic symptomatology.

I am convinced that the fact that there are discrepancies in bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying as reviewed earlier suggests that bystanders who consequently experienced negative emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying might have perceived a threatening cue in the encoding stage of information processing such as anticipating being the next victim (Midgett et al., 2017; Milson & Galo, 2006).

In the similar vein, there might also have been a cognitive error in the interpretation and mental representations of the perceived threatening cues leading a bystander to engage in catastrophic thinking, thereby causing the bystander to be fearful of subsequent, direct victimisation (Gibb et al., 2006). Likewise, bystanders who are willing to defend but unable to do so as a result of their limited capability might perceive their inability to defend or intervene in the bullying they witnessed as contributing to the bullying victimisation, thereby causing the bystanders to develop

feelings of guilt and apportion self-blame. Hence, I will make relevant references to the information processing model of cognitive distortion later in this study when reporting on the thinking patterns of bystanders and how these could possibly trigger emotional and behavioural reactions in the bystanders to witnessing bullying.

Prior research shows a significant relationship between errors in the encoding and the cue interpretation stage of the social information processing steps and negative emotional and behavioural responses to events (Shelley & Craig, 2010). Prinstein, Cheah, & Guyer (2005) conducted research to examine the correlation between errors in information processing such as bias in overgeneralising and a tendency to blame the self for events and internalising symptoms in adolescents. The findings of the study support the hypotheses that the misinterpretation of cues predicts internalising symptoms. Graham and Juvonen (1998) also reported from their research that a self-blaming interpretation mediated the interconnection between being victimised and emotional maladjustments such as anxiety, loneliness and low self-esteem.

Cognitive distortion could be self-debasing or self-serving. Self-debasing cognitive distortions are inaccurate cognitions which debase the self (Barriga et al., 2008). Self-debasing cognitive distortion diminishes someone's confidence. If a person fails at a task, his or her self-debasing cognitive distortion may be an over-generalisation. The person may make statements such as "I am useless, I will never succeed at anything". On the other hand, self-serving cognitive distortions are cognitions that shield a person from self-censure (Barriga et al., 2008). Next, I will discuss the self-debasing cognitive distortions.

2.5 SELF-DEBASING COGNITIVE DISTORTION

Self-debasing cognitive distortions are maladaptive patterns or processes of thinking that debase an individual and which can lead to self-blame. A person who holds a self-debasing cognitive distortion engages in self-blame which might lead to trauma-related guilt. Beck (2011) grouped self-debasing cognitive distortions or irrational thoughts associated with maladaptive emotional and behavioural responses to events into four categories namely, personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction.

2.5.1 Personalisation

Personalisation is a cognitive miscue that happens when a person(s) assume that they are liable for the occurrence of unpleasant events in the absence of objective evidence (Wendland, 2004:7). Personalisation refers to the tendency to relate external events to the self, despite the absence of solid grounds for making such connections (Freeman et al., 2004). In other words, an individual takes responsibility for a negative event when there is no basis for doing so. Such individuals arbitrarily attribute the unpleasant event which they witnessed or experienced to their fault or reflection of their inadequacy, even when such an individual is not responsible for it.

For example, an observer of bullying might immediately decide that he is responsible for the bullying he witnessed by saying *"I was not able to fight for my friend I saw being bullied and I blamed myself. I blamed myself because I thought I was supposed to defend my friend but I was not able to defend him because there were too many bullies. I feel I betrayed him. I felt guilty because I didn't defend my friend. It's my fault that my friend was bullied. This shows how I have failed"*.

As bystanders, who are prone to personalisation interpret their willingness but an inability to intervene or defend a victim as their fault; the negative interpretation of this cue influences their emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying (Salmivalli, 2014). Although attributions of self-blame may be adaptive in a number of ways, for instance, it may offer some illusion of empathy for the victim; personalisation causes one to feel crippling guilt (Twemlow & Sacco, 2013).

2.5.2 Catastrophising

Catastrophising ensues when a negative event is blown out of proportion and takes on different meanings, some of which may not actually reflect reality (Beck, 2011). Catastrophising is a style of thinking that amplifies anxiety (Barriga & Morrison, 2010). This style of thinking error anticipates disaster or that something is worse than it actually is. A bystander may appraise his experience of witnessing bullying and then automatically imagine the worst possible thing that could happen.

For instance, a bystander might be catastrophising when he constantly anticipates the worst-case scenario by saying "I am afraid they could turn to me. I also feel

worried because I always think that one day I will also be bullied as my friend has been bullied. I am so scared and worried. Because of this, I feel restless in school". In catastrophising, the mind continues with the "what if" game. This is when the mind goes on and on thinking about what would happen if the worst-case scenario happens. Catastrophising can generally take two forms. The first of these is to take a scenario out of context and give it an adverse "spin." The second form of catastrophising occurs when an individual looks forward to the future and forecast all the things that will go wrong.

2.5.3 Overgeneralisation

Overgeneralisation happens when a person makes a general conclusion about all circumstances based on a single and likely incidental event (Bernard, 2009, p.2; Froggatt, 2006, p.3; Wendland, 2004, p. 7). Overgeneralisation is a self-debasing cognitive mindset that leads a person to erroneously assume that a situation is worse than it actually is. Overgeneralisation occurs when an individual develops an overblown or misconstrued evaluation or interpretation concerning an event or a scenario (Beck, 2011). "I failed to defend my friend when he was being bullied, so that must mean that I am incompetent and weak as a person."

There are a few different ways of overgeneralising. Those prone to this tend to take isolated events and assume that all future events will be the same. For instance, for a bystander of bullying, failure to intervene in one or two instances while witnessing an unpleasant event such as bullying. does not automatically imply that an observer will always fail at a task expected of him; it is, therefore, erroneous to generally evaluate one's ability as incompetent on the basis of one's performance in a single or few occasions. Hence, over-generalisation implies making a general conclusion based on a single incident or piece of evidence (Beck, 2011).

2.5.4 Selective Abstraction

Selective abstraction referred to a tendency to focus on negative details out of context. Hodges et al., (2013) hypothesised that this tendency resulted from attentional bias and that the perception, for example, of a threat can be adaptive. Selective abstraction occurs when an individual pinpoints one particular negative aspect of a situation on which to focus, which then causes him or her to lose sight of

the larger context. Selective abstraction is the process of exclusively focusing on one negative aspect or detail of a situation, and magnifying the importance of that detail, thereby casting the whole situation in a negative context (Beck, 1979).

For instance, a bystander might appraise school safety based on his singular experience of witnessing bullying by saying "I am so scared because I think these boys that bully might come for me also. I think one day they will also bully me in this school. I don't feel safe in this school. No one is safe in this school. Witnessing bullying makes me hate going to school". Bystanders who are prone to selective abstraction may be more likely to view the bullying they witness as a serious threat to their wellbeing and, as a consequence, react with negative emotions. Selective abstraction can, therefore, contribute to psychological re-victimisation and indirect co-victimisation for bystanders (Rivers et al., 2009).

In summary, bystanders' thinking patterns which involve perception, interpretation, and appraisal of events are crucial in the precipitation and sustainment of negative behavioural and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying (Beck, 2011). Bystanders should, therefore, be taught how to recognise, challenge, and reappraise negative and unhelpful thoughts and feelings related to their experiences (Covin et al., 2011; De Oliveira, 2012).

The impact of self-debasing cognitive distortion in behavioural and emotional responses to events has also been established in several studies (Alatiq et al., 2010; Ingram et al., 2007; Jacobs, Reinecke, Gollab & Kane, 2008; Mobini, Reynolds & Mackintosh, 2012; Najavits et al., 2004). This is because the emotional and behavioural reaction to events is an outcome of a person's thinking (Barriga, Landau, Stinson, Liau, & Gibbs, 2001; Beck, 1979; Joormann & D' Avanzato, 2010).

Barriga et al. (2008) evaluated the relationship between cognitive distortion and maladaptive behaviour in high school adolescents. The result indicated that both self-debasing and self-serving cognitive distortion were frequent in high school adolescents with maladaptive behaviours. Specifically, self-serving cognitive distortions were associated with externalising behaviours, while self-debasing cognitive distortions were linked to internalising behaviours. If self-debasing cognitive distortions are related to internalising behaviour and internalising behaviour are

some of the common symptoms observed in secondary trauma (Creed, Reisweber & Beck, 2011; Lerias & Byrne, 2003), then self-debasing cognitive distortion might play a significant role in bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to bullying.

Nasir, Zamani, Yusooff and Khairudin (2011) reported a positive interrelationship between self-debasing cognitive distortion and depression in their research study of the interconnection between self-debasing cognitive distortion and depression. In a related study on the connection between self-debasing cognitive distortion and psychological disorders, Rosenfield (2004) found that the severity of such disorders could be accounted for by the prevalence of self-debasing cognitive distortion.

Szentagotai and Freeman (2007), as well as Szasz (2011), found in their studies that maladaptive patterns or processes of thinking that debase an individual and which can lead to self-blame are related to depressive moods. In addition, Teo and Say (2012) also found a strong correlation between the participants' level of self-debasing cognitive distortion and the severity of depression. Nyarko and Amisah (2014), too, found that negative thinking manifests in depressive moods and that an indicative positive correlation exists between self-debasing cognitive distortion and depression.

Furthermore, Luqman (2011) explored the contributing influence of self-debasing cognitive distortion on the level of anxiety among adolescents. One hundred adolescents participated in the study. The Dysfunctional Attitude Scale (DAS) was used to measure cognitive distortion and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) was used to measure anxiety. The analysis of the results suggested that self-debasing cognitive distortion plays a significant role in the level of anxiety among adolescents.

Self-debasing cognitive distortion appeared as a significant factor of anxiety not just among early adolescents, but also among the childhood population. Muris and Field (2008) researched the role of self-debasing distorted cognition in the aetiology of childhood anxiety problems. The study revealed that self-debasing cognitive distortion contributes a significant part in the morphology and continuance of anxiety disorderliness in children.

Barriga, Landau, Stinson, Liau, & Gibbs, (2000) earlier investigated the relationship between self-debasing cognitive distortion and internalising difficulties. The finding of the research indicated a decisive association between distorted cognition and internalising behaviour. In other words, it was reported from the findings that distorted thoughts of personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction induced participants' internalising behaviour. Kendal, Stark and Adam (1990) reviewed the role of self-debasing cognitive distortion in childhood depression. In their study, the participants were assessed for defects in information processing and distorted thinking in relation to depression. The result of the study implied that a clear-cut relationship exists between depression and distorted cognition. From the results of the study, it could be opined that negative information processing has implications for an emotional outcome (Covin et al., 2011). Likewise, healthy and efficient information processing may increase the chances of positive emotion and behavioural reaction to events (Covin et al., 2011).

The influence of self-debasing cognitive distortion in exacerbating internalising behaviour has been reported further for decades. Freeman et al. (2004) identified a number of self-debasing cognitive distortions in adolescence internalising disorders. Overgeneralising and catastrophising were particularly strongly related to anxiety. Freeman et al. (2004) further suggested that these self-debasing cognitive distortions tend to exacerbate the individual perception of threat and dangers.

In a study conducted by Abdilla (2009), self-debasing cognitive distortions were discovered to affect the growth of a broad spectrum of internalising behaviours. The result of the study suggested that self-debasing cognitive distortions play a significant part in affecting various elements of psychological functioning. Categorically, self-debasing cognitive distortion seems to hike participants' level of internalising behaviour, anger, anxiety and depression. In another study by Rehna, Hanif & Tariq (2012), self-debasing cognitive distortions were also reported to predict mood disorders in adolescents.

Flouri and Panourgia (2011) explored the impact of self-debasing cognitive distortion on the trajectory of adolescent internalising behaviour. The findings show a significant relationship between distorted thought and internalising behaviour. The

finding further confirmed that distorted thinking patterns might underlie emotional and behavioural reactions to events. Troy, Wilhelm, Shallcross & Mauss (2010), as well as Tiba (2010), had earlier noted that distorted thinking triggers a variety of emotions and behaviour and a person who hold a self-debasing cognitive distortion might be vulnerable to emotional and behavioural problems.

Rehna et al. (2012) conducted a study to examine the role of self-debasing cognitive distortions in intensifying the level of depression in adolescents. The sample consisted of 240 males and females who responded to a self-debasing cognitive distortion questionnaire as well as an anxiety and depression scale. The result of the research shows a positive, strong relationship between each of the distorted thinking patterns which include catastrophising, personalising, over-generalising, selective attraction and internalising behaviour.

Marcotte, Levesque and Fortin, (2006) carried out a longitudinal study of two years in which six hundred and forty-four adolescents participated in investigating how self-debasing cognitive distortion contributes to adolescents' internalising behaviour. Self-report instruments such as the Beck depression inventory, a cognitive style test and a cognition checklist were administered during the course of the research. The findings of the research suggest that depressed participants reported a higher level of self-debasing cognitive distortion.

Prinstein et al. (2005) describe self-debasing cognitive distortion as self-referent attribution. Prinstein et al. (2005) further hypothesised that participants with self-referent attributions would exhibit more internalising behaviour symptoms such as anxiety and depression. One hundred and sixteen primary school learners and 159 adolescents were given a hypothetical scenario. They were further instructed to complete self-report measures such as a children depression inventory. The results of the study supported their hypothesis. Children with higher self-referent attribution exhibit more internalising symptoms. Pareen, Ettekal and Ladd (2013) also noted that children who indulge in self-referent attribution are likely to experience internalising behaviours. In other words, self-blame can instigate psychological distress (Graham, 2006).

I agree that the generalisability of these findings is limited due to the sampling of participants from a different cultural context and the inability to control for other extraneous variables such as personality trait, but the implication of these research findings, however, is that thinking patterns play a pivotal role in emotional and behavioural reactions to events.

The findings of these studies are in line with the main assumption of both cognitive and appraisal theory, namely that individual emotional and behavioural reaction to events depends on an individual's underlying cognitive structures (Akkoyunlu & Turkcapar, 2012). In other words, inaccurate and irrational interpretations underlie emotional dysfunction and maladaptive behaviour rather than the event itself (Jorma & D' Avanzato 2010; Nas, Brugman & Koops, 2008).

In general, the result of these studies supported the notion that a variety of indicators of maladaptive emotion and behaviour is informed by the extent to which victims have adverse beliefs and views about themselves and the events they experienced or witnessed. Barriga et al. (2001) asserted that the interpretation an individual gives to an event or a scenario significantly adds to the individual emotional and behavioural responses to the event or scenario. The manner in which an individual appraises and interprets events rather than the events itself determines emotion and behavioural reaction to such an event (Joorman & D' Avanzato, 2010).

The findings of these reviewed studies also contribute to the increasing literature that suggests irrational appraisal and interpretations of events influence individuals' judgements and subsequent responses to events (Barriga et al., 2008; Flouri & Panourgia, 2011). When an individual's judgement and belief about an event is irrational in some way, this can serve as a basis for misguided action and negative emotional responses (Ledley et al., 2005). Therefore, distorted beliefs and judgement are key elements of the cognitive process that underlie emotional distress (Ledley et al., 2005).

That is to say, emotional and behavioural maladjustment stem from distorted thinking patterns and maladaptive cognitions (Beck, 2008). Identifying the specific erroneous thinking that influences perception, interpretation, and appraisal of events will assist in the understanding of how to offset negative emotional and behavioural response

vulnerability (Mathews & MacLeod, 2005). Once this erroneous thinking is discovered in a person's cognitive style, it can be modified by substituting rational, realistic, ideas for the distorted ones and thus bring about balanced psychological functioning (Roman et al., 2012).

The findings of these studies also seemed to emphasise further the role of interpretation in the outset and continuation of negative behavioural and emotional reactions to events. To this end, I believe strategies to reduce cognitive errors while reacting to events needs to be advanced to achieve the desired emotional and behavioural changes. As such, cognitive behavioural therapy aims to modify errors in information processing believed to underlie the negative emotional and behavioural disorder. Therefore, in the next section, I expatiate on cognitive behaviour therapy.

2.6   COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY

Cognitive behaviour therapy is described as an effective way of bringing about the desired positive change in erroneous cognitions (Beck, 2011; Butler et al., 2006). Aaron Beck developed cognitive therapy in the early 1960s as psychotherapy for modifying distorted thoughts and maladaptive beliefs. Beck noticed that distorted thought induce depression and impacts patients' lives by lowering their self-esteem. The basic assumption of cognitive therapy is that what a person thinks influences what the person feels. Irrational thought distorts perception, and it can result in psychological and emotional problems (Plotnik, 2002).

Beck identified self-debasing cognitive distortion, such as over-generalisation, as one of the cognitive factors that contribute to the various symptoms of an emotional and behavioural disorder. Having established that self-debasing cognitive distortion can exacerbate negative emotional and behavioural responses and feelings of depression, Beck devised a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in 1979 to treat underlying maladaptive cognitions in depressed patients.

Cognitive behavioural therapy is an evidence-based psychotherapy that emphasises the importance of identifying and restructuring cognitive distortion in the treatment of affective emotional and behavioural disorders such as intrusive thought, anxiety and depression (Beck, 2011). The psychotherapy that focuses attention on individual thought and behaviour is generally known as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

According to Towl, Graham, Brighton and David (2010), and Johnstone (2006) CBT is a broad church of related approaches. Examples of approaches under broad CBT includes Aron's Beck cognitive therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy, Albert Ellis' rational emotive behaviour therapy, mindfulness-based CBT, acceptance and commitment therapy among others (Ayers, Sorrell, Thorp & Wetherell, 2007; Van Bilsen & Thomson, 2011).

Cognitive behaviour therapy is an "amalgam of behavioural and cognitive interventions" into one integrated and comprehensive theory aimed at addressing the dysfunctional connection among thinking, emotions and behaviours (Arch & Craske, 2009, p. 525). Thus, cognitive behavioural therapy adopts cognitive and behavioural approaches to change thinking, emotions and behaviours (Bowers, 2013). The fundamental assumption of CBT is that changing individuals' distortions and dysfunctional thoughts by reframing them will consequently affect their emotions and actions.

The cognitive intervention in CBT aims to modify or change maladaptive cognitions and self-statements. The cognitive components of CBT target cognitions or thoughts that underlie negative emotional and behavioural responses to events (Arch & Craske, 2009). It aims to figure out whether these thoughts are accurate or distorted. The behavioural component of CBT aims to decrease maladaptive behaviour by implementing behavioural practices to facilitate adaptive behaviour (Arch & Craske, 2009). The behavioural therapy weakens the connections between stimuli (situation or events) and undesirable reactions to such events (Grohol, 2015). These two elements can be combined in therapy to address both maladaptive cognition and behaviour.

All CBT methods share the perspective that emotional issues are associated with how one thinks about oneself, about others and the world, and that one's action is based on such thought (Dryden, 2010). The assumption of CBT is that irrational thoughts and maladaptive behaviour are learned; therefore, it can be modified and unlearned. There are some significant variations regardless of the overwhelming commonalities among CBT methods. For instance, the approach to CBT varies in terms of the process and procedure that facilitate desired modification in cognition

and behaviour (Van Bilsen & Thomson, 2011). Some CBT approaches adopt skills training to achieve a change in behaviour while others target changing distorted thought.

According to Dobson and Dobson (2016), cognitive behaviour therapy can be classified into three categories namely, development of a repertoire of skills, problem-solving techniques and cognitive restructuring, depending on the extent to which the focus is on achieving cognitive change or behavioural change. Dobson and Dobson (2016) further explained that the emphasis of the therapy could be on the development of a repertoire of skills designed to give the client a set of instructions to cope with a variety of problematic situations. Dobson and Dobson (2016) added that CBT could also be categorised under problem-solving techniques if the aim of implementing the therapy is to help the client develop general strategies to deal with a broad range of personal difficulties. They further emphasised that CBT can also be categorised under cognitive restructuring if the therapy places emphasis on the assumption that emotional and behavioural problems are consequences of maladaptive thoughts. In such an instance, the focus of the intervention will be to reframe distorted thinking and enhance adaptive thoughts.

The central tenet of CBT intervention is that maladaptive emotional and behavioural responses to events result from dysfunctional thoughts and feelings that are informed by the negative appraisal and interpretation of such events (Clark, 2014). Therefore, the goal of CBT is to single out and challenge distorted cognition through the process of reappraisal (Clark, 2014). Among the fundamental assumptions of CBT is that reappraising negative thoughts will most likely decrease the negative emotions associated with distorted thoughts (Butler et al., 2006). Based on this assumption, bystanders need to be taught how to recognise, re-evaluate, and change negative thought patterns which might be present and influence their emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying.

According to Dobson and Dobson (2016), the mechanisms underlying the use of CBT are based on access, mediation, and change speculation. The access hypothesis implied that the content and thinking process could be known and it is accessible. The researchers further argued that with adequate training and

thoughtfulness, a depressed person(s) could become conscious of their thoughts. The mediation hypothesis states that people's patterns of thought inform their emotional and behavioural responses to events. As a sequel to the hypothesis of access and mediation, the hypothesis of change states that since cognitions could be known and precipitate responses to events and situations, distorted cognition can be modified and restructured to affect responses to events (Dobson & Dobson, 2016).

In CBT, treatments are generally tailored to very particular objectives, and there is an effort to assess or evaluate the effect of the treatment. In other words, CBT is specific and it focuses on measurable or observable results. CBT has proved to be highly efficacious in the treatment of various psychological disorders (Bernal et al., 2009; Butler et al., 2006; Hwang, 2009; In Albon & Schnelder, 2007; Klein, Jacobs & Reinecke, 2007; Lohmann, 2014; McMain, Newman, Segal, & DeRubeis, 2015; Nicolas et al., 2009).

Tucker (2016) reported the experiences of counsellors who used cognitive behaviour therapy for adolescents who experienced or witnessed bullying in school. Although the study was limited to 10 counsellor participants, the result was consistent with literature that CBT is an effective therapy to reduce emotional and behavioural maladjustment for children who experienced or witnessed bullying.

Doumas, Midgett and Watts (2019) conducted a study to appraise the efficiency of cognitive behavioural therapy for reducing bystanders' internalising symptoms. Participants in the intervention group completed 90 minutes of bi-weekly cognitive behavioural therapy sessions. The findings of the study revealed that bystanders who participated in the therapy sessions expressed a higher reduction in internalising symptoms from baseline to three months of follow up in comparison to participants in the waitlist.

Berry and Hunt (2009) developed an intervention to reduce anxiety symptoms in victims of bullying. The intervention comprises sessions which incorporated self-esteem building strategies like cognitive restructuring. Participants of this intervention reported significant reductions in symptoms of anxiety. Several other studies indicate that CBT treatment has been efficient in decreasing anxiety and

trauma symptoms in different populations (adult, adolescent and children) (Hundt, Mignogna, Underhill, & Cully, 2013; Rooksby, Elouafkaoui, Humphris, Clarkson, & Freeman, 2015). Kwon and Osei (2003) reported that CBT has been found to restore levels of cognitive distortion back to normal in patients with traumatic symptoms.

A study conducted by Chu, Colognori, Weissman & Bannon (2009) appraised the efficacy of CBT for childhood anxiety. Participants were allocated randomly to either a cognitive behavioural therapy treatment group or a control group. Participants allotted to the intervention group showed a significant reduction in anxiety symptoms. After a period of time, the control group also received the treatment program. The treatment program was also effective in the control group as they also showed a comparable decrease in anxiety symptoms.

The effectiveness of CBT for children and adolescents with juvenile fibromyalgia was also conducted recently (Kashikar-Zuck et al., 2013). One hundred adolescents aged between 11 and 18 with JFM participated in the study. The study found that CBT led to a significant reduction in catastrophic thinking in adolescents with juvenile fibromyalgia (Kashikar-Zuck et al., 2013).

A review of meta-analysis revealed that CBT designed and implemented for children and adolescents showed strong evidence of effective treatment of internalising disorderliness such as anxiety, intrusive thought and fear (James, Cowdrey, Soler, Choke, 2015; Hofmann et al., 2012). There was evidence for the efficacy of CBT in the treatment of anxiety disorders in children and adolescents. In addition, CBT treatment for intrusive thoughts as compared to alternative approaches produced significantly better results (Guggisberg, 2005).

Rajabi, Bakhshani, Saravani, Khanjani, and Bagian (2016), for instance, conducted a quasi-experimental study to ascertain the effect of CBT in reducing depression and anxiety among victims of bullying. The results revealed that CBT reduced depression and anxiety in the participants. Similar results were found in the earlier studies of Chu, Hoffman, Johns, Reyes-Portillo, and Hansford (2014), Lau, Chan, Li, and Au (2010), Berry and Hunt (2009) and Kashikar-Zuck et al. (2013). In all these studies, CBT was found to reduce internalising symptoms such as anxiety, fear and nervousness in the victims of bullying.

Given the effectiveness of CBT in reduction of maladaptive emotions and behaviours in similar contexts as demonstrated in the review of the literature, I am of the opinion that bystanders of bullying could also be taught how to recognise, re-evaluate, and change negative thought patterns that precede negative emotional and behavioural reactions commonly associated with witnessing bullying with a view of modifying their experiences of school bullying. This is because emotions and behaviours also change in line with reappraisal or reinterpretation of events (Baghurst & Kelley, 2014; Ellis, 2009). In other words, cognitive reappraisal or restructuring of negative and dysfunctional thoughts can effectively alter behavioural and emotional responses to events (Clark & Beck 2012; Delgado, Gillis & Phelps 2009). In the next section, I elaborated on cognitive behavioural therapy strategies that could be used in interventions aimed at modifying bystanders' thinking patterns.

2.6.1 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy strategies

The theoretical model underpinning CBT states that dysfunctional or distorted cognitions (thoughts) contribute to adverse emotions (e.g., anxiety), which are controlled, often unhelpful, by certain behaviours (Stallard, 2010). Thus, CBT seeks to rectify dysfunctional connection among thoughts, emotions and behaviour by using a combination of cognitive and behavioural approaches (Arch & Craske, 2009).

The cognitive interventions aspect of CBT is intended to modify cognitions (thoughts), beliefs and self-statements, which are considered to be maladaptive. On the other hand, the behavioural interventions component of CBT aims at reducing maladaptive behaviours (e.g. avoidance) and increasing adaptive behaviours by applying behavioural methods that eventually lead to renewed learning (Arch & Craske, 2009). It can be concluded from the latter that the distinctive characteristics of CBT are problem-focused intervention strategies which are established on the foundations of cognitive theories as well as learning theories (James, Soler, & Weatherall, 2007.

The overarching goal of CBT is the identification and modification of distorted beliefs and irrational assumptions that underlie negative thinking patterns to enhance change in emotion and behaviour (Beck, 2011). Thus, in CBT, there are certain common strategies utilised to achieve these goals. In this session, I described a brief

overview of some of these strategies as they were used in the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention in this study.

2.6.1.1 Socratic questioning

Socratic questioning is a process of promoting insight and rational decision making by asking a series of questions to help clients uncover and examine the error in their cognition and to develop a balanced response to this cognition (Neenan & Dryden, 2015; Reinecke & Ginsburg, 2009). These Socratic questions plunge deeply into thoughts that precede and maintain the onset of emotional maladjustment and offer a chance to analyse and evaluate the truthfulness of those thoughts.

Socratic questioning requires the therapist to maintain a collaborative rapport with the clients to avoid a direct confrontational situation. According to Joyce, Pipper and Ogrodniczuk (2007), establishing a good rapport with participants enhances participants' attendance to intervention sessions. Similarly, Terjesen and Esposito (2006) also noted that it is important to involve participants in the process of drafting rules for participation in a program. Doing so may create a sense of inclusion, security and active participation.

2.6.1.2 Challenging automatic thoughts

This is a strategy used by the therapist to question the validity of a client's maladaptive thoughts. It involves looking for evidence in favour of or against a distorted thought. The therapist encourages the clients to note negative thoughts with a view to challenging the validity of the cognition. For instance, a bystander might say he or she feels worthless and guilty for not being able to stop the bullying he or she witnessed. The implication of this thought will be explained to the bystander to see the correlation between the thoughts and his or her traumatic feelings

2.6.1.3 Coping cards

Coping cards are small index cards with brief phrases. Coping cards contain positive self-talk that can be used to instil confidence when experiencing anxiety. The therapist encourages the clients to keep the cards nearby and read them on a regular basis. Coping cards can take several forms, one of which is to note the self-debasing thoughts on one side with its adaptive response on the other.

2.6.1.4 Decatastrophising

Decastrophising is also called "what if" techniques. Decatastrophising refers to re-evaluating and modifying catastrophic thoughts (Beck 2011). The therapist teaches the clients to imagine the worst thing that could happen. Decatastrophising is a cognitive behavioural technique used to treat cognitive distortions such as over-generalisation, frequently seen in maladaptive responses to an event. This method consists of challenging a feared event using mental imagery to examine if the impact of an event has been over-exaggerated. The aim is depleting the fear while learning to see alternative perspectives.

2.6.1.5 Guided discovery

Beck (2011) recommends the use of guided discovery based on Socratic questioning to assist clients in identifying cognitive distortion in their thinking patterns. The therapist tries as much as possible to refrain from assuming the client's thoughts are distorted, rather the therapist attempt to question and challenge the client cognition for the client to reappraise the situation and make his or her own discoveries. For instance, a bystander might feel powerless as a result of his inability to intervene and see himself as incompetent. The role of the cognitive therapist will be to guide such bystanders to explore alternative ways of appraising the situation.

2.6.1.6 Homework assignments

Homework assignments are tasks or activities given to a client to complete between sessions. Homework assignments enable the client to put into practise the cognitive and behaviour strategies to reinforce the skills learnt throughout the sessions (Friedberg & Brelsford, 2011). Homework is given to enhance the acquisition of new behaviours that are described and discussed in the sessions to achieve the desired therapeutic change (Friedberg & Brelsford, 2011). Completion of homework assignments can facilitate success in therapy to a large extent (Beck 2011). To facilitate understanding how these cognitive behavioural strategies could be used in the process of altering behavioural and emotional responses to events, I describe the concept of cognitive restructuring in the next section.

2.6.2 Cognitive Restructuring

Cognitive restructuring is a cognitive behavioural therapy technique of acquiring knowledge of how to recognise and raise an objection to irrational or ill-adaptive

thoughts known as cognitive distortion to reappraise and change such negative thoughts or interpretations into neutral or positive ones (Clark, 2014; Gladding, 2009). The cognitive restructuring psychotherapeutic process involves identifying the negative thoughts and beliefs that influence and disturb emotions and evaluating these thoughts for their accuracy using evidence, hence, replacing it or modifying it with thoughts that are more accurate and useful (Cuncic, 2014).

The concept of cognitive restructuring is rooted in both cognitive and appraisal theory, which holds that it is one's interpretation of an event or situation and not the event itself that determines one's emotional and behavioural responses to such events (Clark & Ehlers, 2004). Cognitive restructuring, therefore, aims at disputing dysfunctional beliefs with a view to bringing about positive changes in erroneous cognition and in maladaptive information-processing strategies. In the process, wrongly encoded external or internal cues as well as misinterpretation and mental misrepresentation of those cues can be reappraised so that target situations hitherto perceived as stressful can be reframed as less stressful based on evidence from the new information acquired (Grey, Young & Holmes, 2002).

According to Clark (2014), cognitive restructuring has three core components namely, collaborative empiricism, verbal interventions and empirical hypothesis testing. Collaborative empiricism entails establishing a therapeutic connection between the therapist and the client by exchanging professional and experiential knowledge to describe, clarify and assist in resolving any presenting issues (Clark, 2014). Collaborative empiricism constitutes the initial session in which the clients and therapist share their respective experience with a view of describing, explaining and helping the client to secure an even assessment of schematic content (Clark, 2014). Tee and Kazantzis (2011) stated that efficient collaborative empiricism would enable clients to accredit change in behaviour to their own effort and not to any external forces.

To achieve a collaborative atmosphere and ensure co-operative participation during the therapy session, the therapist provides an overview of the rationale of treatment and set up the session agenda in collaboration with the client (Miller, Hubble & Duncan, 2007). Craig, Austin and Alessi, (2012) asserted that effective collaboration

between a therapist and a client should be consistent in therapy. Also, clients' feedback, understanding and thoughts should be noted and included in the treatment plan (Arthur & Collins, 2010).

Verbal interventions involve evidence gathering, identifying cognitive errors and gathering alternative explanations (Clark, 2014). A verbal intervention process will afford the client and the therapist the chance to think of alternative helpful thoughts and behaviours that will facilitate the process of reframing self-debasing cognitive distortions into self-positive statements (Craig et al., 2012).

The empirical hypothesis testing element of cognitive restructuring suggests that treatment should include scheduled experiential exercise based on testing or observation, carried out by clients during or between the cognitive therapy sessions (Clark, 2014). Such experiential activities should concentrate on the usefulness, willingness, and efficiency of the behaviours and cognitive strategies of the clients to deal with such experiences in a distinct context with different settings and not test the reality of oppression or the validity of oppressive experiences of the clients.

A cognitive restructuring session begins with a discussion of how negative thoughts contribute to the misperception of events and how such thoughts, in turn, lead to behavioural choices that compound distress (Clark, 2014). After the initial session, the therapist incorporates empiricism which is a key feature, into the therapeutic process. Clients are being encouraged to describe what the traumatic experience means to them as well as their belief about the event (Miller, et al., 2007; Sundet, 2012). Negative thoughts are assumed to be untrue and not to reflect reality and are therefore open to questioning and challenge (Butler et al., 2006).

In cognitive therapy using cognitive restructuring, clients are made to understand how thinking patterns play a significant role in influencing emotions and behaviour. Some of the techniques used in cognitive restructuring to facilitate change in thought patterns as described by Huppert (2009, p 245) include Socratic questioning, challenging automatic thoughts, decatastrophising, guided discovery and reattribution.

Once negative thoughts related to negative emotional and behavioural responses to events are identified, they are categorised into self-debasing cognitive distortions that include over-generalisation, personalisation, catastrophising, and selective abstraction (Beck, 2011; Clark, 2014). Cognitive restructuring facilitates reappraisal of these self-debasing cognitive distortions and enhances the assimilation of rational thinking, which tends to lead to more positive emotional and behavioural responses (David & Szentagotai, 2006).

It is, therefore, important to note that simply pointing out bystanders' catastrophic misinterpretation of intrusive thoughts, exaggerated sense of personal responsibility, personalisation, and selective abstraction error, which are central to the outset and prolongation of negative behavioural and emotional reactions to events, may not be enough to promote a new, more adaptive way of thinking (Rachman, 2003; Reinecke & Ginsburg, 2009). Rather, bystanders should be guided to recognise that their negative thinking patterns may be untrue, invalid, and not evidence-based and may not reflect reality (Ozdel, Taymur, Guriz, Tulaci & Kuru, 2014).

The efficacy of cognitive restructuring interventions in facilitating reappraisal of negative thoughts as well as in decreasing behavioural and emotional disorders associated with such thoughts has been investigated by numerous researchers (Boschen & Ludvik, 2015; McManus, Doorn & Yiend, 2012; Rodebaugh, Jakatdar, Rosenberg & Heimberg, 2009; Shikatani, Antony, Kuo & Cassin 2014; Steil, Jung & Stangier, 2011).

McManus et al., (2012), for instance, reported the efficacy of cognitive restructuring in decreasing irrational beliefs associated with illness. It was made known that in contrast to the waitlist group, the cognitive restructuring techniques of CBT reduced irrational beliefs and related depressive feelings. Shikatani et al. (2014) reported a significant positive impact of cognitive restructuring in reducing post-event processing and its associated negative effects. This finding further confirmed that decreased maladaptive beliefs significantly predicted a reduction in post-event processing.

In like manner, Muller-Engelman and Steil (2016) reviewed the effect of cognitive restructuring on imagery modification in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

victims. The participants that were exposed to cognitive restructuring showed a significant reduction in the symptoms of PTSD. In a related study, Mueser, Jennifer, Haiyi, Rosenberg, and Wolfe (2015) found that cognitive restructuring played a significant role in reducing PTSD symptoms in patients with severe mental illness.

Chen, Lu, Chang, Chu, & Chou (2006) evaluated the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring techniques on distorted thoughts and self-esteem of an adolescent in comparison with a control group. The result showed, a month after the intervention, that the self-esteem of the experimental group was significantly improved compared to control group participants. In a similar vein, Hamdan, Puskar and Bandak (2009) also conducted a study to ascertain the effectiveness of the use of cognitive restructuring techniques with students suffering from low self-esteem and depressive symptoms. After the intervention, the result showed a significant reduction in participants' scores of perceived stress. Lower depressive symptoms were also reported.

Shurick et al. (2012) conducted a study to investigate the durable effect of cognitive restructuring techniques on conditioned fear. Fifty-two participants were involved in the study in which participants were distributed equally at random to the intervention and comparison groups. The result of the study indicated a significant decrease in the fear response of participants who received cognitive restructuring training.

Can, Dereboy and Eskin (2012) investigated the efficacy of cognitive restructuring in reducing anxiety. A sample of fifty adolescents received nine cognitive restructuring therapy sessions. The results of the study showed a significant reduction in the anxiety level of the participants. From the result of the study, it could be concluded that cognitive therapy may be efficient in reducing the cognitive and physiological components of anxiety (Can et al., 2012).

Motevalli, Sulaiman, Hamzah, Kamaliyeh and Roslan (2013) investigated the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention on trait anxiety among Iranian high school learners. In the study, ninety-four participants were randomly selected to receive eight cognitive restructuring sessions. The result showed that cognitive restructuring has significant effects on reducing anxiety symptoms.

There is evidence of the efficacy of cognitive restructuring intervention in facilitating reappraisal of negative thoughts associated with negative emotional and behavioural responses to events in different contexts, as reported in the review of literature for this study. Nevertheless, its efficacy may be insignificant in cases where clients have highly disturbed cognitive functions that inhibit integrating existing information-processing mechanisms to accommodate new information (Sofuoglu, DeVito, Waters & Carroll, 2013; Tavakolian & Abolghasemi, 2016).

Kiluk, Nich, Babuscio, and Carroll (2010) found that learning the new skills required to refute maladaptive thoughts to change the way in which clients process information and assimilate more adaptive thoughts depends on the clients having a positive attitude to the therapy. One of the challenges of CBT is that clients who are unmotivated may not be able to exert the required energy needed to participate actively in the treatment. In line with this, Clark (2014) maintains that clients must be willing to accept that their maladaptive thinking patterns may be inaccurate, selectively abstracted, personalised, catastrophised, counterproductive, overgeneralised and unproductive in order to ensure positive results in a cognitive restructuring intervention. In the next section, I discuss the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the objective of this research study, I identified two theories that could provide an overarching framework for conceptualising variations in emotional and behavioural reactions to events. Accordingly, both the cognitive theory and the appraisal theory were adopted to facilitate a better understanding of the complexities surrounding the mechanisms for generating emotional and behavioural responses to events.

2.7.1 Cognitive theory

The cognitive theory, developed by Aron T. Beck in 1967, is a theoretical model underpinning cognitive behavioural therapy (Stallard, 2010). The cognitive theory states that malfunctioning or distorted cognition precedes adverse emotions and such as fear, worry, anxiety and depression (Stallard, 2010). The core premise of the cognitive theory is that individual cognition plays an important and underlying role in

developing and maintaining behavioural and emotional reactions to stressful events or situations (Clark & Beck, 2010).

Clark and Beck (2010) asserted that cognitive theory assumes that what determines one's emotion and behaviour in a reaction is the meanings and appraisals that one attaches to such an event, which can aid or deter the adaptation process. That is to say, emotions are generated by the self because the meaning one attributes to an event after cognitive appraisal of the event, and not necessarily the event itself, determines one's emotional and behavioural response (Kinsella & Garland, 2008). Cognitive interpretation of an event makes it possible to construct and attach relational meaning to the event, and such interpretation determines a person's emotions and behaviour (Lazarus, 2006).

If an event leads to the expression of a certain emotion, then the same emotion should be expressed by whoever experiences the same event. In reality, this is often not the case because individuals respond differently with different emotions to a comparable event. Consequently, a determinant other than the event itself influences how people feel and behave. Kennerly, Westbrook and Kirk (2007) assign this determinant to the fundamental role of cognition, that is, the meaning and translation a person attaches to an event. If two persons had an experience of a related traumatic event and respond differently, the difference in their reactions might be because they assigned different meaning or interpretation to the same events they both experienced.

Cognitive appraisal of an event involves assessing a situation to determine the severity of the threat it may pose. In one instance, a person may make a positive cognitive appraisal and then ignore the situation if he or she interprets the situation as posing little or no danger (Beck, 2011). In another instance, a person may make a negative cognitive appraisal if, after evaluating a situation, the person interpreted the situation as stressful, harmful, and threatening to his or her wellbeing. Hunter et al. (2006) added that negative cognitive appraisal of a situation could inform the choice of a maladaptive response to the event or situation.

However, cognitive theory stipulates that negative appraisal patterns can be intentionally targeted and modified (Squires & Caddick, 2012). Dobson & Dobson,

(2016) asserted that cognitive reappraisal of thoughts could be achieved by engaging a client in a psychotherapy process such as cognitive restructuring to facilitate the change of negative cognitions into more rational and balanced thinking leading to improved psychological functionality.

Cognitive Theory
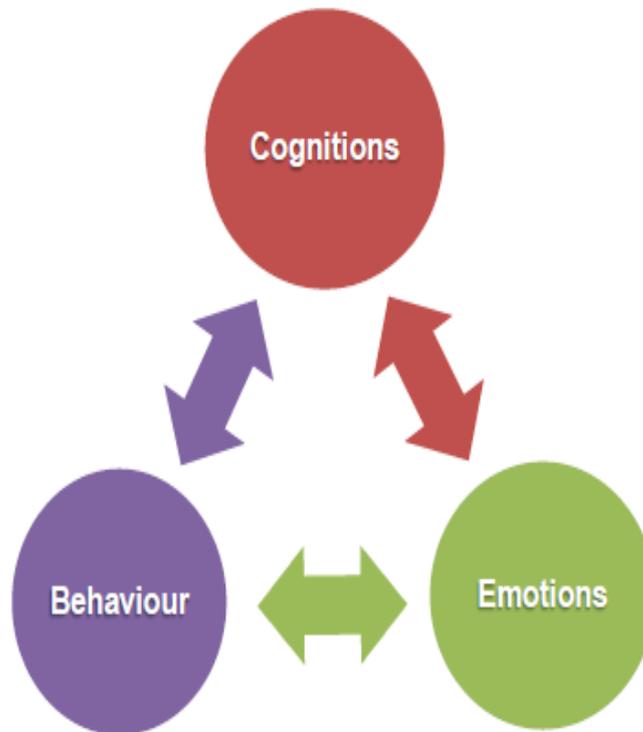
Figure 2-1: An illustration of the Cognitive Theory's bi-directional relationship**.** (Lake, 2014).

Cognitive theory, as shown in Figure 2.1, depicts a circle among thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. What a person thinks and how he or she perceives and interprets an event affects how he or she feels and also influences the person's mood. To complete the circle, what individuals feel about an event, dictates their outward responses as manifested in their behaviour.

2.7.2 Appraisal theory

The theory of appraisal, which was created by Arnold (1960) and advanced by Lazarus (1966) explained the rationale for differences in emotional reactions to

events. Arnold (1960) framed the term appraisal to point out the cognitive process involved in emotion elicitation. Appraisal theory is premised on the assumption that emotion is flexible and it is modifiable based on evaluation and interpretation that is given to an event. That is to say, the meaning attached to an event upon assessment of such an event, serves as a determinant of emotions that will be generated (Smith & Kirby, 2001).

An important tenet of the appraisal theory is that evaluations propel emotions (Roseman & Smith, 2001). By implication, this suggests that arousal of emotional reactions to events is not automatic but rather depends on the interpretation ascribed to an event experienced or witnessed. In other words, emotions are prompted by evaluative judgement. The objective of appraisal theory is to provide an explanation of the reciprocal relationship between evaluation patterns and emerging emotions in response to the event experienced. The structural model of appraisal theory suggests that one can predict the kind of emotion that will be elicited from a specific situation based on the way information regarding the events is processed.

Appraisal theory assigns a significant role to cognition for emotion elicitation, the intensity of emotion and differences in emotions (Smith & Kirby, 2001). Lazarus (1966) asserted that emotional reactions to a situation may differ when the content of the evaluative judgements differs. For instance, anger may correspond to an evaluative judgement that one has deliberately been harmed. Also, the emotion of fear may correlate with the perception of threat (Smith & Kirby, 2009).

Lazarus (1966) stated that emotions are determined by the cognitive process, specifically evaluations and judgement of an eliciting stimulus. He proposed that emotions will change when the contents of the judgement about a stimulus change. Proponents of appraisal theory are of the opinion that thoughts and emotions are interwoven, in other words, it is believed that emotions emanate from individuals' view and interpretation of their experiences (Aronson, 2005).

According to Lazarus (1966), one important factor that can inform the appraisal of a situation is a person's perception of accountability for the occurrence of an event. Lazarus (1966) stated that a person could attribute the causality of an event to himself or herself or to an external factor. In the situation whereby an individual holds

himself or herself responsible for the occurrence of a situation, such an individual might attribute self-blame. On the other hand, if an individual views the occurrence of a situation as due to circumstances, such a person could attribute blame to external factors. Impliedly, the perception of an individual with regards to the causality of an event could give a pointer to the emotions that will be elicited after experiencing an event (Smith & Haynes, 1993).

In summary, the appraisal theory proposes that a researcher could evaluate an individual's interpretation of an event with a view to predicting the emotional experiences of such individual depending on his on her underlying views of the event (Smith & Haynes, 1993). For instance, fear and anxiety may be experienced when an individual evaluates a situation as stressful and perceives feelings of vulnerability (Lazarus, 1996). The diagram depcicted in Figure 2.2 provides a schematic illustration of the appraisal theory.
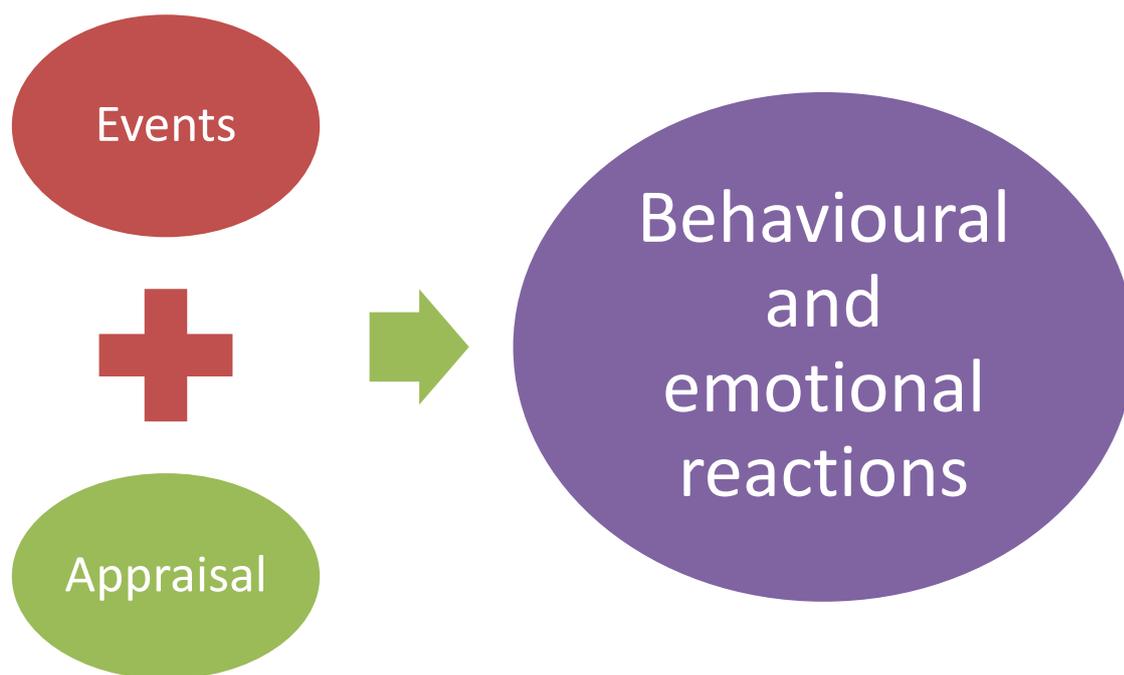
Figure 2-2: An Illustration of the appraisal theory

Next, I describe the conceptual framework for comprehending early adolescents' experiences of school bullying as bystanders.

2.8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMPREHENDING EARLY ADOLESCENTS' EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL BULLYING AS BYSTANDERS

This section explains the conceptual framework guiding this study. A conceptual framework is a set of interrelated concepts, beliefs, assumptions and expectations to facilitate an understanding of a particular phenomenon (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). According to Maxwell (2005), a conceptual framework is constructed and not found. In line with this assertion, I constructed a conceptual framework for understanding early adolescents' experiences of school bullying as bystanders. Constructing a conceptual framework to inform research enables a researcher to approach the study with certain underlying assumptions arising from theoretical perspectives (Mertens, 2014). These underlying assumptions influence the research questions, data collection strategies and ultimately the interpretation of the research findings.

The conceptual framework that was used as a guide to the philosophical orientation of this study is grounded in cognitive and appraisal theories which emphasise the interrelationship between thoughts, emotions and behaviour. The conceptual framework depicts the link between *thoughts*- how an event is interpreted; *emotion*- the feeling that occurs as a result of the thought and *behaviour*- and an action in response to the emotion.

Abd-El-khalick and Akerson (2007) emphasise the use of interrelated concepts grounded in the literature to provide a frame of reference within which to conduct a study. I used a conceptual framework as a diagrammatic means of communicating the various concepts and variables that were investigated in my study and the presumed interrelationship among them. I gained insight from reviewing existing literature and integrating theories that have some linking qualities while constructing a conceptual framework for my study which I presented in a diagram below.
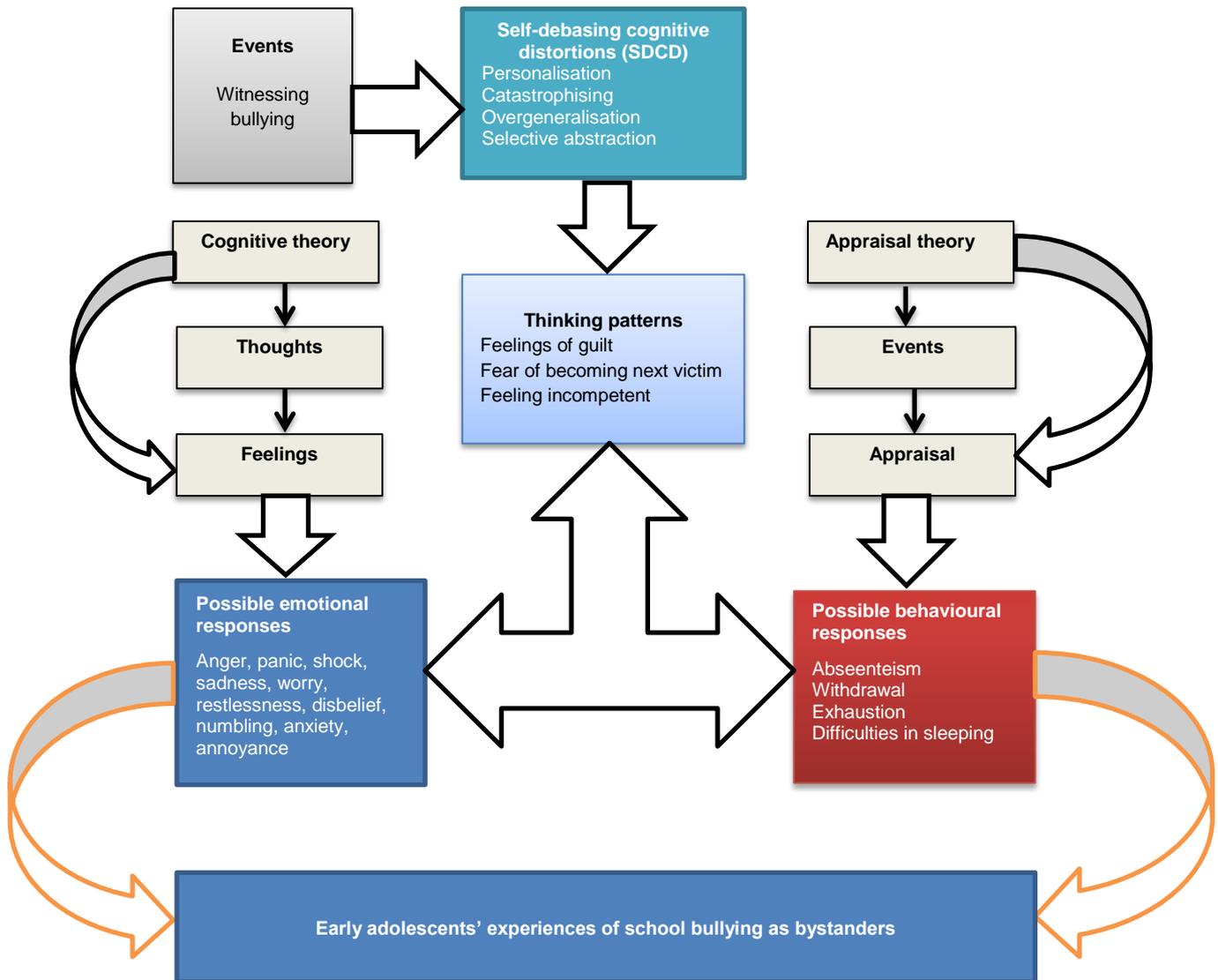
Figure 2-3: Conceptual framework for understanding early adolescents experiences of school bullying as bystanders.

