

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Attachment behavioural system
ADD	Attention deficit disorder
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
AERA	American Educational Research Association
AP	Associated Press
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BED	Bachelor of Education
CB	Cyberbullying
CDC	Centre for Disease Control
CEO	Chief Education Officer
CPTD	Continuing professional teacher development
D	Depression
DC	Disciplinary committee
DOE	Department of Education
EEA	Environment of Evolutionary Adaptations
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
FI	Family influence
GAD	Generalised anxiety disorder
GST	General strain theory
HLM	Hierarchical linear modelling
HRM	Human Resource Management
IQ	Intelligent quotient
IT	Inborn traits
IWM	Internal working model
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LGB	Lesbian gay bisexual
LGBT	Lesbian gay bisexual transgender
MED	Master of Education

NATU	National Teachers Union
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCD	Obsessive compulsive disorder
OCR	Office for Civil Rights
PB	Physical bullying
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAPS	South African Police Service
SASA	South African Schools Act
SCT	Social categorisation theory
SDO	Social dominance orientated
SGB	School Governing Body
SIT	Social identity theory
SMS	Short message system
SMT	School management team
SNA	Social network analysis
TS	Tourette syndrome
TV	Television
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America
VB	Verbal bullying
WHO	World Health Organisation

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **BACKGROUND, PROBLEM FORMULATION AND AIMS OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The high prevalence of bullying in South African schools, as seen in recent media reports, is a cause for serious concern. According to Pillay (2015:5), South African learners are more exposed to violence at school than children in any country other than Jamaica. Bullying is a cruel reality at many schools in the country, and many learners are being forced into a social group in order to identify with it (Naidoo 2013:8). In today's hostile school climate, learners must endure a world characterised by hurtfulness and shame, one in which it is more important to fit in at any cost. The constant teasing and incessant jeering destroys a person's self-confidence and causes the learner to feel inferior and impacts negatively on his self concept and his potential and vision of himself (Naidoo 2013:8). Bullying can affect the social environment of a school, creating a climate of pervasive fear among learners, inhibiting their ability to learn, and leading to other anti-social and disturbing behaviour (Mestry, Van der Merwe & Squelch 2006:46).

In a recently released survey of 49 countries conducted by Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, it was found that 68% of learners feared being physically assaulted or threatened with a weapon at school with the report suggesting that South Africa leads the world when it comes to the extent of bullying in schools (Loynes 2013:14). The report further reveals that 55% of learners have confessed to being bullied at school at least once a week. Another survey revealed that more females-73% felt threatened at school than males-63% (Louw 2013:6). It is estimated that worldwide up to 50% of school children are faced with the complex dilemma of bullying in schools, as either perpetrators or victims (Swart & Bredekamp 2009:405). The most recent United Kingdom research indicates that one in every four primary school children and one in ten secondary school children are bullied at least once a term (Dosani 2008: xiii). What is more, the American Medical Association confirmed that about 160 000 learners stay away from school each day as a result of bullying (Beane 2008:13).

Campbell (2005:68) asserts that bullying is a serious social problem that occurs on a global scale and can occur during all stages of a person's life, from infancy through adolescence and even in the working environment. Bullying can be both physical and psychological and may also present itself in subtle forms, such as social exclusion, name calling and gossip (Mestry *et al.* 2006:47). However, recent media reports reveal a staggering number of incidents in schools where bullying has taken a seriously violent turn. It was reported that one in five South African secondary school learners is a victim of violence, including assault, robbery and even cyberbullying (Anthony 2013:1).

In KwaZulu-Natal, levels of assault and theft have increased substantially since 2008, and it has been established that about 90% of the violence encountered by learners was perpetrated by classmates (Anthony 2013a:1).