Both cognitive and appraisal theory acknowledged the role of cognition in emotional and behavioural reactions to events (Wilson & Branch, 2006). In other words, one's appraisal and interpretation of events produces one's emotional and behavioural responses to such events. To further clarify, Wilson and Branch (2006) asserted that if an individual gives an unhelpful, inaccurate interpretation and appraisal to an event, such a person might likely experience negative emotions and behaviours.

The negative emotional and behavioural reactions of bystanders to witnessing bullying have been widely reported in literature (Oh & Hazler, 2009; Rivers et al., 2009). The thoughts and fear of becoming the next victims could produce feelings of

fear, anger, frustration and moodiness. The thoughts of anticipating the worst case scenario of direct subsequent victimisation could also trigger a high level of negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety, worry and exhaustion. These thoughts could be self-debasing cognitive distortions. SDCD elicits or precedes bystanders' negative emotion behavioural response to witnessing bullying.

In an attempt to understand how bystanders' reactions to witnessing bullying might differ, I drew on cognitive and appraisal theories which say variations in emotional and behavioural reactions to events could be attributed to differences in thought patterns that preceded the interpretation of those events. These theories influenced and shaped the contrary view I held with regards to reports from literature that simply witnessing bullying puts bystanders at risk of emotional and behavioural disorders. My view was substantiated by Wilson and Branch (2006) who asserted that it is the thoughts, beliefs, meaning and interpretation that one appends to a situation or an event that generate emotional and behavioural reactions to such events and not simply the experiencing or witnessing of the event itself.

This means the individual(s) are directly responsible for generating their own emotions. Dobson and Dobson (2016) noted that it is possible for individuals to change their emotional and behavioural responses to events by changing the appraisal and interpretation of the events. As Dobson and Dobson (2016) asserted, I too is of the opinion that changes in emotional and behavioural reactions to events are possible through cognitive restructuring. In line with this, a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention (SDCDRI) could be designed to teach bystanders to apply the principles of cognitive restructuring which require learning to refute irrational thoughts while reacting to witnessing bullying.

2.9   CONCLUSION

In Chapter 2, I presented a general outline of the concept of bullying in school with a focus on bystanders. The negative effect of witnessing bullying on bystanders' psychological wellbeing could be profound and lifelong as reviewed from the literature. Although research reveals that witnessing bullying can lead to intimidation and fear for bystanders, I based my argument on cognitive and appraisal theory that the events an individual experiences or witnesses should not necessarily cause a

person to show negative emotional or behavioural reactions but rather the appraisal or interpretation an individual attach to such an event while encoding cues determine the emotions.

I further described the concept of cognitive distortions as an influencer of bystander thinking patterns. This is because it was proven that cognition influences one's interpretation of events. The interpretations one ascribes to an event subsequently inform or trigger one's emotional and behavioural reaction to such an event. In other words, it is not an event per se but one's appraisal of the event that determines one's reactions to the event. To summarise, irrational thoughts are believed to precede most emotional and behavioural disorders.

Having established that behavioural and emotional reactions to events are the outcomes of a person's thinking patterns (Barriga et al., 2008; Joormann & D' Avanzato, 2010), I, therefore, reviewed the role of self-debasing cognitive distortion in emotional and behavioural responses to events from the literature. Although the generalisability of the findings of studies from the literature reviewed might be limited due to the sampling of participants from a different cultural context and the inability to control for other extraneous variables such as personality trait, the implication of these prior studies is that thinking patterns play a pivotal role in emotional and behavioural reactions to events. The findings of these studies are in line with the main assumption of cognitive theory, namely that individual emotional and behavioural reactions to events depend on people's underlying cognitive structures.

In line with this, I further described cognitive restructuring as a tool of the cognitive behavioural therapy used to facilitate an understanding of the process of altering behavioural and emotional responses to events. I rounded this chapter up with a review of the theoretical framework as well as the conceptual framework for understanding bystanders' reactions to witnessing bullying. Self-debasing cognitive distortions may be present and influence bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. Therefore, guiding bystanders to realise the errors and irrationality that might be present in their thinking patterns while reacting to the bullying they witness, may possibly modify bystander' feelings and behaviours and subsequently reduce negative emotional and behavioural responses which could

result from witnessing traumatic events such as bullying. In the next chapter, I discuss an overview of the contents and activities in the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention designed for this study to explore and describe bystanders' experiences of school bullying.

CHAPTER 3

SELF-DEBASING COGNITIVE DISTORTION RESTRUCTURING INTERVENTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter demonstrated, among others, the potential thinking patterns of bystanders and how such thinking patterns can trigger either positive or negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing school bullying. The literature emphasised that emotional and behavioural responses to events are influenced by patterns of thinking and appraisal and that the concept of cognitive restructuring is rooted in both cognitive and appraisal theory (see Section 2.7.1; 2.7.2).

As a result, I realised that an appropriate intervention is necessary for bystanders to guide them to realise the errors and irrationality that might be present in their thinking patterns whilst reacting to the bullying they witnessed with a view to modify bystander' emotional and behavioural responses. The intervention was developed to assist me to capture bystanders' experiences of school bullying following the implementation of a SDCDRI. Below is a schematic representation of the intent of the intervention.
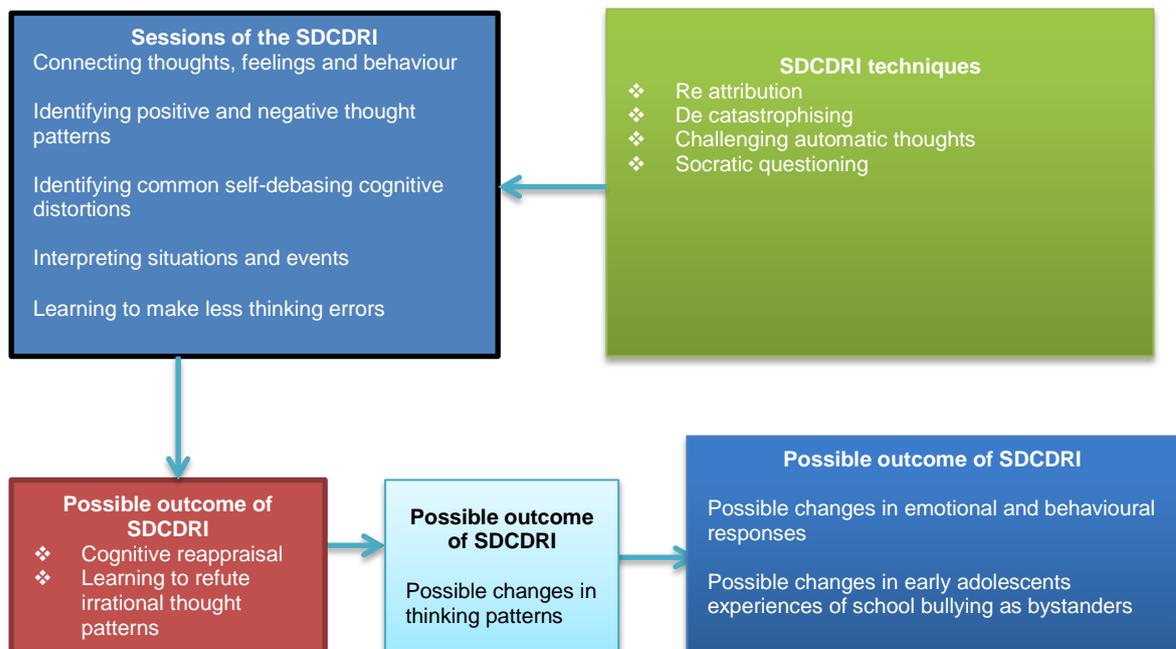
Figure 3-1: Schematic representation of the intent of the SDCDRI

Specifically, this chapter answered the following research question as listed below for ease of reference.

> How can the compilation of a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention assist to capture bystanders' experiences of school bullying?

To address this research question, I commenced this chapter by reviewing some of the principles of both the cognitive theory and appraisal theory that informed the design and implementation of the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention utilised for bystanders in this study. This again, provided the background as to how bystanders could learn to replace negative thinking patterns with rational thoughts that could lead to more desirable emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying.

3.2 THE THOUGHT-EMOTION-BEHAVIOUR CONNECTION

Beck's cognitive theory (see Section 2.7.1) incorporates elements of rational emotive behaviour therapy as propounded by Ellis (1989). According to Hyland and Boduszek (2012), both models view thought patterns as a determinant of emotional and behavioural reactions to events. Specifically, both models are widely recognised as the classic model for examining the relationships between thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. For instance, Ellis's rational emotive behaviour model uses the A-B-C-D-E-F analogy to demonstrate the interconnection among thoughts, emotion and behaviour.

Ellis (1989) illustrated that point A is the activating event such as witnessing bullying as it is the case for bystanders in this study; point C is the emotional and behavioural enactment to an event while the critical component in-between point A and point C is point B, which was described as one's belief about point A. Ellis noted that beliefs can be rational or irrational, functional or dysfunctional. Therefore, point D represents "disputing" the irrationality of the belief (if any). The disputation method involves identifying, debating, and challenging irrational beliefs and replacing them with rational beliefs (Ellis, 1989). Point E represents effective belief which results from the process of searching evidence to dispute the earlier irrational belief. Point F

represents the "feelings and behaviour" which becomes the new emotional and behavioural reactions to events.

According to Ellis (1989), there is an interrelated connection among thoughts, emotions and behaviour, corresponding and interdepending on one another. What an individual thinks, affects how the individual feels, which in turn affects the behaviour of the individual. Ellis utilises the A-B-C-D-E-F model to clarify the interrelationship between feelings, emotion and behaviour. He revealed that the actions and reactions of a person is the direct consequence of his or her feelings, which is also linked to his or her thoughts and beliefs. Ellis (1989) posited that thinking and emotion influence one another in a transactional manner and develop into a cause and effect relationship.

By understanding how this chain operates and how these concepts are related, a person can begin to exercise more control over disastrous thinking, emotions and behaviour (see Section 2.8). The counselling intention here is to correct distorted thinking or a self-debasing belief system using cognitive restructuring. In the process, clients can learn specific techniques (see Section 2.6.1) to challenge and refute irrational thoughts to reappraise such irrational thoughts, hence, replacing or modifying it with thoughts that are more accurate and useful (Cuncic, 2014).

According to the cognitive theory (see Section 2.7.1), emotional and behavioural reactions to events are triggered by conscious and unconscious irrational and self-degrading assessment and interpretations. Thus, clients feel anxious or depressed because their belief system strongly convinces them that it is *terrible* when they fail at something.

During the therapeutic session, clients are informed that *activating events* (A) do not naturally result in behavioural and emotional *consequences* (C), rather it is primarily the (B) *beliefs* about (A) that are accountable for the point (C) effect. By *disputing* (D) the irrational beliefs at point B, the *effect* (E) is that negative consequences (C) are eliminated. When feeling distressed, clients are guided to probe their beliefs (B) rather than blame the activating events (A). The client may be provided with a homework exercise to identify or describe a situation about which the client became sad (A-Activating event), what interpretations were given about the situation (B-

Beliefs) and to describe the upset feelings (C-Consequences, behavioural or emotional). Next, I examine the teaching-learning principles and behaviour modification.

3.3 THE TEACHING LEARNING PRINCIPLES AND BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION

The principles of learning extracted from the CBT approach to behaviour modification and the disputation method involved in learning to replace and challenge irrational beliefs with rational beliefs also informed the development and implementation of the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention in this study. Cognitive and behavioural theory is based on the assumption that behavioural reactions to events is a learning product and that whatever is learnt is an outcome of past conditioning and it can be unlearned through cognitive restructuring (Froggart, 2006; James et al., 2007).

The focus of the CBT approach is cognitive and behaviour modification, through methods similar to those used in experiments of classical conditioning (Hayes, 2004). Classical conditioning learning theory links up to the behaviour component in CBT (see Section 2.6). Ivan Pavlov's classical conditioning is the earliest and most basic learning theory. Ivan Pavlov conducted an experiment to demonstrate how learning a new behaviour can occur via the process of association.

The experiment involved placing some food before a hungry dog and the dog salivates. A neutral condition stimulus: ringing of bell (NS) was consistently paired with unconditioned stimulus: presentation of food (UCS) and it leads to an unconditioned response: salivating (UCR). After the process was repeatedly done, an association was formed between the neutral condition stimulus (NS) and the unconditioned stimulus (UCS). Thereafter, the dog salivates at the sound of the bell alone, evoking a conditioned response (CR) (Field & Nigthingale, 2009).

The classical theory of conditioning could be used to explain the emergence of cognitive and behavioural responses to diverse stimuli in daily life. However, the focal point of CBT is not about the function of classical conditioning in the emergence of responses to events, but how these principles are applicable to treatment (Maunder, Ravith, Fefergrad, & Richter, 2013). For instance, when viewed

in terms of the aftermath of experiencing a traumatic event such as witnessing bullying, a bystander could learn how to generate particular CR (traumatic symptoms response) when the CS (witnessing bullying) are presented through an association of CS and UCS that initially generated an unconditioned traumatic symptom (Mostert & Loxton, 2008).

Cognitive behavioural strategies (see Section 2.6.1) embrace a broad range of learning principles to modify individual emotional and behavioural reactions to events (Worell & Remer, 2003). These strategies include Socratic questioning; challenging automatic thoughts, re-attribution, distancing and distraction, decatatrophising, guided discovery, modifying negative or self-defeating thoughts and constructing realistic and balanced thoughts (see Section 2.6.1). These strategies are tools used in cognitive behavioural therapy to teach and facilitate change in thought patterns, which in turn could lead to change in emotional and behavioural reactions (see Figure. 3-1) (Huppert, 2009).

As individuals learn new cognitive methods through these strategies, their thoughts, emotions and behaviour begins to change in alignment with the newly learnt healthier patterns of thinking. It could, therefore, be concluded that the learning theory is the basis for cognitive and behaviour modification (Rashmi, Nataie & Mark, 2007). In the next section, I elaborate on cognitive behavioural therapy strategies that were used in the SDCDRI of this study.

3.4 SELF-DEBASING COGNITIVE DISTORTION RESTRUCTURING TECHNIQUES

CBT is a structured type of psychotherapy that focuses on the interconnection among thoughts, emotions and behaviours. In cognitive behavioural therapy using cognitive restructuring, clients are made to understand how self-debasing cognitive distortion such as over-generalisation plays a significant role in influencing emotions and behaviour. The following are some self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring techniques used in the intervention of this study to facilitate change in thought patterns as described by Huppert (2009, p 245)

3.4.1 Socratic questioning

Socratic questioning is a method of encouraging understanding and rational decision making through a series of questions to help clients discover and examine the error in their cognition (Neenan & Dryden, 2015). A Socratic question profoundly plunges into thinking that precedes and and continues during the occurrence of emotional maladjustment and provides an opportunity to analyse and assess the reality of those thoughts. Socratic questioning needs the therapist to keep a cooperative relationship with the clients to prevent a direct confrontational scenario. Joyce et al., (2007) noted that establishing a strong relationship with participants increases the participation of clients in intervention sessions. In similar vein, Terjesen and Esposito (2006) also observed that involving participants in the process of drafting guidelines for involvement in a program may boost a feeling of integration, safety and active involvement.

A cognitive restructuring worksheet (see figure 5-13) could be an excellent tool for identifying, defusing, uncovering and examining errors in cognition and to develop a balanced response to these cognitions. This workbook embraces the use of Socratic interrogation (see Section 2.6.1), a method that allows users to dispute irrational or maladaptive thinking. The workbook describes how thinking is a dialogue in the mind. Therefore, the workbook seeks to capture and analyse these thoughts to ascertain their reality and validity based on evidence. In the cognitive restructuring worksheet the first box to fill is "thoughts to be questioned". This is the column where the user notes thoughts that are presumed to be distorted or irrational.

Next, users are encouraged to write down the evidence for and against these thoughts. In other words, the therapist in collaboration with the client examines and notes the evidence in support or against the accuracy of their thoughts. Once the evidence has been identified, the user makes a judgment on their thoughts, whether it is based specifically on facts or instinct. The user then respond to a question as to whether these thoughts are over-generalised or a reflection of catastrophic thought or unreasonably simplifying things when in reality they are complicated. In the last column of the workbook page, the user considers whether they could have been misinterpreting the evidence or making unchecked assumptions.

3.4.2 Challenging automatic thoughts

This is a strategy adopted by the therapist to challenge the validity of an ill adaptive thinking pattern of participants. It includes searching for proof for or against distorted thinking. The therapist motivates participants to note negative thoughts to challenge the validity of cognition. To achieve this goal, the therapist introduces a dysfunctional thought record worksheet (see Figure 5-11) to the participants. The *Dysfunctional Thought Record* is a style of thought recording that promotes identification of any cognitive errors.

The worksheet is intended to note negative thoughts as they likely emerge. The assumption is that by getting to know more about what triggers certain automatic thoughts, they become simpler to deal with and reverse. The dysfunctional thought record workbook is split into seven sections (see Figure 5-11):

- On the left-hand side of the worksheet, there is a section meant to note the specific date and time that a dysfunctional thought pops up.

- The second section is designed to describe the activating event in detail. Here, the user is advised to outline the event that activated or led to the emergence of dysfunctional thoughts in detail.

- The third section is meant for recording automatic thoughts that arise. The user is also provided with the opportunity to rate his or her conviction on the thought on a scale of 0% to 100%.

- The column that follows is for recording elicited emotions. This is where the emotion or emotions caused by these thoughts are mentioned, also with an opportunity to rate the intenseness of the emotion on a scale of 0% to 100%.

- The fifth section is tagged "Distortion". This section is designed for the users to pinpoint the cognitive distortions (if any), they experience with reference to the specific dysfunctional thought, such as personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction.

- The second to last column provides the user with an opportunity to write down alternative thoughts, functional and more positive thoughts that could replace the adverse ones having considered alternative explanations in reaction to events.

- The last column enables the user to indicate the result of the activities. The column also provides the opportunity for the user to state whether the exercise led to a reduction or total elimination in the intensity of their dysfunctional thought or not.

3.4.3 Coping cards

Coping cards are small index cards with short sentences. Coping cards contains beneficial self-talk that can be used when experiencing anxiety to infuse confidence. The therapist advises the participants to preserve the cards and read them on a periodic basis. There could be several forms of using coping cards effectively, one of which is to note the self-debasing thought on one side and also note its adaptive response on the other side.

3.4.4 Decatastrophising

Decatastrophising is also called the "what if" method. Decatastrophising relates to reassessment and modification of catastrophic thinking patterns (Beck 2011). The therapist teaches participants to imagine what could happen that would be the worst thing. Decatastrophising is a cognitive behavioural technique used to treat cognitive distortions such as overgeneralisation often seen in maladaptive reactions to events. This technique involves challenging a feared event using mental imaging to examine whether or not the effects of that event have been over-exaggerated. The goal is to erase fear by learning to see alternative perspectives.

3.4.5 Guided discovery

Beck (2011) proposes using guided discovery based on Socratic- questioning to help clients identify irrationality in their thinking patterns. The therapist strives as much as possible not to assume the participants' thoughts are distorted. Instead, the therapist attempts to question and challenge the participants' cognition so that the participants can reassess the situation and create his or her own analysis. A bystander, for example, may feel helpless because of his failure to intervene in a bullying scene and consider him or her self as incompetent. The cognitive therapist's function will be to guide such bystanders in examining alternative method to assess the situation.

3.4.6 Homework assignment

A homework assignment is a task or activity provided to a participant to do between sessions. Homework assignments allow participants to put the cognitive and behavioural approaches learnt into practice to strengthen the skills learnt during the sessions (Friedberg & Brelsford, 2011). Homework is provided to improve the acquisition of new behaviours that are outlined and discussed in the sessions to accomplish the required therapeutic change. Completion of homework can greatly promote success in treatment (Beck 2011).

In line with this, engaging bystanders in tailored self-debasing cognitive distortion intervention sessions is imperative. Utilising the cognitive and behavioural strategies learnt might enable bystanders to realise the errors and irrationality that might be present in their thinking patterns while reacting to the bullying they witness. This may further facilitate modification of bystander' feelings and behaviours and subsequently, reduce negative emotional and behavioural responses (see Section 2.3) which could result from witnessing traumatic events such as bullying.

Therefore, as part of this study, I designed and implemented an intervention that is theoretically rooted in cognitive behavioural therapy with the aim of teaching bystanders to use the cognitive behavioural strategies described above to identify and challenge irrational and maladaptive thoughts (see Section 2.5) which might stem from witnessing bullying. Thus, in this research study, CBT relates to behavioural and cognitive strategies which bystanders were exposed to during the designed self-debasing cognitive distortion intervention programme meant to capture the bystanders' experiences of school bullying. Next, I discuss the details of the activities in the sessions of the SDCDRI designed for this study.

3.5 SELF-DEBASING COGNITIVE DISTORTION RESTRUCTURING INTERVENTION

Self-debasing cognitive distortions are maladaptive patterns or processes of thinking which are inaccurate and debase an individual in a direct or indirect way (Barriga et al., 2008). The self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention (SDCDRI) was a 11 session CBT designed for bystanders of bullying to modify distorted cognition. Cognitive and appraisal theory were adopted as a theoretical base for the

intervention. The SDCDRI incorporates CBT skills in a group format to address self-debasing distorted cognition such as personalisation, catastrophising, overgeneralising and selective abstraction (see Section 2.5). Cognitive restructuring techniques such as Socratic questioning, challenging automatic thoughts, catastrophising, reattribution and coping cards (see Section 2.6.1) were used in each session to facilitate change in thought patterns as described by Huppert (2009). Homework was given to the participants at the end of each session to reinforce the skill learnt throughout the session and was reviewed at the beginning of a new session.

The SDCDRI was facilitated by a registered Educational Psychologist who served as the therapist and a trained mother tongue translator, both of whom I familiarised with the content and mode of delivery of the therapy. The therapist followed a treatment manual (see section 3.5) to ensure that the specific needs of the participants in the group were met. In order not to disrupt academic activities, the group met once a week after school hours. Each session lasted for 60 minutes. The intervention was designed to enable me to capture bystanders' experiences of school bullying following participation in the SDCDRI. Figure 3-2 shows a summary of sessions of the SDCDRI.

Session 1	General orientation to the intervention
Session 2	Connecting thoughts, feelings and behaviour
Session 3	Identifying positive and negative thought patterns
Session 4	Common self-debasing cognitive distortions
Session 5	Personalisation
Session 6	Catastrophising
Session 7	Over--generalisation
Session 8	Selective abstraction
Session 9	Interpreting situations and events
Session 10	Learning to make less thinking errors
Session 11	Conclusion, reflection and feedback

Figure 3-2: Outline of the summary of sessions of the SDCDRI

Session 1: General orientation to the intervention:

The participants were warmly welcomed into the intervention class, and I solicited their support and maximum cooperation. I let the participants know more about myself, my name and contact address. I clarified the objectives of the intervention to the participants and what they stood to benefit when intervention sessions are concluded. I also introduced the therapist and the mother tongue translator to the

participants. The participants, in return, also introduced themselves starting from their name, age, class and address. The familiarisation process was an attempt to establish rapport and to help the participants settle down and feel comfortable. I assured the participants that their identity or information would be kept confidential.

Thereafter, the therapist discussed the steps the intervention would take and scheduled meeting dates and the time of the intervention. The therapist explained the rules of the intervention and what is expected of the participants during the sessions. Participants were given activity books such as a dysfunctional thought record worksheet, cognitive restructuring worksheet; cognitive model practise sheet and ABCD worksheet. Participants were notified in the process that some activities would be done in a group while some would be executed individually.

The objectives of this session were specifically:

- To establish a cordial relationship by getting to know one another and to introduce the intervention and its objectives to the participants.; and
- To identify some of the negative emotions that participants experienced.

The first objective was achieved by means of introduction and setting the rules which were described above. The activity done to achieve the second objective of this session involved the therapist asking the participants to identify some symptoms of secondary trauma known to them. The participants responded by mentioning some common symptoms such as anger, sadness, shock, fear, nightmares, worry, shame, anxiety, numbing, mood fluctuation and withdrawal. The participants were further instructed to draw a picture that reveals their emotional reactions to witnessing bullying. The participants were given drawing sheets and colour pens to complete the exercise (see Photograph 3-1). The participants were given 10 minutes to complete this task. Most of the participants painted the image they drew with dark colours to depict negative emotions.
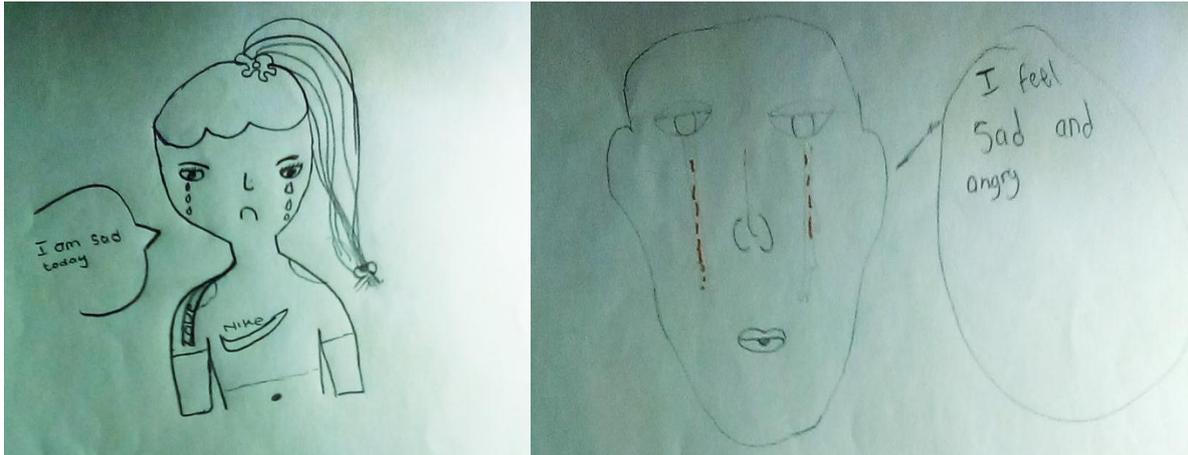
Photograph 3-1: Pictorial demonstrations of participants' emotional reactions

The therapist and the participants then deliberated on the symptoms of secondary trauma identified. The goal of this activity was to acquaint participants' with common emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing unpleasant events such as bullying and to also create an expectation that their participation in the intervention would likely address these problems. In concluding this session, the therapist encouraged the participants to be punctual and gave hints about the sessions to follow. Arrangements were made for the next session.

Photograph 3-2: Participants were warmly welcomed into the intervention sessions

Session 2: Connecting thoughts, feelings and behaviour

In the first part of this session, the therapist focused on reviewing common reactions to witnessing traumatic events that were identified in the previous session and to establish the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviour. In the second segment of this session, the therapist explained the links between thoughts, feelings and behaviour to the participants. Participants were informed that emotional and behavioural reactions to events are mainly prompted by conscious and unconscious irrational and self-defeating assessment of an event.

The rationale for incorporating this session in the intervention is that participants in this study were early adolescents aged between 11 and 13 years. Adolescence is a period characterised with intense emotional experiences, many of which adolescents may struggle to understand. However, understanding the reciprocal relationship among thoughts, emotions and behaviour (see Fig 2.2) may enable adolescents to express their emotions in a rational way. Many adolescents are vulnerable to the

intensity and diversity of negative emotions. In addition, many adolescents feel incapable of managing these emotions. Therefore, assisting adolescents in understanding how to identify, understand, regulate and manage their emotions in a rational way is important for their emotional development.

In line with this, the objectives of this session were, therefore,

- To communicate one of the fundamental values of cognitive and appraisal theory to the participant, which is the reciprocal relationship that exists among thought, emotion and behaviour;
- To learn how to identify different emotional and behavioural reactions to events; and
- Lastly, to learn how to give appropriate interpretation to events and to express emotion in a more rational and realistic way.

To achieve these objectives, participants were introduced to the dysfunctional thought record worksheet (see Figure 5-11). The dysfunctional worksheet is used to identify bias in thinking and to promote balanced thinking. The worksheet afforded the participants the opportunity to practise how to challenge and analyse thoughts to ascertain their reality and validity. The first column is used to record the date and time of the event. In the second column of the worksheet, participants were instructed to describe in detail the activating event that led to the onset of negative thoughts. Participants were also asked to note the elicited emotions in the third column. The worksheet also enabled participants to search for evidence in favour or against the thought. Thereafter, participants were asked to consider alternative thoughts that could replace their negative thoughts based on evidence and not presumption or assumption.

Some of the participants noted in the third column that they think they are a failure because they fail to defend their friend when they witnessed bullying. Meanwhile, in the alternative thoughts column, they noted that there were many boys involved in the bullying which made it difficult to challenge them. After searching for evidence for and against their automatic thoughts, the participants were able to come up with an evaluation and reappraisal of their thought patterns. For instance, one of the participants wrote in the evaluation column of the worksheet that he feels sympathy

for watching his friend being bullied but also thinks he should not put blame on himself because there were many bullies and they were stronger than him.

The session was closed out with a summary of the lesson learnt and a review of the reciprocal relationship that exists between thoughts, emotion and behaviour. The therapist commended the participants for their punctuality and cooperation during the session. She encouraged them to keep this attitude up while reassuring them of the benefit of participating in the intervention.
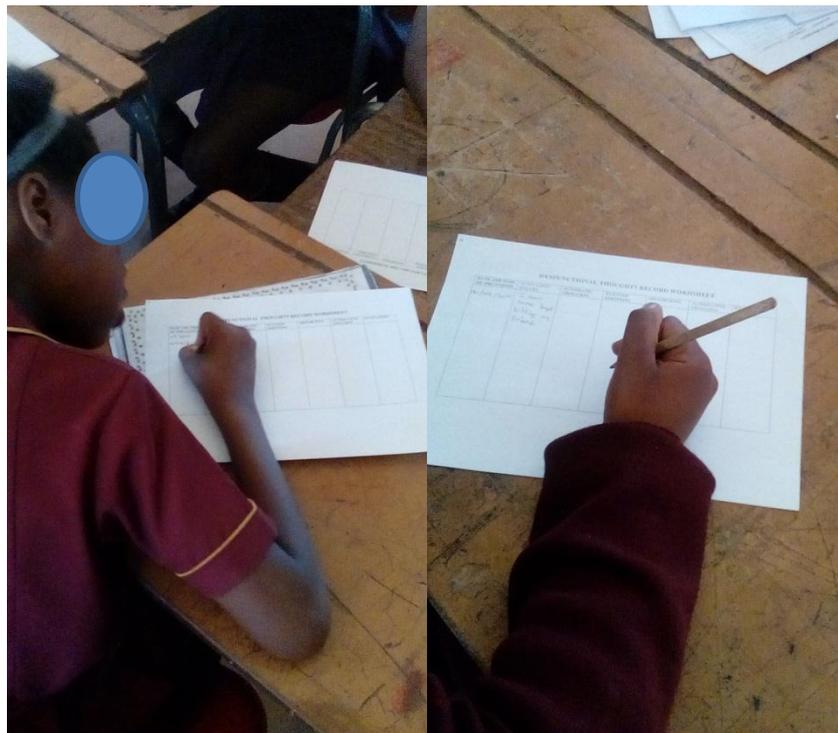
Photograph 3-3: Participants working on dysfunctional thought record

Session 3: Identifying positive and negative thought patterns

The therapist once again welcomed the participants to this session. There was a quick review of the lesson learnt in the last session. This session was specifically designed to let participants understand the difference between positive and negative thoughts, to understand the realistic interpretation of events and to understand and embrace positive ways of reacting to events.

Precisely, the objectives of this session were:

- To teach participants how to identify negative thinking patterns and its influence on emotional and behavioural reactions to events; and

- To teach participants how to apply and practice rational thinking patterns using Socratic questioning techniques (see Section 2.6.1).

To accomplish these objectives, the therapist introduced a Thought–Feelings-Actions records worksheet to the participants (see Figure 5-15). Thoughts-Feeling–Actions record worksheets are useful in testing the validity of ones' thoughts. The worksheet enabled the participants to gather and evaluate the evidence for and against a particular thought, giving them room for an evidence-based conclusion on whether the thought is rational or not. Before completing the worksheet, the therapist illustrated with a diagram of the reciprocal relationship between thoughts, feelings and actions and how self-debasing thoughts could negatively influence feelings and action. The illustrated diagram is given below.

Situation:

My friend Lerato has not talked to me for two weeks

My actual thought

I think Lerato is mad at me for not helping her

My feelings

I feel so sad

My action

I feel shame and I try to hide from her

New thought	My feelings	My actions
It is possible that Lerato is mad at me, or maybe she is angry at something else.	I am concerned that I didn't help Lerato, but I don't feel sad like I used to.	I explained my reason to Lerato and asked if she is mad at me.

Figure 3-3: Illustration of Thoughts-Feelings-Actions record worksheet

Thereafter, each participant completed the worksheet. One of the participants noted in my "actual thought" box that she feels at fault for not defending a learner she witnessed being bullied and because of that, she feels disappointed in herself. After considering a variety of evidence to test the validity of her thoughts, her responses as recorded in the "new thought'{ box changed and she was able to realise that she could not blame herself or feel guilty for an event she had little or no power to control. She stated that she could not defend the victim because she found it difficult to challenge boys that were seven in number.

At the end of the session, the therapist asked if the participants had questions. Various questions were asked and the therapist attempted to answer all. A quick summary of the session was done. The therapist asked if the participants had any questions to ask. She answered all the questions asked. She also asked participants

a few questions to ensure that they understood what was taught. The homework assignment (see Section 2.6.1.6) for the following week was given. The therapist summarised the lesson before bringing the session to an end.

Session 4: Common self-debasing cognitive distortion and their impacts on emotion

The therapist warmly welcomed participants as they arrived for this session. The therapist began the session with a brief review of the topic discussed in the last session. The aim of the session was communicated to the participants. In clear terms, the objectives of this session were:

- To identify common errors in thinking and their influences on mood, feelings and behaviour;
- To understand the basic terms and concepts of cognitive restructuring;
- To understand how to challenge common self-debasing distorted thoughts;

To achieve these goals, the therapist introduced the participants to common self-debasing cognitive distortions such as personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective attraction (see section 2.5). Thereafter, the therapist explained to the participants the meaning of cognitive restructuring and how it can be used to challenge or refute self-debasing cognitive distortion. The therapist emphasised the role of interpretation in behavioural and emotional reaction to events. She further explained that thoughts associated with negative behavioural and emotional responses to events stemmed from self-debasing cognitive distortion.

At this point, the therapist introduced the cognitive restructuring worksheet to the participants (see Figure 5-13). The cognitive restructuring worksheet contains columns such as: thoughts to be questioned, evidence in support of the thoughts, the evidence against the thoughts, judgement on the validity of the thoughts and realistic interpretation. The participants completed the exercise by filling the columns of the cognitive restructuring worksheet. The therapist read out all thoughts that participants' had enumerated in reaction to witnessing bullying.

Using the guided discovery techniques (see Section 2.6.1.5), the therapist then picked the thoughts one after the other and helped the participants search for evidence supporting or not supporting the thoughts. In the process, the therapist

drew the participants' attention to distorted thoughts which provoked negative emotional and behavioural reactions to events. The participants thereafter considered whether their emotions and behavioural reactions were based on facts or stemming from irrational thoughts and unverified assumptions.

Most of the participants stated in the first column under thought to be questioned that they thought that they would be the next victim of bullying. The therapist asked them to justify their thoughts and they responded in the second column by stating that they thought that they would be bullied because their friends were bullied. The therapist then explained to the participants that there are alternative ways to interpret a situation. She emphasised that thoughts are guesses and that it is always good to consider evidence in support or against a thought before coming to a conclusion about a thought. Consequently, the participants were then asked to state other interpretations of their actual thoughts. The participants were able to realise that their thoughts might just be an assumption. For instance, one participant noted in the realistic interpretation column of the worksheet that there is no need for him to be afraid of going to school as a result of fear of being bullied because not everyone is bullied in school.

Before the session ended, the therapist gave each participant coping cards (see Section 2.6.1.3) which would be used for their homework. Coping cards are small index cards which could be used to write short sentences. The therapist encouraged participants to use the coping cards to note any self-debasing thoughts on one side and its adaptive responses on the other side using the thought record principle that they learnt in the session. The therapist encouraged participants to continue to make use of the cognitive restructuring worksheet to identify and challenge self-debasing thoughts that could arise as a result of witnessing bullying in school.

Photograph 3-4: Participants working on cognitive restructuring worksheet

Session 5: Personification

The therapist once more welcomed the participants to the session. Each participant's coping cards were reviewed. The therapist expressed satisfaction at the level of progress of the participants. The specific objective of this session was:

- To introduce the concept of personification and its effect on thoughts, feelings and behaviour to the participants.

To achieve this objective, the therapist described personalisation as a self-debasing cognitive distortion which occurs when an individual takes responsibility for a negative event when there is no basis for doing so (see Section 2.5.1). Participants were taught that such individuals arbitrarily attribute the unpleasant event which they witnessed or experience to their fault or as a reflection of their inadequacy, even when they were not responsible for it.

The participants were thereafter guided on how to replace personification thoughts with positive and more realistic thoughts. Participants were introduced to the cognitive model practise worksheet sheet (see Figure 5-2) to teach them how to search for evidence in support or against a thought that reflects personalisation. The worksheet contained a column where participants were instructed to record the fact of what happened without interpretation. The second column of the worksheet enabled the participants to write the interpretation they gave to the situation recorded in the first column.

Most of the participants recorded that they witnessed bullying, and they were afraid of subsequent, direct victimisation. After that, the therapist reminded the participants that there are many alternative interpretations one can give in explanation of a situation. Having clarified that, the participants were then instructed to use the next column to record possible alternate interpretations that could be given to the interpretation they recorded in the second column. One of the participants noted that he has witnessed bullying in the school, but has never been directly victimised; therefore, his fear of being attacked could just be an assumption or guess.

The therapist also taught participants attribution techniques to challenge and replace a personalisation thought with a more rational one (see Section 2.6.1.2). The session was concluded with a summary of what was learnt. Participants were encouraged to maintain their punctuality. Participants were further advised to make use of the cognitive model practise worksheet given to reinforce the lesson learnt throughout the session.
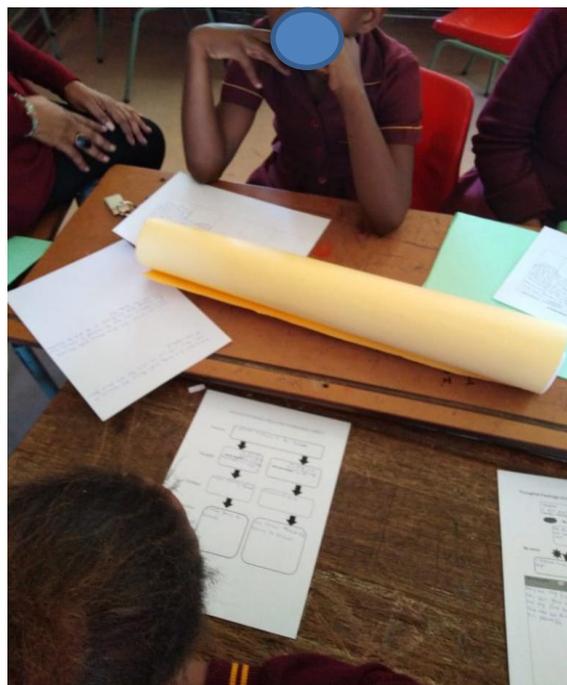
Photograph 3-5: Participants working on cognitive model practise worksheet

Session 6: Catastrophising

The session started as usual, with a warm welcome. The therapist asked the participants about their wellbeing and commended them for their punctuality. The

therapist made it known that another self-debasing cognitive distortion which is catastrophising (see Section 2.5.2), will be discussed in the session. It was anticipated that by the end of this session, the participants would be able to:

- Replace catastrophising thoughts with positive and more realistic thoughts.

To achieve this intention, participants were, firstly, introduced to the concept of catastrophising and its effect on thoughts, feelings and behaviour. The therapist started this session by teaching the participants how to analyse and examine their thinking patterns so as to root out bias in their thinking patterns that cause them to catastrophise after witnessing bullying. The therapist used decatastrophising techniques (see Section 2.6.1.4) to teach participants to imagine the aftermath of the worst-case situation. The rationale for allowing this scenario to play out is to assist the participants to realise that even if all they fear happened, it would probably turn out alright.

To practise the use of decatastrophising techniques such as "what if", participants were asked to write down the various thought that came into their mind after witnessing bullying. The participants used the "what if" techniques to differentiate between the present problem and anticipated problems. For instance, participants wrote down "what if I get bullied" and also wrote "I got bullied." Participants were then instructed to use an "X" mark to differentiate which of the thoughts was a current problem and which was an anticipated problem. It was observed that the participants put the 'X' mark in the statements that started with 'what if'. The therapist explained that the implication of this exercise was that emotions that followed the "what if" thought might only be based on assumption or an anticipated problem and not reality.

Participants were allowed to ask questions in the course of the presentation. All questions asked were answered adequately. The therapist summarised the session by highlighting the major point of the lesson. The therapist also encouraged the participants to continue to make use of "what if" techniques to decatastrophise any catastrophic thoughts they might experience in reaction to witnessing bullying in school.

Photograph 3-6: Participants working on decatastrophising techniques

Session 7: Over-generalising

The participants were warmly welcomed to this session by the therapist. The therapist expressed satisfaction with the participants' consistency so far. The therapist restated the importance of practise by encouraging the participants to practise the principles they have been taught for them to master them. Having welcomed the participants to the seventh session, the therapist made known the objectives of the session to the participants, which were:

- To introduce the concept of over-generalising and its effect on thought, feelings and behaviour;
- To replace over-generalising thoughts with positive and realistic thoughts.

Some activities were done in order to achieve these objectives. Firstly, the therapist started by explaining to the participants that erroneous or exaggerated interpretation of threats might result in inappropriate fear or anxiety. The therapist demonstrated how over-generalising thoughts could be replaced with rational thoughts by giving each participant paper and pen for an over-generalising thought record. She instructed the participants to divide the paper into five columns. In the process, she

supervised how the division was done. Then, she asked them to write in the first column the situation or event that triggers negative thoughts. She instructed them to write down the various thoughts that fly through their head while they ruminate about the event in the second column. One participant noted that he thinks his friend will see him as a traitor for not standing up for him when he witnessed him being bullied. The third column is used to write down their feelings as a result of the thoughts they entertained in their mind. The same participant wrote that he felt like a traitor. At this juncture, the therapist used Socratic questioning techniques (see Section 2.6.1.1) in collaboration with the participants to examine the evidence in support or against the emergence of these feelings. After considering the evidence to ascertain the soundness of their thoughts, the participants were directed to identify and write down possible errors in their thinking patterns in the fourth column. During the course of testing the validity of his thoughts, a participant remarked that he actually made AN attempt to rescue his friend by shouting at the bullies. The last column is used to write down alternative feelings after identifying and stripping out exaggerated thoughts. The participant then noted that there might be an error in his thought of viewing himself as a traitor because he actually had the intention of defending his friend by shouting at the bullies.

The session was closed out with a summary of the lesson learnt. The therapist encouraged participants to be punctual for the next session and to practise what was learnt. A homework assignment was given to the participants and the time of the next meeting was made known to the participants.

Session 8: Selective abstraction

The participants received a warm welcome from the therapist. Participants were, thereafter, informed of the objective of the session. The objective was to:

- Guide participants to replace the focus on negative details while appraising an event with a positive and more realistic appraisal.

To start with, the therapist introduced to the participants the concept of selective abstraction (see Section 2.5.4) and its effect on thoughts, feelings and behaviour. The therapist introduced the ABCD worksheet (see Figure 5-3) to the participants and explained how it could be used to challenge or refute self-debasing cognitive

distortion such as selective abstraction. The ABCD worksheet has columns for A) activating the event B) beliefs about the event C) consequences and reactions to the event D) disputing the belief and generating alternative thoughts.

The therapist taught participants how to refute distorted thought with a view of looking for evidence in support or against their thoughts. The exercise that was done in this session was similar to the previous exercises. Participants were asked to use the worksheet to record an activating event which nearly all of them indicated as witnessing bullying. Next in the B column of the ABCD worksheet, participants were told to write what they tell themselves or their beliefs about the event they witnessed. One of the participants stated that she believed that she was weak and the confidence she had in herself was lost because she failed to defend her friend. She indicated how she reacted in the C column of the worksheet which represents the consequences of her belief. According to her the following day when she saw her friend whom she failed to defend, she became very shy and tried to hide from her.

In a bid to guide participants to replace irrational beliefs while appraising an event with a positive and more realistic appraisal, the therapist admonished participants to carefully consider their intentions and circumstances surrounding their beliefs about the event. In line with this, the participant stated in the fourth column, which is meant to dispute the initial belief and generate alternative thoughts, that she had the intention to fight for her friend but because no one watching did anything, she also got discouraged from defending her. She realised that she is not as weak as she used to think because she stated that if someone had at least stood up to defend the victim of bullying, maybe she also would have joined the person to defend the victims. The participants demonstrated that they were really getting along as the time spent on completing the exercise was getting shorter. This session was brought to a close.

Photograph 3-7: Participants paid rapt attention during the session

Session 9: Interpreting the situation and events

As a usual routine, participants were greeted as they arrived for this session. Having examined the four types of self-debasing cognitive distortion and how to refute distorted thoughts in previous sessions, the therapist made the objective of the session known to the participants, which was:

- To learn the appropriate interpretation of situations and events.

The therapist emphasised that it is not a situation or event *per se* that elicits emotions and behaviour, but the interpretation or meaning an individual attaches to the event (see Section 2.7.1; 2.7.2). The therapist illustrated this notion extracted from the cognitive and appraisal theory with a scenario. The therapist called out a participant to role-play a learner who walked into the gathering of a group of other learners who were laughing out loud. The therapist asked how that would make him feel. The learner answered that he might feel anxious, worried, or ashamed if he thought they were laughing at him. The therapist further asked him if he would feel the same if he knew that they were laughing at a joke made and not at him. The learner replied, "no, no, no". The therapist then asked the participants what

determined the boys' reactions to the situation in the scenario and they all chorused the answer by saying it is what the boy thinks and how he interpreted the situation that determined his reactions.

The therapist appreciated the participants and commended them for being actively involved in the sessions so far. The date, time and venue of the next session were made known to the participants. She summarised the major points of the lesson. The participants asked a few questions. The questions were answered by the therapist and the session was ended.

Photograph 3-8: Participants role-playing session

Session 10: Learning to make less thinking errors

As the sessions were gradually coming to an end, the therapist expressed satisfaction with the performance of the participants at completing the task given to them. The objective of this session was communicated to the participants and it was:

- To learn how to make less cognitive errors while interpreting a situation or event.

The therapist told the participants that a simple exercise would be done to achieve this objective. She gave out a sheet of paper and a pen to the participants. She then asked them to describe in written form, some of their experiences of witnessing bullying in school and the thoughts that followed thereafter. She also asked them to state the various emotions they felt.

After they had done this, she then introduced them to a cognitive restructuring technique known as challenging automatic thought (see Section 2.6.1.2). Challenging automatic thought is a technique used to question the reality of a thought. One of the participants described that he was afraid of going to school because he thinks he would also be bullied. The participant was asked to question his thoughts by asking himself "what if he was not bullied?" The essence of this exercise was to guide the participants in reappraising their thoughts in line with reality. The therapist encouraged the participants always to make use of reframing self-talk techniques to question their thoughts before arriving at a conclusion. By doing so, she reassured them that they would learn to make less cognitive errors while reacting to events or situations.

Although the participants were presumed to be observers of school bullying at the time of the intervention, the therapist, nevertheless, equipped the participants with strategies to deal with direct bullying victimisation. One of these strategies was assertiveness training. Participants were taught to stand up for their personal rights and defend themselves directly and openly while not violating the rights of other persons involved in the situation. Participants were also encouraged to report their experiences to a teacher or an adult in cases where they feel unable to help the situation.

Session 11: Conclusion
The therapist commended the participants for their maximum cooperation all through the sessions. The therapist summarised the major points of all the sessions. The therapist encouraged participants to continue to practise the strategies of self-

debasing cognitive distortion restructuring, which were learnt. The intervention sessions were brought to an end.

Photograph 3-9: Participants leaving to their homes after the sessions

Photograph 3-10: The school arena

3.6 CONCLUSION

In Chapter 3, I examined some principles from cognitive theory and appraisal theory that informed the design and implementation of the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention used to explore and described bystanders' experiences of school bullying. I provided the background as to how CBT could possibly change the thinking patterns of bystanders of school bullying. I emphasised that bystanders could learn to replace negative thinking patterns with rational thoughts that could lead to more desirable emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying.

I examined the thought-emotion-behaviour connection as propounded by Ellis (1989). I also examined the teaching-learning principles and behaviour modification. I described some of the cognitive behavioural therapy strategies that were used in the SDCDRI of this study. These strategies include Socratic questioning, challenging automatic thoughts, re-attribution, distancing and distraction, decatastrophising, guided discovery, modifying negative or self-defeating thoughts, constructing realistic and balanced thoughts. These strategies are tools used in cognitive behavioural therapy to teach and facilitate change in thought patterns, which in turn could lead to a change in emotional and behavioural reactions (Huppert, 2009).

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, I outlined and discussed the content and activities done in each session of the intervention. In this chapter, I start by highlighting the research method and approach, as well as the qualitative assumptions of the study. I discuss the paradigmatic perspectives of the study, research design, sampling strategies, method used to collect data, the techniques used to analyse data, strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and the ethical considerations of the research. I concluded this chapter with a description of my role as the researcher of this study.

The research process was divided into three stages. The first stage was the descriptive part of the study where relevant literature was reviewed, including the construction of a conceptual framework for understanding bystanders' reactions to witnessing bullying. A further review of how cognitive and appraisal theory could inform a self-debasing cognitive restructuring intervention to capture early adolescent bystanders' experiences of school bullying was done and reported. The approaches, techniques, and activities that have been empirically established as valuable in rectifying cognitive distortions were identified and discussed. The first stage of this study was closed with a pre-intervention interview that was administered to participants to explore their experiences of school bullying as bystanders.

The themes emerging from the transcription of the interviews conducted before implementing the intervention informed the compilation of the content of the intervention sessions which were implemented in the second stage of the research. The implementation of the Self-debasing Cognitive Distortion Restructuring Intervention (SCDRI) over 11 sessions was executed by a trained Educational Psychologist to avoid potential bias. During the third stage, post-intervention interviews were administered to explore the changes (if any) in participants' experiences of school bullying as bystanders following a SCDRI. Participants' experiences of school bullying as bystanders were explored and described by means

of individual semi-structured interviews, audio recordings, and my reflective research journal.

A schematic representation of the three stages of the research process is provided in Figure 4.1.

STAGE 1
- Conducted a review of relevant literature.
- Selected appropriate theoretical frameworks.
- Formulated and described a conceptual frameworks for the study.
- Conducted pre-intervention interviews to explore bystanders' experiences of school bullying.

SATGE 2
- Compiled the components of the SDCDRI intervention sessions as informed by the review of literature, theoretical framework and emerging themes from the transcript of the pre-intervention interviews.
- Implemented the Self-debasing Cognitive Distortion Restructuring Intervention (SDCDRI).

STAGE 3
- Conducted a post intervention interview to explore bystanders' experiences of school bullying following a Self-debasing Cognitive Distortion Restructuring Intervention (SDCDRI).

Figure 4-1: Schematic representation of the research progression

4.2   RESEARCH METHOD AND APPROACH

I adopted a qualitative research approach for this research study (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative approach to research studies is intended to explore and gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning individuals or group of individuals ascribe to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research aims at discovering, describing, unfolding and interpreting meaning that individual(s) ascribe to their experience of situations or a phenomenon and hence, enables a researcher to comprehend how individuals react to situations (Willig, 2013). In other words, a qualitative research approach enables participants to express their voice, perception and understanding of a phenomenon, behaviour, actions or experience they encountered and in so

doing, allowing them to formulate interpretations of these experiences (Cohen, 2011; Niewenhuis, 2007).

Different individuals or groups of individuals have different perspectives or viewpoints of a phenomenon and this may lead to a different meaning attached to a particular phenomenon (Gay et al., 2011). That is to say, a qualitative research approach upholds the existences of multiple realities and acknowledges the understanding of a social phenomenon or situation from participants' perspectives (Lichtman, 2012).

A qualitative research approach, therefore, allows a researcher to collect participants' different views, experiences, perceptions and descriptions which, thereafter, allow the researcher to identify and describe emerging themes (Creswell, 2014). Basit (2010) added that a qualitative approach to research studies is good enough for a research study that intends to draw its findings from participants' perspectives and point of views.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) remarked that a qualitative approach to research studies enables participants to express their feelings and share their experiences of a phenomenon in their own setting. Qualitative research studies generally take place in natural environments and it is based on the data analysis typically collected from observations, interviews, audio recording, documents and reflective journals (Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012). Accordingly, I obtained my data from participants in their school setting.

Liamputtong (2018) remarked that a qualitative approach to research studies is most suitable for a study that seeks to explore and describe participants' feelings and experiences of a subject of inquiry from the views of the participants. I opted for a qualitative approach to research because of the descriptive characteristic of qualitative research that aligns with the exploratory and descriptive nature of my research (Yin, 2016). In addition, a qualitative method was adopted for this research study because I intended to describe and explore early adolescents' bystanders' experiences of school bullying before and after participating in a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention and to also gain insight into their experiences from a participant's point of view. I wanted to comprehend the

significance that participants ascribed to their experiences of school bullying and its corresponding effective responses.

My choice of a qualitative research approach was also informed by the perception that human experiences of a phenomenon, as well as experiences of learning, can best be described using a qualitative research approach (Visconti, 2009). Leedy and Ormrod (2014) assert that a qualitative approach to research is most applicable to a study that involves human situations which include analysing individual perspectives or viewpoints about a certain experience. In line with this, I decided to opt for a qualitative research approach because I believed it would enable me to understand and interpret the participants' perceptions, beliefs, thoughts and meaning ascribed to their experience of school bullying.

Creswell (2013) asserts that in qualitative research, the researcher extracts information from participants' perceptions of a phenomenon. Therefore, a qualitative approach to research is considered fit for this research study as participants were firstly required to recount and describe, in their own words, their experiences as well as their affective responses to the bullying they witnessed before and after participating in a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention.

By using a qualitative research approach, I was able to extract bystanders' cognitive interpretation as well as their emotional and behavioural reactions to the bullying incidences they witnessed in school as they recounted their experiences and engaged in meaningful discussions (Mishna, Antle & Regehr, 2004). Tuval-Mashiach et al. (2004) stated that individuals infuse meaning to their experiences of an event while recounting their stories of the event. The qualitative research approach provided me with the possibility of understanding and obtaining a rich and thick description of the meaning bystanders infuse into their experiences of school bullying before and after participating in an SDCDRI (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010)..

Creswell (2011) stated that the researcher is the key instrument in the qualitative research process. Therefore, I was able to immerse myself in the study and also acquire a thorough knowledge of my participants' impressions and interpretations of the school bullying they witnessed as bystanders. The interactive feature of qualitative research facilitated my in-depth understanding and description of a

holistic picture of how bystanders ascribe meaning to the bullying incidences they witnessed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

One weakness of a qualitative research approach is that the findings or report of a study that uses a qualitative research approach is not generalisable to other samples in other contexts (Merriam, 2008). This research study was conducted with a group of bystanders (10). Therefore the findings generated may be unique to the relatively small number of participants of this study and not be generalisable to the entire population (Cohen et al., 2011). On the other hand, generalisation was not the goal of this study but rather to obtain a comprehensive knowledge from the participants' point of view, how the participants experienced school bullying as bystanders.

Another weakness of a qualitative research study is that the researcher's own bias can alter the findings of the study. A researcher's subjectivity cannot be fully eliminated in a qualitative study. As long as the investigator is a key instrument in the process of conducting a qualitative research study, the researcher's background and prior understanding are inseparable from interpretations made. I was aware of my subjectivity and potential bias as a possible limitation; therefore, I reflected on my thought process through a reflective journal and through regular discussion and quality checks with my research supervisor. I also validated my findings with my participants to ensure that the report fully represents their views and perceptions as it was said in their words.

An additional challenge that qualitative research pose is the inadequate transparency in the process or steps utilised during data analysis. To subdue this challenge, I continuously strived to be clear about the research process by documenting the entire research process in detail through the use of a reflective journal so as to maintain an audit trail. Qualitative research has also been described as time-consuming and possibly requiring intense involvement (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Complexities are inevitably involved in studies that focus on human behaviour and experiences, I, therefore, acknowledged this limitation and I provided enough time for the research process and report writing.

4.3   PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES: INTERPRETIVISM

A paradigm is a philosophical stance which includes beliefs, values, methods and agreement that are shared among researchers about their understanding of different research approaches (Joubish, Khurram, Ahmed, Fatima & Haider, 2011). A paradigm influences the lens through which a researcher views what constitutes reality and his belief about the relationship that should exist between the researcher and what can be known (Mertens, 2012; Niewenhuis, 2010). Paradigms are systems of interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions which are central to research design (Terre Blanch, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006). The philosophical paradigm within which a researcher positions him or herself is informed by his or her ontological, epistemological and methodological stance (Denzim & Lincoln, 2013; Wahyuni, 2012).

Ontology is concerned with how a researcher perceives reality, i.e. the view and belief of the researcher on whether reality is a multiple or single reality (Wahyuni, 2012). On the other hand, epistemology is connected with how the researcher believes knowledge should be generated, constructed or understood. i.e. his belief about the extent of the relationship that should exist between the researcher and the participants or what ought to be known (Wahyuni,2012).

The ontological and epistemological perspectives of a researcher determine the paradigm within which a research study falls (Bryman, 2015; Cohen et al., 2011). The ontological perspective of an interpretive researcher is the belief in the existence of multiple realities (Cohen et al., 2011). The ontological perspective of an interpretive researcher is that reality is multiple and reality is in an individual's mind and that it can be collectively constructed (Wahyuni, 2012). It is believed that the reality of a phenomenon is determined by the perceptions and experience of the participants (Wahyuni, 2012). The ontological interpretivist posits that multiple truths exist even though they may conflict. In addition, the ontological interpretivist believes that truth cannot be generalised but can only be used in similar contexts.

Furthermore, the ontological interpretivist believes in the axioms that knowledge is value-laden and can only come to light through individual interpretations (Bryman, 2015; Cohen et al., 2011). In similar vein, the epistemological perspective of an

interpretive researcher is rooted in the premise that existence is in individuals' mind and it is collectively constructed by participants (Wahyuni, 2012). In line with the epistemological and ontological perspectives, I believe my research study is situated in an interpretivism paradigm because I acknowledge that the participants may have different perspectives which may lead to multiple realities of how early adolescents experience school bullying as bystanders (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I equally believe that reality is constructed and as the participants may recount or narrate different stories in line with their experiences, there might be the possibility of multiple realities of the phenomenon (Bryman, 2015).

The interpretivism paradigm involves analysing and interpreting subjective experiences of individuals as the basics of realness (ontology) and while interacting and listening to individual stories, make sense of people's experience (epistemology) (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The interpretive outlook focuses on unfolding participants' views of a phenomenon. According to Niewenhuis (2010), the human mind is a source and supplier of meaning and in the process of uncovering how meaning is constructed, better insights into these meanings are gained. Lowenthal and Muth (2008) opined that knowledge could be built by individuals as they make sense of the world surrounding them through new experiences.

For the purpose of my study, knowledge about bystanders' cognitive interpretation of the bullying incidences they witnessed as well as its corresponding affective responses was constructed by the participants. I strived to understand and describe the experience of participants of this study from the subjective meaning they attached to their experiences of witnessing school bullying (Wahyuni, 2012). I tried to gain insight and to make sense of the meaning participants ascribed to their experiences by engaging participants in interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2011).

My choice of the interpretivism paradigm was guided by the intent of my research study, which was to qualitatively explore and describe 10 early adolescents' experiences of school bullying as bystanders (Silverman, 2011). My study falls within the interpretivism paradigm because I intended to listen, understand and interpret bystanders' perceptions, beliefs, thoughts and the meaning ascribed to their experience of school bullying (Bryman, 2015; Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, I

conducted my study from an interpretivism paradigm because I believe that thick description of people's experience of a phenomenon can be subjectively understood through interpretation. Terre Blanche et al. (2006) noted that interpretive researchers seek to uncover the reality in peoples mind and their subjective experiences by interacting with them and thereafter interpreting the data.

In addition, Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer (2012) contended that the philosophical assumption underpinning most research that adopts a qualitative approach emerges from an interpretive viewpoint. Lincoln (2010) also remarked that studies that adopt an interpretivism paradigm as a theoretical guide aim at answering "how", "why" and "what" questions. Researchers find answers to these questions from participants narrating or recounting their lived stories and experiences. The focus of this qualitative study was descriptive and exploratory. For this reason, I used an open, flexible and inductive mode of an inquiry approach to make sense of the qualitative data that emerged from the interviews.

The interpretivism paradigm allowed me to explore and describe bystanders' experiences of school bullying and also to gain insight into how self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention can possibly change or not change bystanders' experiences of school bullying from the participant point of view. Through the interview, I asked the participants to reflect on perceptions, beliefs, thoughts and meanings ascribed to their experiences of school bullying before and after participating in the SDCDRI. The nature of an interpretivism paradigm is thus well aligned with the purpose of this study.

Conducting a study within the interpretivism paradigm has advantages. It made interaction and conversation with the participants possible so as to obtain insight and to create a clear knowledge as to how the bystanders ascribed meaning to the school bullying they witnessed (Creswell, 2010). I was able to gain insights that enhanced my understanding of the bystanders' cognitive interpretation as well as their emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing the bullying in school. The flexible and emerging nature of this paradigm limits the influence of preconceived ideas and implies the possibility of unforeseen data emerging from the research process (Wu & Chen, 2005).

However, Chesebro and Borisoff (2007) argued that subjectivity, lack of generalisability, it being time-consuming and the possibility of ethical violations characterise the disadvantages of a study that adopts interpretivism as a paradigm. In a bid to address these potential challenges, I remained conscious of any potential bias and subjectivity that could influence my research throughout the study. Jackson, Drummond & Camara (2007) are also of the opinion that embracing a constant reflective approach can limit the influence of subjectivity; therefore, I regularly reflected on my role and input throughout the research process. The main challenge I had with this approach was being cautious of unknowingly imposing my own subjective interpretations of meaning over those of the participants. To address this challenge, I gave the participants a voice and I continuously reminded myself of how my own bias might influence the final interpretation (Scotland, 2012).

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN: QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTIVE- EXPLORATORY

A research design is a layout strategy by a researcher of how data will be collected and analysed for the purpose of answering research questions (Sibaya, 2014). A research design is a method, scheme or procedure for compiling and interpreting data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). As stated, I adopted a qualitative descriptive-exploratory research design for my research study, as suggested by Creswell (2014).

A qualitative descriptive-exploratory research layout is an approach in which a researcher explores the essence of a phenomenon as experienced by the participants (Basit, 2010; Niewenhuis 2007). A qualitative descriptive-exploratory research is a methodical inquiry and comprehensive examination of a phenomenon, not to generalise the findings, but to gain new insight and understanding of the phenomenon investigated (Bless, Highson-Smith & Kagee, 2006). The goal of a qualitative descriptive-exploratory research is not to test a theory or hypothesis but rather to gain an understanding and to increase knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation (Vogt, Gardner, Haeffele & Baker, 2011).

One advantage of a qualitative descriptive-exploratory research design is that it affords the researcher the privilege of getting new understanding and increase knowledge of a phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 2008). Another major

strength of using a qualitative descriptive-exploratory research design is that it provides room for using various sources and method in gathering data to capture the understanding of a phenomenon as expressed by the participants (Creswell, 2013).

A qualitative descriptive-exploratory research is time-consuming (Creswell, 2013). Although a qualitative descriptive-exploratory research study provides a detailed description of the phenomenon under study (Neale 2009), Zucker (2009) noted that the lengthy narrations and descriptions of participants' experiences might be somewhat drawn out because of the detailed information which may make the reader lose interest in the research study. To address this limitation, I summarised participants' narrations in a simple to understand and interesting way. I ensured that I captured all the data and presented it in a reader-friendly way.

A qualitative descriptive-exploratory research can be criticised on the grounds that it could not be able to generate knowledge that can be generalised. However, the emphasis of my research study is not to generalise the findings rather, to provide a detailed description of participants' unique bystander perceptions, beliefs, thoughts and meanings ascribed to their experience of school bullying. Moreover, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that the fact that findings from a study using qualitative descriptive-exploratory strategies cannot be generalised does not imply that knowledge derived cannot be added into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given subject.

A qualitative descriptive-exploratory study has also been criticised based on the fact that it has tendencies to be biased, as long as researchers lookout for trends that will substantiate their subjective ideas (Flyvbjerg, 2006). I remained conscious not to unknowingly impose my own subjective interpretations of constructed meaning on the participants. I continuously remained aware of how my own preconceived ideas and understanding that they might influence the final interpretation. I also discussed my findings with my peers and supervisor to further avoid bias and subjectivity.

4.5 SAMPLING STRATEGIES

4.5.1 Introduction.

Sampling can be described as a procedure for choosing a segment of a population to represent a bigger population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014) in a study. Sampling involves making a decision from whom and where information will be gathered to provide an answer to research questions (Maxwell, 2013). The non-probability sampling method is the most preferred method of sampling for qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2011; Patton, 2015; Ravith & Carl, 2016). This study adopted the use of a non-probability sampling method namely, purposive sampling, to choose the school and participants from within the larger population (Cohen et al., 2011, Gay et al., 2011).

Purposive sampling involves choosing individuals purposively to participate in a research study for specific reasons which may stem from the context of the research questions (Ravith & Carl, 2016). Purposive sampling entails deliberate selection of individuals who experienced or had some understanding of a phenomenon, domiciled in a specific location that is of interest to the research or possesses some other distinctive features considered relevant to answering research questions, to participate in a study.

Purposive sampling is a method of selecting a participant for a study based on participants meeting specific criteria (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Niewenhuis, 2010). For my study, I purposefully selected 10 early adolescents' Grade 6 and 7 learners from a primary school in Mamelodi who experienced bullying as bystanders. The following criteria were used for purposefully selecting the 10 participants for this study:

- Learners who were in primary school;
- Learners who have not experienced bullying as a direct victim but only witnessed bullying in school, identified by means of a request to participate in a research study through invitation letter;
- Additional criteria for participants in the study were bystanders who were early adolescents (within the age range of 11 to 13 years), and who were in Grades 6 or 7

- Learners who indicated that they have not previously been exposed to a similar intervention.
- Participants who could not understand or communicate in the English language were exempted from participating in the study.

I identified participants and purposefully selected them based on the attributes that qualified them to be holders of information required to answer the research questions for this study. I started the sampling selection procedure by putting a letter of invitation to participate in a research study on the school notice board upon securing the consent and approval of the school principal. The criteria for inclusion and exclusion were contained in the letter. Participants who met the criteria to participate and were ready and available to take part in the study responded to the invitation and were contacted in the school to explain the purpose of the study to them further. Thereafter, the required informed assent and consent forms were handed to them.

In order to realise a deliberate, well-founded sampling approach, it is important to take into consideration the research questions for the study and also to consider whose point of view will be needed to collect the information required to answer the research questions with probity and suitable variety of relevant views (Ravith & Carl, 2016). The main research question for this study was to explore how early adolescents experienced school bullying as bystanders. I purposively selected 10 early adolescent bystanders who were in Grade 6 and 7 to participate in this study. I believe the selected participants fulfilled all the criteria and were holders of information needed to answer the questions of this study. Creswell (2014) noted that sample size in a descriptive exploratory qualitative research study might range from 3 to 10.

In this study, a major advantage of selecting participants using purposive sampling techniques is that it enabled me to involve knowledgeable individuals who possessed the necessary characteristics and met certain criteria to better understand how adolescents experienced school bullying as bystanders (Martella, Nelson, Morgan & Marchand-Martella, 2013; Tongco, 2007). On the other hand, one possible limitation of the purposive sampling techniques is that selecting a small number of participants to represent a large population may lead to under-

representation of a particular group (Hedt & Pagano, 2011). It is, however, almost impossible to include every possible participant to participate in a social science research project (Ravith & Carl, 2016). Moreover, the aim of this non-probability sampling study is not to generalise findings or to make conclusive statements (Maree & Pietersen, 2007), rather produce findings that might be applicable in similar contexts and among similar populations (Battaglio, 2008).

4.5.2 Research participants and research site

I am of the opinion that it is important to give a clear description of the participants, site and settings where the research study is conducted. By doing so, the reader might have a clearer understanding of the participants and environment where the phenomenon was explored and described. Having secured approval from the Gauteng Department of Education and permission from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee to commence field work, I decided to approach the principal of some primary school in Mamelodi. I have earlier noticed from my preliminary observations that the prevalence of bullying among learners in Mamelodi primary schools is high.

The principal of the school I visited, confirmed that learner to learner bullying is not only rampant in the school, but learner to teacher bullying is also on the increase. The principal, therefore, expressed his willingness to allow me to conduct my research study in the school. However, he expressed his concern about the medium of communication as most of the learners in the school prefer to communicate in their mother tongue which is not English. He suggested the use of an interpreter to breach communication gaps if any.

Ten participants who indicated an interest in participating in the research study were chosen purposefully and included in the study. Eight participants were in Grade 6 and the remaining two participants were in Grade 7. Two of the participants were boys while the remaining eight participants were girls. All participants were aged between 11 and 13 years. I arranged for a meeting with the prospective participants to explain the research study's objectives and the potential benefit of participating in the research study. I strived to build a good rapport with the participants to make

them feel relieved and relaxed to share their experiences with no fear of intimidation. Table 4-1 shows the demographic information of all the participants.

Table 4-1: Demographic information of the participants

Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Grade	Sources of data collection
Lesego	Female	12	6	Interview/Field Notes
Kea	Female	13	6	Interview/Field Notes
Tsholophato	Female	13	7	Interview/Field Notes
Katlego	Female	12	6	Interview/Field Notes
Molatelo	Female	11	6	Interview/Field Notes
Micheal	Male	13	7	Interview/Field Notes
Lebo	Female	12	6	Interview/Field Notes
Luka	Male	12	6	Interview/Field Notes
Baleseng	Female	12	6	Interview/Field Notes
Molento	Female	11	6	Interview/Field Notes

Having secured the informed written assent of the participants and consent of the participants' parents or guardians, I proceeded to pre-intervention interviews with the participants. McMillan and Shumacher (2010) noted that an important feature of qualitative research is that data is collected in natural settings where participants live or work and where they could exhibit their usual behaviour. In line with this, I decided to conduct the interviews in the classrooms so that participants could respond naturally and with honesty

A convenience sampling technique was used to select the research site. Remler and Van Ryzin (2011) refer to convenience sampling as a sampling technique whereby a researcher capitalises on the availability and accessibility of a research site within the locality of participants. I chose the classroom where the interviews and interventions sessions were conducted as a result of its availability and accessibility (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 2010). The choice of the classroom afforded the opportunity for privacy, as well as convenience for participants. The interviews were arranged in line with each participant's availability and convenience.

Despite their voluntary decision to take part in the research study as participants, I discovered that the participants were always in a hurry to go home after school. I understand that this might be due to the fact that they might be tired after hectic school activities. Notwithstanding, I managed to conduct the interviews with the participants. The school was located not too far from the roadside, hence, the sound of car horns were occasionally heard while the interviews were being conducted.

Photograph 4-1: The classroom where data was collected

4.6   DATA COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION ANALYSIS

This section focuses on the techniques that were used to collect data from participants. The data was collected and analysed in two stages. The first stage was the pre-intervention stage where data was collected to explore bystanders' thinking patterns and how it influenced their emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. The responses of the participants in the pre-intervention interview were analysed and interpreted. The findings that emerged at the first stage informed the common concepts that were addressed in the intervention. The second stage was the post-intervention phase where data was collected and also analysed to explore and describe bystanders' experiences of school bullying following

participation based on an 11 session self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention.

To ensure methodological triangulation (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010; Wallace & Atkins, 2012), I made use of more than one technique to collect data for the purpose of comparing and cross-checking my findings. Triangulation is described as the use of different ways and forms to collect data in a study to better understand a phenomenon (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Methods that elicit people's perspectives and point of views about a phenomenon are typically used to collect data in qualitative research (Percy, Kostere & Kostere, 2015). In line with this, the data collection method used in this study included semi-structured individual interviews, a reflective research journal, audio recording, notes taking and the various activities completed at the sessions of the SDCDRI (Creswell 2014).

One important method of data collection in this qualitative descriptive-exploratory research study was the interview (Yin, 2016). An interview can be defined as a process in which a researcher asks the interviewee (participants) some questions with the aim of enabling the interviewee to share his or her thoughts, knowledge and feelings about a subject (Johnson & Christensen, 2011; Seidman, 2012). The interviews helped me as a researcher to comprehend how the participants understood their world and lives (Kvale & BrickMann, 2009), with specific reference to witnessing bullying.

Prior to the commencement of the interviews, I informed the participants about the nature of the interview, the type of questions to expect and the purpose of the study. By doing this, I created a good rapport with the participants. Dickson–Swiff (2009) emphasised the importance of establishing rapport building as fundamental to make participants feel relaxed and free to discuss very sensitive issues. The interviews were conducted after school hours to avoid disrupting school activities. I paid rapt attention to participants' responses to the interview questions. I allowed participants to express themselves freely.

I recorded the individual semi-structured interviews on a voice recorder with the permission of the participants. I also had written notes where necessary as a backup. During the interview, I made use of field notes and a reflective research

journal to document my observations while interacting with the participants. A session of an interview lasted for about 45 minutes. I asked the participants a uniform set of questions that were open-ended. The rationale was for me to obtain responses that could be easily analysed and compared (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick 2008). I prepared open-ended questions based on the information from the review of the literature, the research questions for the study and the purpose and objectives of this study (Burton & Jones, 2008).

Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 87) asserted that the rationale for conducting a qualitative research interview is to obtain 'rich descriptive data from the participants' perspective, their opinion and views. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) also remarked that an interview is suitable to extract information on how individuals make meaning or make sense of the important events they experience. Given these unique characteristics of interviews, I chose interviews as the most appropriate method of exploring bystanders' experiences of school bullying before and after the implementation of SDCRI. I further selected individual semi-structured interviews as the most "fit for purpose" instrument for answering the set primary and secondary research questions (Cohen et al., 2011). Figure 4-2 below shows a summary of the research and data collection process.

PHASE 1
PRE-INTERVENTION PHASE
- I conducted a pre intervention individual semi structured interview.
- I used data collection methods such as semi structured interviews, field notes, research journal and audio recording.
- I analysed and interpreted the data using inductive thematic analysis.
- I developed the content of the intervention session based on the emerging themes from the pre-intervention interviews.

PHASE 2
POST-INTERVENTION PHASE
- The implementation of the 11 sessions SDCDRI.
- I conducted post intervention interviews.
- I used data collection methods such as field notes, research journal, audio recording and activities completed during the intervention.
- I analysed and interpreted the data using inductive thematic analysis.
- I reported the findings.

Figure 4-2 : The phases of data collection utilised in the study

4.6.1 Individual semi-structured interviews

An individual semi-structured interview is a technique of collecting data using open-ended questions (Seabi, 2013). Mack (2010) argued that in-depth interviews are most appropriate to use when the purpose of a research study is to investigate, describe and collect people's stories about their experiences of a particular event or a phenomenon. My aim of interviewing the participants was to collect in-depth and descriptive data that could aid in answering the research questions (Maree, 2016).

Therefore, individual semi-structured interviews were used to gather data in this study because it afforded the participants the opportunity to elaborate their views perceptions, beliefs, thoughts and meaning ascribed to their experiences of school bullying (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In addition, I chose to use individual semi-structured interviews as data collection techniques because semi-structured interviews are flexible and it allowed me as a researcher to regulate questions so as to gather in-depth information to clarify answers to research questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014).

Bryman (2015) remarked that the use of individual semi-structured interviews enables researchers to pose probing questions which could, in turn, result in more details in participants' responses and richness of data. Gay et al. (2011) also asserted that individual semi-structured interviews are useful to collect data on the experiences of participants on a particular subject or phenomenon. In line with this, 10 bystanders were individually interviewed to uncover their experiences of witnessing school bullying (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The interview comprises open-ended questions (See Appendix A). I made sure that the interview questions were simple to comprehend and not complicated. I kept the number of questions to a minimum to avoid making the interview too long. However, I used probing questions as they emerged to get a further understanding of the participants' perspectives and started the interview by asking questions that require participants to answer with a "yes" or "no" response. For example, I asked participants questions such as "Have you witnessed bullying in your school recently?" The questions were presented as such that one leads to the next.

Participants had ample chance to discuss their opinions, views, ideas, beliefs and the meaning they attached to their experience of witnessing bullying. For instance, participants were asked to narrate how witnessing bullying in school generally affected them. The one-on-one semi-structured interview afforded participants the opportunity to express their feelings freely. I designed the interview session in such a way that I was able to ask additional questions as the need arose.

As stated earlier, a major advantage of an individual semi-structured interview is that it allow participants to express their opinions freely on a topic (Cohen et al., 2011; Seidman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews allow participants to give as many details as possible on a subject of investigation (Henning et al., 2004). The individual semi-structured interviews I conducted enabled me to gather rich descriptive data that helped to obtain a grasp of the participants' construction of reality and knowledge regarding their experience of witnessing school bullying.

A challenge encountered when using the semi-structured interview as a data collection method is that some participants may have been reluctant to share their true feelings and opinions about a subject of inquiry if they felt uncomfortable (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). To overcome this challenge, I created a good rapport with the participants to make participants feel at ease and open to discuss and reveal their experiences (Dickson–Swiff, 2009). Although the interview was regarded as a primary method of collecting data in this study, I also made use of other data collection method such as field notes, a reflective research journal as well as intervention implementation to augment and complement the interview data.

To limit the influence of subjectivity and researcher bias, I remained conscious of my role which was to moderate the interview and listen to participant responses and not to dominate the conversation. I observed participants' non-verbal communication throughout the interview process to gather more data. I requested approval from the participants to audio record the interview and I assured them that after retrieving the data the interview recorded would be secured and safeguarded.

4.6.2 SDCDR techniques and activities completed during the intervention sessions

The self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention was a CBT conducted in 11 sessions. The intervention was designed for participants to learn how to recognise and refute irrational thoughts which are presumed to exacerbate negative emotional and behavioural reactions to events. During the SDCDRI, participants were made to complete some activities such as completing dysfunctional thought record worksheets, cognitive restructuring worksheets and role-playing a scenario to demonstrate how the techniques learnt in the sessions could be applied in a hypothetical situation. Homework assignments were given to the participants at the end of each session and were reviewed at the beginning of a new session (see Chapter 3, Session 3.5).

The intervention incorporated some of the cognitive restructuring techniques such as Socratic questioning, decatastrophising, reattribution, challenging automatic thoughts in each session to facilitate reappraisal of negative thought patterns as recommended by Huppert (2009). Each session of the intervention lasted for 60 minutes once a week, except for a few occasions where the sessions were held twice a week. The first 10 minutes of each session was allocated for the introduction and establishing a cordial relationship. During the introduction session, a review of the previous session and discussion of the homework assignment were done. Thereafter, the subject of the day was discussed for about 30 to 40 minutes. Lastly, five minutes was given to review the day's session and to receive feedback on the session prior to the termination of the session.

4.6.3 Reflective research journal

A reflective research journal as defined by James, Milenkiewich and Buckman (2008) is a written or verbal description of events over time which is subjectively compiled by the researcher. I utilised a research journal to document my confidential remarks and personal experiences (Lamb 2013; Murray & Kujundzic, 2005). I documented my understanding of the learners' subjective perspectives as they developed. I continually reflected on my own thoughts and perceptions during every stage of the research process (Flick, 2009). The reflective journal enabled me to draw a line between participants' contribution and my interpretations of the data and

to reflect on the potential of my biases. The reflective journal enhanced reflexivity and enabled me to examine and clarify my personal ideas, assumptions, goals and beliefs (Ortlipp, 2008).

Theron and Malindi (2013) asserted that preconceived ideas, bias, and beliefs influence the researcher-participant relationship; therefore self-reflection is necessary throughout the research process. I acknowledged that my beliefs, ideas, experiences, thoughts and feelings could affect the researcher-participants' relationship. I, therefore, kept a reflective journal throughout the study to control researcher values and influence on the participant responses. To limit the potential negative influence of subjectivity, I constantly engaged in discussion with my supervisor, regarding my reflections.

4.6.4 Audio recordings

Audio-visual data documentation contributes to the credibility of a study (McMillan & Shumacher, 2010). I used audio tape to record all discussions with the participants during the pre-intervention interviews and post-intervention interview. Utilising an audio recording enabled me to capture all the details of my interviews with the participants without having to make notes constantly. Audio recording afforded me an opportunity to have a durable data set. It was also useful to foster discussions and reflections with myself and supervisor (Jewitt, 2012).

The audio recording may pose a challenge if participants are unwilling to grant permission to be recorded. I asked the participants for authorisation to record the interview (Niewenhuis, 2013). All participants consented to have the interview audio recorded. Bell (2010) also remarked that the process involved in transcribing audio data requires a lengthy endeavour. I kept the interview questions to a minimum and summarised participants' narrations in a simple to understand way. Another challenge I envisaged with audio recordings is a loss of essential data as a result of possible technology failure. I, therefore backed up the audio taping of interviews with handwritten notes to prevent a loss of data in the event that that the audio equipment fails (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2009) suggested the use of note-taking as a complement to the audio taping of interviews in case the audio recordings pose some challenges. However, I am aware that note-taking might distract my attention

from following up cogent points during the interview. I, therefore, strove to ensure that adequate preparation was made to ensure the successful audio recording of the interviews.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis is a procedure that involves transcribing data, coding, organising, categorising and merging related data into categories and themes (Cohen et al., 2011). McMillan and Schumacher (2014) described data analysis as an inductive process that involves sorting the information collected as data into categories so that themes, patterns and trends that emerge can be identified and the relationship between categories can be studied. Lamb (2013) further described data analysis as a process of breaking down and making connections of data collected. Data analysis could also mean the process of sorting the information collected as data into themes and categories (Kumar, 2014). An inductive thematic data analysis process was followed to analyse both pre-intervention and post-intervention interview data.

Inductive thematic analysis can be described as making sense of the data that seems related and categorising such data into themes. Percy et al. (2015) asserted that thematic data analysis is a general technique to identify, analyse and report patterns within qualitative interpretive data. In line with this, I transcribed and analysed pre and post-intervention interviews according to the Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) method of thematic analysis. I identified themes and patterns that reflect important elements associated with the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

At each phase of data analysis, I familiarised myself with the data I collected by means of interviews, audio recordings, activities completed during the intervention sessions, field notes and my reflective journal. Familiarisation is necessary to create an understanding of the data produced and to attach meaning to the central theme (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). I familiarise myself with the data by reading and reading the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews again.

As noted earlier, data was collected and analysed separately in two stages that are at pre-intervention stage and post-intervention stage. Accordingly, data collected was also coded separately according to identified categories from the data source. A

code is a name or label provided to a text or piece containing related information or idea (Cohen, 2011). I set aside data according to the relevance and its relation to other themes. I grouped the responses of participants together based on similar ideas, concepts and theme as identified from the theoretical framework underpinning the study. I colour coded all the data that belong together and clustered them into one category. The process of data coding enabled me to obtain a better knowledge of the data and themes (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

I proceeded to search for recurring themes and patterns that emerged, such as a common view about the meaning participants ascribed to being bystanders to bullying. A theme is a collection of related ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), and as such, I searched to identify themes that are meaningful and relevant to my study. Next, I reviewed and examined the identified themes to ensure that these themes were suitable to answer the research questions. I reviewed all the categories of themes that I have identified to decide whether some categories could be merged. Lastly, I named and defined the themes. I ensured that I discussed the themes that I identified with my supervisor throughout the process. I documented my thoughts and reflections in a reflective journal as I analysed the data. Through inductive thematic analysis, I explored trends, themes and patterns regarding participants' experience of school bullying as bystanders.

The thematic analysis enabled me to identify, analyse, and report patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes and patterns were instrumental in answering the research questions (see Section 6.3). A thematic analysis could be time-consuming and overwhelming when deciding the aspect of the data to focus on (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although having plenty of options for analysis could be considered an advantage as it offers flexibility, it could also be time-consuming to identify the potential range of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To address this challenge, I identified only the themes that were most instrumental in the texts and could offer an insight into answering my research questions.

Another challenge I envisaged during data interpretation was the influence of my own values, preconceptions and biases on the interpretations of responses since I was actively involved in the transcription of the text. Nonetheless, I ensured the

accuracy of my findings by conducting member checking. I verified the accuracy and completeness of the findings with the participants to establish whether my description of their experiences was accurate (Creswell, 2014).

4.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness refers to the level of confidence, and trust, one can have in a study and its findings (Robson, 2011). Trustworthiness is synonymous with reliability and validity of qualitative data. Trustworthiness is concerned with how a researcher convinces an audience that the findings of a study are reliable and valid and not mere fabrications by the researcher. Trustworthiness can be ensured using three main strategies namely, triangulation, member checking and an audit trail (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Triangulation ensures that the findings of the study do not emanate solely from one source, method or viewpoint (Cohen et al., 2011). In line with this, I used data collection methods such as interviews and additional methods such as field notes and reflective researchers to ensure that the findings of this study did not emanate from a singular source. Member checking, on the other hand, meant returning data gathered from participants in the research and the interpretation of the data back to the participants from whom the data was initially generated. In this study, the essence of member checking was to ask participants if my interpretation of the data was acceptable and captured their voices or views about their experiences of witnessing school bullying (Bryman, 2015).

Lastly, auditability refers to the process of documenting records of data for the purpose of providing a trail of evidence (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In order to achieve audiability of this study, I created a paper file consisting of information gathered from the participants in the interview. I stored the file in a closed cabinet for the length of the time of the research. Replies to interview questions were transcribed and kept in a computer file. I ensured that there is no means of identifying the provider of information in the file to further protect the identity of the participants. All information gathered for the research will be stored in a closed office at the University of Pretoria for safekeeping and withheld for a minimum of 15 years as required by the current ethical guidelines for qualitative research. I established a

document security procedure to ensure that only authorised individuals are permitted to access the data. After 15 years, the papers will be destroyed by shredding and the computer file that contains the transcribed responses to the interview will be securely deleted.

Creswell (2014a) states that trustworthiness in qualitative research can be achieved if the following conditions are met: credibility, transferability, dependability, authenticity, and confirmability.

4.8.1 Credibility

Credibility means the authenticity of data collected and the believability of findings generated (McMillan, 2008). In other words, credibility relates to the extent to which the findings of a study represent an accurate description of the participants' accounts and the extent to which such findings are believable (Trochim, 2006). Credibility refers to the amount of intensity a researcher applies to ensure confidence in the study by providing findings that are believable (Ary et al., 2010). I followed the strategies recommended by Shenton (2004) to enhance the credibility of this study.

Sheton (2004) proposed that researchers should adopt data collection methods and analysis methods that have been previously used in other studies and have proven successful. As such, I stayed clear of unfamiliar methods that still require their effectiveness to be evaluated. Shenton (2004) argued that if the effectiveness of a method of data collection and analysis used in a study is doubted by the readers of the research findings, the credibility of the study could also be questioned.

Shenton (2004) further suggested that researchers should acquaint themselves with the participants and the research site prior to collection of data. Shenton based his argument on the notion that the more researchers spend time in the research field to familiarise themselves with the participants and the culture of the research site, the more they get a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. In line with this, I first engaged the participants in an informal discussion about their experience of bullying in school, by doing so I familiarised myself with the research field and the participants before generating data for the study.

According to Patton (2015), triangulation could enhance the credibility of a study. Triangulation of data sources was used to reinforce the rigour of the data and to gain in-depth insight. To reduce the threat to credibility, I triangulated data using various sources of data to verify findings that emerged (Yin, 2016). It is essential to generate data from multiple sources as one source can be used to corroborate the result of the other and hence provide rigour to the study (Yin, 2016). However, Mason (2002) was of a contrary opinion about the idea of triangulation. Mason (2002) argued that the idea of using multiple sources of data is likely to throw light onto different social or ontological phenomena. I did not go in the direction of the contrary submission of Mason (2002) with regards to triangulation as I believed that using multiple sources of data would enhance my clear comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation as against using a single strategy for data collection (Patton, 2015).

To further enhance the credibility of this study, I also did member checks by allowing participants to verify the accuracy of the content of the transcribed interview. In addition to that, I allowed the participants to make comments on interpretation and analysis. This was done to enable participants to note whether their experiences were fully captured or not in the findings and to offer suggestions on how to better present their views. I consulted my supervisor for regular debriefing sessions. I sought the assistance of my supervisor to review my findings as they emerged.

4.8.2 Transferability

Transferability means the extent to which the findings of a study are applicable to a similar context or situation using different samples. Shenton (2004) stated that qualitative research is usually conducted with a relatively small number of participants and as such, it is hard to prove that the findings of a qualitative study are applicable to other population. This qualitative research was conducted with a specific population, at a particular moment in a particular context; therefore, the same result may not be obtainable when the study is replicated but rather, relatability should be considered (Morrow, 2005). Bell (2010) asserted that the relatability of qualitative research is more its important than its generalisability.

Even though this research study is not aimed at generalising the findings, I intended to ensure transferability by keeping detailed notes on each aspect of the research

process in a well-documented format. I will make these notes available upon request so as to allow other researchers the opportunity to check the procedure if the need arises and for the researcher to justify the findings for any similarities. I used multiple sources to collect data, namely individual semi-structured interviews, activities completed during the intervention sessions, a reflective journal and audio-recording to enhance triangulation which could further support transferability.

4.8.3 Dependability

According to Rolfe (2006), dependability is synonymous with reliability. It is the extent to which a study would yield the same result if conducted all over again i.e. the consistency of the research findings. Rolfe (2006), however, stated that the dynamic nature of a qualitative research limit replication of findings of qualitative research in a similar context. Rolfe (2006) then suggested that to enhance the dependability of qualitative research; researchers should make the research process traceable and well documented for verification purpose. By doing so, readers can replicate the study by following the procedure even if their aim is not to obtain similar findings.

An audit trail can be utilised to enhance the dependability of a study (Stringer, 2004). An audit trail is defined as proper documentation of the process of the research, ranging from the data generation process to analysis. I documented the entire research process properly to enhance verification of the findings. I used my reflective journal to document my thoughts and my observations, thereby improving the dependability of the study. The process of how the study was conducted and how the findings were derived was documented and will be kept for 15 years.

A detailed thick description of the research design and data gathering methods was made to afford other researchers the opportunity to justify and elaborate on the findings (Ary et al, 2010). Hamilton and Corbett-Whitthier (2013) noted that providing a detailed account of research procedures enhances the dependability of a study.

4.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent to which the findings of the research are bias-free (Ary et al., 2010). Confirmability ensures that a degree of neutrality is maintained and that

findings are formed by the participants' experiences and not through the researchers'; own bias, interest or motivations (Denzin, 2016). A study can be said to meet the standard criteria of confirmability when its findings are derived from the participants rather than the subjective opinion or bias of the researcher.

Triangulating, member checking and an audit trail enhance the objectivity of findings of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). To guarantee the confirmability of the findings of my research study, I gave my participants a voice in my study through the interviews which were not longer than 45 minutes (Scotland, 2012). I paid adequate attention to participants' expressions as they recounted their experiences of witnessing bullying in school.

I audiotaped the interviews and in addition, took notes which were later transcribed and analysed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). I returned to the participants to do member checking in order to ensure that the interpretations and conclusions I drew from their inputs correlated with their views and voices. I conducted member checking to ensure that my interpretation, data analysis, and conclusions reflected the participants' views and voices and not my subjective ideas (Gay et al., 2011).

Furthermore, I used an audit trail to document the process of research and data analysis (Macnee & Mccabe, 2008). I kept an audit trail which will be maintained for 15 years to enable other researchers to inspect the records to confirm the data if needed. The audit trail consist of the procedures I followed to select participants, how and when I collected the data, how the data was organised, analysed and interpreted. This was done to enhance the transparency of the study and gain readers' trust in the findings of the study.

4.8.5 Authenticity

The authenticity of a study refers to the degree to which the interpretation and report of the findings of a study capture the voice and the views of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014), thus providing a true reflection of the participants' experiences as expressed by them. Authenticity refers to the extent to which participants views and opinions of the phenomenon being investigated is fully represented in the data interpretation and analysis (Morrow, 2005).

In an attempt to monitor and maintain the authenticity of the findings of this study, I included the participants' quotations while reporting the findings in order to fully represent their perceptions and experiences of witnessing school bullying before and after participating in a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I transcribed the interviews verbatim and I quoted some of the participant expressions verbatim. I provided a thick description of how the participants ascribed meaning to the bullying incidences they witnessed in school and their experiences thereof (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Neuman, 2011). I endeavoured to capture the true voices of the participants, thus I audio recorded all sessions of the interviews. This allowed me to revisit the data for clarity purposes.

I remained conscious of how my personal values and bias may influence my interpretations of the participants' responses. I conducted member checking and I engaged in constant discussion with my research supervisor to deliberate on the process of data analysis and the findings of the research study to ensure authenticity.

4.9   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this session, the ethical issues within the context of the research process will be discussed. According to Pillay (2014) "ethics is not just about procedural compliance but more about the application of rules and conduct". Ethics are generally concerned with the wrong and right in the way the researcher conduct research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Mouton, 2013).

My research study was conducted in line with the research and ethics guidelines given by the Faculty of Education ethics committee of the University of Pretoria. Creswell (2014) noted that it is imperative to seek the approval of individuals in authority so as to gain access to study participants. In line with this, I sought approval from the Faculty of Education Ethics committee, the University of Pretoria (EP/17/11/01 see pg iii), the Department of Education (see Appendix B) as well as from the school principal. I obtained ethical approval from the University of Pretoria and I also obtained permission to conduct research from the Department of Education in Gauteng province. I obtained permission to carry out research in the

selected primary school in the Mamelodi area. I commenced the research after I obtained all the necessary ethical clearance certificates.

A letter of invitation to participate in the research was posted on the school notice board. I provided contact details in the letter so that interested and eligible participants could indicate if they were willing to partake in the study. Participants were asked to shed light on the detail of their experiences, thus the ethical issues should be considered to protect participants from any form of harm. Pillay (2014) suggested that ethical principles should be adhered to in all research involving children. Turner and Fozdar (2010) remarked that it is imperative to ensure ethical responsibility in all research, especially with children, because children are considered vulnerable (Lahman, 2008). I adhered to the ethical guidelines as prescribed by the Faculty of Education's Ethics Committee. The principles of anonymity, confidentiality, trust, and voluntary participation were adhered to prevent exploitation of the research participants (Morell, Epstein & Molestsane, 2012). Participants were granted access to the findings of the study to achieve reciprocity (Ary et al., 2010).

4.9.1 Informed assent and consent

Seeking and getting consent from the participants is an important ethical requirement before the commencement of any research process (Miller & Bell, 2012). Mishna et al. (2004) stated that it is necessary to obtain both informed consents of the parents of the participant and assent from the child participant. Mishna et al. (2004) further stressed that it is important to inform the participants that they could decide not to participate in the study even if their parent(s) consent.

The principle of informed consent is derived from the universally practised human right to liberty and autonomy (Cohen et al., 2011). Informed consent ensures that participation in a study is done voluntarily and willingly. All necessary information about the study required to make an informed decision should be supplied (Gay et al., 2011). Such information includes the aim of the research, what is expected of the participants if they consented to take part in the study, the right to discontinue their participation in the study, the potential benefits and consequences of participating in

the study, the issue of anonymity and confidentiality and how the data will be used (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2014; Gay et al., 2011).

Before I embarked on data generation activities, I obtained informed assent from the participants and informed consent from the participants' parents or guardians (see Appendix G and F). Participants in this study were provided with information about what the study entails, the rights of the participants to withdraw at any time if need be and the purpose and procedure of the research (Neuman, 2011). Litchman (2014) stated that it is important that participants are fully notified of the nature of the research study in which they will participate. Thus I attached a covering letter to the assent letter so that participants could read and understand the potential benefit, purpose and procedures of the study. In addition, I verbally explained to participants to assure them that there would be no punishment or threat if they decided to withdraw or take part in the study. I explained the aim of the research to the 10 participants so that they could make informed decisions to participate or not.

4.9.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Researchers are obligated to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants in a study (Mertens, 2012; Mouton, 2013). Confidentiality refers to the restriction of access to the data and names of the research participants while anonymity implies the use of pseudonyms and disguised locations to ensure that no links can be made between the data and the research participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I maintained the confidentiality of the research participants' identities in this study. I recorded and will store all data collected in a safe place at the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years as required by the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee.

I maintained anonymity by not making use of participants' names in reporting on the study; instead, I used pseudonyms to ensure that no links could be made between the data and the research participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The identity of the participants is protected. Participants' names and personal locations were not disclosed. I administered the interview in a quiet private room. Moreover, the transcripts of the interview were stored in a secured place to ensure participants' confidentiality (De Vos et al., 2009).

I also provided the participants and their parents with clear and accurate information about the aim of the SDCDRI and how I intended to use the generated data. The data collected was safeguarded on a password-protected computer, and only the researcher knows the password. I did not reveal the identities of my participants while writing the report of this study; neither will I share any data with individuals not involved with this research.

4.9.3 Voluntary participation

According to McMillan & Schumacher (2014), participants should not be compelled, coerced or required to participate in a study. The study participants were not coerced or deceived to be involved in this study. Instead, it was emphasised that participation was voluntary. Participants were also told that they were at liberty to withdraw from participating in the study at any time if they desired, even if they had agreed to participate earlier on (Creswell, 2014; De Vos et al., 2009).

Participants were also informed about what was expected of them, which was to participate in the interview and to confirm the transcript of their interview. An indication of how the data would be used was shared with the participants. It was clearly stated in the letter of consent that the findings of the study would be published as a thesis as required for the awarding of a degree.

4.9.4 Honesty and integrity

I ensured that the integrity of the research was promoted by acting with honesty in compliance with the code of ethics of the University of Pretoria throughout the research (Elias & Theron, 2012). In other words, I did not fabricate, manipulate or alter the data generated. I provided the contacts details and that of my institutions where I was registered as a student to the participants. I made sure that I clarified the purpose of my study and emphasised that the data collected would be for research purposes.

4.10 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

Ravitch and Carl (2016) refer to researchers as the primary instrument in the process of data collection in qualitative research. Therefore, I took the role of research instrument by sampling the research participants, organising and

conducting the interviews, transcribing and analysing the data generated in the study and then reporting on the findings. While interpreting the data, I reflected on my thoughts and remained conscious of how my assumptions, values and beliefs could influence my interpretations of the data collected (Clarke & Braun, 2013). To this end, I focused only on the views and experiences of my participants to capture the true reflections of the participants' voices while reporting the findings of the study.

Furthermore, I was responsible for designing the intervention, during the course of which I consulted my supervisor for guidance, and the intervention itself was implemented with the assistance of an Educational Psychologist registered in South Africa. I made it a duty to ensure that participants understood the purpose of the intervention and actively participated in all the sessions of the intervention. I also made myself available to answer questions from the participants throughout the study.

I ensured that the interviews' venue was comfortable and had a warm atmosphere. During the interview, I ensured that the participants understood the questions being asked by simplifying and presenting the questions in a way that would be easily understandable. To achieve this aim, I identified and utilised the service of a trained translator who was fluent in Sepedi and English. The reason was to make sure that participants understand the interview questions and express their views and opinions freely without misconceptions.

I understand that interpreters and translators play a crucial role in the research process and they may influence the findings of research due to their personal views and how such views may influence the translations of the participants' narrations (Temple, 2002). This is because interpreters are interactive beings with personal values, opinions, attitudes and unique experiences. These values, opinions and experiences may, however, shape their translations (Temple, 2002). Since such interference may significantly influence the findings of the study, I devised a procedure to eliminate this potential limitation by having the audio recorded interviews examined by two translators to increase the richness of the data sources.

After the interviews were done, transcribed and analysed, I provided an opportunity for the participants to review my interpretation of the data to clear any

misunderstandings or misrepresentations of views (if any). More specifically, I was responsible for the following activities in line with Maree's suggestions (Maree, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016):

- Developing the content of the therapy;
- Preparing the interview questions and conducted the interviews;
- Triangulating the data;
- Analysing the data collected;
- I familiarised the Educational Psychologist, who served as the therapist, with the content and mode of delivery of the SDCDRI;
- I identified a suitable translator and ensured that the transcription was effectively conducted; and
- I constantly reflected on my role.

4.11 CONCLUSION

In Chapter 4, I described the research methodology and design that I utilised for this study as well as the selected paradigmatic lenses that I adopted. A qualitative approach to research study was used for answering the research questions of this study. My research study is situated in an interpretivism paradigm. I justified the acceptance of an interpretivism paradigm as the most suitable for this study because the interpretivism paradigm is embedded in the notion that reality is contained in the meaning people attached to their experiences.

A qualitative descriptive-exploratory design was established as the most appropriate research design to use. I used purposive sampling to select participants for this study. To complement the literature review, I collected data by means of formal strategies to collect data such as individual semi-structured interviews and additional methods such as a reflective journal and audio recordings. Towards the end of this chapter, I discussed the processes taken to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the research study. I also discussed the ethical considerations in line with the ethics and research guidelines provided by the Faculty of Education ethics committee of the University of Pretoria. My role as a researcher in the study was highlighted. A comprehensive discussion of the research findings and data analysis will be provided in Chapter 5**.**

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the design and methodology of this study. The purpose of my study is to qualitatively explore and describe 10 early adolescents' experiences of school bullying as bystanders before and after a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention. As described, a qualitative exploratory descriptive research design was adopted for this study as it allowed for in depth exploration and description of early adolescents' bystanders experiences of school bullying.

The purpose of this chapter was to analyse and interpret the early adolescence bystanders' perceptions and experiences of school bullying. This chapter presents the findings of this study. The findings were linked to the primary research question which is: "*How do early adolescents experience school bullying as bystanders following a self debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention?*"

Data was obtained from an in-depth individual semi-structured interview, excerpts from activities completed during intervention sessions, reflective research journal and audio recordings. Data was collected until data saturation was reached. In using thematic analysis to reduce, organise and code the data, a number of themes and codes emerged and were developed. I included direct quotations from the participants and excerpts from my reflective journal to support the emerged themes.

The themes that emerged include bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying; contributions of self-debasing cognitive distortions to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying; the significance of cognitive restructuring techniques in modifying bystanders thinking patterns; the value of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying and the impact of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention on modifying bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. The themes were discussed

alongside some other sub-themes that emerged. Significantly, this chapter answered the fifth secondary research question reflected below for ease of reference:

> - How can a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention possibly change bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?

In the next section, I will discuss the data analysis process and strategies.

5.2   DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Data analysis is the process of reducing and organising data into smaller and manageable parts with the aim of finding answers to research questions (Polit & Beck, 2008, p. 69). Data was analysed through inductive thematic analysis which implies that analysis was done on the data derived from the participants and not from any superimposed or preconceived theoretical framework (Tjale & De Villiers, 2004).

Data analysis enables the transformation of data into findings by organising, coding and merging related data into categories and themes (Cohen et al., 2011). Kruger, De Vos, Fouché & Venter, (2005, p. 218) asserted that "data analysis does not in itself provide answers to research questions as these are found by way of interpretation of the analysed data". Accordingly, I transcribed and interpreted the data. Interpreting data involves making sense of the data (De Vos et al., 2009).

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted before and after the intervention. All the participants were bystanders of bullying and met the criteria for inclusion stipulated in the previous chapter. The interviews were conducted at a date and time suitable for both participants and researcher.