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education spokesman, Muzi Mahlambi, described the recent bullying and revenge attacks that took place at Mzamo High School in Blaauwbosch, near Newcastle as absolutely shocking and a huge concern for the Department (Nair 2013:1). As payback for being bullied and having her lunch stolen every day, a KwaZulu-Natal high school learner laced a chocolate cake with laxatives and rat poison and offered it to her tormentors. In this near fatal incident, seven victims suffered severe stomach cramps, vomiting, diarrhoea, severe disorientation and were rushed to the Madadeni Provincial Hospital for urgent medical attention (Nair 2013:1). Recently, a vicious attack on an 18 year old Grade 11 learner, Zhane Abubakr from Marklands Secondary in Shallcross, resulted in the youngster suffering fractures to several vertebrae when a dangerous wrestling manoeuvre was used on him in which he was dropped head first onto concrete paving (Naran 2013:1).

In more serious cases, learners have sought revenge with dangerous weapons such as knives with disastrous results (Nair 2013:1). In a violent attack at the Umlulama High School in Pietermaritzburg, 16-year-old Siyanda Sithole and 17-year-old Zwelile Mkhize were stabbed multiple times by a group of learners on the school grounds (Peters 2013:3). In a fatal incident that occurred in October 2012, 16-year-old Nkosingiphile Ngcamu died *en route* to the hospital after being repeatedly stabbed in full view of fellow learners who watched helplessly as their classmate was murdered at school. Two learners, aged 16 and 18 were

arrested and prosecuted for the incident (Peters 2013:3). Furthermore, a long-standing rivalry between two gangs led to the fatal stabbing of a 16-year-old boy and the injury of another at the Pongola High School in Northern KwaZulu-Natal (Mlambo 2015:3).

In another tragic incident, two brothers, both learners at the Welbedene Secondary School in Chatsworth, KwaZulu-Natal, were stabbed several times after an altercation at their school with one brother, Dareshan, pronounced dead at the scene and the other brother, Revashan, in a critical condition at the RK Khan Hospital in Chatsworth (Soobramoney 2013:1). On the East Rand, Gauteng, a grade 11 learner is facing trial for murder after he allegedly shot and killed a grade 10 learner whom he claimed tormented him regularly (Louw 2013:5).

Lately, the use of guns to settle scores has gained momentum in many KwaZulu-Natal schools. In a recent incident, a 15-year-old Pietermaritzburg school boy from Copesville High School, who had had enough of being bullied, took his father's gun to school and ended the life of his tormentor (Regchand 2015:3). Worse still, a murder and a suicide at an Empangeni High School have reignited the debate whether more stringent security measures should be introduced at schools, when a grade 12 learner at the Qantayi High School reportedly shot and killed another learner and then turned the gun on himself (Jansen 2015:1).

Enshrined in The Bill of Rights (Chapter 2:24a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is the provision of a safe environment for all citizens. Sections 4(1) and (2) of the South African School's Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 (ELRC 2003: B65) clearly states that:

- All public schools are (hereby) declared drug free zones and dangerous object free zones.
- No person may cause any form of violence or disturbance, which can impact negatively on any public school activities.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No.108 of 1996 also states in Section 12(e) (RSA 2009) that "everyone has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way". Importantly, bullying is in direct contravention of the rights accorded to children in terms of Section 28(d) of the Constitution of South Africa which states that "every child has a right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation."

According to Naidoo (2012:10), it also contravenes Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that reads, “No one should hurt children in any way. Adults should make sure that every child is protected from abuse, violence and neglect.”

However, despite these legal provisions, school violence continues to escalate at an alarming rate in a number of schools throughout the country severely compromising the safety and well-being of both learners and teachers (Mestry *et al.* 2006:46). Childline’s national co-ordinator, Joan van Niekerk, argued that bullying was symptomatic of the violence that raged in the country and which has just escalated to alarming levels (Louw 2013:6).