I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommendation of the data analysis process. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the process of data analysis starts with the familiarising phase. I immersed myself in the data to understand the data piece by piece. I carefully read through the transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the information provided in each session of the interview until a point of saturation was reached. I thereafter looked for relevant data that could provide answers to my research questions. After reading and re-reading the transcript of the interview, I had

enough information to identify and label codes to reflect themes from the data. I, then, gave relevant data a code.

I continued to search for candidate themes by listing all the codes. Then I grouped similar codes and named each group. I provided the inclusion and exclusion criteria for each group. I repeated this search for a candidate theme with the next piece of data. I compared all candidate themes to provide a review of the themes. At this stage, I ensured that the themes were not just codes. I also ensured that the themes offered useful answers to my research questions.

Next, I defined and categorised the themes under main and sub-themes. To ensure that all participants' views were adequately captured in the themes, I had another look at the original transcripts to see if there could be new themes that I had not included in my summaries. I also incorporated comments from my reflective journal in formulating the themes. I illustrated each theme and subtheme with data. Lastly, I wrote up a report. In my report, I situated my findings in the current body of literature. I explained how my themes confirm and extend existing cognitive behaviour theory and appraisal theory. The following section presents the result of the thematic data analysis.

5.3 RESULTS OF THE INDUCTIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In this section, I discuss the five main themes and sub-themes that I have identified through inductive thematic analysis. Theme 1, as illustrated in Figure 5-1, presents bystanders' emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying. This theme provided answers to Secondary Research Question 1 by depicting how bystanders react emotionally and behaviourally to witnessing bullying.

Theme 2 indicated the contributory role of the train of thoughts that predisposes bystanders to react in a particular way. This theme indicated how bystanders' thinking patterns could trigger emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. Basically, Theme 2 answered the second secondary research question on how self-debasing cognitive distortions could contribute to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying.

Theme 3 captured the significance of cognitive restructuring as a cognitive behavioural therapy technique in modifying bystanders' thinking patterns. The third theme demonstrated how cognitive restructuring as a cognitive behavioural therapy technique could possibly change bystanders' thinking patterns. Theme 4 demonstrated how the compilation of a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention could assist in capturing bystanders' experiences of witnessing school bullying. In essence, the fourth theme showed how the activities that participants completed during the sessions of the intervention helped to articulate their thoughts, feelings and reactions to witnessing bullying. Lastly, Theme 5 identified the effect of the SDCDRI on modifying bystanders' behavioural and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying. The five themes were tabulated and then each theme and sub-themes were also described. Figure 5-1 provides an overview.

THEME 1
Bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying

Sub-theme 1.1
Willingness to intervene

Sub-theme 1.2
Self-blame and feeling guilt for not being able to defend victims

Sub-theme 1.3
Difficulty in concentration due to psychological re-victimisation

Sub-theme 1.4
Expressed negative emotions and behaviours

Sub-theme 1.5
Insecure feelings

Sub-theme 1.6
School phobia

THEME 2
Contributions of self-debasing cognitive distortions to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying

Sub-theme 2.1
Personalisation evoked bystanders self-blame and feelings of guilt

Sub-theme 2.2
Catastrophising amplified bystanders' anxiety and fear

Sub-theme 2.3
Over generalisation induced and exacerbated bystander's negative perception of school safety

Sub-theme 2.4
Selective abstraction led to indirect co-victimisation

THEME 3
Significance of cognitive restructuring techniques in modifying bystanders thinking patterns

Sub-theme 3.1
Challenging automatic thoughts abated bystanders' maladaptive thinking patterns

Sub-theme 3.2
Decatastrophising depleted bystanders' catastrophic thinking patterns

Sub-theme 3.3
Guided discovery assisted bystanders to identify and re appraise negative thinking pattern

THEME 4
The value of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying

Sub-theme 4.1
Visual images enhanced better representation of thoughts and emotions

Sub-theme 4.2
Tasks completed in the SDCDRI sessions reinforced verbal quotations to synthesise bystanders' experiences of school bullying

THEME 5
Impact of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring on modifying bystanders behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying

Sub-theme 5.1
Reduced error in bystanders thinking patterns

Sub-theme 5.2
Enhanced bystanders appropriate interpretation of events

Sub-theme 5.3
Mitigated bystanders negative behavioural and emotional

Figure 5-1: Overview of emerging theme and sub-themes

Table 5-1: Summary of theme 1 with corresponding sub-themes

Theme 1
Bystanders emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying
Sub-themes
1.1   Willingness to intervene
1.2   Self-blame and feeling guilty for not being able to intervene
1.3   Difficulty in concentration due to psychological re-victimisation
1.4   Expressed negative emotions and behaviour
1.5   Insecure feelings
1.6   School phobia

5.3.1   Theme 1: Bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying

This theme captured the emotional and behavioural responses of bystanders to witnessing bullying in school. The six sub-themes that were identified illustrated how bystanders react emotionally and behaviourally to witnessing bullying in school. Table 5-2 contains the inclusion and exclusion criteria I used to identify Theme 1 and its sub-themes.

Table 5-2: Theme 1 – Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Theme/sub-themes	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Theme 1: Bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying	Includes any reference to all actions and reactions of bystanders as a result of witnessing bullying	Excludes any reference to all actions and reaction of bystanders which could not be attributed to resulting from witnessing bullying.
Sub-theme 1.1: Willingness to intervene	Includes any reference that shows bystanders intention to intervene for the victim as a result of sympathy	Exclude any reference to the intention to intervene that could not be attributed to empathy or sympathy
Sub-theme 1.2: Self-blame and Feeling guilt for not being able to defend victims	Includes any reference to apportioning of self-blame and expression of guilt as a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying	Exclude any reference to the apportioning of self-blame and expression of guilt which is not a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying.
Sub-theme 1.3: Difficulties in concentration due to psychological victimisation	Includes any reference to the inability to focus attention in class due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed	Excludes any reference to the inability to focus attention in class which is not due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed.
Sub-theme 1.4: Expressed Negative emotions and behaviour	Includes any references to the expression of negative emotions and behaviours as a result of anticipating being the next target after witnessing bullying.	Exclude any references to the expression of negative emotions and behaviours which could not be linked to anticipating being next target after witnessing bullying.
Sub-theme 1.5: Insecure feelings	Includes any reference to feelings of insecurity in school which is brought about as a result of fear of being the next target after witnessing bullying	Exclude any reference to feelings of insecurity in school which could not be linked to fear of being next target after witnessing bullying or which could be attributed to other factors apart from fear of being next victim after witnessing bullying.
Sub-theme 1.6: School phobia	Includes any reference to a loss of interest in going to school as a result of fear of being the next victim after witnessing bullying.	Exclude any reference to a loss of interest in going to school which is not a result of fear of being the next victim after witnessing bullying

5.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Willingness to intervene

The data collected from the pre-intervention interviews revealed the reactions of participants to witnessing bullying in school. Participants in this study demonstrated a willingness to intervene in their reactions to witnessing bullying in school. The participants were asked to describe the bullying incidents they witnessed and to state if they intervened or not for the victims when they witnessed bullying. Participant 1 responded by saying *"Ke utloile eka ke a mo thusa le ho bolella 'mampoli hore a se ke a mo otla"* (I did feel like helping her and telling the bully not to hit her). (P1, pre-intervention interview, p.1, lines 24-26)

Most participants showed intentions to defend the victims in a bullying situation if they had the power. For instance, participant 2 expressed her intention to defend the victim in her response to the question. She said: *"…E, ke utloa eka nka kena lipakeng ha ke paka bompoli. Ha ho etsahala ka pel'a mahlo a ka ke lakatsa eka nka kena lipakeng"* (Yes, I do feel like I can intervene when I witness bullying. When it happens in front of my eyes, I do wish I can intervene). (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.7, lines 317-320)

Another participant expressed a similar intention in her response by saying *"Ke ikutloa joalo …… ho ea thusa motho ea hlorisoang empa ha ke sa khone, ke ea ho tichere hore e kenelle".* (I feel like that…… to go and help the victim but if I can't, I go to tell the teacher to intervene) (P5, pre-intervention interview, p.25, lines 1204-1207). The eighth participant added that: "*Ke utloa eka nka kena lipakeng mme ke joetse motho ea hlorisang hore o ka se otle ngoana enoa. Sena ha se ngoana oa hau*" (I feel like I can intervene and tell the bully that you can't beat this child. This is not your child). (P8, pre-intervention interview, p.42, lines 2002-2005).

Participants felt concern for the victims out of sympathy. Participants do understand that bullying is wrong and wished they could intervene for the victims. Some other participants made the following comments regarding their willingness to intervene for the victims when they witness bullying. Participant 9 had this to say: *"Ke utloa eka nka bolella mosuoe-hlooho kapa 'm'a ka empa ke tšaba hobane ha ke ba joetsa,' mampoli o tla nkotla"* (I feel like I can tell the principal or my mother but I am afraid because if I tell them, the bully is going to beat me). (P9, pre-intervention interview, p.25, lines 2144-2147).

Participant 6 noted that although he felt pain for the victim the fear of being bullied overshadowed his intention to intervene: *"E, kea batla, empa ke tšaba hobane le bona ba ka mpolaisa" (Yes, I want to but I am afraid because myself too they can bully me).* (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.32, lines 1552-1553). Participant 6 further confirmed that fear of being the next target quelled his willingness to intervene for the victims: *Le 'na ke tšohile hobane ke tšaba hore ba ka nkotla kapa ba mpolaisa feela joalo ka ha ba etsa ho motho ea hlasetsoeng" (Me too I am scared because I am afraid they might beat me or bully me just like they are doing to the victim).* (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.33, lines 1569-1572).

The first participant did not differ in her response. She expressed her good will to defend the victims but at the same time expressed her concern for her safety: *"Ka linako tse ling ke fetoha mohoasa hobane ke batla ho thusa bana ba bang empa ha ke khone hobane ke tšaba." (Sometimes I get moody because I want to help the other children but I can't because I am afraid).* (P1, pre-intervention interview, p.2, lines 64-67).

From all indications, it appeared that bystanders were "trapped in a social dilemma". In other words, although the bystanders reported an intention and willingness to defend victims in a bullying situation, they were also conscious of their own safety and vulnerability.

5.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Self-blame and feeling guilt for not being able to intervene***.*** Almost all the participants in this study apportioned self-blame and reported feelings of guilt and disappointment for not being able to intervene for the victims of bullying. This expression was made apparent in the description provided by participants while narrating their experiences. The second participant said: *"E, ke ikutloa ke le molato haholo ha ke paka ho hlorisoa. Ka linako tse ling ke bile ke lakatsa eka nka ea ho ea bolella mosuoe-hlooho empa ha ke nahana hore 'mampoli a ka khutlela ho nna, ha ke ee mme ke ikutloa ke le molato". (Yes, I do feel guilty very much guilty when I witness bullying. Sometimes I even wish I could go and tell the principal but when I think that the bully can even come back to me, I don't go and I feel guilty).* (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.7, lines 329-336).

Another participant expressed disappointment at herself when asked to describe how she felt for not being able to intervene when she witnessed bullying. She said: "*Ha ke utloe hantle ho hang hobane haeba ke ne ke sa khone ho thusa motho ea hlokahalitsoeng mme a tsoa likotsi, ho nna ho tšoana le ha ke mo hlotsoe. (I don't feel good at all because if I couldn't help the victim and she get injured, to me is like I failed her*). (P7, pre-intervention interview, p.40, lines 1927-1931).

I sought clarity from the third participant to ensure if she also experienced feelings of guilt and self-blame for not being able to defend the victims of bullying. She responded by saying: "*E, ke ikutloa ke le molato, 'me ke lula ke ipeha molato" (Yes, I feel guilty and I do blame myself).* (P3, pre-intervention interview, p.13, lines 602-603).

The fifth participant believed that she betrayed the trust her friend, who was bullied, had in her for not being able to intervene on her behalf when she witnessed her being bullied. Consequently, she apportioned blame to herself and thought she was the cause of the victimisation her friend suffered. She declared: "*Yaa ke ipeha molato ke lakatsa eka nka be ke thusitse kapa ho bitsa motho e mong empa ke ne nke ke ka khona ho beha molato" (Yaa I do blame myself I wish I could have helped or called somebody but I couldn't so I blame myself).* (P5, pre-intervention interview, p.26, lines 1216-1220).

I noted that most of the participants felt indebted to the victims for not defending them when they witnessed the victims being bullied. Following my observation, I made the following remarks in my research journal:

> Following the pre-intervention individual semi structured interviews conducted with participants, I observed that most participants engaged in personalisation which led to attribution of self-blame and trauma related guilt in their reactions to witnessing bullying.
>
> (Reflective Journal 4/9/2019)

The response of another participant while narrating how he felt about himself for not being able to defend victims whom he witnessed bullied confirmed my observation: "*E, ke ikutloa ke le mobe ebile ke le molato" (Yes, I feel bad and guilty).* (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.33, lines 1562-1563). It seemed bystanders could experience self-blame and feelings of guilt if they take personal responsibility or think that they are the sole cause for the bullying victimisation they witnessed because they were not able to do anything to stop it.

5.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Difficulties in concentration due to psychological re-victimisation.

Most participants in this study reported that they experienced difficulties in paying attention in class due to co-victimisation or psychological re-victimisation. These difficulties were expressed by participants at various stages of the interview. The second participant said: "*E nkama haholo ha ke le sehlopheng. Ka linako tse ling esita le ha ke ngola tlhahlobo ho e-na le ho nahana ka teko eo ke e ngolang, ke qala ho nahana ka bompoli boo ke bo boneng" (It affects me a lot when I am in class. Sometimes even when I am writing a test instead of thinking about the test that I am writing, I start thinking about the bullying that I witnessed).* (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.8, lines 373-378).

Participant 9 added that: "*Ha ke khone ho tsepamisa mohopolo hobane nako le nako ha mosuoe a ruta, kelello ea ka e nahana hore ba tla mpolaisa. Ha ke khone ho tsepamisa mohopolo" (I can't concentrate because every time when the teacher is teaching, my mind is thinking that they will bully me. I can't concentrate).* (P9, pre-intervention interview, p.45, lines 2173-2177).

What I noted through the affirmative responses of most participants was that witnessing bullying impeded their concentration on their studies. The thought of probably being a next victim caused bystanders to be unhappy which in turn affected their concentration on academic tasks. Some participants confirmed this by saying: "*Ha ke khone ho tsepamisa mohopolo ha Mam a ntse a ruta. Ha ke utloe le ha bana ba bang ba araba mamong hobane ke nahana ka bompoli boo ke bo pakileng" (I can't concentrate when Mam is teaching. I can't even hear when the other kids are answering the mam because I am thinking about the bullying that I witnessed)* (P4, pre-intervention interview, p.20, lines 956-962).

Another participant had this to say: *"Kelello ea ka ha e eo ka tlelaseng hobane ke utloa eka batho ba teng. Ba batla ho tla le ho nka pene ea ka"* *(My concentration is not in the class because I feel like those people are there. They want to come and take my pen).* (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.33, lines 1597-1600). He further emphasised that: *"E, kea akheha ha ke nahana ka bompoli hobane ke utloa eka ke 'na ea hlorisoang"* *(Yes, I get carried away when I think about the bullying because I feel like it is me that is being bullied).* (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.33, lines 1603-1606).

Participant 1 also declared that she experienced difficulties in concentration in class *"Ka linako tse ling ha ke khone ho tsepamisa mohopolo ka sehlopheng ha tichere ea ka e bua hobane ke nahana ka seo 'mampoli a se entseng"* *(Sometimes I can't concentrate in class when my teacher is speaking because I am thinking of what the bully did).* (P1, pre-intervention interview, p.2, lines 58-62).

Participant 2 confirmed that sometimes she would forget that she is in class even when the teacher is teaching because she is absent minded: *"E nkama le ha mosuoe oa ka a ntse a nthuta maikutlo a ka a hloleha ka linako tse ling le ha a mpotsa potso, ke tla mo sheba feela hobane ha ke tsepamisitse maikutlo hobane ke nahana ka bompoli boo ke bo pakileng"* *(It does affect me even when my teacher is teaching me my mind goes off sometimes even if she asks me a question, I will just be looking at her because I am not concentrating because I am thinking about the bullying that I witnessed).* (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.8, lines 381-388).

Participant 3 affirmed this by saying: *"Ha ke khone ho tsepamisa mohopolo ka sehlopheng 'me ha ke batle ho ngola mosebetsi oa ka oa sekolo. Ke hana ho tsepamisa mohopolo ha matichere a ntse a ruta"* *(I can't concentrate in the class and I can't even write my school work. I can't concentrate when the teachers are teaching).* (P3, pre-intervention interview, p.14, lines 640-644).

It appeared that the anxiety caused by fear of subsequent direct victimisation could contribute to bystanders' emotional insecurity and uncertainty which could make concentration on academic tasks and learning difficult at school.

5.3.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Expressed negative emotions and behaviours.

Participants generally expressed negative emotions and behaviours in reaction to witnessing bullying. The fourth participant described her experience as follows: "*Ke ikutloa ke utloile bohloko haholo ha ke bona bompoli e le 'na hobane ha se lekhetlo la pele ngoana enoa ea hlorisang bana ba sekolo esita le selemong se fetileng a etsa ntho e tšoanang mme ba mo lemosa empa o ntse a hlorisa barutoana le joale. Kahoo ke tšohile*" *(I feel very sad when I witnessed bullying because It is not the first time that this boy bully learners even last year he did the same thing and they give him warning but he is still bullying learners even now. So, I am scared).* (P4, pre-intervention interview, p.20, lines 964-971).

The fear of subsequent direct victimisation has been reported to contribute to bystanders' negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying (Rivers et al., 2009). Another participant confirmed this assertion by saying: "*Ke ikutloa ke tšohile hobane bo-'mampoli bao ba ka tla ho 'na kapa ba ka ea' me ba otla motho e mong*" *(I feel scared because those bullies might come to me or might go and beat another person).* (P8, pre-intervention interview, p.43, lines 2089-2092).

Participant 5 shared similar experiences as follows: "*Ha ke bona 'mampoli enoa a tla ka tsela ena, leha ekaba ke ea ka lehlakoreng lena, ke fetola tsela e' ngoe e le hore ke qobelle ho bona 'mampoli a*" *(When I see this bully coming my way, even if I was going this side, I change direction. I go the other way just to avoid the seeing the bully).* (P5, pre-intervention interview, p.27, lines 1304-1308). The next participant had this to say "*Ke ikutloa ke le mobe hobane ka linako tse ling ke ba le litoro tse mpe. Ke lora ekare ke 'na hore lia hlorisa*" *(I feel bad because sometimes I have bad dreams. I dream like it is me that they are bullying).* (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.34, lines 1615-1616).

The thought and fear of becoming the next victims could also produce feelings of anger, sadness, sleeplessness, restlessness, mistrust, frustration and moodiness. This is confirmed in the reactions of the seventh participant when she said: "*Ke ikutloa ke le mobe haholo hobane ho paka bompoli ho etsa hore ke utloe bohloko haholo hobane bompoli ha bo botle ho hang*" *(I feel so bad because witnessing bullying make me to feel so sad because bullying is not good at all).* (P7, pre-intervention interview, p.40, lines 1906-1909). Participant 6 expatiated by saying: "*Ho*

nkama. Ke na le litoro tse mpe ha ke bona motho a otloa. Ho nkhathatsa haholo boroko ba ka" (It affects me. I have bad dreams seeing a person being hit. It disturbs me a lot in my sleep). (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.27, lines 1286-1289).

It looked as if nearly all participants became sad and restless when they witnessed bullying "*Ke ikutloa ke le mobe haholo haeba ke sa khone ho etsa letho ho emisa bompoli hobane ke utloa eka e etsahalla"* (I feel so bad if I can't do anything to stop the bullying because I feel it is happening to me too). (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.7, lines 323-326). When asked how witnessing bullying in school generally affect her mood, participant 3 said: "*E etsa hore ke nyahame hobane ha ho na seo nka se etsang sekolong"* (It makes me feel down because I can't do anything at school). (P3, pre-intervention interview, p.13, lines 616-618). The sixth participant added that: "*Ha ke tšepe mang kapa mang hobane ke utloa eka le bona ke karolo ea baithuti ba tšoarelletseng ba bompoli"* (I don't trust anyone because I feel like they too are part of those who are busy bullying learners). (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.34, lines 1624-1627).

> I could perceive from my observation that participants' thinking pattern played a determinant role in their reactions to witnessing bullying. Most of the participants nursed the fear that they might equally be bullied. In other words, their reactions to witnessing bullying were based on their thoughts. I am beginning to wonder if an intervention should not be directed towards enhancing interpretation of event based on facts and evidences and not on assumptions, guess or thoughts.
>
> (Reflective Journal 5/9/2019)

5.3.1.5 Sub-theme 1.5: Insecure feelings

This theme reflected bystanders' concern about vulnerability to bullying victimisation as a result of fear which consequently led to insecure feelings. The thoughts and fear of being a next target of bullying – with its accompanying negative emotions such as

anger, sadness, and restlessness diminished participants' ability to engage in learning activities in a non-threatening school environment.

I asked the participants to describe how they feel about their safety in school after they witnessed bullying. Participants stated clearly that they feel insecure in school because they always think that they would be bullied as well in school. A participant remarked that: "*Ha ke ikutloe ke sireletsehile ho hang hobane ke tšaba hore na ho ka thoe'ng haeba 'mampoli a ka tla ho' na 'me a nkena hore ehh u re bone. Kahoo ha ke bolokehe. Ke ka lebaka leo ke sa ikutloeleng ke bolokehile*" (*I don't feel safe at all because I am scared that what if the bully come to me and challenge me that ehh you saw us. So, I am not safe. That is why I don't feel safe*). (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.9, lines 412-418).

Another participant responded by describing his feelings as follow: "*Ha ke ikutloe ke sireletsehile ho hang hobane kea bona hore bompoli bo etsahala sekolong. Ka hona, joaloka nna le 'na ke tla hlorisoa*" (*I don't feel safe at all because I see that bullying is happening at school. I feel like me too I will be bullied*) (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.34, lines 1641-1645). The seventh participant responded to the same question by saying: "*Ho nna ke nahana hore sekolo ha se bolokehe ha ke bona barutoana ba hlekefetsoa*" (*For me I think school is not safe when I see learners being bullied*) (P7, pre-intervention interview, p.40, lines 1912-1914). One participant expressed her feelings on school safety by saying "*Che, ha ke ikutloe ke sireletsehile hobane ha ke fihla sekolong, ke tla fumana hore ba otla motho e mong mme ke nahana hore le bona ba tla nkotla* (*No I don't feel safe because when I arrive at school, I will find that they are beating other person and I think they will also beat me*). (P8, pre-intervention interview, p.43, lines 2074-2080).

Participant 6 attested that he feels insecure in school as a result of fear that the bullies may target him next: "*Ha ke na bonnete ba hore nka khona ho bolella mosuoe kapa mosuoe-hlooho hobane ke tšaba hore ba ka tla ba tla ntlhokofatsa*" (*I am not sure if I can tell the teacher or principal because I feel scared that they can come and bully me*). (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.34, lines 1634-1638).

It seemed participants lived in fear and this produced feelings of insecurity in school especially when they recalled the bullying they witnessed. The third participant

indicated that she does not feel safe and secure in school because she keeps wondering if there is adequate protection for her and this in turn affected her overall perception of school safety: "*Ha ke ikutloe ke sireletsehile ho hang hobane ha ke utloe eka ke sirelelitsoe mona sekolong*" *(I don't feel safe at all because I don't feel like I am protected here in school).* (P3, pre-intervention interview, p.15, lines 678-681).

It appeared that nearly all participants in this study reported feelings of insecurity which stemmed, in part, from thought and fear of becoming the next victim after witnessing bullying. The school environment is expected to be a safe place where effective teaching and learning can take place for learners. However, this may not be the case for bystanders who constantly indulge in thoughts and fear of subsequent direct victimisation.

5.3.1.6 Sub-theme 1.6: School phobia

During the pre-intervention individual semi structured interview conducted with participants, I asked the participants if witnessing bullying affected their interest in going to school. The first participant disclosed thus: "*Bompoli bo etsa hore ke tšabe ho kena sekolo. Ka linako tse ling ha 'm `e a ntsosa hore ke ee sekolong ho tšoana le ha a sa ntlhake ke sa batle ho kena sekolo*" *(Bullying make me to be afraid of school. Sometimes when my mother wakes me for school I am like no don't wake me up I don't want to go to school).* (P1, pre-intervention interview, p.3, lines 106-111).

Most participants stated that fear and anxiety became a daily routine in their lives. Almost all participants remarked that they dislike going to school for fear of being the next victims of bullying. The second participant made this assertion apparent in her narration: "*E ama sebopeho sa ka sekolong. Ka linako tse ling ha ke tsoha ke belaela hore na ke tlameha ho kena sekolo kapa che ka lebaka la bompoli bona*" *(It does affect my likeness for school. Sometimes when I wake up I doubt if I should go to school or not because of this bullying).* (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.8, lines 348-352).

Another participant demonstrated her unwillingness to go to school as a result of fear of attack or harm: "*Ehlile ke e nahana ka tsatsi le hlahlamang ha ke ne ke lokela ho*

kena sekolo. Ke tšoha ebe ke ipolella hore ho thoe'ng haeba bompoli bo ka ntlhahela" (Yes, I do think about it the following day when I am supposed to go school. I get scared and say to myself that what if bullying happens to me). (P7, pre-intervention interview, p.40, lines 1947-1952).

The school play a meaningful role in the socialisation of learners. However, if the school environment is hostile, learners may lose interest in going to school. Some participants claimed they like to be at home more than in school: "*E, ke tšaba sekolo mme ke utloa eka nka ea hae empa ha ke ea hae, mme o tla mpotsa hore na ke khutlela hae. Mme o tla mpolella hore ke lokela ho khutlela ho tla tlalehela mosuoe-hlooho) a ka laea ngoana eo empa ke tšaba hore kamora sekolo, 'mampoli a ka ntetsetsa mme a re o batla ho bua le nna feela a tseba hore o batla ho nkotla"* (Yes, I am afraid of school and I feel like I can go home but if I go home my mama will ask me why I come back. My mother will tell me that I must go back and report to the principal so that the principal can discipline that child but I am scared that after school, the bully can call me and said he want to talk to me only to find out that he wants to beat me). (P9, pre-intervention interview, p.46, lines 2229-2240).

Another participant confirmed her phobia for school by saying: "*Ha ke tsoha hoseng 'me ke nahana ho ea sekolong, ke ile ka re che, ho tšoana le ha ke ea sekolong hoseng ho hong le ho hong"* (When I wake up in the morning and think of going to school, I said no, I feel like not going to school every morning). (P5, pre-intervention interview, p.28, lines 1318-1321).

It is evident that fear of being bullied negatively affected bystanders' regard for school as most participants interviewed expressed loss of interest in going to school. In addition, it seemed the emotional distress caused by thought and fear of becoming the next victim of bullying created discomfort and unhappiness for participants even while in school: "*Ha ke na thabo sekolong hobane ke lula ke utloa eka ke lla 'me ke utloa bohloko"* (I don't have happiness in school because I always feel like crying and I feel sad). (P3, pre-intervention interview, p.14, lines 660-663).

Another participant expressed a similar experience: "*Ke utloa bohloko hobane ka linako tse ling ha ke lakatse ho tla sekolong ka lebaka la lintho tse hlorisang 'me ka linako tse ling ke tšaba ho tla sekolong ….."* (I feel bad because sometimes I don't

wish to come to school because of the bullying things and sometimes I am scared to come to school…). (P9, pre-intervention interview, p.45, lines 2153-2158).

> From the body language of the participants, I observed and noted negative facial expressions displayed by participants while they were describing how they feel about going to school after they witnessed bullying. Their facial expression suggested that they have reached a conclusion that the school is not safe and they believed everyone is vulnerable of being victimised. I think cognitive restructuring intervention will be needed to modify their thinking patterns.
>
> (Reflective Journal 6/9/2019)

In the next theme, I discussed how self-debasing cognitive distortions namely; personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction, influenced bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying.

Table 5-3: Summary of theme 2 and its corresponding sub-themes

Theme 2
Contributions of self-debasing cognitive distortions to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying
Sub-themes   2.1   Personalisation evoked bystanders' self-blame and feelings of guilt   2.2   Catastrophising amplified bystanders' anxiety and fear   2.3   Over-generalisation induced and exacerbated bystanders' negative perception of school safety   2.4   Selective abstraction led to indirect co victimisation

5.3.2   Theme 2: Contributions of self-debasing cognitive distortions to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying

This theme revealed how negative thinking patterns could trigger bystanders' negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. It captured the

contributions and roles of patterns of thought in the aetiology and maintenance of behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. I identified four sub-themes. The inclusion and exclusion criteria I used to identify the theme and its four sub-themes are contained in Table 5.4.

Table 5-4: Theme 2 – Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Theme/Sub-themes	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Theme 2: Contributions of self-debasing cognitive distortions to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying	Includes any reference to patterns of thinking that could be identified as contributing to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying.	Excludes any reference to thinking patterns that could be identified as not contributing to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying.
Sub-theme 2.1: Personalisation evoked bystanders' self-blame and feelings of guilt	Includes any reference to personalised thoughts that may have predisposed bystanders to self-blame and feelings of guilt after witnessing bullying.	Excludes any reference to personalised thoughts that may not have predisposed bystanders to self-blame and feelings of guilt after witnessing bullying
Sub-theme 2.2: Catastrophising amplified bystanders' anxiety and fear	Includes any reference to catastrophic thinking patterns that may have amplified anxiety and instil fear in bystanders after witnessing bullying.	Excludes any reference to catastrophic thinking patterns that may not have amplified anxiety or instil fear in bystanders after witnessing bullying
Sub-theme 2.3: Over-generalisation induced and exacerbated bystanders' negative perception of school safety	Includes any reference to exaggerated thinking patterns that may have induced or exacerbated bystanders' negative perception of school safety after witnessing bullying.	Excludes any reference to exaggerated thinking patterns that may not have induced or exacerbated the perception of bystanders' negative perception of school safety after witnessing bullying.
Sub-theme 2.4: Selective abstraction led to bystanders' indirect co-victimisation	Includes any references to selective abstraction thoughts such as focusing on negative aspect of a situation which could be said to have led to indirect co victimisation for bystanders.	Excludes any references to selective abstraction thoughts such as focusing on negative aspect of a situation which could not be established to have triggered indirect co victimisation for bystanders.

5.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Personalisation evoked bystanders' self-blame and feelings of guilt

I observed that the majority of the bystanders that participated in this study indulged in taking excess responsibility for the bullying they witnessed even when the evidence suggested that there was little they could do to stop the bullying they witnessed. Hence, apportioning undue blame to themselves for not being able to defend the victims evoked the feelings of guilt. I supported my observation with verbatim extracts from the pre-intervention individual semi-structured interviews.

For instance, participant 7 apportioned blame to herself for not being able to rescue the victim despite declaring that she made attempts to do so by telling the bully to stop: "*Ha ke utloe hantle ho hang hobane haeba ke ne ke sa khone ho thusa motho ea hlokahalitsoeng mme a tsoa likotsi, ho nna ho tšoana le ha ke mo hlotsoe*" *(I don't feel good at all because if I couldn't help the victim and she get injured, to me is like I failed her).* (P7, pre-intervention interview, p.40, lines 1927-1207). Meanwhile, she earlier noted that: *Ke ile ka kenella hobane ke ile moo mme ka bolella mampoli hore ha ho hotle ho loana Ke kene ka har'a bona mme ke ba joetse hore ha se hantle ho loana*" *(I did intervene because I went there and told the bully that it is not good to fight I came in between them and I told them that it is not good to fight).* (P7, pre-intervention interview, p.39, lines 1892-1897).

Another participant assumed responsibility for not standing up to the bully on behalf of the victim. Consequently, she apportioned self-blame to herself and felt anger. She said: "*Ke ikutloa ke le bohale ka lebaka la hore ke lumelle mpoli hore a otle motsoalle oa ka*" *(I feel angry at myself because I let the bully hit my friend).* (P1, pre-intervention interview, p.2, lines 53-55). I also questioned her to obtain the reason she failed to defend the victim and she stated that: "………*ke batla ho thusa bana ba bang empa ha ke khone hobane ke tšaba.*" *(…… I want to help the other children but I can't because I am afraid).* (P1, pre-intervention interview, p.2, lines 64-66).

The third participant revealed that she felt heartbroken for not being able to stand for her friend when she was bullied and because of that, she felt guilty. She said: "*Ke ikutloa ke sithabetse maikutlo mme ke ikutloa ke le mobe hobane ha ke khone ho*

sireletsa motho ea hlasetsoeng" *(I feel heartbroken and I feel bad because I can't defend the victim).* (P3, pre-intervention interview, p.13, lines 597-599). When I asked why she did not intervene when she witnessed bullying, she actually stated that: "*Ke lakatsa eka nka khona ho etsa joalo emba ke tšaba ho sireletsa lehlatsipa"* *(I wish I can do that but I am scared to defend the victim).* (P3, pre-intervention interview, p.13, lines 592-593).

In similar vein, participant 5 stated that she still thinks she should receive the blame for not defending the learner she witnessed being bullied despite her effort to intervene: *Ho joalo, kea tšoenyeha hobane ke lula ke nahana hore ho na le moithuti enoa ea neng a hlorisoa 'me ha ho letho leo nka le etsang ka hona"* *(Yes I get carried away because I am always thinking that there was this learner who was being bullied and I couldn't do anything about it).* (P5, pre-intervention interview, p.27, lines 1270-1274). I further sought clarity on what attempt she made to stop the bullying and she confirmed that sometimes she challenged the bully to stop: "*Yaa ka linako tse ling ke ikutloa ke tšohile empa ka linako tse ling ke ee ke joetse motho ea hlorisang hore a se ke a etsa joalo 'me o qetella a nthohaka"* *(Yaa sometimes I feel scared but sometimes I go to tell the bully not to do that and he ends up insulting me).* (P5, pre-intervention interview, p.26, lines 1223-1227).

Participant 8 had a similar response: "*Ke ikutloa ke sa thaba hobane ke sitoa ho thusa motho ea hlorisoang"* *(I feel unhappy because I couldn't help the person that was bullied).* (P8, pre-intervention interview, p.42, lines 2050-2054). Meanwhile, as good as her intention was to do something about the bullying, she equally admitted that she does not have the strength to stand up to the bullies.

It appeared that the bystanders in this study took responsibility for the bullying they witnessed without considering other factors which prevented them from intervening in the bullying situation. Bystanders who are prone to personalisation may ascribe excess responsibility to themselves for events over which they have little or no control, leading to self-blame and a feeling of guilt. Engaging in personalisation while reacting to events can negatively influence one's emotions and behaviour (Beck, 2011). I reflected on the responses of the participants interviewed and I made a few observations which I noted in my research journal. Below is an extract:

From the narrations of the participants, I noted that the majority of them apportioned blame to themselves and felt guilty for not defending their friends who were bullied despite admitting that the bullies were stronger and that they do not have the strength to challenge the bullies even though they attempted to intervene.

(Research Journal, 7/9/19).

5.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Catastrophising amplified bystanders' anxiety and fear

This theme demonstrated how catastrophising amplified anxiety and instilled fear of subsequent direct victimisation in participants. After witnessing bullying, many of the participants expressed a fear of being the next victim. As a result, they became nervous, worried, restless, scared and afraid of going to school. This is because most of the participants were imagining the worst-case scenario causing them to anticipate being the next victim of bullying and become more fearful of going to school.

Distorted reality influences a person's interpretation of a given situation. Such an interpretation further feeds negative emotions which eventually culminate in full-blown anxiety, nervousness and restlessness. Catastrophic thoughts were expressed in the response of the second participant when she said: "*Ke ikutloa ke tšoenyehile ha ke tlameha ho tla sekolong. Ke lula ke nahana hore ho thoe'ng haeba bompoli bo etsahalletseng bana ba bang le bona bo nkutloela. Ka hona, ke lula ke tšoenyehile hoseng ha nako ea sekolo e fihla*" (*I feel a bit worried when I am supposed to come to school. I always think that what if the bullying that happened to the other learners also happens to me. I am always worried in the morning when it is time for school). (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.9, lines 421-428).*

Exaggerating the potential or real consequences of an event amplifies negative reactions to such an event as was observed in the reaction of the seventh participant. Participant 7 noted that: "*Yaa ke nahana hore bompoli bo ka etsahala le ho nna, ho thoe'ng haeba ho ka etsahala ka 'na ebe kea bolaoa*" (*Yaa I do think that*

bullying can happen to me also, what if it happens to me and I get killed). (P7, pre-intervention interview, p.40, lines 1935-1938). The response of the first participant also buttressed this submission: "*Nke ke ka thabela sekolo ho hang hobane ke nahana hore na ho ka etsahala'ng ka nna" (I can't be happy at school at all because I am thinking what if it happens to me).* (P1, pre-intervention interview, p.2, lines 72-75).

Participant 4 stated clearly that she does not feel safe and secure in school because she keeps wondering when it will be her turn to be bullied and this, in turn, makes her scared, anxious and nervous: "*E boetse e etsa hore ke tšohe hobane 'mampoli eo a ka tla ho nna le nako efe kapa efe. Joale ha ke lokela ho tsoha ke nahana ka seo" (It also makes me to be scared because that bully can come to me too anytime. When I am supposed to wake up I am thinking about that).* (P4, pre-intervention interview, p.20, lines 949-953).

Participant 3 substantiated her fear of going to school as a result of a fear of attack or harm: "*Ke utloa eka e ka etsahalla kapa ba ka etsa seo ba se entseng ho li-vcitims tse ling le nna (I feel like it can happen to me or they can do what they did to other victims to me also).* (P3, pre-intervention interview, p.14, lines 631-634). She further stated that: *Pelo ea ka e otla ka lebelo. Ke ikutloa ke thothomela ebe kea qabola hobane ke tšaba hore na ba tlo nketsa'ng (My heart beat fast. I feel shaking and I freeze because I get scared of what they are going to do to me).* (P3, pre-intervention interview, p.14, lines 671-675).

Participant 5 added that: "*Kea tšoha 'me ke utloa eka motho a le mong a ka tla a etsa ntho e tšoanang le' na" (I get scared and feel like the same person can come and do the same thing to me).* (P5, pre-intervention interview, p.26, lines 1241-1244). The tenth participant also expressed a similar view: *"Ke ikutloa ke le mobe hobane ke tšaba hore a ka tsoa kae kapa kae mme a tla ho nkotla" (I feel bad because I am scared that he can come from nowhere and come and beat me too).* (P10, pre-intervention interview, p.48, lines 2313-2316).

From all the experiences of participants, it seemed that anticipating subsequent direct victimisation amplifies various negative reactions such as fear, worry, sadness, frustration, restlessness, nervousness, and anger. Listening to participants'

narrations of their reactions to witnessing bullying before the intervention led me to reflect as follows:

> It appears catastrophic thinking triggers unhelpful emotions as most of the participants believed their negative thoughts regarding their safety in school after witnessing bullying rather than having a balanced view of the situation. Participants anticipated similar victimisation as a result of negative exaggeration so much that they actually created fear and anxiety for themselves. Engaging in catastrophic thoughts narrows participants thinking down, reducing their range of options to manage the situation
>
> (Reflective journal, 7/9/2019)

5.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Over generalisation induced and exacerbated bystanders' negative perception of school safety

Overgeneralised beliefs were evidenced in the description provided by participants regarding their experiences of school bullying during the pre-intervention individual semi-structured interview. Most of the participants made an unjustified generalisation on the basis of a few incidences of bullying they witnessed. One participant stated thus: *"Ke nahana hore ho na le lintho tse ngata. Ka linako tse ling ha ke khone le ho nahana hore na ke feta joang, kelello ea ka e lahleha feela hobane ke tla be ke nahana hore ke ea sebakeng seo bompoli bo etsahalang ho sona"* *(I think a lot of things. Sometimes I can't even imagine how I am walking through; my mind just gets lost because I will be thinking that I am going to a place where bullying is happening).* (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.8, lines 361-367).

Some of the participants assumed and anticipated that they would equally be a direct victim of bullying after witnessing a few of their peers being bullied and this negatively informed their perception of school safety: *"Pelo ea ka e mpolella hore ke tlameha ho lula hae hobane ha ke nahana ho ea sekolong, ke nahana ka seo ba se etsetsang bana ba bang sekolong joalo ka ho nka chelete ea bona kapa ho ba shapa. Kahoo ha ke batle ho ea sekolo"* *(My heart tells me that I must stay at home*

because when I think of going to school, I think about what they are doing to other kids at school like taking their money or beating them. I don't feel like going to school). (P3, pre-intervention interview, 15, lines 684-691)

The fifth participant draws a broad conclusion about her safety in school and the possibility of also being bullied based on a few incidences of bullying she witnessed. When asked to describe how she felt about her safety in school after she witnessed bullying, she stated thus: "*Che, ke ikutloa eka ha ho na batho ba lokileng sekolong, ho na le batho ba fosahetseng feela sekolong. Ke kamoo ke ikutloang kateng*" *(No, I feel like in school there are no more good people, there are only bad people at school. That is how I feel).* (P5, pre-intervention interview, p.25, lines 1311-1315).

I sought clarity from participant 10, and she had this to say: "*Che, ha ke rate ho ea sekolong hobane ke lula ke nahana hore nkhono enoa a ka tla a tlosa khatello ea hae ho nna*" *(No, I don't like going to school because I always think that this bully can come and take his stress out from me).* (P10, pre-intervention interview, p.48, lines 2318-2321). Another participant made up a general rule based on a negative interpretation of a few incidents*: "*Che, ha ke ikutloe ke sireletsehile hobane ka tsatsi le leng e tla etsahala ho nna*" *(No, I don't feel safe because someday it will happen to me*). (P1, pre-intervention interview, p.2, lines 86-90).

It seemed participants made a general rule based on a negative interpretation of a few incidents, thereby, drawing a broad conclusion about their safety and wellbeing in school and the possibility of also being bullied based on few incidences of bullying witnessed. In reflecting on my observations regarding the presence and influence of overgeneralised beliefs as manifested in participants' reactions to witnessing bullying, I recorded the following remark:

Most of the participants erroneously believed that the fact they witnessed bullying victimisation, heralds future tragedy for them since the event is likely to reoccur. In reality, not every learner who witnessed bullying in school becomes direct victim of bullying as anticipated by most participants. Therefore, there might be no basis for making up a general rule about school safety based on a negative interpretation of a few incidents (Research journal, 9/9/19)

5.3.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Selective abstraction led to indirect co victimisation

In the course of my discussions with the participants of this study, it was evident that participants in this study selectively filtered the available evidence which led them to make a biased judgment while attaching a meaning to the bullying incident they witnessed. Participants in this study selectively filtered the available evidence which led them to make interpretations that seemed not to be absolutely accurate and which in turn, contributed to their psychological re-victimisation and indirect co victimisation.

Participant 5 noted: "*Ke ikutloa ke tšohile nakong ea khefu eohle. Ka linako tse ling nakong ea khefu ha ke khone le ho tsoa. Motsoalle e mong oa ka o tla mpona 'me a mpotse; hobaneng ha o sa tsoe le rona? Ha ke nahana ka bompoli boo ka linako tse ling ha ke tsoe sehlopheng le nakong ea khefu"* (*I feel scared during the whole break. Sometimes during break I can't even go out. My other friend will see me and ask me; why are you not going out with us? When I think about that bullying sometimes I don't get out of class even in break time*). (P5, pre-intervention interview, p.27, lines 1276-1284).

In similar vein, participant 4 described an instance where she watched a learner being bullied and thereafter became scared and suffered nightmares: "*E nkama*

haholo hobane ka linako tse ling ke lora ka moshanyana enoa ea hlorisang bana ba bang. Kahoo ha ke khone ho robala hobane ke nahana hore e ka nketsahalla" (It affects me so much because sometimes I dream about this boy bullying other kids. I can't sleep because I think it can happen to me). (P4, pre-intervention interview, p.21, lines 980-985). A parallel view was echoed by participant 3 who experienced difficulties in sleeping as a result of focusing on the experience of one or a few incidences of bullying witnessed: "*Ke na le litoro tse mpe 'me ke lula ke nahana hore na ba otla bana ba bang joang"* (I have bad dreams and I keep on thinking of how they beat other kids). (P3, pre-intervention interview, p.14, lines 655-657).

The first participant expressed a similar view when she declared: "*Ka linako tse ling ha ke itšepe ka lebaka la ha ke nahana ka hore na ke mang ea tla hlorisoa hamorao. Ho nka tšepo ea ka ha ke nahana ka lintho tse etsahetseng ho bana ba bang"* (Sometimes I don't feel confident about myself because I think of who is going to be bullied next. It takes my confidence when I think about the things that happened to other kids). (P1, pre-intervention interview, p.3, lines 99-104). She noted further that: *Ha ke ikutloe ke thabile ha ke bona 'mampoli. Ke utloa bohloko ha ke mo bona. Ha ke batle le ho bua le eena"* (I don't feel happy when I see the bully. I feel sad when I see him. I don't even want to talk to him). (P1, pre-intervention interview, p.1, lines 39-42).

Similarly, the second participant recounted an incident where she witnessed a learner being bullied and thereafter becoming frustrated, shocked and scared of going to school as a result of the thought of becoming a next victim: "*Ke utloa bohloko ha ke nahana ka bompoli boo ke bo boneng bo etsahetse ho barutoana ba bang…. Yaa e tšosa haholo. E nkama haholo. Ka linako tse ling ke sitoa le ho robala"* (I do feel bad when I think about the bullying that I witnessed which happened to other learners….Yaa it is so scary. It affects me a lot. Sometimes I can't even sleep). (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.8, lines 343-357).

The responses of the participants revealed that focusing on the experience of one or a few negative events witnessed or experienced while making an appraisal of that event could contribute to indirect co-victimisation. It could be argued that

conceptualising an entire experience of an event while making an appraisal of that event on the basis of a fragment could feed negative emotions.

In the next theme, after examining the influence of thinking patterns on bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying, I discuss the significance of cognitive restructuring techniques in modifying bystanders' thinking patterns.

Table 5-5: Summary of theme 3 and its corresponding sub-themes

Theme 3 Significance of cognitive restructuring techniques in modifying bystanders' thinking patterns
Sub-themes 3.1 Challenging automatic thought techniques abated bystanders' maladaptive thinking patterns 3.2 Decatastrophising techniques reduced bystanders' catastrophic thinking patterns 3.3 Guided discovery techniques assisted bystanders to identify and reappraise negative thinking pattern

5.3.3 Theme 3: Significance of cognitive restructuring techniques in modifying bystanders' thinking patterns

This theme revealed how cognitive restructuring as a cognitive behavioural therapy technique could be utilised in modifying bystanders' thinking patterns. In other words, the third theme unveiled the influence of cognitive restructuring techniques in revising bystanders' thinking patterns. I established three sub-themes. The inclusion and exclusion criteria I used to single out the theme and its four sub-themes were contained in Table 5.6.

Table 5-6: Theme 3 – Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Theme/Sub-themes	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Theme 3: Significance of cognitive restructuring techniques in modifying bystanders' thinking patterns	Includes any reference to modification in bystanders thinking patterns that could be linked to the influence of cognitive restructuring techniques	Excludes any reference to modification in bystanders' thinking patterns that could not be linked to the influence of cognitive restructuring techniques
Sub-theme 3.1: Challenging automatic thought techniques abated bystanders' maladaptive thinking patterns	Includes any reference to decline in bystanders' maladaptive thinking patterns as a result of applying challenging automatic thought techniques.	Excludes any reference to a decline in bystanders' maladaptive thinking patterns which are not brought about by applying challenging automatic thought techniques.
Sub-theme 3.2: Decatastrophising techniques reduced bystanders' catastrophic thinking patterns	Includes any reference to the reduction in bystanders' catastrophic thinking patterns arising from putting decatastrophising techniques into use.	Excludes any reference to a reduction in bystanders' catastrophic thinking patterns which is not as a result of implementing decatastrophising techniques.
Sub-theme 3.3: Guided discovery techniques assisted bystanders to identify and reappraise negative thinking pattern	Includes any references to bystander's ability to identify and reappraise negative thinking pattern using guided discovery techniques	Excludes any references to bystander's ability to identify and reappraise negative thinking pattern which could not be connected to using guided discovery techniques

5.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Challenging automatic thought techniques abated bystanders' maladaptive thinking

This subtheme showed how participants challenged automatic thoughts as a cognitive restructuring technique to test the validity of their thinking pattern. Most participants demonstrated knowledge of how to search for evidence in favour of or against a distorted thought after participating in the SDCDRI. For example, participant 6 remarked that he no longer panicked at the sight of any of the boys that bully in schools unlike before when he thought that he might be bullied in school, and his heart started beating fast: *"Ts'epo ea ka e tiile joale. Joale kea tseba hore ke har'a metsoalle ea ka mme 'mampoli a ke ke a tla ho nna. Moithuti oa bongaka o*

nthutile hore na nka itšireletsa joang esita le mosuoe-hlooho o ile a mpolella hore ha ke tšoenyehe hore o tla sebetsana le hona bo-mpoli. Kahoo ke na le tšepo joale" (My confidence is sharp now. Now I know I am among my friends and the bully won't come to me. The therapist taught me how to defend myself and even the principal told me that I must not worry that he will deal with that bully. I have confidence now). (P6, post-intervention interview, p.37, lines 1797-1785).

It appears participants learnt to challenge automatic thoughts in order to unveil and review the error that might be present in their cognition. For instance participant 5, who mentioned in the pre-intervention interview that she felt scared that the same person that bullied others could do the same to her and because of that became restless in class, when asked if she still felt the same when she witnesses bullying after participating in the intervention she had this to say: "*Che, hobane ke tseba ho emisa bompoli ke tlil'o bolella 'mampoli hore a emise hobane seo a se etsang se fosahetse."* (No because I know how to stop the bullying I am going to tell the bully to stop because what he is doing is wrong). (P5, post-intervention interview, p.29, lines 1412-1417).

In addition, participant 4 was able to dispute irrational thoughts by searching for proof for or against the distorted thought. As a result, there was a change in her response to the question of whether she still has a bad mood and became scared when she witnessed bullying. Her reason was that: "*Hobane kea tseba hore hang ha bompoli eo bo ka qalella hape, motho ea jeleng tee o tla joetsa mampoli hore a ee hae mme a se ke a khutlela sekolong hape re tla lokoloha ebe re etsa eng kapa eng eo re batlang ho e etsa*" (Because I know that once that bully start again, the teacher will tell the bully to go home and not to come back to school again and we will be free and do whatever we want to do). (P4, post-intervention interview, p.22, lines 1056-1062).

From the information extracted from the cognitive model practise worksheet which the participants completed during the sessions in addition to the post-intervention interview, it looked like participant 3 had also learnt to identify and challenge automatic thoughts to uncover and examine the errors in her cognition which led to a decline in maladaptive thinking. When asked how she feels about going to school

every day now, she narrated: *"I don't feel scared of going to school because my brother told me that he will come to school to tell the principal. I am not scared because I know the bully saw my brother in school".* (P3, an excerpt from the cognitive model, practise worksheet, p.5)
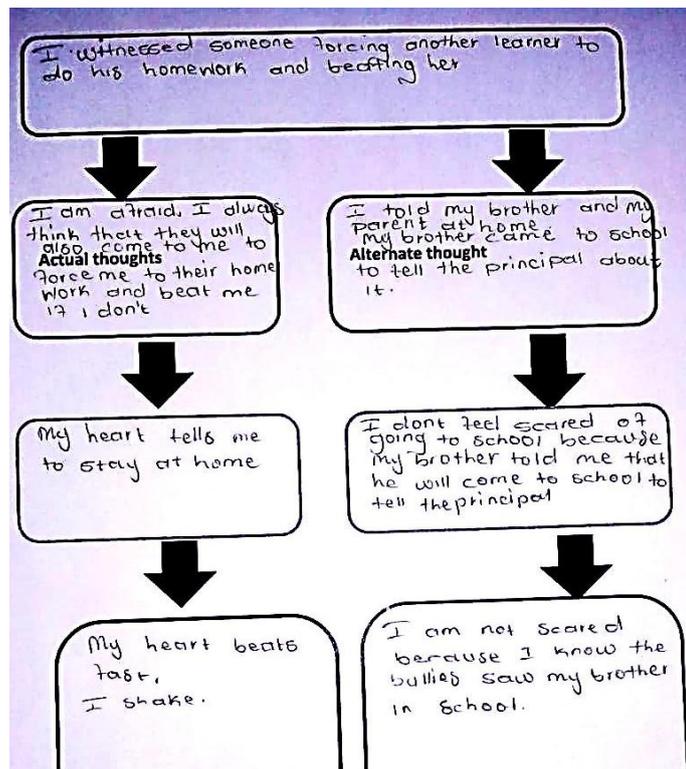
Figure 5-2: P3's cognitive model practise worksheet

Similarly, participant 1 stated that: *"Whenever I think that I lost my confidence, I remind myself that I do represent my class in debate, I also remind myself that sometimes represent my class in athletics so I asked myself that if I don't have confidence how come I do those things for my class. I don't think my confidence is lost just because I couldn't defend a victim I witnessed being bullied".* (P1, an excerpt from the cognitive model practise worksheet, p.10)

The responses gave the impression that participants had developed a balanced response to their cognition. This is because participants were able to ask questions which plunged deeply into thoughts that preceded and maintained negative

behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. I discovered that engaging in this process enabled participants to analyse and evaluate the truthfulness of their thoughts.