According to Rondganger (2013:5), a school should provide a safe environment and should be representative of a centre of learning, not a place for guns and dangerous weapons. The University of Pretoria education expert, Kobus Maree, suggests that schools create an environment in which learners can safely report acts of bullying without fear of threats and victimisation from perpetrators (Louw 2013:6). However, an online survey conducted by Pondering Panda recently found that 10% of the 2064 young people interviewed, aged between 13 and 24, felt that they had no one to turn to when bullied. This disturbing response suggests that learners who are victims will not report bullying at school if they feel they will be exposed or victimised (Louw 2013:6). According to Dhaver (2012:5), children that are bullied seem too embarrassed to speak out or tell an educator because of the fear of being seen as weak and choose to remain silent in order to avoid further reprisals from the bullies themselves.

The effects of bullying have far-reaching consequences. The constant teasing destroys the learner’s self-confidence and causes labels to stick to him/her as the derision continues relentlessly (Naidoo 2013:8). It causes the learner to feel inferior to others and impacts on his self-concept, his potential and vision of himself. In fact, the pain of a put-down can wound a child for life. Although bullying is generally perceived to be physical, emotional bullying is no less harmful and causes scars that could potentially last a lifetime (Dhaver 2012:5). Victims suffer humiliation and insecurity at the hands of the bully and are extremely fearful of going to school, because of having to face the bully on a daily basis (Naidoo 2012:10). Parents of victims of violent bullies, claim that their children’s lives are in

jeopardy as incidents of bullying, extortion and even drug dealing have become commonplace (Peters 2013:3). Many teenagers are silent victims and in many cases, have no one to turn to and have resorted to taking their own lives as a result of their inability to cope with the unremitting persecution (Dhaver 2012:5).

According to Naidoo (2012:10), bullying makes children feel lonely, unhappy and frightened. It makes them feel unsafe, doubt their abilities and feel that there must be something wrong with them. They lose confidence in themselves, feel physically sick and become severely depressed and suicidal. Repetitive acts of violence- physical or emotional- impact heavily on children's performance at school. In fact, the culture of violence impacts on children's basic rights placing them at risk with their mental and physical health (Anthony 2013:1). According to Poggenpoel and Myburg (2009:76), these mental health challenges include anger, hatred, outrage, humiliation and rage, feelings of worthlessness and intense sadness. Beane (2008:180) concurs with this viewpoint by stating that victims of bullying go from experiencing feelings of extreme hurt, fear, overwhelming anxiety, frustration, helplessness to experiencing deep anger, resentment, hate, depression, rage, hopelessness and a desire for revenge or suicide. Furthermore, exposure to such violence could have serious, long-standing physical, emotional and psychological implications for victims resulting in distress, reduced self-esteem, reduced school attendance, impaired concentration and a diminished ability to learn leading to academic underperformance (Mncube & Harber 2012:17).

While the current body of research highlights the problem of bullying in schools and provides some guidelines on what measures may be adopted to address the problem, the suggested methods are not effective enough resulting in the problem continuing unabated, as media reports continue to confirm. Therefore, urgent and effective interventions are necessary to stem the occurrence of bullying in schools. Failure to do so may render schools ungovernable and lead to a climate and ethos that can potentially rule out any hope of effective learning and teaching taking place in our schools. However, interventions need to take place within the context of solid and orderly guidelines if any effective decline in incidences of bullying is to be observed. Consequently, the researcher is convinced of an urgent need for developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu

District of KwaZulu-Natal. This model is intended to reduce bullying incidences substantially with the expectation that it will alter the behaviour of the 20% of learners responsible for bullying in schools (Swearer, Espelage & Napolino 2009:7).

For the purpose of this study, five schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal were used. These schools were located in a rural area, where the researcher himself was a principal and where, in recent years, incidences of bullying had been observed to be on a significant upswing.

## **1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION**

The Uthungulu District, in which this research is being conducted, is made up of mainly rural schools that serve predominantly underprivileged children. Educators from these schools have complained about the increased incidence of bullying in their schools, which has damaged both teacher and learner morale and has contributed significantly to high rates of absenteeism. Bullies who display aggressive behaviour are wreaking havoc in schools, making the school environment completely unsafe and instilling fear by obstinately pursuing vulnerable victims.