5.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Decatastrophising technique reduced bystanders' catastrophic thinking

In this subtheme, I discuss how participants made use of decatasrophising techniques to reduce fear by reassessing and modifying catastrophic thinking patterns. By doing so, participants were able to use mental imagery to consider alternative perspectives with a view to examining if the impact of an event has been over-exaggerated or not. Decatastrophising techniques helped the participants to question the reality of a thought, take control of negative thought patterns and to replace the negative thoughts with positive and helpful thoughts. I asked participants if they still felt panic, were scared or had difficulties with sleeping when they remembered the bullying they witnessed or when they saw any of the boys that bullied in school.

Participants 2 replied: "*Che, ha ke sa nahana ka eona hobane joale kea utloisisa ebile kea tseba hore ho na le motho ea teng ho re sireletsa joalo ka mosuoe-hlooho le matichere*" (*No, I am no longer thinking about it because now I understand and I know that there is someone who is there to protect us like principal and teachers*). (P2, post-intervention interview, p.11, lines 506-511).

Participant 3 showed signs that suggested she has learnt to use decatastrophising techniques to challenge irrational thoughts by considering an alternative interpretation of an event before reacting to such an event. In her response to the same question, she added that she could now focus on her studies because she could pinpoint distortions in his thoughts and replace them with functional and more positive thoughts: "*Ha ke sa tšaba letho hobane bo-'mampoli ba tseba hore ke boleletse abuti le batsoali ba ka kahoo ba ke ke ba nkutloisa bohloko. Ke nahana hore ba tšaba ho etsa joalo*" (*I am no longer scared because the bullies know that I told my brother and my parents so they won't hurt me. I think they are scared of doing that*). (P3, post-intervention interview, p.19, lines 878-883).

Decatastrophising techniques turn out to be significant in reducing participants' catastrophic thinking patterns. This is because using decatastrophising techniques afforded participants the opportunity to consider a variety of evidence to test the validity of their thoughts. Participant 5 confirmed this in her explanation when she was asked to express how she feels about her safety in school after participating in the intervention sessions: "*Joale ke ikutloa ke sireletsehile hobane joale ke tseba ho ba emisa mme kea tseba hore mosuoe o teng o re joetse hore o tlo ba emisa" (Now I feel safe because now I know how to stop them and I know principal is there he told us that he is going to stop them).* (P5, post-intervention interview, p.31, lines 1493-1497).

In addition, participants were also able to utilise the "what if' techniques to reduce fear in the instance of a worst-case situation occurring. I asked the participants what they would do if the bullies actually one day tried to bully them. The sixth participant stated that: "*Ke nahana hore haeba motho eo a tla 'me a batla ho nkotla, ke tla ea ho mosuoe-hlooho ke mo tlalehe mme mosuoe-hlooho o tla mo emisa" (I think that if the person comes and want to beat me, I will go to the principal and report him and the principal will suspend him).* (P6, post-intervention interview, p.36, lines 1748-1752).

The fourth participant had a similar expression when asked if she still feels anxious or uncomfortable when she sees any of the boys that bully in school. She disclosed: "*Che, ha ke utloe joalo joalo hobane le hona joale ke nahana hore ho ka etsahala hore bo-'mampoli ba tšabe le sehlopha sa ka hore mohlomong ke ka lebaka leo ba keng ba leke ho hlorisa e mong oa rona kahoo ha ke utloe ke tšoenyehile kapa ho ikutloa ke sa phutholoha"* (No, I don't feel like that anymore because even now I think it is possible that the bullies are also afraid of my group maybe that it why they have never tried to bully any one of us so I don't feel anxious or feel uncomfortable) (P4, post-intervention interview, p.23, lines 1055- 1059).

It seemed, firstly, that participants were able to overcome anxiety and panic, by considering alternative interpretations which enabled them to re-evaluate their negative thoughts and get their anxiety and fear under control. Secondly, the "what if" techniques also enabled participants to realise that THE worst-case scenario could be manageable.

5.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Guided discovery techniques assisted bystanders to identify and reappraise negative thinking patterns

The last subtheme in this section examined participants' ability to identify and reappraise negative thinking pattern using guided discovery techniques. Participants were able to identify irrationality in their thinking patterns by exploring alternative ways of appraising a situation. In the process of using guided discovery techniques to identify and reassess faulty thinking patterns, a range of alternative thoughts were opened to participants, which assisted them in creating new perceptions and forming new discoveries. For instance, it looked as if participant 1 has learnt to apply guided discovery techniques as evidenced in her analysis when asked to express how she felt for not being able to defend victims she witnessed being bullied: *"…. I am not a coward because on that day I remember that I told the bully to stop, that bullying is not good".* (P1, an excerpt from the ABCD worksheet, p.8).

Figure 5-3: P1's ABCD worksheet

It appeared that guided discovery techniques were also useful in changing participant four's beliefs about herself as useless and worthless when she witnessed bullying and could not intervene for the victim: "*No I am not useless and I am not*

178

worthless. I think I have been having a wrong thought about myself because there are so many things I do even in school for example I am part of the scholars. I am part of those who control traffic in the morning so I said to myself that if I am useless or worthless, I won't be chosen to be scholar patrol" (P4, an excerpt from replacing over-generalising thought exercise, p.6).

In similar vein, participant 10 was able to review the thought that led her to see herself as weak when she fails to defend a victim of bullying. Reassessing the situation with a different lens of perception enhanced reflection, which in turn prompted new analysis and discoveries, she stated: "*I don't think it is good to call myself weak because I believe that I am not weak it is just that I can't face the boys that bully alone because they are many "* (P10, excerpt from the ABCD worksheet, p.8).

Figure 5-4: P10's ABCD worksheet

Learning to identify and reappraise negative thoughts using guided discovery techniques led participants to consider options that were not considered beforehand. This process enabled them to evaluate their thoughts more objectively. Participant 6 responded to the question of whether he still feels uncomfortable and restless when he remembers the bullying he witnessed by saying: *"…Che, ha ke utloe bohloko ho hang hobane joale ke hopola hore ke boleletse batsoali ba ka mme batsoali ba ka ba mpolelletse hore ba tlo tla ho tla shebella taba ena. Ke hopola hore mosuoe-hlooho o ile a re o tla ea taba ena) Seo ke se tsebang ke hore, seo ke nahanang hore ke sona seo ke se utloang kahoo ke tlameha ho itaola (No I don't feel bad mood at all because now I remember that I told my parents and my parents told me that they will come and attend to the issue. I remember that the principal also said that he will attend to the issue).* (P6, post-intervention interview, p.16, lines 769-777).

It seemed that the cognitive restructuring techniques such as guided discoveries that participants were introduced to in the intervention sessions were effective in enabling participants to identify, challenge and modify negative thoughts and assumptions that were presumed to provoke negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. As such, participants were able to dive into the thoughts that preceded and maintained the onset of emotional and behavioural maladjustment in search of evidence for or against these thoughts while reacting to the bullying incident they witnessed.

> Going by the post-intervention interviews I have conducted so far, and comparing it with the excerpt from the worksheet used in completing activities during the sessions, I have the impression that participants were able to apply newly discovered information to modify previously held beliefs and, in some cases, generated a new belief.
>
> (Research journal, 23/9/2019)

Next, I discussed the last theme, which is the impact of the self-debasing cognitive distortions restructuring intervention on bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying.

Table 5-7: Summary of theme 4 with corresponding sub-themes

Theme 4 **The value of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying**
Sub-themes 4.1 Visual images enhanced better representation of thoughts and emotions 4.2 Tasks completed in the SDCDRI sessions reinforced verbal quotations to synthesise bystanders experiences of school bullying

5.3.4 Theme 4: The value of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying

This theme described how the compilation of a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention could assist in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying. The sub-themes identified reflected how the activities completed during the SDCDRI sessions were instrumental in capturing participants' thoughts, feelings and reactions to witnessing the bullying. Table 5.8 contains the inclusion and exclusion criteria I used to identify theme 4 and its sub-themes.

Table 5-8: Theme 4 – Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Theme/sub-themes	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Theme 4: The value of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying	Includes any reference to all activities completed in the SDCDRI sessions which assisted in capturing bystanders experiences of witnessing bullying	Excludes any reference to all activities which could assist in capturing bystanders' experiences of witnessing school bullying but not contained in the SDCDRI sessions.
Sub-theme 4.1: Visual images enhanced better representation of thoughts and emotions	Includes any reference to all activities completed in the SDCDRI sessions using visual images which enhanced better reflection of thoughts, feelings and emotions and assisted in capturing bystanders experiences of witnessing bullying	Exclude any reference to all activities which could enhance better reflection of thoughts, feelings and emotions and assist in capturing bystanders experiences of witnessing bullying but not contained in the SDCDRI sessions
Sub-theme 4.2: Tasks completed in the SDCDRI sessions re-inforced verbal quotations to synthesise bystanders experiences of school bullying	Includes any reference to activities in the SDCDRI sessions which augmented verbal quotations to synthesise bystanders' experiences of school bullying.	Exclude any reference to activities which could augment verbal quotations to synthesise bystanders experiences of school bullying but not included in the SDCDRI sessions

5.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Visual images enhanced better representation of thoughts and emotions

The activity done in the first session of the SDCDRI which required participants to have pictorial demonstrations of their reactions to witnessing bullying afforded participants the opportunity to communicate their behavioural and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying through visual images. Visual communications involve articulating one's thoughts, reactions or feelings through the use of signs, images or gestures. Participants were able to pass information within a limited time using visual images. For instance, when participants were instructed to draw a picture that reveals their emotional reactions to witnessing bullying, most of the participants drew images that enhanced the clarity of information:

Figure 5-5: An excerpt from an activity completed by P5 at the first session
(P5, p.1).

The image in figure 5-5 showed that participant 5 feels sad when she witnessed
bullying. Hence, the image was a tool to uncover and convey a deeper aspect of her
emotional reactions to witnessing bullying.

The image given by the seventh participant assisted in visualising information in a
simple way and allowed a better understanding of her emotional reactions to
witnessing bullying:
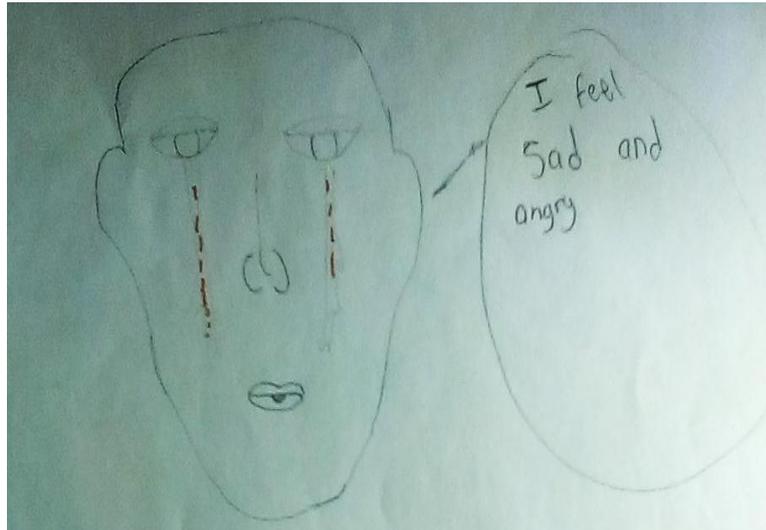
Figure 5-6: An excerpt from an activity completed by P7 at the first session
(P7, p.1).

Images are an effective means of conveying messages efficiently. The efficiency in communication using visual images enabled participants to convey their messages more quickly and clearly. As such, participant 7 drew an image that reflected how angry and sad she is whenever she witnesses bullying in school.

Some specific reactions that might otherwise be difficult to verbalise were elicited through the use of visual images, thereby leading to the disclosure of more emotional details and sensitive issues. Participant 8 revealed through the image she drew that she experience unhappiness when she witnesses bullying:
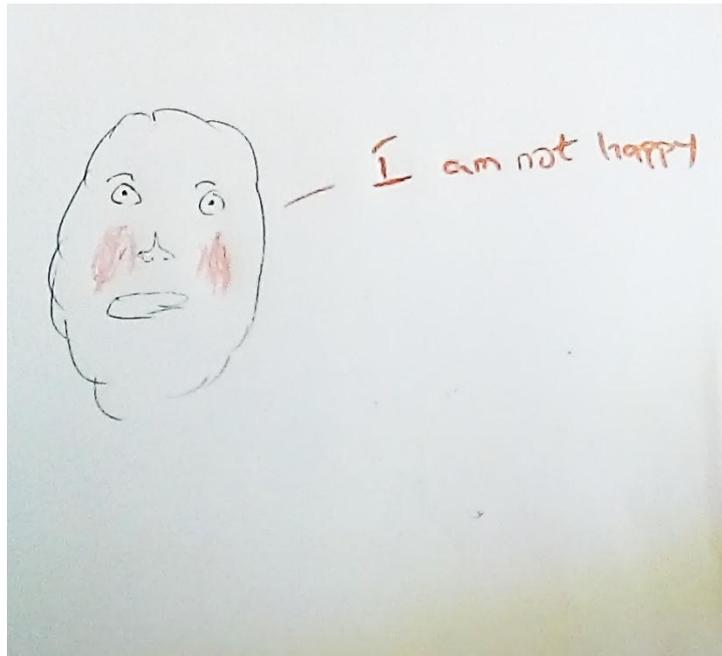
Figure 5-7: Excerpt from activity completed by P8 at the first session,
(P8, p.1).

It appeared that the experiences that participants were trying to narrate during the
pre-intervention interview were better clarified and captured with visual images. It
seems the use of visual images to reflect participants' reactions to bullying provided
a good summary of bystanders' experiences of witnessing school bullying. The sixth
participant described her experiences with an image that shows she feels upset and
moody when she witnesses bullying:
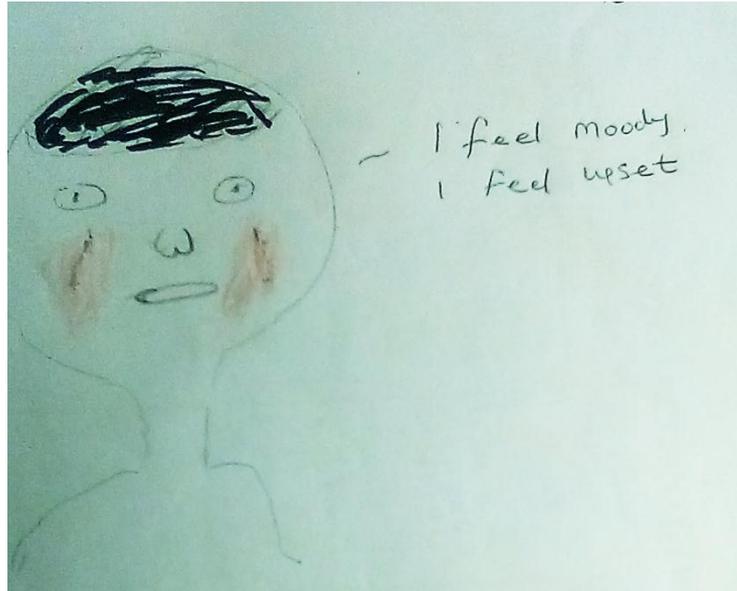
Figure 5-8: Excerpt from activity completed by P6 at the first session
(P6, p.1).

In addition, the use of visual images also created a forum for participants to share expressions, gestures and emotions in a way that might be difficult to capture with words. Rather, the visual images supported oral and written notes to enhance the representation of their thoughts, emotions and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. Participant 3 seems to find the use of a visual image the easiest way of expressing her reactions to witnessing bullying. She revealed how she felt with the picture she drew:
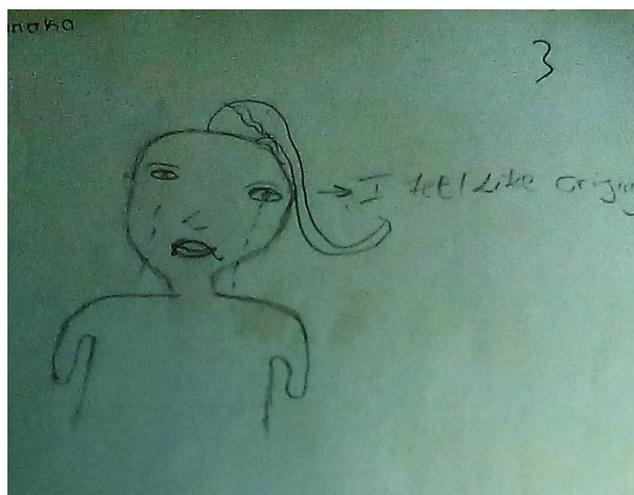
Figure 5-9: Excerpt from an activity completed by P3 at the first session
(P3, p.1).

5.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Tasks completed in the SDCDRI reinforced the verbal quotations to synthesise bystanders' experiences of school bullying

In the activities completed in the SDCDRI worksheets such as the thoughts record, ABCD worksheet and the cognitive restructuring worksheet were used to augment verbal quotations from participants to obtain an all-inclusive capture of bystanders' experiences of witnessing school bullying. For instance, the dysfunctional thought record worksheet used in session 2 of the SDCDRI enabled participants to outline the event that activated or led to the emergence of dysfunctional thoughts in detail, including automatic thoughts that arise and elicited emotions. The experiences of participant 7 were captured from the worksheet. She noted in the activating event column that: *"I witness how some boys in my school abuse my friend in school".* She further noted in the automatic thoughts column that: "*I think I disappointed her because I couldn't help to stop the bullying".* She reported in the elicited emotions column that she feels: *"guilty, crying and angry".*

Figure 5-10: An excerpt from the dysfunctional thought record worksheet of P7 (P7, p.2).

In the similar vein, an excerpt from the automatic thoughts column revealed that participant 10 also noted that: "*I am afraid that the boys that bully other kids will bully*". As a result of that, she stated that she experienced "*fear, sadness and worry*".

187

DYSFUNCTIONAL THOUGHTS RECORD WORHSHEET

AND TIME EVENTS	ACTIVATING EVENTS	AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS	ELICITED EMOTIONS	DISTORTIONS	ALTERNATIVE THOUGHTS	EVALUATION
/ 2019	I witness bullying in the school	I am afraid that the boys that bully other kids will bully me	fear, Sad worry		my teacher will beat them I tell my teacher to beat the bully.	I can go to School because I know that my teacher will not allow the bully to beat me

Figure 5-11: Excerpt from dysfunctional thought record worksheet of P10
(P10, p2).

The participants also had the opportunity to write down alternative and functional thoughts that could replace the negative thoughts having considered alternative explanations in reaction to events. Participant 6, for instance, noted in the alternative thoughts column that: "*The boys that bullies were in group and they were many. I don't think I can fight them alone*". The evaluation column provided an opportunity to capture the new interpretation she attached to her experiences: "*I think it is not right to call myself a betrayal because I fail to defend the victim. I can't fight boys that are many alone*".

DYSFUNCTIONAL THOUGHTS RECORD WORHSHEET

AND TIME EVENTS	ACTIVATING EVENTS	AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS	ELICITED EMOTIONS	DISTORTIONS	ALTERNATIVE THOUGHTS	EVALUATION
/2019	I Saw My friend Who is a newcomer being harras by Some naughty boys.	I Think I am a betrayal. because I didn't fight for my friend	Moody, Shock, upset, fear, nightmares, Sad.	Personalis-ation	The boys the bullies were in group and they were many I don't think I can fight them alone	I think it is not right to call myself a betrayal because I fail to defend my friend I cant fight boys that are many alone.

Figure 5-12: Excerpt from dysfunctional thought record worksheet of P6 (P6, p.2)

188

Similarly, the cognitive restructuring worksheet used in completing activities in session 4 of the SDCDRI further assisted in capturing how participants challenge or refute errors in their thinking patterns to create new experiences. The second participant wrote in the realistic interpretation column that: *"I will not miss school. I will go to school. If the bully comes to me, I will tell the principal to beat him"*.

Figure 5-13: Excerpt from cognitive restructuring worksheet of P2
(P2, p.4).

These activities also provided an opportunity to assess how participants make judgements on the validity of their thought. The worksheet showed how participants questioned their initial thoughts to arrive at a realistic interpretation. Participant 5 noted: *"The teacher said he will give them warning form; the bully are afraid to get warning; I am no longer scared they will bully me"*/

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING WORKSHEET

THOUGHTS TO BE QUESTIONED	EVIDENCES IN SUPPORT OF THE THOUGHTS	EVIDENCES AGAINST THE THOUGHTS	JUDGEMENT ON THE VALIDIDITY OF THE THOUGHT	REALISTIC INTERPRETATIONS
I am scared that they will bully me in this school	Because they like to bully leaners	the teacher said he will give them warning form	The bully are afraid to get warning form	I am no longer scared that they will bully me

Figure 5-14: Excerpt from cognitive restructuring worksheet of P5
(P5, p.4).

An extract from the thoughts-feelings-actions worksheet used for activities in session 3 of the SDCDRI buttressed the verbal quotations from the interviews to establish how participants identify the link between their feelings, thoughts and how it in-turn, influences their actions. As culled from the worksheet, participant 7 noted down her actual thought when she witnessed bullying and was unable to defend the victim: "*She thinks I disappointed her because I didn't support her*". Her action: "*I became angry at myself*". She recorded her feelings: "*I feel hurt and not happy*". The worksheet also captured how participants evaluated the evidence for and against their thoughts, giving room for an evidence-based conclusion on whether the thought is rational or not which facilitated new thoughts, feelings and actions. She noted down in the new thought column: "*Maybe my friend can see that is not my fault because she also see the boys are powerful*". Because of the new thought, she had new feelings and actions as captured by the thought-feeling-action record worksheet: "*I don't get so much nervous or restless any more*".
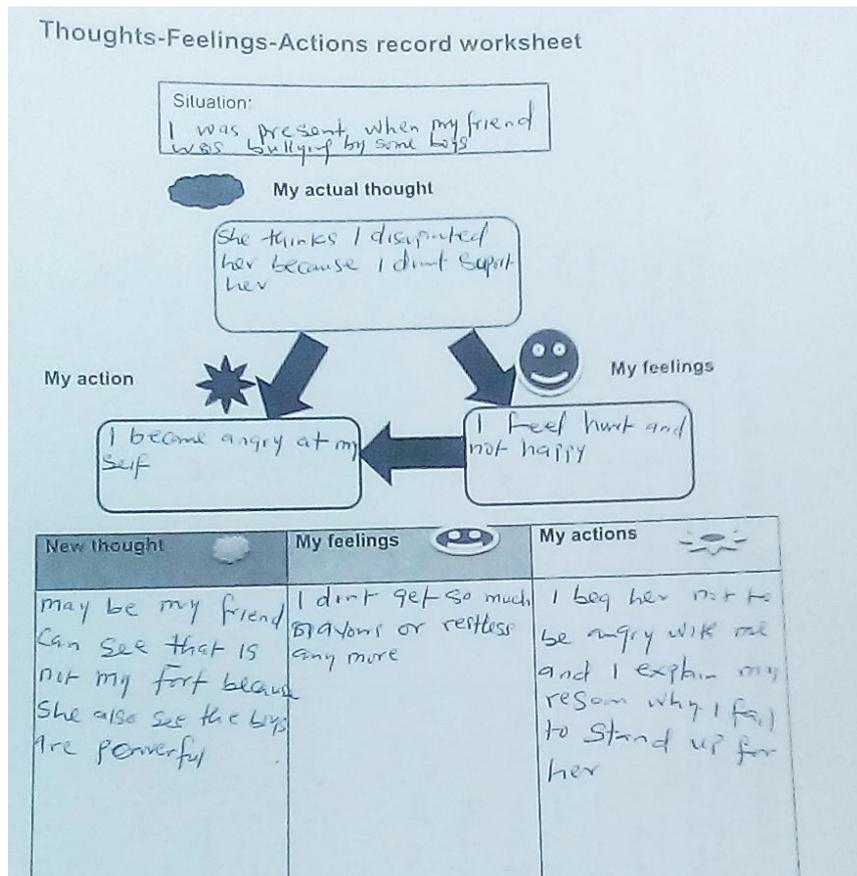
Figure 5-15: Excerpt from thoughts-feelings-action worksheet of P7
(P7, p.3).

Many research reports on bystanders' reactions and experiences of witnessing bullying tend to rely only on interviews as sources of data generation and underutilise visual images and extract from activities completed by participants at the intervention sessions. Therefore, the compilation of various activities in addition to verbal quotations from interviews added value to capturing bystanders experiences of witnessing bullying in this study.

Table 5-9: Summary of theme 4 and its corresponding sub-themes

Theme 5
Theme 5 **The impacts of self-debasing cognitive distortions restructuring on modifying bystanders behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying**
Sub-themes 5.1 Reduced errors in bystanders' thinking patterns 5.2 Enhanced bystanders' appropriate interpretation of events 5.3 Mitigated bystanders negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying

5.3.5 Theme 5: The impacts of self-debasing cognitive distortions restructuring on modifying bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying.

The last theme examined the impacts of self-debasing cognitive distortions restructuring on modifying bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. In other words, this theme explored participants' experiences of bullying in school following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention. The outcomes of the SDCDRI on bystanders' reactions to witnessing bullying were recorded and categorised into three sub-themes namely; a) Reduced errors in bystanders' thinking patterns b) Enhanced bystanders' appropriate interpretation of events c) Mitigated bystanders negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. Table 5.10 contains the inclusion and exclusion criteria I used to identify theme 4 and its sub-themes.

Table 5-10: Theme 5 – Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Theme/Sub-themes	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Theme 5: The impacts of self-debasing cognitive distortions restructuring on modifying bystanders behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying.	Includes any reference to positive changes in bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying in school which could be attributed to benefits derived from participating in the SDCDRI.	Excludes any reference to positive changes in bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying in school which could not be attributed to benefits derived from participating in the SDCDRI.
Sub-theme 5.1: Reduced errors in bystanders' thinking patterns	Include any reference to realisation and modification of distorted thoughts such as personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction while reacting to witnessing bullying which could be attributed to benefits derived from participating in the SDCDRI.	Exclude any reference to realisation and modification of distorted thoughts such as personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction while reacting to witnessing bullying which could not be attributed to benefits derived from participating in the SDCDRI.
Sub-theme 5.2: Appropriate interpretation of events	Include any reference to interpretation and appraisal of events that conform to reality which could be attributed to benefits derived from participating in the SDCDRI.	Exclude any reference to interpretation and appraisal of events that conform to reality which could not be attributed to benefits derived from participating in the SDCDRI.
Sub-theme 5.3 Mitigated bystanders negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying	Include any reference to reduction in negative emotional and behavioural responses while reacting to witnessing bullying as a result of acquiring knowledge of how to identify and replace irrational thoughts with thoughts that are more accurate	Exclude any reference to reduction in negative emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying which could not be established to have resulted from acquiring knowledge of how to identify and replace irrational thoughts with thoughts that are more accurate

5.3.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Reduced errors in bystanders' thinking patterns

Participants understood that irrationality in their thinking patterns could exacerbate and fuel negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. As such, concerns about susceptibility to attacks were reduced as the participants learned to make fewer cognitive errors. The responses from most participants during the post-intervention semi-structured individual interviews and responses, as extracted from the activities completed in the intervention's sessions, indicated that there were reductions in the negative perceptions of school safety and feelings of insecurity. The reason was that participants could now test the validity and reality of thoughts that underay faulty thinking patterns: "*Che, ha ke utloe ke tšaba ho ea sekolong hobane Rangoane o ile a mpolella hore o tla tla sekolong mme a bua le mosuoe-hlooho mme mosuoe-hlooho o tla emisa 'mampoli eo (No, I don't feel scared to go to school because my uncle told me that he is going to come to school and talk to the principal and the principal will suspend that bully).* (P6, post-intervention interview, p.36, lines 1726-1731).

Most participants no longer focus on the experience of one or a few incidences of bullying witnessed while making an appraisal of school safety, instead they analyse their thoughts to ascertain their reality and validity based on evidence: "*it is possible that no one bully me in school and if one day the bully try to bully me I will fight for myself*" (P10, excerpt decatastrophising techniques exercise, p.9).

I asked participants to describe how they feel when they see one of the bullies coming towards them. Having considered an alternative interpretation, the third participant stated that: "*Ha ke tšohe hobane ke nahana hore bo-'mampoli le metsoalle ea hae ba ea ka tsela ea bona mme kea tseba hore ba ke ke ba nkopa hobane ba tšaba mor'eso*" *(I am not scared because I think the bullies and his friends are going their own way and I know they won't touch me because they are scared of my brother).* (P3, post-intervention interview, p.18, lines 863-868).

A conducive school environment is imperative for effective teaching and learning. Therefore, it is necessary for learners to feel secure in school to enhance concentration on studies.

5.3.5.2 Sub-theme 5.2: Appropriate interpretation of an event

From the participants' responses to the post-intervention interview questions, I observed a significant decrease in the misappropriation of self-blame and feelings of guilt and this could be traceable to the replacement of personification thoughts with positive and more realistic thoughts following participation in the SDCDRI. It looked like participants have learnt how to give an appropriate interpretation to an event and express emotion in more rational and realistic ways.

Many participants realised and refrained from the distorted thoughts of personification. Hence, they no longer apportioned self-blame for their inability to defend the victims of bullying especially when it is obvious that the situation is beyond their power: Participant 6 explained that: "*Che, ha ke ipehe molato hobane ha ke ea ho bona ke ba hoelehetsa ke ba tšosetsa hore ke tlil'o bolella mosuoe-hlooho, ba ile ba nkoenya hampe mme ba tsoela pele ho hlorisa motho eo. (No, I don't blame myself because when I went to them and shouted at them and threatened them that I am going to tell the principal, they just ignored me and continued bullying that victim).* (P6, post-intervention interview, p.35, lines 1705-1710).

Most of the participants disengaged from ascribing excess responsibility and self-blame for situations which are out of their control. When participants were asked to state if they still feel they were the cause of the bullying they witnessed because they could not intervene, the third participants replied by saying: "*Che, ha ke ipone ke fositse 'me ha e sa nkama hobane ha ke ne ke phathahane ka ho e nahana, ke leka ho e utloisisa. Ke leka ho thusa motho eo empa batho bao ba ne ba le bangata haholo hoo ke sa khoneng ho emela motho eo (No I don't see myself wrong and it is no longer affecting me because when I was busy thinking about it, I try to understand it. I try to help that person but those people were too many so I can't defend that person).* (P3, post-intervention interview, p.16, lines 729-736).

The same question was directed to another participant and from her response, it seems she has learnt to challenge and replace a personalisation thought with a more rational one. She replied as follows "*Che, ha ke ikutloe ke le molato. Ke sheba boemo pele; haeba bo-'mampoli ba bangata haholo joale nka ipeha molato ha ke sa thusa. (No, I don't feel guilty. I check the situation first; if the bullies are too many*

then I can't blame myself for not helping). (P2, post-intervention interview, p.10, lines 459-462).

The participants were no longer attributing the cause of an external event unduly to themselves. Rather, they searched for evidence in support or against their decision and carefully examined and criticised their thoughts to root out the source of bias in their thinking that caused them to ascribe excess responsibility to themselves for events over which they had little or no control. I sought clarity from the fifth participant by asking the same question, her response articulated a similar view: "*Che Hobane kea tseba hore ba matla ho mpheta ebile ba ka nkotla" (No, because I know that they are stronger than me and they can beat me).* (P5, post-intervention interview, p.29, lines 1375-1380).

The responses of the participants reported above suggested that participants refuted distorted thought with a view of looking for evidence in support for or against their thoughts. Following the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention, participants searched for evidence supporting or not supporting their thoughts while reacting to bullying they witnessed in school.

5.3.5.3 Sub-theme 5.3: Mitigated bystanders negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying

There were decreases in negative emotions and behaviours of participants in reactions to witnessing bullying. This was confirmed in the participants' responses to interview questions following the implementation of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention. Participants were able to draw a direct link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour and this effort contributed to the reduction of negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying.

The participants realised and modified the distorted thoughts of catastrophising. They could replace catastrophising thoughts with positive and more realistic thoughts and this led to a decrease in negative emotions and behaviours associated with witnessing bullying in school: *"Hona joale ke ikutloa ke lokile ho ea sekolong hobane ke tseba hore mosuoe-hlooho o etsa molao oa hore mang kapa mang ea hlorisang ngoana e mong o tla emisoa esita le 'mampoli a tseba molao oo mme o tšaba ho emisoa. (Now I feel ok going to school because I know the principal make the rule*

that whoever bully another kid will be suspended even the bully knows that rule and he is afraid of suspension). (P6, post-intervention interview, p.38, lines 1842-1848).

Another participant realised that the probability of a worst-case scenario eventuating might be low, and, therefore, stopped engaging in unnecessary worries: "*…Che, ha ke soabe ho ea sekolong hobane ke boleletse batsoali ba ka le batho bao ba hlorisang 'mampoli hore ba se ke ba tla ho' na. Ba kanna ba ntšosa kapa ba kanna ba se ke ba ntšaba empa ha ke sa tšaba ho ea sekolong. (No, I don't feel scared at all going to school because I told my parents and even those bullies might not come to me. They might be scared of me or they might not be scared of me but I am no longer scared of going to school).* (P3, post-intervention interview, p.17, lines 783-790).

The data extracted from the cognitive restructuring worksheet completed by the participants during the sessions confirmed that participants were able to replace over-generalising thoughts with positive and realistic thoughts. It could be observed that most participants do not over-generalise anymore and as such, stopped making a general rule based on negative interpretation of one or a few incidences of bullying they witnessed. This was made clear from the views expressed by the seventh participant: "*I have a brother in this school and I also have friends that are boys and they don't bully anyone, so I don't think everybody is a bully so I am no longer scared of going to school".* (P7, excerpt from the cognitive restructuring worksheet, p.4).

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING WORKSHEET

...ENCES IN ...ORT OF THE ...UGHTS	EVIDENCES AGAINST THE THOUGHTS	JUDGEMENT ON THE VALIDIDITY OF THE THOUGHT	REALISTIC INTERPRETATIONS
...gave me a ...t that they ...e/so bullying me	I am always play with my friends I dont get close to these boys that bullying	the boys that I bullying dont even come near me I think my th thought that I will be bullied is just a guess	I have a brother in this school and I also have friends that are boys and they dont bullying any one so not every body is a bully so I am no longer scared of going to school

Photograph 5-1: P7's Cognitive restructuring worksheet

Participants have also realised the common errors in thinking and their influences on mood, feelings and behaviour. Hence, the reduction in participants' negative emotions and behaviours connected with witnessing bullying. Participant 6 responded to the question meant to inquire if he still experiences nightmares when he witnessed bullying by saying: "*Now I sleep well because I know that there are other people at school who will help us if the bully tries to bully us".* (P6, post-intervention interview, p.37, lines 1788-1795).

From all indications, it appeared that the majority of the participants understood the reciprocal connections among thoughts, feelings and behavioural and emotional response reactions to events. The quotation from the transcript of the post-intervention interviews revealed that the SDCDRI has a positive impact on modifying participants' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. While I reflected on the responses of the participants, I made the following remark in my research journal:

It seems participants have learnt to check their thinking patterns in line with reality based on evidence and not just feelings, presumptions or assumptions. They have realised the reciprocal relationship among thought, feelings and reactions. Therefore, they were able to exert more control over their thoughts, feelings, emotions and behaviours

(Research journal 25/9/19)

5.4   LITERATURE CONTROL

5.4.1   Introduction

In this section, I discuss the main findings of this study. The findings of this study were based on the inductive thematic analysis which emanated from the data collected from the interview. I situated the findings within the existing literature. While discussing the main findings, I highlighted the similarities and contradictions between the existing literature and the findings of this study.

5.4.2   Findings on bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying

This finding revealed that bystanders in this study reacted in a number of ways to witnessing bullying. Under this section, I discuss some of these reactions which include, willingness to intervene, self-blame and feeling guilty for not being able to intervene, difficulty in concentration due to psychological re-victimisation, expressed negative emotions and behaviour, insecure feelings and school phobia.

5.4.2.1   Willingness to intervene

There is evidence from the existing literature that bystanders of school bullying expressed willingness to defend and have sympathetic reactions towards the victims of bullying (Almedia et al., 2010; Cappadocia et al., 2012; Nickerson & Taylor 2014; Rock & Baird, 2012; Thornberg et al., 2012). For instance, Nickerson and Taylor (2014) reported from their study that bystanders felt sorry for the victims and

demonstrated a willingness to help the victims. Gini et al. (2008) also reported similar findings that bystanders indicated that watching bullying is dehumanising and that they sympathised with the victims.

Findings of the research conducted by Thornberg et al. (2012) revealed that bystanders had highly sympathetic reaction toward the victims of bullying. The result of their study indicated that bystanders demonstrated a willingness to stand up for the victim, even if they did not like them because they felt sorry for them. Cappadocia et al. (2012) equally noted sympathetic responsiveness of bystanders to observing bullying in school. The study found that bystanders reported high levels of sympathy and they expressed willingness and intention to intervene.

Almedia et al. (2010) also examined the attitudes and reactions of bystanders to witnessing bullying in school. The result of the study indicated that participants showed higher sympathy while they expressed their intention to defend the victims. Nishina and Juvonen (2005) reported from their study that bystanders felt unpleasant when they witnessed bullying and that they expressed intention to do something to stop the bullying.

There are similarities in the findings of this present study with other studies, namely, that bystanders recognise bullying behaviour as wrong and are willing to intervene on behalf of the victim. From all indications, the bystanders in this study demonstrated sympathy and expressed willingness to intervene on behalf of the victims, although, their intention to intervene did not translate into action due to fear of becoming the next victim. One of the participants said, "*E, kea batla, empa ke tšaba hobane le bona ba ka mpolaisa*" *(Yes, I want to but I am afraid because myself too they can bully me).* (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.32, lines 1552-1553).

It appeared to me that bystanders in this study experienced cognitive dissonance because they believed that bullying was wrong and they intended to intervene on behalf of the victim. However, they were trapped in a social dilemma. In other words, they reported an intention and willingness to defend victims in a bullying situation but they were also conscious of their own safety and vulnerability, hence, the inability to translate their intention and willingness to intervene into action.

Salmivalli (2014), as well as Twemlow and Sacco (2013), supported this view by asserting that bystanders or observers of bullying may be conscious of the fact that bullying is wrong and they may even express a willingness to intervene on behalf of the victim, but at the same time bystanders may also be conscious of their own safety and vulnerability and thus, may become fearful to intervene. Moreover, Rigby and Johnson (2006), as well as Gini et al. (2008), explained that whilst most bystanders feel uncomfortable for not intervening and feel sympathetic towards victims, the fear of becoming the next target of bullying overshadow the feelings of willingness to intervene and defend the victims.

As against findings of some previous studies with regards to bystanders' moral disengagement and lack of empathy (Oh & Hazler, 2009; Padgett & Notar, 2013; Polanin, Espelage & Piggot, 2012), bystanders in this study did not reinforce bullying behaviour by laughing, cheering or hailing the bullies; instead, they demonstrated their disapproval of bullying behaviour even though they could not intervene.

5.4.2.2 Self-blame and feeling guilt for not being able to intervene

As mentioned earlier, bystanders in this study showed signs of willingness to defend the victims but failed to do so as a result of fear of becoming the next victims. Hence, they reacted by apportioning blame to themselves and consequently felt guilty for not defending the victim. One of the participants stated that: "*Yaa ke ipeha molato ke lakatsa eka nka be ke thusitse kapa ho bitsa motho e mong empa ke ne nke ke ka khona ho beha molato*" *(Yaa I do blame myself I wish I could have helped or called somebody but I couldn't so I blame myself)*. (P5, pre-intervention interview, p.26, lines 1216-1220).

Similar themes related to bystanders feeling guilt for not being able to intervene in a bullying situation were reported in the literature. For instance, Salmivalli (2014) reported that bystanders often experience feelings of guilt, self-blame and anger towards themselves as a result of their failure to intervene on behalf of the victim. Hutchinson (2012) also noted that bystanders might experience an increased level of stress and guilt for not standing up to the bully on behalf of the victim. According to Frey et al. (2009), bystanders often experience feelings of guilt and anger towards themselves as a result of their failure to intervene on behalf of the victim.

Batsche and Porter (2006) argued that when bystanders take excessive responsibility for the bullying they witness, they experience guilt and self-blame. This view was also echoed by Milsom and Gallo (2006), namely, that bystanders experienced feelings of guilt and self-blame for their willingness but their inability to defend victims while witnessing bullying.

5.4.2.3 Difficulty in concentration due to psychological re-victimisation

From the findings of this study, it seemed that bystanders experienced difficulties in concentration on academic tasks due to psychological re-victimisation. This was observed from statements made by participants such as, "*Ha ke khone ho tsepamisa mohopolo hobane nako le nako ha mosuoe a ruta, kelello ea ka e nahana hore ba tla mpolaisa. Ha ke khone ho tsepamisa mohopolo*" *(I can't concentrate because every time when the teacher is teaching, my mind is thinking that they will bully me. I can't concentrate).* (P9, pre-intervention interview, p.45, lines 2173-2177).

It follows that feeling emotionally and physically troubled as a result of fear of subsequent direct victimisation could impede learners' concentration on their studies (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Shore, 2009).

This finding is consistent with the report of Shore (2009) that bystanders may react to witnessing bullying with fears and worry which could cause bystanders to feel intimidated, hence, contributing to difficulties in paying attention in class. Whitted and Dupper (2005, p. 171) corroborated this finding by asserting that bystanders may be "fearful" and become distracted in school, thereby, making concentration in school activities difficult.

5.4.2.4 Expressed negative emotions and behaviours

Participants in this study expressed various forms of negative emotions and behaviour such as anger, restlessness, worry, sadness, shock, shame, anxiety, and frustration in reactions to witnessing bullying as a result of the thought and fear of becoming the next direct victim of bullying. This finding confirmed that bystanders who witnessed bullying could experience negative emotions similar to the direct victims themselves. Morrison (2006) declared that the mere witnessing of bullying could cause bystanders to identify with the pain and suffering of the victim and this

could lead to an expression of negative emotions such as sadness, shock and disbelief.

It seemed that after the bullying incidents were over, intrusive thoughts and images filled the minds of the bystanders, which caused them to identify with the pain and suffering of the victim. Consequently, the flashback of the bullying incidents they watched led to co-victimisation or re-victimisation for bystanders (Rivers et al., 2009). This was evidenced in the responses of one of the participants: *"Ke ikutloa ke le mobe hobane ka linako tse ling ke ba le litoro tse mpe. Ke lora ekare ke 'na hore lia hlorisa"* (I feel bad because sometimes I have bad dreams. I dream like it is me that they are bullying). (P6, pre-intervention interview, p.34, lines 1615-1616).

This finding is consistent with findings of other recent studies indicating that bystanders of bullying experience negative emotions as they wrestle with the nightmare about being a next victim (American Psychological Association, 2009; Carney, 2008; Frey et al., 2009; Hutchinson, 2012; Salmivalli, 2014; Ttofi & Farington, 2011; Visconti et al., 2013).

For instance, Kelly et al. (2015) reported a high level of negative emotional and behavioural responses in adolescents who witnessed bullying. In a related study, Milson and Gallow (2006) reported that bystanders of school bullying are more likely to react to witnessing bullying with symptoms of secondary trauma stress like depression, anxiety and insecurity than either the bullied or direct victims. Janosh et al. (2008) equally confirmed from their study that witnessing bullying was associated with an expression of negative emotional and behavioural responses such as fear, anxiety, shock, disbelief and depression.

This finding equally resonates with the findings of recent research conducted by Midgett and Doumas (2019). The study investigated the correlation among witnessing bullying, anxiety and depressive symptoms among middle school learners. The result of the study revealed that, even after controlling for frequency of being a bully-victim, witnessing bullying account significantly for anxiety and depressive symptoms in bystanders.

However, there were differences in the report of a few studies on emotional and behavioural reactions of bystanders to witnessing bullying (Glew et al., 2005; Juvonem et al., 2011). For instance, Juvonem et al. (2011) found that sixth-grade bystanders did not experience common negative emotions such as anxiety and loneliness to the same degree as the direct victims. The observed differences in bystanders' behavioural and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying could be that the bystanders in the Juvonem et al. (2011) study were able to curtail anxiety caused by thoughts and fear of subsequent direct victimisation.

Ttofi and Farrington (2011) asserted that fear of direct subsequent victimisation contributes to bystanders' emotional insecurity and uncertainty. From the findings of my study and the studies reviewed from the literature, it became clear that bystanders could exhibit negative behavioural and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying, depending on how the bystanders perceive and appraise the bullying they witness.

5.4.2.5 Insecure feelings

This theme revealed that bystanders reacted to witnessing with feelings of insecurity at school as a result of fear of direct subsequent victimisation. Existing literature indicated that a minimised sense of school safety and concerns about vulnerability to being the next victim of bullying might affect bystanders' readiness to learn and their school attendance rate (Dinkes et al., 2009; Kohut, 2007). This particular finding of this present study, therefore, confirmed that witnessing bullying relates to a negative perception of school safety. One of the participants shares his perception of school safety after observing bullying: "*Ha ke ikutloe ke sireletsehile ho hang hobane ha ke utloe eka ke sirelelitsoe mona sekolong*" (*I don't feel safe at all because I don't feel like I am protected here in school).* (P3, pre-intervention interview, p.15, lines 678-681).

The school environment is supposed to provide an environment conducive for learners to learn effectively but it appeared that this was not the case for bystanders in this study because they constantly indulged in thoughts and fear of subsequent, direct victimisation. The fear of becoming a next victim of bullying created lack of feelings of safety that is assumed to be imperative for an effective learning environment.

This finding coincides with some of the findings in the existing literature that feeling insecure in school clearly have a negative influence on the overall school climate (Dinkes et al., 2009; Nansel et al., 2008). For instance, Elinoff et al., (2004) reported that learners in a negative school climate might lack feelings of safety necessary for effective teaching and learning. In addition, Varjas et al. (2009) conducted a study on school bullying and learners' perception of school safety. The findings of the study revealed that witnessing or experiencing bullying relates to a negative perception of school safety.

Dinkes et al. (2009) stated that experiencing or witnessing bullying in school can make learners fearful and feel insecure in school and this can affect learners' readiness and ability to learn. Dinkles et al. (2009) further recommended that the school should find avenues to allay fear and anxiety related to bullying in school to enhance learners' academic performance, attendance rate and sense of safety while in school. I agree with Dinkes et al. (2009), because learners who feel insecure and avoid interaction with their peers in school may lack the normal social interactions that are vital to their healthy development (Nansel et al., 2008).

5.4.2.6 School Phobia

Findings of previous studies have shown that fear or anticipating being next target of bullying may cause bystanders to feel unsafe and become fearful of attending school (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008; Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008). Berkowitz and Benbenishty (2012), as well as Bradshaw, Wasadrop, Goldweber and Johnson (2013) noted that bystanders of school bullying appear to lose interest in going to school and are most likely to miss school as a result of feeling afraid or anticipating direct bullying victimisation.

Arostegui and Arraez (2006), as well as Beauty and Alexyev (2008), reported that bystanders who witnessed bullying may feel unsafe and express fear of attending school because they anticipate being the next victim. Meyer- Adams and Conner (2008) also confirmed that witnessing bullying in school may negatively impact bystanders' perception of school safety, which in turn may lead to behavioural reactions such as avoiding or skipping school.

In accordance with the existing findings from previous studies, my finding also confirmed that fear of the unknown became a daily routine for bystanders in this study and this fear affected their interest in going to school. Indications of a loss of interest in going to school were found in responses given by one of the participants: "*E ama sebopeho sa ka sekolong. Ka linako tse ling ha ke tsoha ke belaela hore na ke tlameha ho kena sekolo kapa che ka lebaka la bompoli bona*" *(It does affect my likeness for school. Sometimes when I wake up I doubt if I should go to school or not because of this bullying)*. (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.8, lines 348-352).

This finding indicated that if learners think the school environment is not friendly, they may feel scared of going to school and consequently develop an attitude of phobia for school.

5.4.3 Findings on contributions of self-debasing cognitive distortions to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying

This finding revealed how bystanders' thinking patterns could serve as the basis for generating and triggering varieties of behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying as deduced from their responses to pre-intervention interview questions. In specific terms, this finding described the contributory role of thinking patterns in bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying.

5.4.3.1 Personalisation evoked bystanders' self-blame and feelings of guilt

This theme unveiled that apportioning undue self-blame or relating the cause of an external event to oneself, despite an absence of solid grounds for making such a connection could trigger negative emotions such as a feeling of guilt. Personalisation led bystanders in this study to assume excess responsibility for their inability to defend the victims of the bullying they witnessed even when there was evidence suggesting that there was little or nothing they could do to affect the outcome. Hence, they reacted with feelings of guilt and self-blame. It turned out that bystanders in this study held themselves responsible and blamed themselves for their inability to defend the victim in the absence of objective evidence. In most cases, it was apparent that there was no basis for the bystanders to apportion blame to themselves. Nevertheless, they assumed they were the sole cause of the bullying victimisation.

This theme is in line with the findings of Barriga et al., (2008) who reported that bystanders who are willing to defend victims but unable to do so as a result of their limited ability, might arbitrarily perceive their inability to defend or intervene in the bullying they witnessed as contributing to the bullying victimisation, thereby causing the bystanders to develop feelings of guilt and apportioning of self-blame. This finding also supports the findings of Joormann and D' Avanzato (2010) that personalisation might play a significant role in triggering bystanders' behavioural and emotional reactions to bullying, particularly self-blame and a feeling of guilt. Furthermore, this finding resonates with the report of Szentagotai and Freeman (2007) as well as Szasz (2011) that personalisation as a maladaptive thinking pattern debases an individual and can lead to self-blame.

As bystanders live with the thoughts of disappointment, shame and guilt for not being able to defend the victim of bullying, their self-confidence erodes which further triggers negative behavioural and emotional problems such as withdrawal, avoidance, difficulties concentrating and feelings of inferiority. One of the participants declared that she lives in shame despite admitting that it was beyond her power to intervene for her friend who she saw being bullied: *"Ha ke utloe hantle ho hang hobane haeba ke ne ke sa khone ho thusa motho ea hlokahalitsoeng mme a tsoa likotsi, ho nna ho tšoana le ha ke mo hlotsoe" (I don't feel good at all because if I couldn't help the victim and she get injured, to me is like I failed her).* (P7, pre-intervention interview, p.40, lines 1927-1207).

From all indications, it sounds as if bystanders in this study could be considered highly empathic because of their demonstration of willingness to intervene in spite of obstacles as reflected in their responses. However, I observed that they were not able to draw the cutting line in their thoughts as they began to take excess responsibility which led them to react negatively. Although showing sympathy towards a victim is a moral value that must not be discouraged, bystanders should be able to discern when such a response becomes excessive, problematic and produces considerable negative emotions for them.

5.4.3.2 *Catastrophising amplified bystanders' anxiety and fear*
This theme showed that the intensity and severity of bystanders negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying could be attributed to

bystanders exaggerating the potential or real consequences of witnessing bullying thus, leading to anticipating bullying on themselves, being anxious and becoming more fearful. This theme revealed that catastrophic thinking patterns characterise bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. This finding agrees with Kottler and Shepard (2008) as well as Owens (2014), who reported that bystanders engage in thoughts that amplify anxiety, causing them to anticipate more difficulties, thereby intensifying the severity of negative emotional and behavioural responses they experienced

The bystanders in this study appraised their experience of witnessing bullying and then automatically imagined and expected subsequent, direct victimisation which triggered a greater likelihood of anxiety. It was evident that their emotional and behavioural reactions were based on "what if" and not on reality. For instance, one of the participants said during the pre-intervention interview that: "*Ke ikutloa ke tšoenyehile ha ke tlameha ho tla sekolong. Ke lula ke nahana hore ho thoe'ng haeba bompoli bo etsahalletseng bana ba bang le bona bo nkutloela. Ka hona, ke lula ke tšoenyehile hoseng ha nako ea sekolo e fihla" (I feel a bit worried when I am supposed to come to school. I always think that what if the bullying that happened to the other learners also happens to me. I am always worried in the morning when it is time for school).* (P2, pre-intervention interview, p.9, lines 421-428).

Previous studies have found a similar correlation between catastrophising and anxiety. For instance, Midgett et al. (2017) noted that an expression of negative behavioural and emotional responses and psychological re-victimisation of bystanders could be linked to bystanders' fearful anticipation of future victimisation. Rivers et al. (2009) also re-affirmed that thoughts and fear of victimisation afterwards may account for bystanders' higher level of secondary trauma, sensitivity, distress and anxiety.

This finding also correlates with the report of Luqman (2011) who examined the contributing role of catastrophising as a self-debasing cognitive distortion of the level of anxiety among adolescents. The results suggested that catastrophising as self-debasing cognitive distortions play a significant role in the level of anxiety among adolescents. Equally, the finding of this study is also in positive connotations with the

view of Muris and Field (2008), who asserted that catastrophic thinking plays a precise role in the aetiology and maintenance of childhood anxiety disorders.

In my view, one possible explanation for this finding could be that there is no effective anti-bullying policy in the school where the study was conducted, hence, the reason for participants' expression of fear of being the next victim of bullying. Rigby and Johnson (2016) remarked that having effective anti-bullying rules and sanctions against bullying behaviour allay the fear of being victimised and improve learners' perception of safety in school.

5.4.3.3 Over generalisation induced and exacerbated bystanders' negative perception of school safety.

This theme depicted that unjustified generalisations served as the basis for misguided actions of bystanders and equally contributed to bystanders' negative perception of school safety. From the analysis of the responses of the participants, it could be deduced that over generalised thinking patterns were evidenced in the responses provided by participants regarding their experiences of school bullying. Bystanders in this study reached a general and overarching conclusion about their vulnerability to being the next victim of bullying based on their negative interpretation of one or a few incidences of bullying they witnessed and this overgeneralised belief induced and exacerbated the negative perception of their safety in school.

Quantifiers of overgeneralised assumptions such as "always", "never", "all the time", which seems to increase participants' perception of the level of the threat to wellbeing, were found in the responses given by participants. For instance, a participant described his experience thus: "*Che, ke ikutloa eka ha ho na batho ba lokileng sekolong, ho na le batho ba fosahetseng feela sekolong. Ke kamoo ke ikutloang kateng*" (*No o I feel like in school there are no more good people, there are only bad people at school. That is how I feel).* (P5, pre-intervention interview, p.25, lines 1311-1315).

This finding coincides with the report of other researchers such as Rehna et al. (2012); Flouri and Panourgia (2011) and Freeman et al. 2004, whose studies also confirmed that self-debasing cognitive distortions such as over-generalisation could instigate individual perception of threat and dangers. Troy et al. (2010) as well as

Tiba (2010) also agreed that over-generalised thinking patterns could trigger a negative perception of threats to psychological wellbeing.

Bystanders in this study reached a broad conclusion that was characterised by ill-grounded beliefs and blanket judgement about their wellbeing and safety in school after witnessing bullying. This finding could probably be because the participants in this study have been trapped by a polarised way of appraising a situation and they could only see this way of interpreting a situation or event.

5.4.3.4 Selective abstraction led to indirect co-victimisation

Existing literature established a link between focusing on the experience of one or a few negative events witnessed while appraising such an event and psychological victimisation or indirect co-victimisation (Barriga et al., 2008; Joormann & D' Avanzato, 2010; Rivers et al., 2009). It appears that this theme also agrees with a growing body of evidence in existing literature linking selective abstraction to indirect co-victimisation for bystanders. This is because the finding of this present study indicated that bystanders pinpointed one or a few incidences of bullying they witnessed and gave a biased interpretation of that experience, which in turn contributed to psychological re-victimisation for them.

It seemed that bystanders in this study erroneously magnified the threat posed by witnessing bullying as their fear of becoming the next victims was unfounded. Many of the participants experienced sleep difficulties and nightmares due to constant thoughts and fear of being the next target of bullying in school, whereas it is possible that their thoughts could just be a guess and not reality. This finding further provided evidence that attention bias could precipitate the development of co-victimisation and psychological victimisation.

This theme also upheld the findings of other studies as reported in the literature with regards to the influence of selective abstraction in psychological re-victimisation for bystanders of bullying in school. For instance, Szentagotai and Freeman (2007) as well as Szasz (2011) found in their studies that attention bias could explain bystanders' failure to consider alternative possibilities while appraising and attaching meaning to the bullying incident they witnessed, thereby leading to psychological re-victimisation. In addition, Teo and Say (2012) also found a strong correlation

between the level of selective abstraction and the severity of psychological re-victimisation for bystanders who witnessed bullying in school.

In justifying this finding, as reflected in this theme, I refer to Beck's cognitive theory of emotions and behaviour as discussed in Section 2.7.1, which asserted that individual cognition plays a significant and primary role in the development and maintenance of behavioural and emotional linkage to events (Beck, 2011).

In conclusion, earlier in this study, I provided a report concerning the commonalities and discrepancies in emotions and behaviours expressed by bystanders in reaction to witnessing bullying as reviewed in the literature. One possible explanation for these discrepancies and commonalities could be attributed to several causal factors such as thinking patterns, that is, how bystanders perceive and appraise the bullying they witness (Rivers et al., 2009; Ttofi & Farington, 2011; Werth et al., 2015). Therefore, it could be suggested that thinking patterns play a role in the heterogeneity of behavioural and emotional reactions of bystanders to witnessing bullying as emphasised by Hofman et al. (2012).

It was at this point that I deemed it fit to introduce to participants, through the SDCDR intervention, how cognitive restructuring as a cognitive behavioural therapy technique could possibly change their thinking patterns while reacting to witnessing bullying in school to achieve the desired emotional and behavioural changes. In the next section, I discuss the significance of cognitive restructuring techniques in modifying bystanders' thinking patterns.

5.4.4 Findings on the significance of cognitive restructuring techniques in modifying bystanders' thinking patterns

This theme revealed how cognitive restructuring as a cognitive behavioural therapy technique could be utilised in modifying bystanders thinking patterns. In other words, the third theme unveiled the influence of cognitive restructuring techniques in revising bystanders' thinking patterns.

5.4.4.1 Challenging automatic thought techniques abated bystanders' maladaptive thinking

Vyskocilova and Prascko (2012) alluded to the assertion that challenging automatic thoughts in CBT has the potential to enable clients to critically assess their thoughts

and view them as a hypothesis which may or may not be true. Participants in this study were able to re-assess their thought pattern by challenging automatic thought. The findings revealed that participants learnt to review the situation and develop new perspectives through the use of the dysfunctional thought record.

In addition, as participants acquired skills in identifying and modifying situation-specific automatic thoughts, they began to evaluate the validity of their thought pattern by comparing the evidence that supports their automatic thoughts with evidence that are inconsistences with their automatic thought thereby, enabling them to modify inaccurate thought into balanced thought. This was demonstrated in the assertions made by participants who were able to dispute irrational thoughts by searching for proof for or against distorted thought: "*Ts'epo ea ka e tiile joale. Joale kea tseba hore ke har'a metsoalle ea ka mme 'mampoli a ke ke a tla ho nna. Moithuti oa bongaka o nthutile hore na nka itšireletsa joang esita le mosuoe-hlooho o ile a mpolella hore ha ke tšoenyehe hore o tla sebetsana le hona bo-mpoli. Kahoo ke na le tšepo joale*" (*My confidence is sharp now. Now I know I am among my friends and the bully won't come to me. The therapist taught me how to defend myself and even the principal told me that I must not worry that he will deal with that bully. I have confidence now.* (P6, post-intervention interview, p.37, lines 1797-1785).

My findings resonated with findings of previous research which emphasised that challenging automatic thoughts may set the stage for emotional and behavioural change in CBT treatment (Barnes et al., 2013; Berg et al., 2008; McManus et al., 2012). For instance, Gega, Smith and Reynolds (2013) reported that participants in their study described challenging their thoughts as an important intervention in their therapy. They revealed that participants explained that the cognitive restructuring techniques of challenging thoughts enabled them to exercise scrutiny over the thoughts that "pop into" their minds. This assisted them to perceive situations from a more balanced, objective viewpoint, which resulted in more rational responses.

5.4.4.2 Decatastrophising technique reduced bystanders' catastrophic thinking

Catastrophising is estimating an unrealistically high likelihood of the occurrence of a worst-case scenario and assigning an overly high cost to that scenario (McManus & Doorn, 2012). The person takes as fact that a worst-case scenario will indeed occur,

that it will be devastating, and that he or she will not be able to cope with or recover from it. However, the use decatastrophising technique in which a person estimates the realistic likelihood that a worst-case scenario might occur and how they would cope or manage the situation if a worst-case scenario were to occur, seems to reduce catastrophic thinking patterns.

The use of decatastrophising techniques such as 'what if" enabled participants in this study to realised that a worst-case scenario is typically manageable, hence the reduction in participants' catastrophic thinking. This was reflected in some of the comments made by participants of this study *"Ke nahana hore haeba motho eo a tla 'me a batla ho nkotla, ke tla ea ho mosuoe-hlooho ke mo tlalehe mme mosuoe-hlooho o tla mo emisa"* (I think that if the person comes and want to beat me, I will go to the principal and report him and the principal will suspend him). (P6, post-intervention interview, p.36, lines 1748-1752).

This finding appears to confirm previous findings of researchers such as McManus and Doorn (2012) as well as Thorn, Pence and Ward (2007), namely that decatastrophising is a cognitive restructuring technique to reduce self-debasing cognitive distortion such as catastrophising. My findings furthermore paralleled the findings of Smeets, Vlaeyen, Kester and Knottnerus (2016) who reported that a 10-week cognitive-behavioural treatment to reduce catastrophising in patients using decatastrophising techniques was associated with reductions in the frequency and impact of catastrophic thinking. This finding also agrees with the earlier research which revealed that a variety of cognitive-behavioural interventions can lead to reductions in levels of catastrophising.

For instance, the findings of Sullivan, Adams and Rhodenizer (2013), that developed a structured cognitive behaviour intervention program aimed at reducing levels of catastrophising in clients with chronic fatigue syndrome suggest that participants who participated in the cognitive behaviour therapy experienced a significant reduction in their levels of catastrophic thinking. Likewise, the findings of this study generally resonated with the submission of Rajabi, Bakhshani and Bagian (2017) who reported from their study that cognitive techniques like changing catastrophic thoughts and dysfunctional beliefs corrected distorted interpretations and increased

the ability of students who were the victims of bullying to deal with stressful situations.

5.4.4.3 Guided discovery techniques assisted bystanders to identify and reappraise negative thinking patterns

Guided discovery is a useful tool for enabling clients to identify how specific psychological problems have been maintained through catastrophic misinterpretation (Westbrook, Kennerley & Kirk, 2011). Guided discovery, as a cognitive restructuring technique, is based on the belief that clients are best placed to find answers to their own very specific problems, building resilience and fostering the ability in clients to ask pertinent and accurate questions to evaluate their cognitive bias independently (Overholster, 2011). The process of guided discovery is underpinned by the principle of involvement and facilitation of the client, with the therapist guiding the client's exploration of their own circumstances, with an emphasis on facilitating rather than direct teaching (Overholster, 2011). Guided discovery facilitates this by encouraging the client to test their beliefs and thoughts through cognitive restructuring, looking at alternative interpretations for events and evaluating new behaviours.

In line with this, the finding of this study revealed that participants explored evidence for and against their thoughts, to search for an alternative perspective, and to examine how realistic and helpful their thoughts are. This process of using guided discovery afforded participants the opportunity to review and reflect their thoughts and beliefs objectively to arrive at a conclusion on whether their negative thoughts are valid or not.

The findings of this study also suggested that participants were able to figure out constructive alternative ways of interpreting an event rather than reaching a broad conclusion that is characterised by ill-grounded beliefs. This was made known from the comments made by most of the participants from the post-intervention interview, as P4 stated: "*No I am not useless and I am not worthless. I think I have been having a wrong thought about myself because there are so many things I do even in school for example I am part of the scholars. I am part of those who control traffic in the morning so I said to myself that if I am useless or worthless, I won't be chosen to be scholar patrol*". (P4, excerpt from replacing over-generalising thought exercise, p.6).

This finding supports the findings of Braun, Strunk, Sasso, and Cooper (2015), who reported the use of guided discovery assisted in the reduction of symptoms associated with depression. Similarly, the findings of this study resonate with that of Christopher, Jacob, Neuhaus, Neary, and Fiola, (2009) who affirmed that guided discovery as a cognitive restructuring tool decreased negative thinking and set the stage for behavioural change among clients with mood disorders who participated in the cognitive behavioural therapy.

5.4.5 Findings on the value of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying

This theme revealed how the compilation of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention could further assist in capturing bystanders experiences of witnessing school bullying. That is to say; the fourth theme expresses how the tasks performed at the SDCDRI helped in documenting bystanders' experiences of school bullying.

5.4.5.1 Visual images enhanced better representation of thoughts and emotions

This theme indicated that the use of visual images enabled participants to express their thoughts and emotions freely. Participants demonstrated that pictures could also be an effective way of communicating and sharing their experiences of witnessing school bullying, particularly their emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. Verbal communication has been the predominant means of reporting bystanders' experiences of school bullying in the literature (Davies, Duncan, Diana & Bathurst, 2009; Holliday, 2007). Hence the findings of this study revealed that the use of visual images could not be considered an inferior form of presenting bystanders reactions to witnessing bullying.

The findings of this study are in line with the views of Davies et al. (2009) who asserted that the use of visual images and pictograms are gaining momentum in recording and documenting human experiences in social science research. The findings of this study also resonate with the findings of Levie and Lentz (2009), who reviewed studies on the effect of pictorial illustrations on presenting narratives of traumatic experience without verbalising it. The result of the review indicated that visual images facilitated a better presentation and understanding of the subject

215

under investigation in a concise and easy to understand way. The findings of theme 4 support the report of Bagnoli (2009), which confirmed the richness of research data obtained by a visual image. Bagnoli (2009) reported that visual images were effective at describing and articulating feelings and thoughts that usually remain unsaid.

5.4.5.2 Tasks completed in the SDCDRI sessions reinforced verbal quotations to synthesise bystanders' experiences of school bullying.

This theme described how activities performed by participants in the SDCDRI sessions strengthened verbal quotations from the interviews to summarise bystanders' experiences of school bullying. The findings from this sub-theme revealed that worksheets such as the ABCD worksheet, dysfunctional thought record and cognitive restructuring worksheet used in completing the activities in the SDCDRI, afforded participants the opportunity to communicate their experiences of witnessing school bullying.

I could not find any formal research findings in the literature that is in alignment or refute the findings of this sub-theme. However, there are a few indications from interventions in other studies which suggest the usefulness of activities performed in intervention sessions to elicit participants' experiences of a phenomenon under investigation. For instance, Avrahami (2016) reported that the activities undertaken by participants in art therapy were found to be valuable because it enabled the participants to express their inner feelings and thoughts.

5.4.6 Findings on the impacts of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention on bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying.

The themes identified from the analysis of data collected from the pre-intervention interviews (see Section 5.3) informed the development of the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring Intervention for participants in this study. After the implementation of 11 sessions of SDCDR intervention, post-intervention interviews were conducted and analysed from where the last theme of this study emerged. This finding revealed the impacts of SDCDR intervention on bystanders' reactions to witnessing bullying which will be discussed in this session.

5.4.6.1 Reduced errors in bystanders' thinking patterns

This theme suggested that participants might have understood the irrationalities inherent in their thinking patterns which were fuelling negative reactions to witnessing bullying in school. I quote the response of one of the participants as an illustration: "*Che, ha ke utloe ke tšaba ho ea sekolong hobane Rangoane o ile a mpolella hore o tla tla sekolong mme a bua le mosuoe-hlooho mme mosuoe-hlooho o tla emisa 'mampoli eo*" *(No, I don't feel scared to go to school because my uncle told me that he is going to come to school and talk to the principal and the principal will suspend that bully).* (P6, post-intervention interview, p.36, lines 1726-1731).

From the response of the participants, it appears that the bystanders have learnt to make fewer cognitive errors. It seems that the use of cognitive restructuring worksheet that was introduced to the participants during the third session of the intervention has enabled the participants to search for evidence supporting or not supporting thoughts which provoke negative reactions to witnessing bullying.

Following participation in the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention, it looked as if the participants were now able to examine whether their emotions and behavioural reactions were based on facts or stemming from irrational thought and unverified assumptions. This present study extended the findings on the efficacy of cognitive restructuring interventions in reducing thinking error while reacting to events (Boschen & Ludvik, 2015; McManus et al., 2012; Rodebaugh et al., 2009; Shikatani et al., 2014;.Steil et al., 2011)o

For instance, McManus et al., (2012), reported the efficacy of cognitive restructuring intervention in reducing cognitive error associated with illness. It was found that compared to the control group, the cognitive restructuring techniques of CBT reduced irrational thoughts and related depressive feelings. In another study, Shurick et al. (2012) reported the effectiveness of using cognitive restructuring techniques to decrease negative thoughts associated with conditioned fear. The result of the study revealed a significant reduction in the fear response of participants who received cognitive restructuring training.

5.4.6.2 Appropriate interpretation of an event

This sub-theme indicated that participants were able to examine alternative interpretations and apply the most appropriate ones in reacting to witnessing bullying. Participants were also able to consider alternative ways of appraising a situation and an event. In the process, participants could now refute distorted thoughts giving room for an evidence-based interpretation of the bullying incident they witnessed. An excerpt from the response of one of the participants could shed more light: *"Che, ha ke ipehe molato hobane ha ke ea ho bona ke ba hoelehetsa ke ba tšosetsa hore ke tlil'o bolella mosuoe-hlooho, ba ile ba nkoenya hampe mme ba tsoela pele ho hlorisa motho eo. (No, I don't blame myself because when I went to them and shouted at them and threatened them that I am going to tell the principal, they just ignored me and continued bullying that victim). (P6, post-intervention interview, p.35, lines 1705-1710).*

From the response of the participants, it was evident that the use of the dysfunctional thought record worksheet introduced to participants in the fourth session of the intervention has been helpful for participants in testing the validity of personalisation thoughts associated with the apportioning of undue self-blame and corresponding feelings of guilt.

It equally appeared that bystanders used re-attribution techniques to challenge and replace personalisation thoughts with more rational ones, thereby, leading to realistic emotional and behavioural reactions attached to witnessing bullying. It could be further observed that reattribution techniques had a positive impact on re-evaluating, modifying and challenging automatic thoughts which earlier formed the aetiology for the onset and maintenance of dysfunctional emotions and behaviour.

It is important to note that the finding of this study resonated with the findings of other studies on the effectiveness of using reattribution techniques to enhance the re-evaluation of irrational thoughts and ensure appropriate interpretation of events. (Clark & Beck 2012; Delgado et al., 2009; Hofmann, et al., 2012; James et al., 2015). It could be concluded that cognitive reappraisal of negative and dysfunctional thoughts can effectively alter the interpretation one attaches to an event which in turn could influence adaptive behavioural and emotional responses to events.

5.4.6.3 Mitigated bystanders negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying

This finding revealed that the cognitive restructuring strategies that participants were taught in the intervention sessions produced positive results in reducing negative emotions and behaviour associated with witnessing bullying in school. This is because participants were able to identify, challenge and modify negative thinking patterns that could have been responsible for fuelling negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying.

It seems as if the SDCDR intervention made a difference in equipping participants to exert control on their emotions and behaviours. For instance, participants looked for alternative ways of interpreting assumptions they had regarding the fear of being the next victim of bullying as seen from the response of one of the participants described thus: "*I have a brother in this school and I also have friends that are boys and they don't bully anyone, so I don't think everybody is a bully so I am no longer scared of going to school*". (P7, excerpt from the cognitive restructuring worksheet, p.4).

From the remark of most participants, it could be observed that when the participants started thinking differently based on evidence and reality testing, their emotions and behaviour changed correspondingly. This suggested that the cognitive restructuring methods, such as decatastrophising and challenging automatic thoughts, that were taught using the dysfunctional thought worksheet, enhanced participants' ability to identify bias in thinking and promoted balanced thinking, thus, leading to a reduction in negative emotions and behaviour.

It also appears that the use of coping cards to note a negative thought as it pops up on one side and its adaptive response on the other side, made a positive impact in reducing negative emotions and behaviour associated with witnessing bullying in school. This is because this technique seemed to assist participants in uncovering alternative explanations that could be given to the meaning they attached to their experience of witnessing bullying.

This finding extended previous findings on the efficacy of using cognitive behavioural techniques in reducing negative emotions and behaviours attributed to witnessing

unpleasant events (Bernal et al., 2009; Butler et al., 2006; ; Hwang, 2009; Lohmann, 2014, as cited in-Albon & Schnelder, 2007; McMain et al., 2015; Nicolas et al., 2009). Tucker (2016) reported the experiences of counsellors who used cognitive behaviour techniques for adolescents who experienced or witnessed bullying in school. The finding of this study revealed that participating counsellors affirmed the efficacy of cognitive behavioural techniques in dealing with negative emotions and the behaviour of adolescents who witnessed or experienced bullying in school.

The findings of this present study also align with that of Berry and Hunt (2009), who developed an intervention to reduce anxiety symptoms in victims of bullying. The intervention comprises sessions where cognitive behavioural strategies are utilised. After participating in the intervention, participants of the study reported significant reductions in symptoms of anxiety. Furthermore, the findings of this study is in accordance with the report of Motevalli et al. (2013), who stated that applying cognitive restructuring techniques is effective in facilitating re-appraisal of negative thoughts linked with the expression of negative emotions such as anxiety, nervousness, restlessness and fear among school learners.

However, it is surprising that there is a contradiction in the finding of this study and that of Tshabalala (2008), who reported that cognitive strategies such as decatastrophising, Socratic questioning and re attribution did not have a significant effect on the reduction of negative emotions and behaviours connected with participants' catastrophic thoughts. Tshabalala (2008) further noted that one reason for the insignificant effect could be that the participants had difficulties in understanding the cognitive strategy principles that were taught in the intervention sessions.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In Chapter 5, I presented the findings as derived in the present study. I discussed the five main themes and sub-themes that I identified through inductive thematic analysis taking note of the inclusion and exclusion criteria. I made use of direct quotations by participants and extracts from my reflections as noted in the research journal to corroborate my findings.

This chapter equally explained the interview discussions that were conducted with regards to bystanders' experiences of school bullying before and after implementation of a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention. Following the transcription of the interviews with the participants, five broad themes emerged, namely: (a) Bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying (b) Contributions of self-debasing cognitive distortions to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying (c) Significance of cognitive restructuring techniques in modifying bystanders thinking patterns (d) The value of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying and (e) The impact of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention on modifying bystanders behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing. These five major themes and the emerging sub-themes described bystanders' experiences of school bullying in the present study.

In the next chapter, I provide the synopsis of my findings; I equally address both primary and secondary research questions guiding this study, followed by recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study was designed to qualitatively explore and describe 10 early adolescent experiences of school bullying as bystanders before and after a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention. Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews which were conducted before and after the intervention; excerpts from activities completed during intervention sessions and reflective research journal. In Chapter 5, I discussed the five major themes and the sub-themes from the interviews which I identified through inductive thematic analysis. I utilised verbatim quotations and extracts from the data to corroborate my findings.

In this chapter, my focus was to provide a synopsis of the findings, conclusion and recommendations. Firstly, I provide an answer to the secondary research questions, then move on to the main question. I compare and link the findings that I obtained in this study with other studies I discussed in the literature reviewed. From there, I highlighted studies in alignment with the findings of this study as well as studies that seem to differ from the findings of this study.

I make references to the two theoretical frameworks underpinning this study namely; cognitive theory and appraisal theory to serve as a link and overarching lenses through which the findings of this study could be analysed. Lastly, I discuss the potential contribution of this study to the body of knowledge. I examine the likely limitations of this study and then summarised this chapter with the discussion of possible recommendations for practise, training and further research based on the findings obtained. In the next session, I present an overview of the preceding chapters and thereafter I discussed the summary of findings.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF PRECEDING CHAPTER

Chapter 1 contained a discussion of the background and rationale of the study, the statement of purpose and the underlying theoretical perspectives. In this chapter, I emphasise that stressors, such as experiencing or witnessing bullying in school, may pose a threat to the subjective emotional wellbeing of bystanders (Midgett &

Doumas, 2019). Notwithstanding this, I share the conviction that an important factor in explaining the heterogeneity of behavioural and emotional responses of bystanders to witnessing bullying might be the ability to re-appraise the situation (Hofmann et al., 2012).

I subscribed to this assertion because I also believe that emotions and behaviour change in line with reappraisal or reinterpretation of events (Baghurst & Kelley, 2014). I based my argument on the principles of cognitive and appraisal theories which contend that the events an individual experiences or witnesses should not necessarily elicit negative emotional or behavioural reactions, but the appraisal or interpretation an individual attaches to such an event will determine the emotional or behavioural reactions (Ellis, 2009).

In addition, I discussed the research design and the methodological strategies used in the study, in terms of sampling strategy, data collection and documentation strategies used in the study as well as data analysis and the interpretation procedure which involves an inductive thematic analysis. I further elucidated the process to achieve the trustworthiness of the research and ethical consideration.

In chapter 2, I discussed an overview of bullying in school with a focus on bystanders. In addition, I described self-debasing cognitive distortions as an influencer of bystander thinking patterns. This is because it was proven that cognition influences one's interpretation of events. I aligned with the assumption that irrational thoughts precede most behavioural and emotional disorders.

In an attempt to further establish the aforementioned assumption that behavioural and emotional reactions to events is an outcome of a person's thinking patterns (Barriga et al., 2008; Joormann & D' Avanzato, 2010), I reviewed the role of self-debasing cognitive distortion in behavioural and emotional responses to events. I was able to establish from the findings of these researches that thinking patterns play pivotal roles in behavioural and emotional responses to events. In line with this, I further described cognitive restructuring as a tool of the cognitive behavioural therapy used to facilitate the understanding of the process of altering behavioural and emotional responses to events. I closed the second chapter with a review of a

theoretical framework as well as a conceptual framework for understanding bystanders' reactions to witnessing bullying.

In chapter 3, I reviewed some of the principles from cognitive theory and appraisal theory that informed the design and implementation of the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention used for bystanders in this study. I started by providing readers with the background on how CBT could possibly change the thinking patterns of bystanders of school bullying. I advanced my argument that bystanders could learn to replace negative thinking patterns with rational thoughts that could lead to more desirable behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying.

I looked into the reciprocal relationship between thought-emotion-behaviour as propounded by Ellis (1989). I also examined the teaching-learning principles and behaviour modification. I discussed an overview of the contents and activities in the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention designed for this study. I provided a description of the activities completed by participants in all 11 sessions of SDCDRI. The cognitive behavioural strategies described in Chapter 2 were utilised in the sessions of the intervention to enhance modification of negative or self-defeating thoughts and to construct realistic and balanced thoughts.

In Chapter 4, I explored the research approach, design and methodology as well as paradigmatic lenses suitable for this study. I adopted a qualitative research approach to answer the research questions of this study. My research study was situated in an interpretivism paradigm. I further justified the adoption of an interpretivism paradigm as the most suitable for this study. I shared the conviction that the interpretivism paradigm is embedded in the notion that reality is contained in the meaning people attached to their experiences.

I identified qualitative descriptive-exploratory design as the most suitable research design to use. I equally described purposive sampling as the technique to select participants for this study. This chapter further describe the main data collection method which is individual semi-structured interviews and complementary data collecting methods such as excerpts from activities completed during intervention sessions and reflective research journal. Towards the concluding part of this chapter,

I discussed the steps taken to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research process. I next addressed the ethical considerations in line with the ethics and research guidelines provided by the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. I equally provided a description of my role as a researcher in the study.

In chapter 5, I presented a detailed discussion of the research findings as derived in the present study. I further explained the interview discussions that were conducted with the participants. Along this line, I discussed the five main themes and sub-themes that I identified through inductive thematic namely: (a) Bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying (b) Contributions of self-debasing cognitive distortions to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying (c) Significance of cognitive restructuring techniques in modifying bystanders thinking patterns and (d) The value of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying (e) The impact of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention on modifying bystanders behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing traumatic events..

6.3 ADDRESSING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe early adolescent experiences of school bullying as bystanders before and after a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention. Bystanders' experiences in this context include bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying and the patterns of thoughts that precede such reactions. The five themes and the sub-emes derived from data analysis assisted in revealing answers to primary and secondary research questions.

This section described how the themes derived in Chapter 5 were used to answer the research questions presented in Chapter 1. Figure 6.1 below outline the main themes that emerged from the analysis of the data collected and the corresponding research questions that these themes answered.

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
Bystanders' emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying; Literature review from chapter 2	Contributions of self-debasing cognitive distortions to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying; Literature review from chapter 2	Significance of cognitive restructuring techniques in modifying bystanders' thinking patterns; Literature review from chapter 2	The value of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying; Description of activities in the SDCDRI from chapter 3	Impact of self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention on bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying; Findings from chapter 5

Answer secondary research question 1	**Answer secondary research question 2**	**Answer secondary research question 3**	**Answer secondary research question 4**	**Answer secondary research question 5**
What are bystanders' emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying?	How can self-debasing cognitive distortions contribute to bystanders behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?	How can cognitive restructuring as a cognitive behavioural therapy technique possibly change bystanders thinking patterns?	How may the compilation of a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention assist to capture bystanders' experiences of school bullying?	How can self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring possibly change bystanders behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?

Answer primary research question

How do early adolescents experience school bullying as bystanders following a self debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention?

Figure 6-1: Outline of research themes and related research questions

6.3.1 Secondary research question 1: What are bystanders' emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying?

The first theme of this study (see Section 5.3.1) provided answers to this question. From the findings of this study as derived from the response of the participants, it became clear that bystanders' reactions to witnessing bullying could be summarised as a) Willingness to intervene b) Self-blame and feeling guilt for not being able to intervene c) Difficulties in concentration due to psychological re-victimisation d) Expressed negative emotions and behaviours e) Insecure feelings f) School phobia.

As reviewed from literature and reported in Chapter 2, there were reports from previous studies regarding bystanders' sympathetic reactions to witnessing bullying (Cappadocia et al., 2012; Nickerson & Taylor, 2014; Thornberg et al., 2012). The literature indicated that bystanders had a high level of sympathy for the victims of bullying (Thornberg et al., 2012). I also discovered from findings of previous the studies reviewed that bystanders showed a willingness to defend the victim, even if they did not like the victim, but just because they felt bad about the bullying (Cappadocia et al., 2012).

Bystanders in this study did not differ in the attitudes of showing sympathy towards the victims of bullying. Participants demonstrated their willingness and intention to intervene on behalf of the victims in reaction to witnessing bullying. However, despite the fact that they felt uncomfortable witnessing bullying and wish they could stop the bullying action, they were not able to intervene, citing thoughts of fear of being the next victim as the reason for their inaction.

Just as pointed out in the literature review, the bystanders in this study experienced feelings of guilt and self-blame. In many cases, participants expressed disappointment at themselves for not being able to stand up for the victims. Although many of the participants acknowledged that there was a power imbalance as a result of the bullies' strength or size, they took excess responsibility by heaping blame on themselves for not being able to intervene.

Due to the self-inflicted blame coupled with the fear of becoming the next victim, bystanders in this study reacted by becoming anxious, stressed and worried, which culminated into difficulties in concentration in academic tasks for them. The reports

from the literature equally emphasised that bystanders could experience difficulties in paying attention in class due to psychological re-victimisation (Rivers et al., 2009).

Bystanders in this study reported that the thoughts and fear of being the next victim produced some negative emotions and behaviour such as sadness, anxiety, shame, numbing, mood fluctuations, anger, intrusive thoughts, emotional exhaustion, disbelief, upset, mood fluctuations, shock, outburst, worry and withdrawal. Midgett and Doumas (2019), as well as Ttofi and Farington (2011), asserted that these negative emotions and behaviours could affect bystanders' emotional and psychological well-being and in addition, could influence bystanders' perception of school safety negatively. Dinkes et al. (2009) noted that perception of school as a hostile environment could contribute to learners avoiding and skipping school. Varjas et al. (2009) added that bystanders who are emotionally or physically troubled as a result of worries and fear of becoming a direct victim of bullying might not be in a good state of mind to learn optimally.

As participants entertained a fear that they would become the next victim of bullying in school, their attitude for school deteriorated drastically. It became clear that the sense of fear could make bystanders develop school phobia which could, in turn, impede school attendance. This reaction aligns with and affirms the tenet of the cognitive and appraisal theories which are the theoretical framework underpinning this study. The core assumption of these theories is that individual thoughts and feelings play an important and fundamental role in the development and maintenance of the emotional and behavioural responses to events. In line with this, the thoughts and fear of becoming the next victim caused bystanders in this study to experience negative emotions.

6.3.2   Secondary research question 2: How can self-debasing cognitive distortions contribute to bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?

The literature described self-debasing cognitive distortion as unhelpful thoughts that can directly or indirectly undermine a person and in effect elicit or reinforce negative behavioural and emotional responses to events (Barriga, Hawkins, & Camelia 2008). The report from the literature as described in Chapter 2 further made it clear that self-debasing cognitive distortion can contribute to worries about negative thoughts

and emotions that do not actually correspond to reality and can create a system of ill-adapted perceptions that act as mechanisms for interpreting and understanding events (Barriga & Morrison, 2010).

There is an insight from the literature regarding the four types of self-debasing cognitive distortions that might trigger bystanders' negative emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying. These include personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction. According to Wendland (2004), personalisation is a self-debasing thinking pattern which occurs when a person(s) inappropriately attribute excess responsibility to themselves and hold themselves responsible for causing unfortunate events in the absence of objective evidence. A review of literature further indicated that research reports such as Beck (2011) as well as Dobson and Dobson (2016) noted that SDCD such as personalisation is a form of self-reproach and victims who are prone to self-blame have been reported to be vulnerable to emotional and behavioural problems.

To buttress the reports that were reviewed from the literature in answering the second research question, the second theme (see Section 5.3.2) also offered an answer to this question. The responses of participants demonstrated that the thoughts associated with negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying stemmed from self-debasing cognitive distortions and errors in thinking, which included personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction. In other words, it could be affirmed that self-debasing cognitive distortions influenced bystanders' thinking patterns, which in turn, informed their negative emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying. This is because the findings indicated that participants' thoughts patterns triggered a variety of negative reactions.

For instance, personalisation evoked self-blame and feelings of guilt. As noted earlier, bystanders in this study were sympathetic towards the victims of bullying but could not intervene because of fear of becoming the next victim. As a result, they thought they should hold themselves responsible for the victimisation of their peers even when there was no objective evidence to do so. Therefore, they subjected themselves to self-blame and feelings of guilt.

In addition, catastrophising also amplified anxiety and fear among participants in this study. I found from the literature that I reviewed in Chapter 2 that Kottler & Shepard (2008) refer to catastrophising as a form of self-debasing cognitive distortion that amplifies anxiety and thus increases the intensity of negative emotional and behavioural responses of a victim.

Bystanders in this study engaged in irrational thoughts that made them always to expect that they might become the next target of bullying without considering that the probability of a worst-case scenario eventuating was probably very low. Before the intervention, the bystanders in this study based their emotional and behavioural reactions on catastrophic misinterpretation and not on reality. Thereby, they caused the severity of negative emotions such as anxiety and fear that they experienced to intensify. Automatically imagining and anticipating direct future victimisation set the stage for a greater likelihood of anxiety, distress, and fear among the participants. Muris and Field (2008) asserted that catastrophising plays a precise role in the aetiology and maintenance of childhood anxiety disorders.

Over-generalisation induced and exacerbated bystanders' negative perception of school safety. Bernard (2009) described over-generalisation as negative thinking patterns that cause an individual to exaggerate or make unjustified generalisations of an event or situations. Rivers and Noret (2010) had earlier observed that the level of over-generalised thinking patterns was high among bystanders of school bullying. Bystanders in this study were no exceptions to this observation.

Participants in this study made unjustified generalisations that were characterised with unfounded assumptions and beliefs. As bystanders arbitrarily continued to use quantifiers of overgeneralised assumptions such as "always", "never", the level of their negative perception of school safety was triggered. The overarching conclusion reached by participants about being vulnerable to direct victimisation, impressed on their mind that the school environment was not safe, thereby causing them to dislike going to school.

Lastly, selective abstraction led to indirect victimisation for bystanders. A close study of the literature revealed that Donely (2014) asserted that the tendency to focus on the negative details of an event while making an evaluation of that event could feed

negative emotions. The bystanders in this study experienced negative symptoms that were similar to that which were reported by victims of bullying themselves in other studies. This is because they focussed on the experience of one or two incidences of bullying they witnessed and erroneously magnified the possibilities of being a next victim of bullying. After the bullying incident was over, the intrusive thoughts, flashbacks and memories of the bullying they witnessed caused the participants to identify with the pain and suffering of the victim which led to co-victimisation for the participants.

According to the cognitive and appraisal theories, which serve as the theoretical framework for this study, developing negative behavioural and emotional responses to situations results from the way an individual perceives, interprets and appraises an event. Reflecting on the insight gained from the cognitive and appraisal theories, it appears that the working assumptions presented in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.4) were correct. These assumed that cognition is a determinant factor in individual emotional and behavioural reactions to events and self-debasing cognitive distortions may influence bystanders' behavioural and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying. This has been in the findings of this study. Self-debasing cognitive distortion influences participants' interpretation and appraisal of events and increases the likelihood of negative emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying.

6.3.3 Secondary research question 3: How can cognitive restructuring as a cognitive behavioural therapy technique possibly change bystanders' thinking patterns?

In Chapter 2, I explained how cognitive behavioural therapy adopts both cognitive and behavioural strategies to effect change in thinking patterns (Clark, 2014). The cognitive components of CBT aim to teach participants to use evidence to figure out whether a thought is accurate or distorted while the behavioural component of CBT aims to decrease maladaptive behaviour by implementing behavioural practices to facilitate adaptive behaviour (Arch & Craske, 2009).

As indicated in the literature, cognitive restructuring is a technique used in cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) to facilitate change in irrational thinking patterns and to encourage balanced thinking through a process of reappraisal (Nebolsine, 2012;

Covin et al., 2011). In addition, cognitive restructuring as a strategy used in CBT is aimed at identifying and modifying irrational thoughts and assumptions that underlie negative thinking patterns to enhance change in emotion and behaviour (Beck, 2011).

For instance, Clark (2014) identified the process involved in using cognitive restructuring to identify, modify and re-appraise negative thought patterns. Firstly, Clark (2014) noted that it is important to establish a therapeutic connection between the therapist and the person(s) receiving the treatment by sharing technical and experiential information to describe, clarify and help resolve any presenting issues.

It is in line with this and with a view to achieving the goal of cognitive restructuring that the participants were warmly welcomed at the beginning of each session of the intervention. The cordial relationship was established by getting to know one another and in introducing the intervention and its objectives to the participants. Participants were further encouraged to share some of the symptoms of negative emotions they had recently experienced as a result of witnessing bullying in school. Collaborative empiricism, which is one of the core elements of cognitive restructuring, enabled participants in this study to take the leading role in pointing out errors in their thinking pattern.

According to, Craig et al. (2012), another core element of cognitive restructuring that could facilitate change in thinking patterns is a verbal intervention. Verbal intervention, as described in Chapter 2 of this study, involves gathering evidence for or against thoughts, identifying the cognitive error and finding alternative explanations to the thoughts. Participants in this study were made to complete activities that required them to question their thoughts, gather evidence in support of or against the thoughts and make judgements on the validity of the thoughts based on realistic interpretations. This process enabled participants to dispute irrational beliefs and generates alternative interpretations of their experiences.

In Chapter 2 and 3, I reviewed some certain common strategies used in achieving the reappraisal and substitution of maladaptive thoughts. For instance, Beck (2011) reported that using challenging automatic thoughts as a cognitive restructuring technique encourages the participants to note negative thoughts with a view to

challenging the validity of their cognition. Beck (2011) further noted that the decatastrophising technique, also referred to as the "what if" technique, enables participants to see alternative perspectives to catastrophic thoughts with the view to changing the pattern of thoughts and reducing fear. Lastly, Beck (2011) asserted that the use of guided discovery based on Socratic questioning has the potential to enable participants to identify errors in their thinking pattern for them to reappraise the situation or event and make their own discoveries.

To this end, the SDCDR intervention in this study incorporated cognitive restructuring techniques such as challenging automatic thoughts; decatastrophising and guided discovery, with a view of enabling bystanders to identify and restructure negative or faulty thinking patterns. The cognitive restructuring techniques, accordingly, help bystanders in this study to challenge the truthfulness of their negative thinking patterns, thereby leading to more rational ways of processing information and more realistic thinking.

Challenging automatic thoughts enabled participants in this study to search for evidence in favour or against their thoughts, to recognise, challenge, and reappraise negative and unhelpful thoughts and feelings related to their experiences. Following participation in the intervention sessions, it appears that participants were able to weigh the evidence that aligns with their thoughts and the evidence that is not in support of their automatic thoughts to challenge and establish the validity and reality of their thinking patterns, thereby leading to a change in their thinking patterns.

The decatastrophising technique made participants in this study conscious of an exaggerated view of reality and a catastrophic misinterpretation of the event, which led to a reduction in the level of catastrophic thinking. Furthermore, decatastrophising techniques assisted the participants in discovering alternative perspectives on the negative thoughts that made them anticipate more difficulties and become more fearful after witnessing the bullying. Doing so erased fear and made the participants realise that a worst-case scenario could be managed.

Guided discovery techniques enabled the participants in this study to identify and reappraise the negative thinking pattern by exploring alternative ways of attaching meaning to situations, which assisted them in forming new discoveries. Participants

233

made use of Socratic questioning to probe their negative thoughts to make their own conclusion about the validity and accuracy of their thoughts. Therefore, the use of guided discovery as a cognitive restructuring tool decreased bystanders' negative thinking pattern and set the stage for their behavioural change.

An insight gained from the theoretical framework underpinning this study is that the concept of cognitive restructuring is rooted in both cognitive and appraisal theory, which holds that it is one's interpretation of an event or situation and not the event itself that determines one's emotional and behavioural responses to such events (Clark & Ehlers, 2004). This informed the idea to guide participants to realise the errors and irrationality that might be present in their thinking patterns whilst reacting to the bullying they witnessed with a view to modifying their emotional and behavioural responses.

6.3.4 Secondary question 4: How may the compilation of a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention assist in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying?

In Chapter 3, I provided a template of how the compilation of a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention could assist in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying. The activities that were done in the intervention sessions by participants were designed to reflect the interconnection among thoughts-emotions and behaviour. These activities were given to participants to capture how their thoughts affect their emotions which in turn affect their behaviour.

To fully understand how the compilation of SDCDRI assisted in capturing bystanders' experiences of school bullying, it is important to highlight some of these activities completed by participants in the intervention sessions. The first task required participants to draw a picture that depicts their emotions when they witness bullying. The rationale for introducing a non-verbal means such as a visual image to capture bystanders' responses to witnessing bullying is that verbal communication has been the primary means of documenting bystanders' experiences of school bullying in the literature (Davies et al., 2007).

The use of visual images in capturing human experiences in social science research is gaining acceptance as asserted by Davies et al. (2007). The reports from a few

studies in the literature that used visual images to document participants' narratives of traumatic experiences confirmed the richness of data generated by visual images (Bagnoli 2009; Levie & Lentz, 2009).

The findings from Chapter 5 of this study revealed that visual images enhanced better representation of participants' thoughts and emotions. Participants demonstrated feelings and emotions that usually remain unvoiced with the use of pictures. The collation of all the pictures drawn by participants was helpful in generating themes that holistically define bystanders' emotional and behavioural responses to witnessing bullying.

Furthermore, the activities performed by participants during the sessions of SDCDRI reinforced verbal quotations from the interviews to fully capture bystanders' experiences of school bullying. The worksheets such as the ABCD worksheet, dysfunctional thought record and cognitive restructuring worksheet used in completing the activities in the SDCDRI were useful in eliciting how participants think, feel and react to witnessing bullying.

6.3.5 Secondary question 5: How can self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring possibly change bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the influence of distorted thoughts on emotional and behavioural responses to events. I described how faulty thinking might be the basis or mechanism for generating cognitive distortion which may in-turn trigger negative emotions and behavioural responses to events. The literature further presented a road map to understanding how cognitive distortion develops and its role in activating a wide range of emotions and behaviour in response to events. According to Ward et al. (2006), cognitive distortion develops as a result of defect or bias in information processing by the cognitive system, consequently informing individual responses to events. The literature also made it clear that identifying cognitive distortions is crucial to changing behavioural and emotional responses to events.

In alignment with the report from literature regarding the role and influence of cognitive distortions on behavioural and emotional responses to events, I stated in Chapter 1 that the working assumption (see Section 1.4) of this study is that

bystanders' thinking patterns are assumed to be a determinant factor of the emotions and behaviours they express in reactions to witnessing bullying. I equally assumed that guiding them to realise the errors and irrationality in their thinking patterns (if any) may modify bystanders' thought patterns and subsequently reduce negative emotional and behavioural responses associated with witnessing bullying in school. The findings of this study upheld my assumptions.

Following participation in the SDCDRI, participants were able to figure out bias in their thinking patterns. This led to a reduction of error in their thinking patterns. The participants realised that irrationality in their thinking pattern could intensify and fuel negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. The participants used the cognitive restructuring techniques such as challenging automatic thoughts, decatastrophising and guided discovery to question the reality of their automatic thoughts and gather evidence to contradict irrationalities in their thinking patterns. Hence, they looked for evidence in support for or against their beliefs while reacting to the bullying they witnessed. This facilitated an appropriate interpretation of events.

The SDCDRI equipped participants to exert control on their emotions and behaviours. This led to a reversal of the negative emotions and behaviours they earlier expressed in reaction to witnessing the bullying. The various tasks and activities given to participants using worksheets such as the cognitive restructuring worksheet and homework assignments enabled them to role-play new adaptive behaviour that was described at the intervention sessions.

The participants were able to replace thoughts that were not necessarily valid or accurate with realistic thinking, thereby leading to an observable reduction in negative emotions and behaviour associated with witnessing bullying in school. It appeared that commitment and completion of the homework assignment and exercises facilitated positive results in reducing negative emotions and behaviours associated with witnessing bullying in school (see figure 3.1).

The insights gained from the teaching learning principles derived from both cognitive and appraisal theories in relation to emotional and behavioural modification is that emotional and behavioural responses to events is a learning product and that

236

whatever is learnt is an outcome of past conditioning and it can be unlearned through cognitive restructuring (James et al., 2007). In other words, irrational thoughts and maladaptive behaviour are learned; therefore, it can be modified and unlearned

6.4   PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION: How do early adolescents experience school bullying as bystanders following a self debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention?

In Chapter 2, I noted that previous research findings on bystanders of bullying revealed that mere knowledge of or witnessing of bullying could elicit a variety of responses depending on how bystanders perceive or interpret the bullying they witness. Similar to the findings of the previous studies, the findings of this study, as reported in Chapter 5, revealed that the interpretation and appraisal of the situation influence participants' responses to witnessing bullying.

For instance, before learning how to ascertain the validity and reality of thoughts based on evidence, bystanders in this study exhibited some reactions to witnessing bullying which include feelings of guilt and self-blame. As a result of their willingness but an inability to intervene on behalf of the victim during the bullying episode, the bystanders in this study experience feeling of guilt and self-blame. The participants equally expressed disappointment at themselves for not being able to stand up for the victims. Despite the fact that many of the participants acknowledged that the power imbalance, as a result of the bullies' strength or size, might have accounted for their inability to defend the victims, they took excess responsibility for not being able to intervene.

The thoughts and fear of becoming the next victim made bystanders in this study react with negative emotions and behaviour such as sadness, anxiety, shame, mumbling, mood fluctuations, anger, intrusive thoughts, emotional exhaustion, disbelief, upset, mood fluctuations, shock, outburst, worry and withdrawal. These negative emotions and behaviours culminated in difficulties in concentration in academic tasks for the participants. The fear of becoming the next victims of bullying negatively influenced participants' perception of school safety.

The negative perception of school safety impeded their eagerness to attend school because they perceived school as a hostile environment and the repercussion of this is that their attitude towards school deteriorated drastically. Evidence suggested that the negative emotions and behaviours that the participants expressed in reactions to witnessing bullying could have stemmed from self-debasing cognitive distortions and errors in thinking patterns which included personalisation, catastrophising, over-generalisation and selective abstraction.

Following participation in the SDCDRI, where participants learnt to challenge the validity and reality of their thoughts with a view to counter any kind of irrationalities in the way they think while reacting to events, participants' experiences of school bullying as bystanders changed significantly as revealed in Chapter 5 of this study. Firstly, participants were able to apply the cognitive restructuring techniques to challenge and establish the validity and reality of their thoughts, thereby leading to a re-appraisal and rooting out bias in their thinking patterns. As a result of this, the findings from the post-intervention interviews indicated that participants experienced a reduction in feelings of insecurity.

The CBT strategies that were described in Chapter 3 and which participants learnt in the therapy sessions also enabled them to search for evidence in favour of or against their thoughts with a view of recognising, challenging and reappraising the truthfulness of the negative and unhelpful thoughts related to their experiences. Consequently, participants reported a reduction in the feelings of self-blame over situations beyond their influence.

As a follow-up, when participants corrected faulty thinking patterns, they experienced a decrease in the negative emotions and behaviours that were earlier expressed in reaction to witnessing bullying. This is because participants were able to replace thoughts that were not necessary, valid or accurate with realistic thinking. For instance, findings from this chapter showed that participants stopped engaging in unnecessary worries when they realised that the likelihood of a worst-case scenario happening could be low.

In a nutshell, participants were able to examine the thoughts that preceded and maintained the onset of negative emotional and behavioural reactions in search of

evidence for or against these thoughts while reacting to the bullying incident they witnessed. Therefore, the self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention modified bystanders' experiences of school bullying by enabling them to refute distortions in their thinking patterns which led to a reduction in negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying.

6.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study adds to the body of knowledge in two dimensions namely, contribution to theory and contribution to practice as discussed below

6.5.1 Theoretical contribution

This study explored and described bystanders' experiences of school bullying before and after participating in a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention. The findings of this study provided an insight into how bystanders' thinking patterns could be a determinant factor in emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. There was theoretical support for the significant influence that individual cognition has in the onset and maintenance of behavioural and emotional reactions to victimisation (Clark & Beck, 2010; Covin, et al., 2011), though most available studies were based on international literature. Even if proven to be empirically true, the feasibility and adaptability of these findings being applicable within different environments and contexts need to be ascertained.

There appears to be a research gap on a proactive cognitive strategy to mitigate or interrupt the continuity of negative emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying in schools taking into consideration the uniqueness of South African education context. To the best of my knowledge, there seems to be little research in South Africa that considers the focus of this present study. It was, therefore, necessary for me to ascertain whether the efficacy of cognitive approaches in changing the thinking patterns and reducing or preventing negative behavioural and emotional and behavioural reactions to events, could be applicable to culturally diverse samples, specifically, with learners in the age group bracket of 11 to 13 years.

Hence, the findings of this study provide support for cognitive restructuring as an effective cognitive and behavioural approach to modifying and effecting positive change in bystanders' self-debasing cognitive distortions. The study was able to substantiate the efficacy of cognitive restructuring in facilitating re-appraisal of negative thoughts, which has not been tested before among bystanders of school bullying, as well as reducing negative behaviours and emotions associated with such thoughts.

The study also contributes to the literature on bullying bystanders. The bystander is relatively under-researched in bullying literature (Salmivali, 2014). This is because most studies on bullying focus primarily on bullies or the direct victims of bullying. Yet, bystanders or witnesses of bullying are often equally affected by the bullying incidents but get neglected (American Psychological Association, 2009; Carney, 2008; Farrington et al., 2017).

Consequently, the study afforded bystanders the opportunity to share and voice their experiences and reactions to witnessing bullying in school. In addition, this study was the first to use unconventional means such as visual images and activities completed in an intervention session to capture bystanders' experiences of school bullying. Conventional means such as verbal communication has been the predominant means of documenting bystanders' experiences of school bullying in literature. Therefore, this study also provided an opportunity for bystanders to express feelings and emotions that usually remain unvoiced with the use of pictures.