Victims have been reported to be deeply traumatised by bullies and often fear that reporting the abuse will just lead to further persecution. As a result, victims suffer in silence experiencing intense loneliness, isolation, depression, stress and anxiety. Many see themselves as powerless victims who do not stand a chance against the bullies (Naidoo 2012:10). Fear, anxiety, and stress are closely followed by anger and helplessness- perhaps even hopelessness (Beane 2008:13). These children, who are persistently mistreated, have been reported to experience depression for a significant amount of time and, in turn, have displayed suicidal tendencies (Beane 2008:14).

According to Surujpal (2013:2), cases of learners intimidating and assaulting teachers are on the rise. Recently, a Sasolburg school teacher, who was shot by a learner had to undergo emergency surgery at the Vanderbijlpark hospital. This follows another incident, which sparked widespread outrage when a grade eight learner was filmed attacking a male teacher while his classmates cheered and laughed (Monama 2013:2). The learner had the audacity to pick up a broom and throw it at his teacher while the rest of the learners



shouted profanities at the defenceless teacher. Surujpal (2013:2) asserts that such a situation is untenable, and this type of behaviour needs to be eradicated as a matter of urgency. The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, expressed deep concern about the recent violent incidents, emphasising the need for schools to remain no-violence zones where educators and learners can feel safe and secure for effective teaching and learning to take place (Monama 2013:2).

Evidence from observations by principals and teachers at the Uthungulu District schools suggest that bullying is one of the most, if not *the* most, pervasive problem faced in schools at the moment and has become a clear concern not only for schools but for communities and society at large. The constant fear and insecurity experienced by victims are a matter of serious concern. The often violent nature of the bullying acts have created heightened tensions in the classrooms and playgrounds, adversely affecting the ethos of the school and compromising effective teaching and learning. The incessant harassment and sometimes brutal humiliation are damaging to the physical, psychological, social and academic development of children (Craven, Finger & Yeung 2007:1).

Accordingly, the overarching question the researcher attempts to answer is:

How can the problem of bullying be addressed positively in rural secondary schools using an effective and appropriate model?

In attempting to develop a model to curb bullying in schools, the following sub-questions will also need to be addressed first:

- What types of bullying are prevalent in secondary schools?
- What are the factors contributing to bullying in secondary schools?
- What is the impact of bullying on all stakeholders of the school?
- How can the problem of bullying be addressed positively in secondary schools using an effective and appropriate model?

According to Beane (2008:2), bullying is a form of overt, aggressive behaviour that is intentional, hurtful and persistent. Swearer *et al.* (2009:2) define bullying as a form of proactive aggression, in which the bully is unprovoked and initiates the bullying behaviours. Bullying can take many forms- physical violence, threats, name-calling, sarcasm, spreading

rumours, persistent teasing, exclusion from a group, tormenting, ridicule, humiliation and abusive comments- all these are a form of violence (Harber 2004:47). It is regarded as violent because it is so destructive to the well-being of children that it can lead children to harming themselves and to harming others.

Evidence in the Uthungulu District suggests that various types of bullying are prevalent in these schools. Physical bullying, the most common form of school violence, occurs in actions such as hitting, kicking, pushing, pinching, forcefully taking others' belongings and in more serious cases, stabbings and shootings (Beane 2008:3). Of major concern to stakeholders of the school and of almost equal severity, is the occurrence of verbal bullying, which takes the form of name-calling, insulting remarks and put-downs, racist remarks and harassment, threats and intimidation and sexist or homophobic comments (Dosani 2008: xiii). Psychological bullying, also referred to as emotional bullying, which also occurs at an alarmingly high rate, covers actions such as spreading nasty stories and rumours, excluding and isolating, gestures and signs that are meant to humiliate and embarrass, terrorising, blackmailing and ostracising (Mestry *et al.* 2006:48). In all of the three forms of bullying mentioned, the aggressor is perceived as physically, socially and psychologically more powerful than the target.