I believe that the qualitative research approach used in this study gave bystanders the chance to give in-depth descriptions of their experiences of school bullying, which may have been limited if the quantitative approach had been used as evidenced in most studies with a quantitative research approach.

6.5.2 Practical contribution

In particular, the findings of the study might be helpful for school counsellors and educational psychologists to fully comprehend the nature and role of self-debasing cognitive distortions in the onset and maintenance of negative emotional and behavioural responses while designing strategies to help victims of bullying and bystanders in school. Furthermore, the findings of this study could provide school

counsellors and educational psychologists with insight on possible cognitive strategies that could be applied in designing treatment and interventions for victims of school bullying, especially the bystanders.

In addition, the findings of this study might bring bystanders to the awareness of the relationship among their thoughts, feelings and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying in school. This awareness may reveal the link between irrationality in their thought patterns and their reactions to witnessing bullying. I intend to disseminate the findings of my study and to also provide it as feedback to bystanders of school bullying and other readers by publishing the findings in national and international scientific journals. Lastly I intend to share my findings with the participating school.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the possible sources of limitations of this study was the relatively few participants used in the study. Therefore, the findings may not be widely generaliseable. However, the aim of this research was not to generalise the findings but to explore and describe bystanders' unique experiences and responses to observing bullying in school. Moreover, the use of small number of participants provided me with the opportunity to do in-depth research of the phenomenon under study as there was enough time to spend on interviewing and observing each participant.

My inability to conduct a focus group interview might have denied me the opportunity of the dynamics of interaction within the focus group context such as consensus and disagreement. Nieuwenhuis (2010) believes that the rationale for using a focus group interview as a method of data collection is based on the assumption that the interactions in the group might widen the range of responses and also release inhibitions that may otherwise demotivate participants from giving information. On the other hand, I concur with Seabi (2013) that some participants may perceive group dynamics as threatening and, as a result, may be threatened to express their views and opinions freely. Hence, the use of an individual semi-structured interview so that participants may independently and freely discuss their diverse views about their experiences in a non-threatening atmosphere.

Another challenge I encountered in the course of this research is the difficulty in getting parental consent to allow participants to take part in the study. This could be because the parents were afraid that the identity of their children might be revealed considering the sensitive nature of bullying in school or that the safety of their children could be compromised. Most of the parents cited a recent rape case that happened in the school premises involving two Grade 7 learners as the reason for their reluctance. However, I was able to overcome this challenge and get a small number of participants by assuring the participants that their personal information would remain confidential and assuring the parent that adequate security will be provided for the participants during the period of data collection.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, I make recommendations for best practices and further research based on the findings of my study.

6.7.1 Recommendations for practice

It was revealed from the findings of this study that a negative thinking pattern predisposes bystanders to negative behavioural and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying. I, therefore, recommend that school counsellors and educational psychologists should provide adequate support to victims of bullying by equipping them with cognitive restructuring skills to root out the source of bias in their thought patterns. In line with this, school counsellors should be trained in the use of cognitive restructuring techniques such as challenging automatic thoughts, decatastrophising and guided discovery needed to refute distortions in negative thought patterns.

The rudiments of cognitive restructuring skills should be incorporated into the curriculum of teacher training programs and in the career-long professional learning programs for existing teachers. This will enable teachers to possess elementary knowledge of cognitive restructuring to support learners who are victims of bullying in their care. This is necessary as most primary schools do not have an educational psychologist readily available. In addition, government and the Department of Basic Education should organise seminars and workshops for in-service teachers on how to plan an intervention for victims of bullying based on the principles of cognitive behaviour therapy using cognitive restructuring techniques. Cognitive restructuring

techniques such as challenging automatic thought, decatastrophising and guided discovery that proved to be effective from the findings of this study should be included in similar interventions for victims of bullying.

6.7.2 Recommendations for further research

- Based on the limitations of this study (see Section 6.7), I recommend that future research studies should expand the scope of this study by increasing the sample size and geographical coverage of this study.

- Since findings of this study revealed the efficacy of cognitive restructuring in modifying self-debasing cognitive distortions of bullying bystanders after witnessing bullying, there is a need for further study to equally evaluate the efficacy of a self-serving cognitive distortion restructuring intervention on reducing bullying behaviour in school. Bullying is anti-social behaviour and continuous effort should be made at reducing bullying in the school environment.

- I also recommend that further study should explore the significance of other cognitive restructuring techniques such as putting thoughts on trial, redefining, decentring and cognitive imagery in modifying thinking patterns.

6.8 FINAL SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe early adolescent experiences of school bullying as bystanders before and after a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention. Based on the findings of this study, I made use of figure 6.2 below to depict a schematic synthesis of bystanders' experiences of school bullying before and after a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention.

Events

Witnessing bullying

Self-debasing cognitive distortions (SDCD)
Personalisation
Catastrophising
Overgeneralisation
Selective abstraction

- ❖ Personalisation evoked self-blame and feelings of guilt
- ❖ Catastrophising amplified anxiety and fear
- ❖ Over generalisation induced and exacerbated negative perception of school safety
- ❖ Selective abstraction led to indirect co-victimisation

- ❖ Experienced self-blame and feeling guilt for not being able to defend victims
- ❖ Experienced difficulty in concentration due to psychological re-victimisation
- ❖ Experienced insecure feelings
- ❖ Experienced school phobia
- ❖ Experienced negative emotions and behaviours such as anger, panic, shock, sadness, worry, restlessness, disbelief, numbling, anxiety, fear

COGNITION

Emotion

Behaviour

Sessions of the SDCDRI

- ❖ Identifying common self-debasing cognitive distortions.
- ❖ Identifying negative and positive thoughts patterns
- ❖ Learning to refute irrational thought patterns
- ❖ Learning to make less thinking errors
- ❖ Cognitive reappraisal

Events

Appraisal

Behavioural and emotional reactions

Outcome of the design and implementation of the SDCDRI to capture bystanders experiences of school bullying

- ❖ Experienced less errors in thinking pattern
- ❖ Experienced appropriate interpretation of events
- ❖ Experienced reduction in negative behavioural and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying

Figure 6-2: Schematic representation of bystanders' experience of school bullying before and after a SDCDRI

The findings of this study from the pre-intervention phase revealed that distorted thoughts could trigger bystanders' negative behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. Consequently, bystanders in this study experienced self-blame

and feeling of guilt as a result of personalisation, experienced psychological re-victimisation as a result of selective abstraction which led to difficulty in concentration, experienced insecure feelings and school phobia as a result of overgeneralisation which induced and exacerbated negative perception of school safety. In adition, bystanders experienced negative emotions and behaviours such as anger, panic, shock, sadness, worry, restlessness, disbelief, numbling, anxiety and fear as a result of catastrophising which amplifies negative emotions and behaviours. This informed the design and implementation of a self-debasing cognitive distortions restructuring intervention which assisted me to capture bystanders experiences. The SDCDRI was designed based on assumptions from the principles of cognitive and appraisal theories which contend that the events of an individual experience or witness should not necessarily elicit negative emotional or behavioural reactions, but instead they are triggered by the appraisal or interpretation an individual attaches to such an event.

The findings of this study from the post-intervention phase indicated the significant effect of the SDCDRI on modifying bystanders' behavioural and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying. By applying the techniques of cognitive restructuring to challenge the validity and reality of their thought patterns, bystanders were able to exert control on their emotions and behaviour, thereby leading to changes in their experiences of school bullying as bystanders following participation in the SDCDRI. Firstly, the bystanders experienced less error in thinking pattern. Secondly, they experienced appropriate interpretation of events and lastly they experienced reduction in negative behavioural and emotional reactions to witnessing bullying.

I anticipate that the findings of this study will bring bystanders to the awareness of the reciprocal relationship between thoughts, feelings and emotional responses to witnessing bullying. As I reflect on the findings of this study, I refer to the words of Ellis (2003, p. 34): "*Emotions and behaviours significantly influence and affect thinking, just as thinking influences emotions and behaviours*". These words made me conclude that individuals are directly responsible for generating their own emotions. Therefore, it is possible for one to change the emotional and behavioural responses to events by changing the appraisal and interpretation one attaches to that event.

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APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix A: Interview schedule

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Pre intervention interview questions

1. Could you please tell me about yourself, your age and your class?
2. What is your understanding of bullying?
3. Have you witnessed bullying in your school?
4. Describe the bullying incidence that you witnessed
5. How frequent do you witness bullying in this school?
6. Do you sometimes wish you could fight the learners that bully or stand up for the victims
7. How do you feel when you witness bullying and you couldn't help the victim.
8. Do you feel guilt or blame yourself or do you feel happy when you witness bullying and you are not able to intervene.
9. Do you feel scared to defend the victim of bullying……..why
10. How does witnessing bullying affect your mood especially when you remember the bullying you witnessed?
11. How does witnessing bullying affect your likeness for school?
12. Are you always afraid or scared that you could also become a victim when you remember the bullying you witnessed?
13. How do you feel when you are alone, or you walk alone to school or going back home
14. When you witnessed bullying, do you feel angry because of what you witnessed?
15. How does witnessing bullying affect your concentration in class?
16. Do you get carried away in class when you remember the bullying you witnessed?
17. How does witnessing bullying in school affect your confidence?
18. How does witnessing bullying affect your sleeps at night……do you experience nightmares or bad dreams sometimes?
19. How does witnessing bullying affect your happiness in school?
20. How does witnessing bullying affect your trust for people?
21. How do you feel when you see some boys or girls that bully in school?
22. How do you feel about your safety in school after you witness bullying?

23. How do you feel about going to school every morning?

24. Do you sometimes dislike school or get scared of going to school because of the bullying you witnessed

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Post intervention interview questions

1. Hello. So let me start again by asking you to please tell me your name and your class and a little bit about the sessions.

2. How long have you been in this school?

3. I understand bullying is when somebody comes to me and to my brothers and they were holding knifes and they wanted to take action upon us. That is the bullying that I understand. Do you still witness bullying in this school?

4. In the first interview you said you feel sad and angry when you witness bullying and you wish you could intervene but because of one reason or the other you fail to intervene. Do you still feel the same? Do you now consider reason why you are not able to defend the victim before you make decision whether it is your fault or not

5. You also said in the first interview that you feel guilty and you do blame myself when you witness bullying and you wish you could have helped or called somebody but I couldn't so. Do you still feel the same even when you try your best to intervene or when you don't support the bullying? do you think you blame yourself for something you cant control

6. Do you report to the principal or teacher when you witness bullying?

7. You said earlier that witnessing bullying affect your mood and you get scared and your whole day gets spoil. Do you still have a bad mood when you witness bullying and you report to the principal and the principal punish the bully

8. Do you still feel sacred of going to school when you witness bullying and you tell your mum or aunt about it and your mum said to you that she will come to school to approach the bully to stop bullying others kids.

9. Do you now know how to be assertive? What is assertiveness? Did she teach you how to defend yourself if the bully comes to you?

10. Are you still get scared and feel like the same person that bully others can come and do the same thing to you. Now that you know how to defend yourself. Do you still feel scared

11. How do you feel when you are alone, maybe you are walking to school or you are going back home and you remember the bullying that you witnessed? Then a thought come to your mind that someone will hit you and because of that you start panicking. What other meaning can you attach to your thought?

12. You said to me in the first interview that witnessing bullying makes you to lose concentration in class. Do you still find it difficult to pay attention in class? Even now that you know that the principal and the teachers are there to protect you. And even yourself know how to defend yourself

13. You said in the first interview that witnessing bullying make you to lose confidence in yourself. What can you say about your confidence now that you know how to be assertive and now that you know that there are some people who will protect you from the bully.

14. Have you realised that the thought that use to come to your mind that you might be bully in school could just be a guess or an assumption.

15. How does witnessing bullying now affect your sleep now that you realise that the thought of being the next victim could just be an assumption

16. Do you still feel unhappy in school because of something that you think will happen to you not because of what happen you.

17. Has anyone been good to you in the school before?

18. You said witnessing bulling affect your trust for people. Do you still think everyone is bad and that you can't trust anyone even those who are good to you.

19. How do you feel now when you see one of the bullies coming towards you? Do you give it another meaning that maybe the bully is just going on his own think? And when you think like that do you still panic or get sacred

20. You said in the first interview that you don't think there are good people left in the school and because of that you don't feel safe in the school. How do you feel about your safety in school after you witness bullying and you know that there are still good people in the school?

21. How do you feel about going to school every morning after you witnessed bullying? When you have this negative thought that make you to be afraid of going to school, what do you say to yourself that make the fear to go

8. 2 Appendix B: GDE research approval letter

Appendix B

GDE research approval letter

GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department of Education

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	07 March 2018
Validity of Research Approval:	05February 2018 - 29 September 2018 2018/371
Name of Researcher:	Adewoye S.E
Address of Researcher:	33228 EXT 17 Kriel Street Mahube
	Mamelodi East
	Pretoria, 0002
Telephone Number:	074 553 5066
Email address:	adewoyesegunemmanuel@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Bystanders experiences of school bullying following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention
Type of qualification	PhD Educational Psychology
Number and type of schools:	One Primary School

Districts/HO	Tshwane West

__Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research__

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted. 13/03/2018
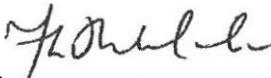
Making   education   a   societal   priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.govza

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District Head Office Officials in the project.

3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the

researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

4. A letter/document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.

5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.

6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.

7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.

8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.

9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.

10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.

11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.

12. On completion of the study, the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.

13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.

14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

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

Kind regards

Ms Faith Tshabalala

CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 13/03/2018

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

8 .3 Appendix C: Informed consent of the School Governing Body (SGB)

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

2 September 2019

Informed Consent of the School Governing Body (SGB)

The chairman

School governing body

Dear sir/madam

My name is Emmanuel Adewoye. I am a doctoral student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Educational Psychology. I am conducting a research project entitled: Bystanders experiences of a school bullying following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention, as part of my PhD degree. I am doing this research to find out, firstly, bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying at school. Secondly, to find out if there are changes or not in their feelings, emotions and behaviour in response to witnessing bullying after they participated in an intervention aimed at identifying and correcting negative thoughts. The assumption is that by revealing the link (if any), between negative thinking styles and emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying, bystanders may realise the mistakes in their thought patterns and develop realistic alternatives to these patterns thus reducing the likelihood of them experiencing symptoms of secondary trauma if they witness similar traumatic events in future.

I will conduct a semi-structured interview with participants who have obtained parental consent and who themselves are willing to participate in the research. The interview will be conducted at the school after school hours. The participants' responses will be kept private and confidential. I will also like to request your permission to use the data generated, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data set are intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data

for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy attached to this study will be binding on future research studies.

I do not foresee that the participants will experience any harm or risk as a result of participating in the study. However, I am aware that while they recount their experiences of the bullying incidents they witnessed, negative emotions may arise. If any participant experiences emotional distress as a result of narrating his or her story, I will engage an educational psychologist to facilitate a counselling and debriefing session at the end of the interview. If the need arises, individual counselling sessions will be arranged and discussed with the participants' parents or legal guardians.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary, and your participating learners will be free to withdraw from the research at any time or not answer questions that they do not feel comfortable answering. The names of your participating learners will remain confidential, that is to say, I will not mention the names of your participating learners or the name of the school when I write the findings of the study.

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me via email at 14212634@tuks.co.za or on my mobile on 0745535066. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Annelize du Plessis, at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Psychology, on +27124202498.

I hereby seek permission to interview participating learners at your school for the purpose of this study. I can assure you that the learners selected for this research project will be treated with the utmost care and respect. An educational psychologist has agreed to be on hand to attend to any learners who show signs of emotional distress during and after the data collection.

Your cooperation in assisting me with this project will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Name of researcher: Emmanuel Adewoye   Signature _____

Name of supervisor: Dr. Annelize du Plisses   Signature_____

If you agree to grant me permission to interview participating learners at your school for the purpose of this study, please complete the declaration below.

School Governing Body Consent Form

I give you my consent to approach learners in Grades 6 and 7 to participate in the research project: Bystanders experiences of school bullying following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention.

- I have read the project information statement explaining the purpose of the research project and understand that
- I may decide to withdraw the school's participation at any time without penalty;
- Learners in Grades 6 and 7 will be invited to participate and that permission will be sought   from them and also from their parents;
- Only learners who consent and whose parents consent will participate in the project;
- The learners' names will not be used, and individual learners will not be identifiable in any written reports on the study;
- The school will not be identifiable in any written reports on the study;
- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty;
- A report on the findings will be made available to the school;

_____   _____

Chairman   Signature

_____

Date

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

2 September 2019

Informed Consent of the School Principal

Dear Principal,

My name is Emmanuel Adewoye. I am a doctoral student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Educational Psychology. I am conducting a research project entitled: Bystanders experiences of a school bullying following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention, as part of my PhD degree. I am doing this research to find out, firstly, bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying at school. Secondly, to find out if there are changes or not in their feelings, emotions, and behaviour in response to witnessing bullying after they participated in an intervention aimed at identifying and correcting negative thoughts. The assumption is that by revealing the link (if any), between negative thinking styles and emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying, bystanders may realise the mistakes in their thought patterns and develop realistic alternatives to these patterns thus reducing the likelihood of them experiencing symptoms of secondary trauma if they witness similar traumatic events in future.

I will conduct a semi-structured interview with participants who have obtained parental consent and who themselves are willing to participate in the research. The interview will be conducted at the school after school hours. The participants' responses will be kept private and confidential. I will also like to request your permission to use the data generated, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data set are intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy attached to this study will be binding on future research studies.

I do not foresee that the participants will experience any harm or risk as a result of participating in the study. However, I am aware that while they recount their experiences of the bullying incidents they witnessed, negative emotions may arise. If any participant experiences emotional distress as a result of narrating his or her story, I will engage an educational psychologist to facilitate a counselling and debriefing session at the end of the interview. If the need arises, individual counselling sessions will be arranged and discussed with the participants' parents or legal guardians.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary, and your participating learners will be free to withdraw from the research at any time or not answer questions that they do not feel comfortable answering. The name of your participating learners will remain confidential, that is to say, I will not mention the names of your participating learners or the name of the school when I write the findings of the study.

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me via email at 14212634@tuks.co.za or on my mobile on 0745535066. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Annelize du Plessis, at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Psychology, on +27124202498.

I hereby seek permission to interview participating learners at your school for the purpose of this study. I can assure you that the learners selected for this research project will be treated with the utmost care and respect. An educational psychologist has agreed to be on hand to attend to any learners who show signs of emotional distress during and after the data collection.

Your cooperation in assisting me with this project will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Name of researcher: Emmanuel Adewoye   Name of supervisor: Dr. Annelize du Plessis

Signature _____   Signature_____

If you agree to grant me permission to interview participating learners at your school for the purpose of this study, please complete the declaration below.

- **School Principal Consent Form**

I give you my consent to approach learners in Grades 6 and 7 to participate in the research project: Bystanders experiences of school bullying following a self debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention.

- I have read the project information statement explaining the purpose of the research project and understand that

- I may decide to withdraw the school's participation at any time without penalty;

- learners in Grades 6 and 7 will be invited to participate and that permission will be sought   from them and also from their parents;

- Only learners who consent and whose parents consent will participate in the project;

- The learners' names will not be used, and individual learners will not be identifiable in any written reports on the study;

- The school will not be identifiable in any written reports on the study;

- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty;

I may seek further information on the project from the researcher, Emmanuel Adewoye, on 0745535066 or via email at <u>u14212634@tuks.co.za</u> or from his supervisor, Dr. Annelize du Plessis, at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Psychology, on +27124202498.

_____   _____

Principal   Signature

_____

Date

8.5 Appendix E: Letter of invitation to participate in a research project

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

2 September 2019

LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED: Bystanders experiences of school bullying following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention

Dear Learner,

- Are you between the age of 11 and 13?
- Are you in Grade 6 or 7?
- Have you witnessed bullying at school?
- Have you experienced feelings such as self-blame, guilt, fear, worry, restlessness, or numbness as a result of witnessing bullying in school?

You may qualify to receive a free lesson on how to identify, challenge, and reframe negative thoughts that may affect your feelings, emotions, and behaviour when and after you witness bullying.

I, Emmanuel Adewoye, would like to invite you to participate in an intervention study where you will be taught how to identify, challenge, and correct negative thinking styles. I am a doctoral student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Educational Psychology. My supervisor is Dr Annelize du Plessis.

I am doing this research to find out, firstly, bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying at school. Secondly, to find out if there are changes or not in their feelings, emotions, and behaviour in response to witnessing bullying after they participated in an intervention aimed at identifying and correcting negative thoughts. My aim with this research is to assist you to identify, challenge, and correct negative thoughts that may affect your feelings, emotions, and behaviour when and after you witness bullying.

If you decide to participate voluntarily in the research, and after you have obtained permission from your parents, I will conduct a semi-structured pre-intervention interview and post-intervention interview with you. The interviews will be conducted at the school after school hours. Before you receive the lesson, I will ask some questions to find out your emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying. The pre-intervention interview will last about one hour. After you have received the lesson on how to identify, challenge, and correct negative thoughts, I will also like to know your opinion and views of the lesson. The length of the post-intervention interview after you have received the lesson will depend on how much you have to say. There will be no right or wrong answers. Your responses will be kept private and secret.

I do not foresee that you will experience any harm or risk as a result of participating in the study. However, I am aware that while you talk about your experiences of the bullying incidents you witnessed, negative emotions may arise. If you experience any emotional trouble as a result of telling your story, I will ask an educational psychologist to arrange a counselling session at the end of the interview for you. If the need arises, individual counselling sessions will be arranged and discussed with your parents or legal guardians.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can withdraw from the research at any time or not answer questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. Your name will remain confidential, that is to say, I will not mention your name or the name of your school when I write the findings of the study.

The assent and consent forms are attached to this letter. If you have any questions about the research, you can contact me via email at 14212634@tuks.co.za or on my mobile on 0745535066.

Name of researcher: Emmanuel Adewoye   Signature _____

Name of supervisor: Dr. Annelize du Plessis   Signature_____

Name of participant: _____   Signature_____

8.6 Appendix F: Informed consent of the parents

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

2 September 2019

Informed Consent of Parents

Dear parent of potential participant,

My name is Emmanuel Adewoye. I am a doctoral student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Educational Psychology. I am conducting a research project entitled **Bystanders experiences of a school bullying following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention,** as part of my PhD degree. I am doing this research to find out, firstly, bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying at school. Secondly, to find out if there are changes or not in their feelings, emotions, and behaviour in response to witnessing bullying after they participated in an intervention aimed at identifying and correcting negative thoughts. The assumption is that by revealing the link (if any), between negative thinking styles and emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying, bystanders may realise the mistakes in their thought patterns and develop realistic alternatives to these patterns thus reducing the likelihood of them experiencing symptoms of secondary trauma if they witness similar traumatic events in future.

I will conduct a semi-structured interview with participants who have obtained parental consent and who themselves are willing to participate in the research. The interview will be conducted at the school after school hours. The participants' responses will be kept private and confidential. I will also like to request your permission to use the data generated, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data set are intellectual property of the university of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy attached to this study will be binding on future research studies.

I do not foresee that your child will experience any harm or risk as a result of participating in the study. However, I am aware that while your child narrates his or her experiences of the bullying incidents witnessed, negative emotions may arise. If your child experiences emotional distress as a result of narrating his or her story, I will engage an educational psychologist to facilitate a counselling and debriefing session at the end of the interview. If the need arises, individual counselling sessions will be arranged and discussed with the participants' parents or legal guardians.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary, and your child will be free to withdraw from the research at any time or not answer questions that he or she does not feel comfortable answering. The name of your child will remain confidential, that is to say, I will not mention your child's name or the name of the school when I write the findings of the study. Any comments your child makes will remain anonymous.

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me via email at 14212634@tuks.co.za or on my cell phone on 0745535066. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Annelize du Plessis, at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Psychology, on +27124202498. If you agree to your child participating in this research project, please complete the declaration below.

I…………………………………………….. (Full names) hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to ……………………………………………… (Full names of child) participating in the project. My relationship with the above named child is ………………………… (Father/ Mother, guardian)

Signature of parent or guardian…………………..

Date…………………………………………

Name of researcher: Emmanuel Adewoye   Signature _____

Name of supervisor: Dr. Annelize du Plessis   Signature_____

8.7 Appendix G: Research assent form

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

<div align="right">

2 September 2019

</div>

<div align="center">

Research Assent Form

</div>

Dear Learner,

I kindly request you to take part in this research study entitled Bystanders experiences of school bullying following a self-debasing cognitive distortion restructuring intervention.

What is a research study?

- A research study helps us learn new ideas and gain new information. A researcher asks questions, and the research participants then answer these questions.

Why am I doing this research?

- I am doing this research to find out, firstly, your emotional and behavioural reactions to the bullying you have witnessed at school. Secondly, to find out if there are changes or not in your feelings, emotions, and behaviour in response to witnessing bullying after you participated in an intervention aim at identifying and correcting negative thoughts.

Important things that you need to know

- It is totally up to you to decide if you want to take part in the research or not.
- You can say 'no' or you can say 'yes'.
- No one will punish or bully you if you say 'no' or 'yes' to taking part.
- If you say 'yes', you are free to change your mind and say 'no'.

What will happen if you say 'yes' and decide to take part in the research?

- I will conduct an hour-long interview with you to find out how you feel and how your feelings affect your behaviour when you witness bullying at school.

- You will receive a 10 session of lessons by a registered educational psychologist on how to identify, challenge, and correct negative thoughts that may affect your feelings, emotions, and behaviour in response to witnessing bullying.

- I will interview you again after you have received the lessons so that you can tell me about your feelings, emotions and behaviour in response to witnessing bullying.

Can bad things happen if I take part in this research?

- No. I do not foresee any bad thing happening to you as a result of taking part in this research. All I want to know is your views and experiences of witnessing school bullying before and after you participated in the intervention. However, I understand that while you tell me about your experiences of the bullying incidents you witnessed, you may experience some negative emotions. If you experience emotional trouble as a result of telling your story, I will ask an educational psychologist to arrange a counselling session at the end of the interview for you.

Can this research help me?

- Participating in this research may help you because you will learn how to identify and correct mistakes in your thinking style and find new positive ways of understanding events.

What else should I know about this research?

- This is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers.
- Your name and the name of your school or any details that can identify you will be kept secret.
- Your parents or guardians have also been sent a letter asking their permission for you to take part in this research project, but they will not be told about what you say or show me.

I would like to ask your permission to use your answers to help other students in their studies, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future studies.

If you have any questions about the research, you can contact me via email at u14212634@tuks.co.za or on my mobile on 0745535066. You can also phone my supervisor, Dr Annelize du Plessis, at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Psychology, on +27124202498.

If you have read and understood the information in this letter, and you would like to take part in this research study, please fill in your name and sign in the space provided below.

Name of participant: _____   Signature_____

Name of researcher: Emmanuel Adewoye   Signature _____

Name of supervisor: Dr. Annelize du Plessis   Signature_____

8.8 Appendix H: Example of coding of transcripts to develop themes

P1 Transcription of pre intervention interviews with Lesego

1. Emman: Hello my name is Emmanuel. I am a student at the University of
2. Pretoria. I am conducting a research on bystanders' experiences of school
3. bullying. There is no right or wrong answer. I just want to know your views and
4. experiences of witnessing school bullying. Let me start by asking you to
5. please tell me about yourself, your name, class and your age
6. **Lesego**: *Lebitso la ka ke Lesego. Ke grade 6. Ke tlo ea lilemo li 12.*
7. *(My name is Lesego. I am in grade 6. I am going to turn 12).*
8. Emman: Ok Lesego what is your understanding of bullying?
9. **Lesego**: *Ke utloisisa bompoli ka tsela ena eo sehlopha sa bompoli se*
10. *etsahalang ka teng. Ka tlelaseng bana ba bang ba rata ho re hlorisa ka*
11. *mekhoa e mengata e fapaneng.*
12. *I understand bullying in this manner that in class bullying happens. In class*
13. *some other kids they like to bully us in so many different ways).*
14. Emman: let me ask you; have witnessed a learner that is being bullied in the
15. school before?
16. **Lesego**: Ee.
17. *(Yes)*
18. Emman: Describe for me the bullying incident that you have witnessed.
19. **Lesego**: *Ke kile ka bona ngoana enoa a otla motsoalle oa ka ka pel'a mahlo a*
20. *ka ka tlelaseng.*
21. *(I once saw this child beating my friend before my eyes in the classroom).*
22. Emman: So that day when you saw your friend being bullied did you wish you
23. could stand up for her.
24. **Lesego**: *Ke utloile eka ke a mo thusa le ho bolella 'mampoli hore a se ke a*
25. *mo otla.*
26. *(I did feel like helping her and telling the bully not to hit her).*
27. Emman: So how do you feel when you were not able to help your friend?
28. **Lesego**: *Ke ne ke utloile bohloko hobane ke sa khone ho thusa motsoalle oa*
29. *ka, ke utloile bohloko haholo.*
30. *(I felt sad because I couldn't help my friend, I felt very sad).*
31. Emman: Do you feel guilty or do you put the blame on yourself because you
32. couldn't help that friend?
33. **Lesego**: *E, ke ikutloa ke le molato.*
34. *(Yes I do feel guilty).*
35. Emman: Are you saying that you were so scared of helping your friend?
36. **Lesego**: *Ee ke ne ke tšaba. Ke ne ke tšaba hore e kanna eaba o nkotla.*
37. *(Yes I was afraid. I was very scared that what if he hit me too).*
38. Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your mood generally in school?
39. **Lesego**: *Ha ke ikutloe ke thabile ha ke bona 'mampoli. Ke utloa bohloko ha ke*
40. *mo bona. Ha ke batle le ho bua le eena.*
41. *(I don't feel happy when I see the bully. I feel sad when I see him. I don't even*
42. *want to talk to him).*
43. Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your likeness for school?
44. **Lesego**: *E etsa hore ke se rate sekolo hobane bana ba bang ba hlorisoa.*
45. *(It makes me not to like school because some other kids are getting bullied).*

46. Emman: Are you saying that you are always afraid of becoming a victim
47. yourself?
48. **Lesego**: *Yaa ka linako tse ling ke tšoha hore e ka etsahalla.*
49. *(Yaa sometimes I do get scared that it can happen to me).*
50. Emman: How do you feel when you are alone maybe you are coming to
51. school alone or you are going back home alone and you remember the
52. bullying that you witnessed. How do you feel?
53. **Lesego**: *Ke ikutloa ke le bohale ka lebaka la hore ke lumelle mpoli hore a otle*
54. *motsoalle oa ka.*
55. *(I feel angry at myself because I let the bully hit my friend).*
56. Emman: I am so sorry to hear that. Now let me ask you how does witnessing
57. bullying affects your concentration in class
58. **Lesego**: *Ka linako tse ling ha ke khone ho tsepamisa mohopolo ka*
59. *sehlopheng ha tichere ea ka e bua hobane ke nahana ka seo 'mampoli a se*
60. *entseng.*
61. *(Sometimes I can't concentrate in class when my teacher is speaking*
62. *because I am thinking of what the bully did).*
63. Emman: When you witness bullying, do you feel angry?
64. **Lesego**: *Ka linako tse ling ke fetoha mohoasa hobane ke batla ho thusa bana*
65. *ba bang empa ha ke khone hobane ke tšaba.*
66. *(Sometimes I get moody because I want to help the other children but I can't*
67. *because I am afraid).*
68. Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your sleep?
69. **Lesego**: *Ha ke khone ho robala. Ka linako tse ling ke ba le litoro tse mpe.*
70. *(I can't sleep. Sometimes I have nightmares).*
71. Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your happiness in school?
72. **Lesego**: *Nke ke ka thabela sekolo ho hang hobane ke nahana hore na ho ka*
73. *etsahala'ng ka nna.*
74. *(I can't be happy at school at all because I am thinking what if it happens to*
75. *me).*
76. Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your trust for people?
77. **Lesego**: *Ha ke tšepe motho leha e le ofe sekolong eo ke tšepang hore ke*
78. *motsoalle oa ka oa hlooho ea khomo.*
79. *(I don't trust anyone at school the only person that I trust is my best friend).*
80. Emman: How do you feel when you see one of the bullies coming towards
81. you?
82. **Lesego**: *Ha ke mmona a tla ke tsamaea.*
83. *(When I see him coming I walk away).*
84. Emman: So how do you feel about your safety in school after you witnessed
85. bullying?
86. **Lesego**: *Che, ha ke ikutloe ke sireletsehile.*
87. *(No I don't feel safe).*
88. Emman: Why
89. **Lesego**: *Hobane ka tsatsi le leng e tla etsahala ho nna.*
90. *(Because someday it will happen to me).*
91. Emaan: How do you feel about going to school every morning after you
92. witnessed bullying?
93. **Lesego**: *Ke nahana habeli ka linako tse ling pele ke tla sekolong, ke ile ka re*
94. *ho 'na ke lokela ho ea kapa che empa motsoali oa ka o nqobelle ho tla*

95. *sekolong.*
96. *(I think twice sometimes before I can come to school, I said to myself should I*
97. *go or not but my parent push me to come to school).*
98. Emman: So how does witnessing bullying affect your confidence?
99. **Lesego**: *Ka linako tse ling ha ke itšepe ka lebaka la ha ke nahana ka hore na*
100. *ke mang ea tla hlorisoa hamorao. Ho nka tšepo ea ka ha ke nahana*
101. *ka lintho tse etsahetseng ho bana ba bang.*
102. *(Sometimes I don't feel confident about myself because I think of who*
103. *is going to be bullied next. It takes my confidence when I think about*
104. *the things that happened to other kids).*
105. Emman: Do you sometimes feel scared of going to school?
106. **Lesego**: *Bompoli bo etsa hore ke tšabe ho kena sekolo. Ka linako tse*
107. *ling ha 'm `e a ntsosa hore ke ee sekolong ho tšoana le ha a sa*
108. *ntlhake ke sa batle ho kena sekolo.*
109. *(Bullying make me to be afraid of school. Sometimes when my mother*
110. *wakes me for school I am like no don't wake me up I don't want to go*
111. *to school).*
112. Emman: Is there any other thing you want to tell me about your
113. experience of witnessing bullying?
114. **Lesego**: *Ke utloa eka bana ba hloka ho bua ka bompoli bona hobane*
115. *bo ba ama.*
116. *(I feel like kids need to talk about this bullying because it affects them).*
117. Emman: Thank you for your time.

P1 Transcription of post intervention interviews with Lesego

118. Emman: Hello my name is Emmanuel. I am here again to interview you
119. about your experiences of witnessing school bullying after you
120. participated in the intervention sessions. There is no right or wrong
121. answer. Just feel free to tell me about every thing you have
122. experienced as
123. bystanders of school bullying. So let me start again by asking you to
124. please tell me your name and your class and a little bit about yourself.
125. **Lesego**: *Lebitso la ka ke lesego. Ke sehlopheng sa 6. Ke rata 'Mino le*
126. *bonono*
127. *(My name is lesego. I am in grade 6. I love Music and arts).*
128. Emman: How long have you been in this school?
129. **Lesego**: *lilemo tse 6*
130. *(6 years).*
131. Emman: Do you still witness bullying in this school?
132. **Lesego**: *E, ke ntse ke paka bompoli*
133. *(Yes I still witness bullying)*
134. Emman: If something go wrong and you make effort to correct it, but
135. your effort did not yield desirable result. Do you blame yourself for
136. that?
137. **Lesego**: *Ka linako tse ling ke ipona ke le molato*
138. *(Sometimes I see myself at fault).*
139. Emman: When you witness bullying and you make attempt to intervene
140. maybe by shouting at the bully to stop but your effort did not yield

141.	result, do you still see yourself at fault)
142.	**Lesego***: Che, ha ke ipone molato*
143.	*(No I don't see myself at fault).*
144.	Emman: Why?
145.	**Lesego***: Hobane ha se 'na ea qalileng bompoli*
146.	*(Because I am not the one who started the bullying).*
147.	Emman: When you witness bullying do you report to the principal?
148.	**Lesego***: E, ke ea ho mosuoe-hlooho ke e tlalehe*
149.	*(Yes I go to the principal and report it).*
150.	Emman: Can you tell me who else do you report to when you witness
151.	bullying?
152.	**Lesego***: Ke tlalehela batsoali ba ka le mosuoe oa tlelase*
153.	*(I report to my parents and the class teacher).*
154.	Emman: So when you report to the principal or class teacher what do
155.	they say to you?
156.	**Lesego***: Ba mpoleletse hore ba tla thibela bompoli ho hlorisa bana ba*
157.	*bang*
158.	*(They told me that they will stop the bully from bullying other kids).*
159.	Emman: You said earlier that witnessing bullying affect your mood
160.	negatively. Do you still have a bad mood when you witness bullying
161.	and you report to the principal and the principal said he will punish the
162.	bully?
163.	**Lesego***: Che, hobane ke se ke boleletse batsoali ba ka, mosuoe-*
164.	*hlooho le tichere ea sehlopha*
165.	*(No because I already told my parents, the principal and the class*
166.	*teacher).*
167.	Emman: So do you think that the principal and the class teacher can
168.	protect you in the school?
169.	**Lesego***: E*
170.	*(Yes).*
171.	Emman: Do you still feel sacred of going to school when you witness
172.	bullying and you told your mum and the principal about it and the
173.	principal said to you that he will beat the bully?
174.	**Lesego***: Che, ha ke soabe*
175.	*(No I don't feel scared).*
176.	Emman: Why don't you feel scared?
177.	**Lesego***: Hobane ke boleletse batsoali ba ka*
178.	*(Because I have told my parents).*
179.	Emman: Did the therapist teach you how to defend yourself if the bully
180.	comes to you? Did she teach you assertiveness?
181.	**Lesego***: Ee o nthutile*
182.	*(Yes she taught me).*
183.	Emman: Are you still get scared and feel like the same person that
184.	bully others can come and do the same thing to you now that you
185.	know how to defend yourself. Do you still feel scared?
186.	**Lesego***: Che. Ha ke tšabe*
187.	*(No I am not scared).*
188.	Emman: I want to know the reason you are no longer scared?
189.	**Lesego***: Hobane mofani oa thuto o re rutile ho itšireletsa.*

190.	*(Because the therapist taught us how to defend ourselves).*
191.	Emman: How do you feel when you are alone, maybe you are walking
192.	to school or you are going back home and you see the bully coming
193.	towards you.
194.	**Lesego**: *Ka linako tse ling ke ikutloa ke tšohile hobane ke utloa eka*
195.	*'mampoli o tla tla ho nkotla.*
196.	*(Sometimes I feel scared because I feel like that the bully will come*
197.	*and beat me).*
198.	Emman: Do you think being assertive or defending yourself will work in
199.	this situation?
200.	**Lesego**: *Ha ke soabe.*
201.	*(I don't feel scared).*
202.	Emman: When you see someone coming at your back and you start
203.	getting panic because you think the person will hit. What other things
204.	come to your mind?
205.	**Lesego**: *Ntho e 'ngoe e tlang kelellong ea ka ke ho baleha.*
206.	*(The other thing that comes to my mind is to run away).*
207.	Emman: You said to me in the first interview that witnessing bullying
208.	makes you to lose concentration in class. Do you still find it difficult to
209.	pay attention in class? Even now that you know that the principal and
210.	the teachers are there to protect you. And even yourself know how to
211.	Defend yourself
212.	**Lesego**: *Ka linako tse ling ke tsepamisa maikutlo ho matichere. Ke*
213.	*khona ho tsepamisa maikutlo sehlopheng.*
214.	*(Sometimes I concentrate on the teachers. I can focus in the class).*
215.	Emman: Why?
216.	**Lesego**: *Ha ke batle hore bompoli boo ke bo pakileng bo kene*
217.	*kelellong ea ka hobane bo tla etsa hore ke tšohe le ho nahana haholo.*
218.	*(I don't want the bullying I witnessed to come into my mind because it*
219.	*will make me to be scared and think too much).*
220.	Emman: You said in the first interview that witnessing bullying make
221.	you to lose confidence in yourself. What can you say about your
222.	Confidence now that you know how to be defend yourself and now
223.	that you know that there are some people who will protect you from
224.	the bully?
225.	**Lesego**: *Kholiseho ea ka e lokile.*
226.	*(My confidence is ok.).*
227.	Emman: Why is your confidence ok?
228.	**Lesego**: *Hobane ha ke sa nahana ho paka bompoli.*
229.	*(Because I no longer think of witnessing bullying).*
230.	Emman: How does witnessing bullying now affect your sleep now that
231.	you realised that the principal and teachers are there to protect you.
232.	**Lesego**: *Hona joale ha e ame boroko ba ka hobane ke boleletse*
233.	*batsoali ba ka.*
234.	*(Now it doesn't affect my sleep because I told my parents).*
235.	Emaan: Do you still feel unhappy in school
236.	**Lesego**: *Ka linako tse ling ke ikutloa ke thabile).*
237.	*(Sometimes I feel happy).*
238.	Emman: Why do you feel happy sometimes?

239.	**Lesego***: Hobane senokoane sena ha se nkhathatse).*
240.	*(Because that bully doesn't disturb me).*
241.	Emman: So are you trying to say that the bully doesn't come to you?
242.	**Lesego***: E.*
243.	*(Yes).*
244.	Emman: So it means you think that sometimes there is no need for you
245.	to be afraid because the bully doesn't come to you.
246.	**Lesego***: E*
247.	*(Yes)*
248.	Emman: Has anyone been good to you in the school before?
249.	**Lesego***: E.*
250.	*(Yes).*
251.	Emman: You said in the first interview that witnessing bulling affect
252.	your trust for people. Do you still think everyone is bad and that you
253.	can't trust anyone even those who are good to you?
254.	**Lesego***: Ha ke nahane hore kaofela li mpe.*
255.	*(I don't think all of them are bad).*
256.	Emman: Why
257.	**Lesego***: Hobane ba bang ba bona ke ba tšepa haholo banab'eso.*
258.	*(Because some of them I trust especially my cousins).*
259.	Emman: You said in the first interview that you don't think there are
260.	good people left in the school and because of that you don't feel safe
261.	in the school. How do you feel about your safety in school after you
262.	witness bullying and you know that there are still good people in the
263.	school
264.	**Lesego***: Ke ipona ke bolokehile ha joale.*
265.	*(I see myself safe now).*
266.	Emaan: Why
267.	**Lesego***: Hobane ke tlaleha ho mosuoe-hlooho le matichere.*
268.	*(Because I report to the principal and the teachers).*
269.	Emman: Do you think your cousins that you said they are good to you
270.	can also protect you
271.	**Lesego***: E, ke nahana hore ba ka ntšireletsa.*
272.	*(Yes I think they can protect me).*
273.	Emman: How do you feel about going to school every morning after
274.	you witnessed bullying? When you have this negative thought that
275.	make you to be afraid of going to school, what do you say to yourself
276.	that make the fear reduce?
277.	**Lesego***: Joale ha ke nahana ka bompoli, ke nka fono ea ka ebe ke*
278.	*bapala 'mino mme mohopolo o tla fela.*
279.	*(Now when I think of the bullying, I just take my phone and play music*
280.	*and the thought will go away).*
281.	Emman: And what about the thought that the principal and teachers
282.	are also there to protect you. Does it also make the fear to go away?
283.	**Lesego***: E*
284.	*(Yes)*
285.	Emman: Thank you for your time

P2 Transcription of pre intervention interviews with Kea

286. Emman: Good afternoon. My name is Emmanuel. I am a student at the
287. University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research on bystanders'
288. experiences of school bullying. There is no right or wrong answer. I
289. just want to know your views and experiences of witnessing school
290. bullying. Let me start by asking you to please tell me about yourself,
291. your name, class and your age
292. **Kea:** *Lebitso la ka ke Kea. Ke sehlopheng sa 6. Ke tlo ba lilemo tse 13*
293. *haufinyane.*
294. *(My name is Kea. I am in grade 6. I am going to be 13 years old soon).*
295. Emman: Ok. What is your understanding of bullying?
296. **Kea**: *Seo ke se utloisisang ka bompoli ke hore ke ha moithuti a*
297. *hlorisoa ke moithuti e mong sekolong se tšoanang. Mohlomong ba mo*
298. *otla kapa ba mo nka lijo le lintho tse ling tse joalo. Ke tsela eo ke*
299. *utloisisang bompoli ka eona.*
300. *(What I understand about bullying is that it is when a learner is being*
301. *bullied by another learner from the same school. Maybe they hit him or*
302. *take food from him and some other things like that. That is how I*
303. *understand bullying).*
304. Emman: Have you witnessed bullying in the school before?
305. **Kea**: *Ee ke entse.*
306. *(Yes I did).*
307. Emman: How frequent do you witness bullying?
308. **Kea**: *Ke se ke bone bopaki ba bompoli sekolong sena hangata*
309. *(I have been witnessing bullying so many times in this school).*
310. Emman: Describe for me the bullying incident that you have witnessed.
311. **Kea**: *Ke paka papali ea bompoli ka sehlopheng sa ka e bona moithuti e*
312. *mong eo a otlang seithuti se seng sehlopheng sa ka.*
313. *(I do witness bullying in my class seeing this other learner beating*
314. *another learner in my class).*
315. Emman: Do you wish you could defend the victim or stand up for the
316. victim?
317. *Kea: E, ke utloa eka nka kena lipakeng ha ke paka bompoli. Ha ho*
318. *etsahala ka pel'a mahlo a ka ke lakatsa eka nka kena lipakeng.*
319. *(Yes I do feel like I can intervene when I witness bullying. When it*
320. *happens in front of my eyes, I do wish I can intervene).*
321. Emman: So how do you feel when you witness bullying but you were
322. not able to defend the victim?
323. **Kea**: *Ke ikutloa ke le mobe haholo haeba ke sa khone ho etsa letho ho*
324. *emisa bompoli hobane ke utloa eka e etsahalla.*
325. *(I feel so bad if I can't do anything to stop the bullying because I feel it*
326. *is happening to me too).*
327. Emman: Do you feel guilty or do you put the blame on yourself
328. because you couldn't help that friend?
329. **Kea**: *E, ke ikutloa ke le molato haholo ha ke paka ho hlorisoa. Ka*
330. *linako tse ling ke bile ke lakatsa eka nka ea ho ea bolella mosuoe-*
331. *hlooho empa ha ke nahana hore 'mampoli a ka khutlela ho nna, ha ke*
332. *ee mme ke ikutloa ke le molato.*
333. *(Yes I do feel guilty very much guilty when I witness bullying.*

334.	*Sometimes I even wish I could go and tell the principal but when I*
335.	*think that the bully can even come back to me, I don't go and I feel*
336.	*guilty.*
337.	Emman: Are you saying that you were so scared of helping the victim?
338.	**Kea***: E, kea tšoha.*
339.	*(Yes I am scared).*
340.	Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your mood generally in
341.	school especially when you remember the bullying that you witnessed
342.	in school?
343.	**Kea***: Ke utloa bohloko ha ke nahana ka bompoli boo ke bo boneng bo*
344.	*etsahetse ho barutoana ba bang.*
345.	*(I do feel bad when I think about the bullying that I witnessed which*
346.	*happened to other learners).*
347.	Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your likeness for school?
348.	**Kea***: E ama sebopeho sa ka sekolong. Ka linako tse ling ha ke tsoha*
349.	*ke belaela hore na ke tlameha ho kena sekolo kapa che ka lebaka la*
350.	*bompoli bona.*
351.	*(It does affect my likeness for school. Sometimes when I wake up I*
352.	*doubt if I should go to school or not because of this bullying).*
353.	Emaan: Are you saying that you are always afraid of going to school
354.	when you remember the bullying that you witnessed
355.	**Kea***: Yaa e tšosa haholo. E nkama haholo. Ka linako tse ling ke sitoa*
356.	*le ho robala.*
357.	*(Yaa it is so scary. It affects me a lot. Sometimes I can't even sleep).*
358.	Emman: How do you feel when you are alone maybe you are coming
359.	to school alone or you are going back home alone and you remember
360.	the bullying that you witnessed. How do you feel?
361.	Kea: Ke nahana hore ho na le lintho tse ngata. Ka linako tse ling ha ke
362.	khone le ho nahana hore na ke feta joang, kelello ea ka e lahleha
363.	feela hobane ke tla be ke nahana hore ke ea sebakeng seo bompoli
364.	bo etsahalang ho sona.
365.	*(I think a lot of things. Sometimes I can't even imagine how I am*
366.	*walking through, my mind just get lost because I will be thinking that I*
367.	*am going to a place where bullying is happening).*
368.	Emman: When you witness bullying do you feel angry?
369.	**Kea***: Eona ho paka ka bompoli ho nkhalefisa.*
370.	*(Yes witnessing bullying makes me feel angry).*
371.	Emman: Now let me ask you how does witnessing bullying affect your
372.	concentration in class?
373.	**Kea***: E nkama haholo ha ke le sehlopheng. Ka linako tse ling esita le*
374.	*ha ke ngola tlhahlobo ho e-na le ho nahana ka teko eo ke e ngolang,*
375.	*ke qala ho nahana ka bompoli boo ke bo boneng.*
376.	*(It affects me a lot when I am in class. Sometimes even when I am*
377.	*writing a test instead of thinking about the test that I am writing, I start*
378.	*thinking about the bullying that I witnessed).*
379.	Emman: Do you get carried away in class as a result of witnessing
380.	bullying in school?
381.	**Kea***: E nkama le ha mosuoe oa ka a ntse a nthuta maikutlo a ka a*
382.	*hloleha ka linako tse ling le ha a mpotsa potso, ke tla mo sheba feela*

383.	*hobane ha ke tsepamisitse maikutlo hobane ke nahana ka bompoli*
384.	*boo ke bo pakileng.*
385.	*(It does affect me even when my teacher is teaching me my mind goes*
386.	*off sometimes even if she asks me a question, I will just be looking at*
387.	*her because I am not concentrating because I am thinking about the*
388.	*bullying that I witnessed).*
389.	Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your sleep?
390.	**Kea***: Ha ke khone le ho robala. Ka nako e 'ngoe ha ke leka ho robala*
391.	*ke tsoha ebe ke lula setulong se lutseng holim'a sofa ebe ke etsa ho*
392.	*hong feela ho sutumelletsa nako hobane ha ke khone ho robala.*
393.	*(I can't even sleep. Sometime when I try to sleep I end up waking up*
394.	*and go to sit in the sitting room on the sofa and do something just to*
395.	*push time because I can't sleep).*
396.	Emman: How does witnessing bullying in school affect your happiness
397.	in school?
398.	**Kea***: Ha ke a thaba sekolong.*
399.	*(I am not happy in school).*
400.	Emman: How does witnessing bullying in school affect your trust for
401.	people?
402.	**Kea***: Ha ke ba tšepe kaofela bao ke ba ts'epileng.*
403.	*(I don't trust them all some I do trust).*
404.	Emman: How do you feel when you see one of the bullies coming
405.	towards you?
406.	**Kea***: Ke ikutloa eka ke baleha ha a tla ho 'na e le hore a se ke a bona*
407.	*moo ke leng teng.*
408.	*(I feel like running away when he is coming towards me so that he can't*
409.	*see where I am).*
410.	Emman: So how do you feel about your safety in school after you
411.	witnessed bullying?
412.	**Kea***: Ha ke ikutloe ke sireletsehile ho hang hobane ke tšaba hore na*
413.	*ho ka thoe'ng haeba 'mampoli a ka tla ho' na 'me a nkena hore ehh u*
414.	*re bone. Kahoo ha ke bolokehe. Ke ka lebaka leo ke sa ikutloeleng ke*
415.	*bolokehile.*
416.	*(I don't feel safe at all because I am scared that what if the bully come*
417.	*to me and challenge me that ehh you saw us. So I am not safe. That is*
418.	*why I don't feel safe).*
419.	Emaan: How do you feel about going to school every morning after you
420.	witnessed bullying?
421.	**Kea***: Ke ikutloa ke tšoenyehile ha ke tlameha ho tla sekolong. Ke lula*
422.	*ke nahana hore ho thoe'ng haeba bompoli bo etsahalletseng bana ba*
423.	*bang le bona bo nkutloela. Ka hona, ke lula ke tšoenyehile hoseng ha*
424.	*nako ea sekolo e fihla.*
425.	*(I feel a bit worried when I am supposed to come to school. I always*
426.	*think that what if the bullying that happened to the other learners also*
427.	*happens to me. So I am always worried in the morning when it is time*
428.	*for school).*
429.	Emman: Are you saying that sometimes you dislike school or get
430.	scared of going to school because of the bullying you witnessed?
431.	**Kea:** *Ke tšaba ho ea sekolong empa lapeng ba nqobella hore ke*

432.	*tlameha ho kena sekolo.*
433.	*(I am scared of going to school but at home they forced me that I have*
434.	*to go to school).*
435.	Emman: Thank you for your time

P2 Transcription of post intervention interviews with Kea

436.	Emman: Hello my name is Emmanuel. I am here again to interview you
437.	about your experiences of witnessing school bullying after you
438.	participated in the intervention sessions. There is no right or wrong
439.	answer. Just feel free to tell me about every thing you have
440.	experienced as bystanders of school bullying. So let me start again by
441.	asking you to please tell me your name and your class and a little bit
442.	about yourself.
443.	**Kea**: *Ke bile teng mananeong ohle. E qalile ho tloha ho 2 ho isa ho 3 o.*
444.	*Ba re joetse hore na re lokela ho etsa joang ketsahalong le hore na*
445.	*likelello tsa rona li sebetsa joang.*
446.	*(I attended all the sessions. It started from 2 to 3 o clock. They told us*
447.	*about how to react to event and how our mind works).*
448.	Emman: How long have you been in this school?
449.	**Kea**: *lilemo tse 3.*
450.	*(3 years).*
451.	Emman: Do you still witness bullying in this school?
452.	**Kea**: *E*
453.	*(Yes)*
454.	Emman: You said in the first interview that you feel guilty and you do
455.	blame yourself when you witness bullying and you wish you could
456.	have helped or called somebody but you couldn't do so. Do you still
457.	feel the same even when you try your best to intervene when you
458.	witness bullying?
459.	**Kea**: *Che, ha ke ikutloe ke le molato. Ke sheba boemo pele; haeba bo-*
460.	*'mampoli ba bangata haholo joale nka ipeha molato ha ke sa thusa.*
461.	*(No I don't feel feel guilty. I check the situation first; if the bullies are too*
462.	*many then I can't blame myself for not helping).*
463.	Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your mood now?
464.	**Kea**: *Ha ke soetsehe haholo hobane joale ke fumane tharollo. Ke*
465.	*tlaleha ho mosuoe-hlooho mme mosuoe-hlooho o mpoleletse hore o*
466.	*tlil'o hlasela bo-'mampoli.*
467.	*(I don't feel down as much because now I found the solution. I report to*
468.	*the principal and the principal told me that he is going to beat the*
469.	*bullies).*
470.	Emman: Do you still feel sacred of going to school when you witness
471.	bullying and you tell your principal and the principal said he will beat
472.	them
473.	**Kea**: *Joale ha ke tšabe ho ea sekolong hobane joale ke boleletse mme*
474.	*mme o ile a mpolella hore o tla tla sekolong mme a bue le mosuoe-*
475.	*hlooho.*
476.	*(Now I am not afraid of going to school because now I told my mother*
477.	*and my mother told me that she will come to school and talk to the*

478. *principal).*
479. Emman: How do you feel now when you are alone, maybe you are
480. walking to school or you are going back home and you remember the
481. bullying that you witnessed?
482. **Kea***: Ha ke tšabe hobane joale kea tseba hore mme le mosuoe-hlooho*
483. *ba teng ho tla ntšireletsa.*
484. *(I am not afraid because now I know that my mother and the principal*
485. *are there to protect me).*
486. Emman: You said to me in the first interview that witnessing bullying
487. makes you to lose concentration in class. Do you still find it difficult to
488. pay attention in class? Even now that you know that your mother and
489. the principal are there to protect you?
490. **Kea***: Che, ha joale ha ke lihlong ebile ha ke utloe tšabo hobane joale*
491. *kea tseba hore ho na le motho ea teng ho tla re sireletsa sekolong.*
492. *(No, now I don't feel shy and I don't feel afraid because now I know*
493. *there is someone who is there to protect us in the school).*
494. Emman: Does your mind still go off when the teacher is teaching in
495. class?
496. **Kea***: Joale ha ke tšabe. Ke khona ho tsepamisa mohopolo*
497. *mosebetsing oa ka oa sekolo hobane joale kea tseba hore ho na le*
498. *motho ea re sirelletsang.*
499. *(Now I am not afraid. I can focus on my school work because I now*
500. *know that there is someone who is protecting us).*
501. Emman: Do you still have problem with sleeping as a result of
502. witnessing bullying?
503. **Kea***: Che.*
504. *(No).*
505. Emman: Why
506. **Kea***: Che, ha ke sa nahana ka eona hobane joale kea utloisisa ebile*
507. *kea tseba hore ho na le motho ea teng ho re sireletsa joalo ka*
508. *mosuoe-hlooho le matichere.*
509. *(No I am no longer thinking about it because now I understand and I*
510. *know that there is someone who is there to protect us like principal*
511. *and teachers).*
512. Emman: Do you still feel unhappy in school because you think of
513. bullying happening to you?
514. **Kea***: Che, ha ke nahane haholo ka bompoli hoo ke sa boneng ke sa*
515. *thaba.*
516. *(No, I don't think too much about bullying so I dont see myself being*
517. *unhappy).*
518. Emman: Do you still have problem trusting people in the school?
519. **Kea***: Ha ho tšoane le hore ke ba tšepa kaofela. Ha ke ba tšepe*
520. *kaofela, ke tšepa ba fokolang empa ba bang ha ke ba tšepe.*
521. *(It is not like I trust all of them. I don't trust all of them; I just trust few*
522. *but others I don't trust).*
523. Emman: Do you still feel like running away when you see one of the
524. bullies coming towards you?
525. **Kea***: Che, ha ke tšohe hobane ha ke ba bona ke nahana hore*
526. *mohlomong ba ea ka tsela ea bona.*

315

527.	*(No I don't feel scared because when I see them I think that maybe*
528.	*they are going their own way).*
529.	Emman: What do you think about your safety now?
530.	**Kea***: Ke nahana hore sekolo se bolokehile joale hobane mosuoe-*
531.	*hlooho o teng ho re sireletsa.*
532.	*(I think the school is safe now because the principal is there to protect*
533.	*us).*
534.	Emman: Do you still feel worried thinking that what if the bullying that
535.	happens to others will happen to you?
536.	**Kea***: Ha ke tšoenyehe haholo hobane joale kea tseba hore ha ba tla ho*
537.	*nna ke lokela ho ea ho mosuoe-hlooho ke ba tlalehe.*
538.	*(I don't feel worry that much because now I know that when they come*
539.	*to me I have to go to the principal and report them).*
540.	Emman: Do they still force you to go to school?
541.	**Kea***: Ha ba nqobelle ho kena sekolo hape. Ntho feela eo ba*
542.	*mpoletseng eona ke hore haeba 'mampoli a tla ho nna ke tlameha ho*
543.	*ea bua le mosuoe-hlooho kapa ke tlameha ho ba joetsa.*
544.	*(They don't force me to go to school anymore. The only thing they told*
545.	*me is that if the bully comes to me I must go and report to the principal*
546.	*or I must tell them).*
547.	Emman: What can you say about your confidence now?
548.	**Kea***: Ha ke sa tšaba batho ba mpolaeang joalo, ha ba tla ho 'na ke ka*
549.	*ba phephetsa*
550.	*(I am no longer afraid of those bullies, when they come to me I can*
551.	*challenge them)*

P3 Transcription of pre intervention interviews with Toluphato

552.	Emman: Hello my name is Emmanuel I am a student at the University
553.	of Pretoria. I am conducting a research on bystanders' experiences of
554.	school bullying. I will like you to tell me your views and opinions about
555.	your experiences of witnessing bullying in school. There are no right or
556.	wrong answers. Just feel free to express yourself. Could you please
557.	tell me about yourself, your age and your class?
558.	**Toluphato***: Lebitso la ka ke Toluphato, ke etsa sehlopha sa 7. Ke*
559.	*lilemo tse 13*
560.	*(My name is Toluphato, I am doing grade 7. I am 13 years old).*
561.	Emman: Toluphato, can you please tell me what your understanding of
562.	bullying is.
563.	**Toluphato***: Seo ke se utloisisang ka bompoli ke ha motho e mong au*
564.	*qobella ho etsa ntho eo u sa rateng ho e etsa kapa ho nka pene ea*
565.	*hau*
566.	*(What i understand about bullying is when somebody is forcing you to*
567.	*do something you don't like to do or taking your pen).*
568.	Emman: Give me examples of bullying that you know.
569.	**Toluphato***: Mohlala oa bompoli ke ha motho e mong a nka lintho tsa*
570.	*hau a u otla ntle le lebaka*
571.	*(Example of bullying is when somebody takes your things and beat you*
572.	*up for no reason).*

573. Emman: Where does bullying take place in the school?
574. Toluphato: *Boholo ba linako bo etsahala sehlopheng nakong ea khefu.*
575. *Ha e le hantle e etsahala kae kapa kae*
576. *(Most of the times it happens in the class during break time. Actually it*
577. *happens anywhere).*
578. Emman: Have you witnessed bullying in this school?
579. Toluphato: *E, ke e bone ha ba ne ba otla motsoalle oa ka mme ba*
580. *boetse ba mo nka chelete mme ba mo qobella ho etsa ntho eo a sa e*
581. *rateng*
582. *(Yes I have witnessed it when they were beating my friend and they*
583. *also took her money and they forced her to do something she doesn't*
584. *like).*
585. Emman: How frequent do you witness bullying in the school?
586. Toluphato: *E etsahala khafetsa, ha ke tsebe hore na ke makhetlo a*
587. *makae empa boholo ba linako*
588. *(It happens frequently, I can't say how many time but most of the*
589. *times)*
590. Emman: Do you sometimes wish you could defend or fight for the
591. victim?
592. Toluphato: *Ke lakatsa eka nka khona ho etsa joalo*
593. *(I wish I can do that).*
594. Emman: So how do you feel when you witness bullying and you wish
595. you could intervene but because of one reason or the other you fail to
596. intervene.
597. Toluphato: *Ke ikutloa ke sithabetse maikutlo mme ke ikutloa ke le*
598. *mobe hobane ha ke khone ho sireletsa motho ea hlasetsoeng*
599. *(I feel heartbroken and I feel bad because I can't defend the victim).*
600. Emman: Are you trying to say that you feel guilty or blame yourself for
601. not being able to defend the victim?
602. Toluphato: *E, ke ikutloa ke le molato, 'me ke lula ke ipeha molato*
603. *(Yes I feel guilty and I do blame myself).*
604. Emman: Are you trying to say that you feel scared to defend the victims
605. when you witnessed bullying?
606. Toluphato: *E, ke ikutloa ke tšaba ho sireletsa motho ea*
607. *hlokahalitsoeng*
608. *(Yes I feel scared to defend the victim).*
609. Emman: Why do you feel scared?
610. Toluphato: *Ke tšohile hobane ke utloa eka le bona ba tla nkotla kappa*
611. *ba tla nketsetsa seo ba se etsetsang motho ea betiloeng*
612. *(I am scared because I feel they will also beat me or they will do to me*
613. *what they are doing to the victim).*
614. Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your mood in school
615. generally in the school?
616. Toluphato: *E etsa hore ke nyahame hobane ha ho na seo nka se*
617. *etsang sekolong*
618. *(It makes me feel down because I can't do anything at school).*
619. Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your likeness for school?
620. Toluphato:. *Ha ke batle ho kena sekolo. Ha ke rate sekolo mme e etsa*
621. *hore ke utloe eka ha ke sa batla ho ea sekolong*

622.	*(I don't feel like coming to school. I don't like school and it makes me*
623.	*feel like I don't want to go to school anymore).*
624.	Emman: Are you always afraid that you could also become a victim
625.	whenever you remember the bullying that you witnessed.
626.	**Toluphato***: E, ke ikutloa joalo*
627.	*(Yes I feel so).*
628.	Emman: How do you feel when you are alone, maybe you are walking
629.	to school or you are going back home and you remember the bullying
630.	that you witnessed?
631.	**Toluphato***: Ke utloa eka e ka etsahalla kapa ba ka etsa seo ba se*
632.	*entseng ho li-vcitims tse ling le nna*
633.	*(I feel like it can happen to me or they can do what they did to other*
634.	*vcitims to me also).*
635.	Emman: When you witnessed bullying; do you feel angry?
636.	**Toluphato***: E, ke ikutloa ke hloname haholo ha ke bona bompoli*
637.	*(Yes I feel very angry when I witnessed bullying).*
638.	Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your concentration in
639.	class?
640.	**Toluphato:** *Ha ke khone ho tsepamisa mohopolo ka sehlopheng 'me*
641.	*ha ke batle ho ngola mosebetsi oa ka oa sekolo. Ke hana ho*
642.	*tsepamisa mohopolo ha matichere a ntse a ruta*
643.	*(I can't concentrate in the class and I can't even write my school work. I*
644.	*can't concentrate when the teachers are teaching).*
645.	Emman: Do you get carried away in class when you remember the
646.	bullying you witnessed?
647.	**Toluphato***: E, kea akheha ha ke nahana ka seo ke se pakileng*
648.	*(Yes i get carried away when I think of what I witnessed).*
649.	Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your confidence?
650.	**Toluphato***: Ts'epo ea ka e ea theoha hobane ke utloa eka ba ka tla ba*
651.	*nkotla kapa ho hong*
652.	*(My confidence is going down because I feel like they can come and*
653.	*beat me up or something).*
654.	Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your sleep?
655.	**Toluphato***: Ke na le litoro tse mpe 'me ke lula ke nahana hore na ba*
656.	*otla bana ba bang joang*
657.	*(I have bad dreams and I keep on thinking of how they beat other kids).*
658.	Emman: How does witnessing bullying affect your happiness in
659.	school?
660.	**Toluphato***: Ha ke na thabo sekolong hobane ke lula ke utloa eka ke lla*
661.	*'me ke utloa bohloko*
662.	*(I don't have happiness in school because I always feel like crying and*
663.	*I feel sad).*
664.	Emma: How does witnessing bulling affect your trust for people?
665.	**Toluphato***: Ha ke tšepe mang kapa mang hobane ke ikutloa eka*
666.	*batho bao ba ka furalla 'me ba nkotla kapa ba mpolaisa*
667.	*(I don't trust anybody because I feel like those people can turn their*
668.	*back and beat me or bully me also).*
669.	Emman: How do you feel when you see one of the bullies coming
670.	towards you?

671. **Toluphato**: *Pelo ea ka e otla ka lebelo. Ke ikutloa ke thothomela ebe*
672. *kea qabola hobane ke tšaba hore na ba tlo nketsa'ng*
673. *(My heart beat fast. I feel shaking and I freeze because*
674. *I get scared of*
675. *what they are going to do to me).*
676. Emman: How do you feel about you safety in school after you witness
677. bullying?
678. **Toluphato**: *Ha ke ikutloe ke sireletsehile ho hang hobane ha ke utloe*
679. *eka ke sirelelitsoe mona sekolong*
680. *(I don't feel safe at all because I don't feel like I am protected here in*
681. *school).*
682. Emman: How do you feel about going to school every morning after
683. you witnessed bullying?
684. **Toluphato**: *Pelo ea ka e mpolella hore ke tlameha ho lula hae hobane*
685. *ha ke nahana ho ea sekolong, ke nahana ka seo ba se etsetsang*
686. *bana ba bang sekolong joalo ka ho nka chelete ea bona kapa ho ba*
687. *shapa. Kahoo ha ke batle ho ea sekolo*
688. *(My heart tells me that I must stay at home because when I think of*
689. *going to school, I think about what they are doing to other kids at*
690. *school like taking their money or beating them. So I don't feel like*
691. *going to school).*
692. Emman: Do you sometimes dislike school or get scared of going to
693. school because of the bullying you witnessed?
694. **Toluphato**: *Ke tšaba ho tla sekolong ka lebaka la seo ba se etsang*
695. *(I get scared of coming to school because of what they are doing).*
696. Emman: Is there any other thing you want to tell me about your
697. experiences of witnessing bullying?
698. **Toluphato**: *Ha ke rate seo ba se etsetsang bana ba bang se etsa hore*
699. *ke tšohe*
700. *(I don't like what they are doing to other kids it makes me feel scared).*
701. Emman: Thank you. Bye
702. **Toluphato**: *Bye*
703. *(Bye).*

P3 Transcription of post intervention interviews with Toluphato

704. Emman: Hello my name is Emmanuel. I am here again to interview you
705. about your experiences of witnessing school bullying after you
706. participated in the intervention sessions. There is no right or wrong
707. answer. Just feel free to tell me about every thing you have
708. experienced as bystanders of school bullying. So let me start again by
709. asking you to please tell me your name and your class and a little bit
710. about yourself.
711. **Toluphato**: *Lebitso la ka ke Toluphato ke sehlopheng sa 7. Ke lilemo li*
712. *13.*
713. *(My name is Toluphato I am in grade 7. I am 13 years old).*
714. Emman: How long have you been in this school?
715. **Toluphato**: *lilemo tse 4.*
716. *(4 years).*

717.	Emman: Do you still witness bullying in this school?
718.	**Toluphato**: *E, ke ntse ke e paka*
719.	*(Yes I still witness it)*
720.	Emman: Can you describe one of the bullying incidences you
721.	witnessed recently?
722.	**Toluphato**: *Bohle ba shebahala joalo. Ba otla bana ba bang bakeng sa*
723.	*lijo kapa chelete ea bona.*
724.	*(They all look the same. They beat other kids for their food or their*
725.	*money).*
726.	Emman: If something go wrong and you make effort to correct it, but
727.	your effort did not yield desirable result. Do you blame yourself for
728.	that?
729.	**Toluphato**: *(Che) Ha ke ipone ke fositse 'me ha e sa nkama hobane*
730.	*ha ke ne ke phathahane ka ho e nahana, ke leka ho e utloisisa. Ke*
731.	*leka ho thusa motho eo empa batho bao ba ne ba le bangata haholo*
732.	*hoo ke sa khoneng ho emela motho eo*
733.	*(No I don't see myself wrong and it is no longer affecting me because*
734.	*when I was busy thinking about it. I try to understand it. I try to help*
735.	*that person but those people were too many so I can't defend that*
736.	*person)*
737.	Emman: You said in the first interview that you feel guilty and you do
738.	blame yourself when you witness bullying and you wish you could help
739.	or do something to stop the bullying. Do you still feel the same even
740.	when you try your best to intervene when you witness bullying?
741.	**Toluphato**: *Che, ha ke ipehe molato hobane ke lekile ho ..... Ke ile ka*
742.	*nahana ka ntho eo, ke lekile ho thusa motho ea hlokahalitsoeng empa*
743.	*bo-'mampoli ba ne ba le bangata haholo mme ba ile ba hlola 'na ka*
744.	*matla a bona.*
745.	*(No I don't blame myself because I tried to…. I thought about that*
746.	*thing, I tried to help the victim but the bullies were too many and they*
747.	*defeat me with their strenght).*
748.	Emman: Do you report to the principal or teacher when you witness
749.	bullying?
750.	**Toluphato**: *Ee ke boleletse mosuoe-hlooho. Ke bile ke bolelle abuti oa*
751.	*ka le batsoali ba ka lapeng.*
752.	*(Yes I told the principal. I even told my brother and my parents at*
753.	*home).*
754.	Emman: So what did they say to you?
755.	**Toluphato**: *Ke joetse 'm'e.' Mè o mpolelletse hore o tla tla sekolong*
756.	*mme a bue le 'mampoli eo e hlorisang bana ba bang. Le' na ke ile ka*
757.	*bolella abuti le ntate, le bona ba re ba tla tla sekolong mme ba bue le*
758.	*moshemane eo 'me u mo botse hore na ke hobane'ng ha a hlorisa*
759.	*bana ba bang. Leha mosuoe-hlooho o ile a bua joalo.*
760.	*(I told my mother. My mother told me that she will come to the school*
761.	*and talk to that bully that is bullying other kids. Even I told my brother*
762.	*and my father, they also said they will come to the school and talk to*
763.	*that boy and ask him why he is bullying other kids. Even the principal*
764.	*said the same thing).*
765.	Emman: You said earlier that witnessing bullying affect your mood and

766.	you get scared and your whole day gets spoil. Do you still have bad
767.	mood when you witness bullying and you remember what the principal
768.	and your mother told you.
769.	**Toluphato**: *Che, ha ke utloe bohloko ho hang hobane joale ke hoopla*
770.	*hore ke boleletse batsoali ba ka mme batsoali ba ka ba mpolelletse*
771.	*hore ba tlo tla ho tla shebella taba ena. Ke hopola hore mosuoe-*
772.	*hlooho o ile a*
773.	*re o tla ea taba ena) Seo ke se tsebang ke hore, seo ke nahanang*
774.	*hore ke sona seo ke se utloang kahoo ke tlameha ho itaola.*
775.	*(No I don't feel bad mood at all because now I remember that I told my*
776.	*parents and my parents told me that they will come and attend to the*
777.	*issue. I remember that the principal also said that he will attend to the*
778.	*issue. What I know is that, what I think is what I am feeling so I have to*
779.	*control myself).*
780.	Emman: Do you still feel sacred of going to school when you witness
781.	bullying and you remember that you have told you're your mama and
782.	principal about it?
783.	**Toluphato**: *Che, ha ke soabe ho ea sekolong hobane ke boleletse*
784.	*batsoali ba ka le batho bao ba hlorisang 'mampoli hore ba se ke ba tla*
785.	*ho' na. Ba kanna ba ntšosa kapa ba kanna ba se ke ba ntšaba empa*
786.	*ha ke sa tšaba ho ea sekolong.*
787.	*(No I don't feel scared at all going to school because I told my parents*
788.	*and even those bullies might not come to me. They might be scared of*
789.	*me or they might not be scared of me but I am no longer scared of*
790.	*going to school).*
791.	Emman: Do you now know how to be assertive? What is
792.	assertiveness? Did she teach you how to defend yourself if the bully
793.	comes to you?
794.	**Toluphato**: *Ee o re joetse hore ha bo-'mampoli ba leka ho re hlorisa re*
795.	*tlameha ho ba joetsa hore; ha ho na uena ea ke keng a etsa joalo.*
796.	*(Yes she told us that when the bullies are trying to bully us we must tell*
797.	*them that; no you can't do that).*
798.	Emman: Are you still get scared and feel like the same person that
799.	bully others can come and do the same thing to you now that you
800.	know how to defend yourself. Do you still feel scared?
801.	**Toluphato**: *Che, ha ke tšohe ho hang hobane joale ke nahana hore*
802.	*'mampoli le eena o tšaba batsoali ba ka le banab'eso.*
803.	*(No I don't feel scared at all because now I think that bully is also afraid*
804.	*of my parents and my brothers).*
805.	Emman: How do you feel when you are alone, maybe you are walking
806.	to school or you are going back home and you remember the bullying
807.	that you witnessed? Then a thought come to your mind that someone
808.	will hit you and because of that you start panicking. What other
809.	meaning can you attach to your thought?
810.	**Toluphato**: *Che, ha ke tšohe hobane ke nahana hore mohlomong*
811.	*motho eo o ea kae kapa kae moo a batlang ho ea teng kappa*
812.	*mohlomong o batla ho tla ho 'na a mpotsa potso kapa mohlomong o*
813.	*ntse a sebelisa' mila o le mong.*
814.	*(No I don't feel scared because I think maybe that person is going to*

815. *somewhere that he wants to go or maybe he wants to come to me and*
816. *ask me question or maybe he is using the same road with me).*
817. Emman: You said to me in the first interview that witnessing bul
818. lying
819. makes you to lose concentration in class. Do you still find it difficult to
820. pay attention in class? Even now that you know that the principal and
821. the teachers are there to protect you. And even you yourself know how
822. to defend yourself?
823. **Toluphato***: Ke ikutloa ke lokile hona joale mme ke khona ho tsepama*
824. *ka sehlopheng hobane kea tseba hore motho ea hlorisoang ke batho*
825. *ba bang ba kang batsoali ba ka le banab'eso. 'Mampoli o oa ba tšaba.*
826. *(I feel ok now and I can concentrate in class because I know that the*
827. *bully is scared of some people like my parents and my brothers. The*
828. *bully is afraid of them).*
829. Emman: You said in the first interview that witnessing bullying make
830. you to lose confidence in yourself. What can you say about your
831. confidence now that you know how to be assertive and now that you
832. know that there are some people to protect you?
833. **Toluphato***: Ha ke sa tšaba sekolo hobane joale ke boleletse batsoali*
834. *ba ka le banab'eso.*
835. *(I am no longer afraid in school because now I told my parents and my*
836. *brothers).*
837. Emman: Do you still have problem with sleeping as a result of
838. witnessing bullying?
839. **Toluphato***: Ha e ame boroko ba ka hobane ke boleletse mosuoe-*
840. *hlooho 'me ke joetse motsoali oa ka.*
841. *(It doesn't affect my sleep because I told the principal and I told my*
842. *parent).*
843. Emman: Do you still feel unhappy in school because you think o
844. f bullying happening to you?
845. **Toluphato***: Che, ha ke sa thaba.*
846. *(No, I am no longer unhappy).*
847. Emman: Has anyone been good to you in the school before
848. **Toluphato***: E, ho na le batho ba nqhekellang hantle sekolong ka*
849. *mohlala metsoalle le moena oa ka.*
850. *(Yes there are people who are treating me good at school for example*
851. *my friends and my brother).*
852. Emman: You said in the first interview that witnessing bulling affect
853. your trust for people. Do you still think everyone is bad and that you
854. can't trust anyone even those who are good to you?
855. **Toluphato***: Ke ts'epa batho hobane joale kea tseba hore ha ho ka*
856. *etsahala letho ho nna nka ea ho bona mme ba tla nthusa.*
857. *(I trust people because now I know that if anything happens to me I can*
858. *go to them and they will help me).*
859. Emman: How do you feel now when you see one of the bullies coming
860. towards you? Do you give it another meaning that maybe the bully is
861. just going his own way? And when you think like that do you still panic
862. or get sacred
863. **Toluphato***: Ha ke tšohe hobane ke nahana hore bo-'mampoli le*

322

864.	*metsoalle ea hae ba ea ka tsela ea bona mme kea tseba hore ba ke*
865.	*ke ba nkopa hobane ba tšaba mor'eso.*
866.	*(I am not scared because I think the bullies and his friends are going*
867.	*their own way and I know they won't touch me because they are*
868.	*scared of my brother).*
869.	Emman: You said in the first interview that you don't think there are
870.	good people left in the school and because of that you don't feel safe
871.	in the school. How do you feel about your safety in school now after
872.	you witness bullying and you know that you have reported to the
873.	principal?
874.	**Toluphato***: Ke ikutloa ke sireletsehile 'me ha ke sa tšaba sekolong.*
875.	*Emman: Ke leboha haholo. Bye*
876.	*(I feel safe and I am no longer afraid at school).*
877.	Emman: Why
878.	**Toluphato***: Ha ke sa tšaba letho hobane bo-'mampoli ba tseba hore ke*
879.	*boleletse abuti le batsoali ba ka kahoo ba ke ke ba nkutloisa bohloko.*
880.	*Ke nahana hore ba tšaba ho etsa joalo.*
881.	*(I am no longer scared because the bullies know that I told my brother*
882.	*and my parents so they won't hurt me. I think they are scared of doing*
883.	*that).*
884.	Emman: How do you feel about going to school every morning after
885.	you witnessed bullying? When you have this negative thought that
886.	make you to be afraid of going to school, what do you say to yourself
887.	that make the fear to go?
888.	**Toluphato***: Ke ikutloa ke lokile. Ha ke sa tšaba hobane joale ke tseba*
889.	*ho itšireletsa. Ha ke soabe ho hang 'me ke ikutloa ke thabile ho ea*
890.	*sekolong.*
891.	*(I feel ok. I am no longer scared because I now know how to defend*
892.	*myself. I don't feel scared at all and I feel happy to go to school.*
893.	Emman: Thank you so much. Bye

Example of coding of transcripts to develop themes

Focus: What are bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?

Participant 1
Analyse Phase 1: Coding the data

Data	Open Code
Question: **So that day when you saw your friend being bullied did you wish you could stand up for her.** *I did feel like helping her and telling the bully not to hit her.* **So how do you feel when you were not able to help your friend?** *I felt sad because I couldn't help my friend, I*	• She is sympathetic and willing to intervene. • She feels guilty for not helping her friend. • She dislikes going to school as a result of fear of being bullied • She loses concentration in class as a result of

323

felt very sad **Do you feel guilty or do you put the blame on yourself because you couldn't help that friend?** *Yes I do feel guilty* **How does witnessing bullying affect your likeness for school?** *It makes me not to like school because some other kids are getting bullied* **I am so sorry to hear that. Now let me ask you how witnessing bullying affects your concentration in class** *Sometimes I can't concentrate in class when my teacher is speaking because I am thinking of what the bully did* **When you witness bullying, do you feel angry?** *Sometimes I get moody because I want to help the other children but I can't because I am afraid* **How does witnessing bullying affect your sleep?** *I can't sleep. Sometimes I have nightmares* **How does witnessing bullying affect your trust for people?** *I don't trust anyone at school the only person that I trust is my best friend* **How do you feel about going to school every morning after you witnessed bullying?** *I think twice sometimes before I can come to school, I said to myself should I go or not but my parent push me to come to school* **Do you sometimes feel scared of going to school?** *Bullying make me to be afraid of school. Sometimes when my mother wakes me for school I am like no don't wake me up I don't want to go to school*	psychological re-victimisation • She becomes moody as a result of inability to intervene on behalf of the victims • She experiences nightmare and sleeplessness • She has mistrust • She thinks she is not secure in school because she thinks no one will defend her when she is also bullied. • She becomes afraid of going to school

Analyse Phase 2: Searching for candidate theme
Audit trail

Open code	Axial code	Inclusion/ exclusion criteria
She is sympathetic and disappointed. She becomes moody as a result of inability to intervene on behalf of the victims	Willingness to intervene.	Includes any reference that shows bystanders intention to intervene for the victim as a result of sympathy. Exclude any reference to an intention to intervene that could not be attributed to empathy or sympathy.
She feels guilty for not helping her friend	Feeling guilt and self-blame.	Includes any reference to expression of guilt and apportioning of self-blame as a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to expression of guilt and apportioning of self-blame

324

		which is not a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying.
She dislikes going to school as a result of fear of being bullied. She becomes afraid of going to school	School phobia	Includes any reference to loss of interest in going to school as a result of fear of being next victim after witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to loss of interest in going to school which is not a result of fear of being the next victim after witnessing bullying
She loses concentration in class as a result of psychological re-victimisation	Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co- victimisation	Includes any reference to inability to focus attention in class due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed Excludes any reference to inability to focus attention in class which is not due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed.
She experiences negative emotions and behaviours such as nightmare, sleeplessness and mistrust	Expression of negative emotions and behaviours.	Includes any reference to expression of negative emotional and behavioural reactions as a result of anticipating being next victim after witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to expression of negative emotions and behavioural reactions which could not be linked to anticipating being next victim after witnessing bullying.
She thinks she is not secure in school because she thinks no one will defend her when she is also be bullied	Insecure feelings	Includes any reference to feelings of insecurity in school which is brought about as a result of fear of being next target after witnessing bullying Exclude any reference to feelings of insecurity in school which could not be linked to fear of being next target after witnessing bullying or which could be attributed to other factors apart from fear of being next victim after witnessing bullying.

What are the bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying? For participant 1, they are:

- Willingness to intervene.
- Feeling guilt and self-blame.
- School phobia
- Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co- victimisation
- Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as nightmares, sleeplessness and mistrust
- Insecure feelings

Participant 2
Analyse Phase 1: Coding the data

Data	Open Code
Do you wish you could defend the victim or stand up for the victim? *Yes I do feel like I can intervene when I witness bullying. When it happens in front of my eyes, I do wish I can intervene.* **So how do you feel when you witness bullying but you were not able to defend the victim?** *I feel so bad if I can't do anything to stop the bullying because I feel it is happening to me too.* **Do you feel guilty or do you put the blame on yourself because you couldn't help that friend?** *Yes I do feel guilty very much guilty when I witness bullying. Sometimes I even wish I could go and tell the principal but when I think that the bully can even come back to me, I don't go and I feel guilty.* **Are you saying that you were so scared of helping the victim?** *Yes I am scared.* **How does witnessing bullying affect your likeness for school?** *It does affect my likeness for school. Sometimes when I wake up I doubt if I should go to school or not because of this bullying.* **When you witness bullying do you feel angry?** *Yes witnessing bullying makes me feel angry.* **Now let me ask you how does witnessing bullying affect your concentration in class?** *It affects me a lot when I am in class. Sometimes even when I am writing a test instead of thinking about the test that I am writing, I start thinking about the bullying that I witnessed.* **Do you get carried away in class as a result of witnessing bullying in school?** *It does affect me even when my teacher is teaching me my mind goes off sometimes even if she asks me a question, I will just be looking at her because I am not concentrating because I am thinking about the bullying that I witnessed.* **So how do you feel about your safety in school after you witnessed bullying?** *I don't feel safe at all because I am scared that what if the bully come to me and challenge me that ehh you saw us. So I am not safe. That is why I don't feel safe* **Are you saying that sometimes you dislike school or get scared of going to school**	• She wishes she could intervene when she witness bullying • She feels so bad • She becomes angry • She feels guilty for not defending her friend. • She takes responsibility for not defending the victim • She develops hatred for school • She becomes absent minded in class when she flashbacks to the bullying incident she witnessed • She feels not secure in school because she thinks she will be next victim of bullying

because of the bullying you witnessed?	
I am scared of going to school but at home they forced me that I have to go to school	

Analyse Phase 2: Searching for candidate theme
Audit trail

Open code	Axial code	Inclusion/ exclusion criteria
She wishes she could intervene when she witness bullying	Eagerness to intervene.	Includes any reference that shows bystanders intention to intervene for the victim as a result of sympathy. Exclude any reference to an intention to intervene that could not be attributed to empathy or sympathy.
She experiences negative emotions and behaviours such as anger, distress, upset,	Expression of negative emotions and behaviours.	Includes any reference to expression of negative emotional and behavioural reactions as a result of anticipating being next victim after witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to expression of negative emotions and behavioural reactions which could not be linked to anticipating being next victim after witnessing bullying.
She feels guilty for not defending her friend. She takes responsibility for not defending the victim	Feeling remorse, guilt and self-blame.	Includes any reference to expression of guilt and apportioning of self-blame as a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to expression of guilt and apportioning of self-blame which is not a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying.
She develops hatred for school	School dislike	Includes any reference to loss of interest in going to school as a result of fear of being next victim after witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to loss of interest in going to school which is not a result of fear of being the next victim after witnessing bullying
She becomes absent minded in class when she flashbacks to the bullying incident she witnessed	Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation	Includes any reference to inability to focus attention in class due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed Excludes any reference to inability to focus attention in class which is not due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed.

She feels not secure in school because she thinks she will be next victim of bullying	Unconfident of school safety	Includes any reference to feelings of insecurity in school which is brought about as a result of fear that no one can challenge the bullies in school. Exclude any reference to feelings of insecurity in school which could not be linked to fear that no one can challenged the bullies or which could be attributed to other factors apart from fear that is generated from thought that no can challenged the bullies in school

What are the bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying?

For participant 2, they are:

- Eagerness to intervene
- Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as anger, distress and upset
- Feeling remorse, guilt and self-blame
- School dislike
- Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation
- Unconfident of school safety

Participant 3
Analyse Phase 1: Coding the data

Data	Open Code
Do you sometimes wish you could defend or fight for the victim? *I wish I can do that* **Are you trying to say that you feel guilty or blame yourself for not being able to defend the victim?** *Yes I feel guilty and I do blame myself.* **How does witnessing bullying affect your mood in school generally in the school?** *It makes me feel down because I can't do anything at school* **How does witnessing bullying affect your likeness for school?** *I don't feel like coming to school. I don't like school and it makes me feel like I don't want to go to school anymore.* **When you witnessed bullying; do you feel angry?** *Yes I feel very angry when I witnessed bullying.* **How does witnessing bullying affect your concentration in class?** *I can't concentrate in the class and I can't even write my school work. I can't concentrate when the teachers are teaching.*	• She wishes she could fight back the bullies on behalf of the victim • She thinks she should be blamed because she couldn't defend her • Witnessing bullying makes her feel downhearted • She becomes angry when she witness bullying • She feels unhappy, tearful and sad • She develops mistrust because she believes that everyone is a bad person • She experiences decrease in love for school • She loses concentration in class because her mind is disturbed as a result of flashbacks to the bullying scenario • She doesn't feel safe in school because she

Do you get carried away in class when you remember the bullying you witnessed? *Yes i get carried away when I think of what I witnessed.* **How does witnessing bullying affect your happiness in school?** *I don't have happiness in school because I always feel like crying and I feel sad).* **How does witnessing bulling affect your trust for people?** *I don't trust anybody because I feel like those people can turn their back and beat me or bully me also.* **How do you feel about you safety in school after you witness bullying?** *I don't feel safe at all because I don't feel like I am protected here in school.*	thinks there is no one to protect her.

Analyse Phase 2: Searching for candidate theme
Audit trail

Open code	Axial code	Inclusion/ exclusion criteria
She wishes she could fight back the bullies on behalf of the victim	Desire to intervene.	Includes any reference that shows bystanders intention to intervene for the victim as a result of sympathy. Exclude any reference to an intention to intervene that could not be attributed to empathy or sympathy.
She thinks she should be blamed because she couldn't defend her	Self-condemnation and self-blame.	Includes any reference to expression of guilt and apportioning of self-blame as a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to expression of guilt and apportioning of self-blame which is not a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying.
She experiences negative emotions and behaviours such as, tearfulness, anger, unhappiness, sadness and mistrust	Expression of negative emotions and behaviours.	Includes any reference to expression of negative emotional and behavioural reactions as a result of anticipating being next victim after witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to expression of negative emotions and behavioural reactions which could not be linked to anticipating being next victim after witnessing bullying.
She experiences decrease in love for school	School phobia	Includes any reference to loss of interest in going to school as a result of fear of being next victim after witnessing bullying.

		Exclude any reference to loss of interest in going to school which is not a result of fear of being the next victim after witnessing bullying
She loses concentration in class because her mind is disturbed as a result of flashbacks to the bullying scenario	Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation	Includes any reference to inability to focus attention in class due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed Excludes any reference to inability to focus attention in class which is not due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed.
She doesn't feel safe in school because she thinks there is no one to protect her.	Uncertain of school safety	Includes any reference to feelings of insecurity in school which is brought about as a result of fear of being next target after witnessing bullying Exclude any reference to feelings of insecurity in school which could not be linked to fear of being next target after witnessing bullying or which could be attributed to other factors apart from fear of being next victim after witnessing bullying.

What are the bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying?

For participant 3, they are:

- Desire to intervene
- Self-condemnation and self-blame
- Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as tearfulness, anger, unhappiness, sadness and mistrust
- School phobia
- Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation
- Uncertain of school safety

Participant 4
Analyse Phase 1: Coding the data

Data	Open Code
Did you fight for the victim? *I did intervene I went to the bully and I told him that he is older and he should not beat the small girl because she refused to give him her money* **How do you feel when you witness bullying?** *I feel very sad when I witness bullying because the victim might end up not coming to school*	• She makes attempts to stop the bullying by confronting the bully to stop • She feels sad • She becomes worried • She is scared that she could become a victim

330

anymore.		too.
How does witnessing bullying affect you generally?		• She feels hurt
It affects me because this other learner was hurt. The bully hit her until she got hurt. So to me I was worried that what if the girl doesn't come to school anymore.		• She loses concentration in class whenever she remembers the bullying she witnessed
How does witnessing bullying affect your concentration in class?		
I can't concentrate when Mam is teaching. I can't even hear when the other kids are answering the mam because I am thinking about the bullying that i witnessed.		
What are your other experiences of witnessing bullying?		
I feel very sad when I witnessed bullying because It is not the first time that this boy bully learners even last year he did the same thing and they give him warning but he is still bullying learners even now. So I am scared.		
Is there any other thing you want to tell me about witnessing bullying?		
I also witnessed another bullying. This bully tells everyone that this girl is smelling whenever the girl is passing. He also tells everyone that the parent of the girl doesn't have a good house. That they are sleeping in a small place. So it hurts me so much when I think about it.		
Did you try to intervene on behalf of the victim?		
I told the girl not to worry and that she shouldn't take what the bullying is saying serious. I told her that that boy is a bully and she must not take his words serious.		

Analyse Phase 2: Searching for candidate theme
Audit trail

Open code	Axial code	Inclusion/ exclusion criteria
She made attempts to stop the bullying by confronting the bully to stop	Striving to intervene.	Includes any reference that shows bystanders intention to intervene for the victim as a result of sympathy. Exclude any reference to an intention to intervene that could not be attributed to empathy or sympathy.
She experiences negative emotions and behaviours such as sadness, worry, fear	Expression of negative emotions and behaviours.	Includes any reference to expression of negative emotional and behavioural reactions as a result of anticipating being next victim after witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to expression of negative emotions and behavioural reactions which could not be linked to anticipating being next victim after

331

		witnessing bullying.
She loses concentration in class whenever she remembers the bullying she witnessed	Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation	Includes any reference to inability to focus attention in class due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed. Excludes any reference to inability to focus attention in class which is not due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed.

What are the bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying?

For participant 4, they are:

- Striving to intervene.
- Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as sadness, worry and fear
- Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation

Participant 5
Analyse Phase 1: Coding the data

Data	Open Code
Do you sometimes wish you could defend or fight for the victim? *I feel like that…… to go and help the victim but if I can't, I go to tell the teacher to intervene.* **So how do you feel when you witness bullying and you wish you could intervene but because of one reason or the other you fail to intervene.** *I feel sad and I feel bad. I feel a lot of emotions.* **Are you trying to say that you feel guilty or blame yourself for not being able to defend the victim?** *Yaa I do blame myself I wish I could have helped or called somebody but I couldn't so I blame myself.* **Are you trying to say that you feel scared to defend the victims when you witnessed bullying?** *Yaa sometimes I feel scared but sometimes I go to tell the bully not to do that and he ends up insulting me.* **How does witnessing bullying affect your mood in school generally?** *I get scared and my whole day gets spoil.* **How does witnessing bullying affect your likeness for school?** *I feel scared sometimes I don't wanna come to school and I tell my mom and my mom tells me*	• She intends to intervene • She feels sad and bad • She becomes moody • She experiences nightmares • She loses trust for everyone • She feels guilty and blame herself for not being able to help the victim • She feels unhappy to go to school because she is not comfortable in school • She is afraid to go school because she thinks she will be bullied • She loses concentration in class as a result of psychological re-victimisation

to come to school and she will tell my other aunt that she must come and attend to the matter.	
How does witnessing bullying affect your concentration in class?	
It changes with my mood. Sometimes I do feel like I can't concentrate. Sometimes I try to concentrate and sometimes I can't concentrate.	
Why do you find it difficult to concentrate in class?	
Yes it disturbs me a lot I can't concentrate because I saw another child being bullied in school.	
How does witnessing bullying affect your sleep?	
It affects me. I have bad dreams seeing a person being hit. It disturbs me a lot in my sleep.	
How do you feel about going to school every morning after you witnessed bullying?	
When I wake up in the morning and think of going to school, I said no, I feel like not going to school every morning.	
Do you sometimes dislike school or get scared of going to school because of the bullying you witnessed?	
I do go to school but sometimes I get scared. I don't want to go to school but i end up going because I want to go to school and write my test and pass.	
How does witnessing bulling affect your trust for people?	
It has made me lose a lot of trust even for my friend, even when they tell me something I end up telling them that even you can bully me.	
Emman: How do you feel when you see one of the bullies coming towards you?	
When I see this bully coming my way, even if I was going this side, I change direction. I go the other way just to avoid seeing the bully	

Analyse Phase 2: Searching for candidate theme
Audit trail

Open code	Axial code	Inclusion/ exclusion criteria
She intends to intervene	Longing to intervene.	Includes any reference that shows bystanders intention to intervene for the victim as a result of sympathy. Exclude any reference to an intention to intervene that could not be attributed to empathy or sympathy.
She experiences negative emotions and behaviours such	Expression of negative emotions and behaviours.	Includes any reference to expression of negative emotional and behavioural reactions as a result of

as sadness, moodiness nightmares and mistrust		anticipating being next victim after witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to expression of negative emotions and behavioural reactions which could not be linked to anticipating being next victim after witnessing bullying.
She feels guilty and blame herself for not being able to help the victim	Feeling guilt and self-blame.	Includes any reference to expression of guilt and apportioning of self-blame as a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to expression of guilt and apportioning of self-blame which is not a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying.
She feels unhappy to go to school because she is not comfortable in school She is afraid to go school because she thinks she will be bullied	School phobia	Includes any reference to loss of interest in going to school as a result of fear of being next victim after witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to loss of interest in going to school which is not a result of fear of being the next victim after witnessing bullying
She loses concentration in class as a result of psychological re-victimisation	Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation	Includes any reference to inability to focus attention in class due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed Excludes any reference to inability to focus attention in class which is not due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed.

What are the bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying?

For participant 5, they are:

- Longing to intervene
- Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as sadness, moodiness nightmares and mistrust
- Feeling guilt and self-blame.
- School phobia
- Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation

Data	Open Code
Do you sometimes wish you could defend or fight for the victim? *Yes I want to but I am afraid because myself too they can bully me* **So how do you feel when you witness bullying and you wish you could intervene but because of one reason or the other you fail to intervene.** *I feel bad and sometimes I feel angry* **Are you trying to say that you feel guilty or blame yourself for not being able to defend the victim?** *Yes I feel bad and guilty.* **Are you trying to say that you feel scared to defend the victims when you witness bullying?** *Yes.* **Why do you feel scared?** *Me too I am scared because I am afraid they might beat me or bully me just like they are doing to the victim.* **How does witnessing bullying affect your mood in school generally in the school?** *Sometimes I am shaking. Sometimes my body is shaking and I get angry because I want to beat them but I can't.* **How does witnessing bullying affect your likeness for school?** *I don't feel like coming to school. Sometimes I want to avoid school.* **How does witnessing bullying affect your concentration in class?** *My concentration is not in the class because I feel like those people are there. They want to come and take my pen.* **Do you get carried away in class when you remember the bullying you witnessed?** *Yes i get carried away when I think about the bullying because I feel like it is me that is being bullied.* **How does witnessing bullying affect your sleep?** *I feel bad because sometimes I have bad dreams. I dream like it is me that they are bullying.* **How does witnessing bulling affect your trust for people?** *I don't trust anyone because I feel like they too are part of those who are busy bullying learners.* **How do you feel about you safety in school after you witness bullying?** *I am not sure if I can tell the teacher or*	• He wishes to intervene only that she is afraid • He feels angry and bad • He shivers and gets nervous • He experiences bad dream • He develops mistrust for everyone • He experiences fear • He feels disappointed for not being able to render help to the victim even though he intended to • He is fearful of going to school because he thinks he will be bullied • He finds it difficult to pay attention in class anytime he thinks he will equally be bullied • He doesn't feel safe in school because he always engage in thought that he will be bullied

principal because I feel scared that they can come and bully me. **Ok I want to know how you feel about your safety in school after you have seen bullying happening in school.** *I don't feel safe at all because I see that bullying is happening at school. So I feel like me too I will be bullied.* **How do you feel about going to school every morning after you witnessed bullying?** *Eish sometimes when I come to school I feel shaking. I feel afraid to go school.* **Is there any other thing you want to tell me about your experiences of witnessing bullying?** *I feel scared and sometinmes I feel like I can commit suicide. I feel angry because I feel like I can get inside and defend the victim that they are bullying.* How do you feel when you see one of the bullies coming towards you? *I feel scared and sometimes I hold my feet.* **Do you sometimes dislike school or get scared of going to school because of the bullying you witnessed?** *I feel scared because I think about what they are doing to other kids.*	

Analyse Phase 2: Searching for candidate theme
Audit trail

Open code	Axial code	Inclusion/ exclusion criteria
He wishes to intervene only that she is afraid	Willingness to intervene.	Includes any reference that shows bystanders intention to intervene for the victim as a result of sympathy. Exclude any reference to an intention to intervene that could not be attributed to empathy or sympathy.
He experiences negative emotions and behaviours such as anger, shivering, nervous, nightmares, fear and mistrust	Expression of negative emotions and behaviours	Includes any reference to expression of negative emotional and behavioural reactions as a result of anticipating being next victim after witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to expression of negative emotions and behavioural reactions which could not be linked to anticipating being next victim after witnessing bullying.
He feels disappointed for not being able to render help to the victim even though he intended	Feeling guilt and answerable	Includes any reference to expression of guilt and apportioning of self-blame as a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to expression

to		of guilt and apportioning of self-blame which is not a result of not being able to defend the victim when witnessing bullying.
He is fearful of going to school because he thinks he will be bullied	Unwilling to go to school	Includes any reference to loss of interest in going to school as a result of fear of being next victim after witnessing bullying. Exclude any reference to loss of interest in going to school which is not a result of fear of being the next victim after witnessing bullying
He finds it difficult to pay attention in class anytime he thinks he will equally be bullied	Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation	Includes any reference to inability to focus attention in class due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed Excludes any reference to inability to focus attention in class which is not due to flashbacks of the bullying witnessed.
He doesn't feel safe in school because he always engage in thought that he will be bullied	Insecure feelings	Includes any reference to feelings of insecurity in school which is brought about as a result of fear of being next target after witnessing bullying Exclude any reference to feelings of insecurity in school which could not be linked to fear of being next target after witnessing bullying or which could be attributed to other factors apart from fear of being next victim after witnessing bullying

What are the bystanders' emotional and behavioural reactions to witnessing bullying?

For participant 6, they are:

- Willingness to intervene.
- Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as anger, shivering, nervous, nightmares, fear and mistrust
- Feeling guilt and answerable.
- Unwilling to go to school
- Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation
- Insecure feelings

Analyse phase 3: Reviewing themes

P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Willingness to intervene.	Eagerness to intervene	Desire to intervene	Striving to intervene	Longing to intervene	Willingness to intervene
Feeling guilt and self-blame.	Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as anger, distress and upset	Self-condemnation and self-blame	Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as sadness, worry and fear	Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as sadness, moodiness nightmares and mistrust	Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as anger, shivering, nervous, nightmares, fear and mistrust
School phobia	Feeling remorse, guilt and self-blame	Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as tearfulness, anger, unhappiness, sadness and mistrust	Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation	Feeling guilt and self-blame	Feeling guilt and answerable
Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation	School dislike	School avoidance		School phobia	Unwilling to go to school
Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as nightmares, sleeplessness and mistrust	Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation	Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation		Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation	Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co-victimisation
Insecure feelings	Unconfident of school safety	Uncertain of school safety			Insecure feelings

Codes based on research questions

What are bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying?

Willingness to intervene (P1)
Eagerness to intervene (P2)
Desire to intervene (P3)
Striving to intervene (P4)
Longing to intervene (P5)
Willingness to intervene (P6)
Willingness to intervene (P7)
Willingness to intervene (P8)
Willingness to take action against the bullies (P9)

> **Willingness to intervene**

Feeling guilt and self-blame (P1)
Feeling remorse, guilt and self-blame (P2)
Self-condemnation and self-blame (P3)
Feeling guilt and self-blame (P5)
Feeling guilt and answerable (P6)
Feeling blameworthy (P7)
Feeling guilt and self-blame (P8)

> **Self-blame and feeling guilt for not being able to defend victims**

Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co- victimisation (P1)
Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co- victimisation (P2)

> **Difficulty in concentration due to psychological re-victimisation**

338

Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co- victimisation (P3)
Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co- victimisation (P4)
Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co- victimisation (P5)
Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co- victimisation (P6)
Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co- victimisation (P7)
Difficulties in concentration due to indirect co- victimisation (P9)

Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as nightmares, sleeplessness and mistrust (P1)
Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as anger, distress and upset (P2)
Expression negative emotions and behaviours such as tearfulness, anger, unhappiness, sadness and mistrust (P3)
Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as sadness, worry and fear (P4)
Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as sadness, moodiness nightmares and mistrust (P5)
Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as shivering, anger, nervous, nightmares, fear and mistrust (P6)
Expressed negative emotions and behaviours such as sadness, (P7)
Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as anger, unhappiness, fear and worry (P8)
Expression of negative emotions and behaviours such as sadness and fear (P9)

Insecure feelings (P1)
Unconfident of school safety (P2)
Uncertain of school safety (P3)
Insecure feelings (P6)
Worried about safety in school (P7)

Insecure feelings

School phobia (P1)
School dislike (P2)
School avoidance (P3)
School phobia (P5)
Unwilling to go to school (P6)
Reluctant to attend school (P7)
Fear of going to school (P8)

School phobia

Emerging theme:

Bystanders' behavioural and emotional responses to witnessing bullying

Emerging sub themes:

| Willingness to intervene | Self-blame and feeling guilt for not being able to defend victims | Difficulty in concentration due to psychological re-victimisation |
| Expressed negative emotions and behaviours | Insecure feelings | School phobia |