In recent times, however, a new form of bullying called cyberbullying, has emerged that makes use of a diverse range of technology (Campbell 2005:2). Cyberbullying occurs when victimisation takes place via telecommunication networks such as e-mail, a short message system (SMS) or picture messaging (Mestry *et al.* 2006:48). Cyberbullying is rampant in the "virtual world" and the phenomenon of children harassing children through the internet, Facebook and cell phones are now becoming commonplace and a matter of serious concern (Anthony 2013:3). According to Ahuja (2013:12), teenagers today are part of the Facebook generation who spend hours every day consuming digital media, often negatively, through direct attacks, which "include stealing passwords and assuming a person's identity, internet polling such as "who's hot and who's not, sending porn or junk mail to another child or creating websites dedicated to ridiculing children" (Anthony 2013:3).

The effects of cyberbullying are often devastating on victims. The psychological impact is often more traumatising than physical bullying because of the extremely public nature of

the bullying (Anthony 2013:3). Victims are made to feel insignificant, deeply hurt, embarrassed and fearful, irritated, powerless and wishing that they were not alive. These painful psychological effects confirm that bullying evokes feelings of embarrassment, anger, worry, fear, humiliation, loneliness, self-consciousness, betrayal and sadness (Swart & Bredekamp 2009:416). The long-term effects are equally devastating as victims have terrible recurring memories of their ordeals at the hands of their perpetrators. Many resort to absenting themselves from school in order to avoid contact with the perpetrator, thereby affecting their academic performance adversely (Makwabe 2007:4).

However, according to Nair (2013:3), cyber bullies who ceaselessly harass their victims could face prosecution. In 2009, a United Kingdom teenager, Keely Houghton, became the first person in Britain to be sentenced for cyberbullying an 18-year old girl for four years and for having threatened to kill her (Anthony 2013:3). Houghton, 18, was sentenced to three months imprisonment after pleading guilty to harassment. Similarly, a Durban-based KwaZulu-Natal woman, is seeking legal advice after she was harassed on Facebook (Umar 2013:3). The Protection of Harassment Act, which came into effect on April 27, 2013, allows victims of cyberbullying to apply for a protection order from the clerk of court," which would then be issued to the alleged offender. If the person contravenes the order they would be found guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years" (Umar 2013:3).

From a social perspective, the factors that influence bullying include the school climate, the home environment, the peer group influence and individual characteristics (Craven *et al.* 2007:2). Within the school environment, it is classroom management (of which the teacher is the chief architect) and social structure that together contribute significantly to school bullying (Roland & Galloway 2002:299). Accordingly, the influential role of the teacher in the management of learner social dynamics and the provision of a positive classroom and school climate are of paramount importance.

Learners who come from low socio-economic home environments, as is observed by principals and teachers in the Uthungulu District, often fall into the group who display bullying behaviour. Craven *et al.* (2007:3) believe that the home environment may foster authoritarian styles that contribute to bullying. "Children are sometimes presented with less

than ideal role models” at home and learn pro-aggression attitudes, develop an inability to identify or regulate emotions and emulate their parents by reacting angrily to the adverse situations that they encounter (Swearer *et al.* 2009:20). As Beane (2008:35) points out, parents who express anger physically will likely produce children who tend to express anger physically. Parents of bullies are more authoritarian, condone “fighting back” and use physical punishment to control and discipline their children. Families of bullies have been described as lacking in warmth and structure, low in family cohesion, and high in family conflict (Swearer *et al.* 2009:20).

Perceptions from teachers and management personnel in the Uthungulu District indicate that school climate is emerging as an extremely important influence on bullying or victimisation. According to Swearer *et al.* (2009:23), school climate is a particularly important variable to consider because adult supervision decreases from primary school to high school. Learners in highly conflicted schools, in which a disruptive and negative ethos prevails, often display an increase in verbal and physical aggression. Accordingly, classroom practices and teacher attitudes are salient components of school climate that contribute to bullying prevalence (Swearer *et al.* 2009:23). Sometimes, it is the inefficiency of authoritarian school structures that can cause violence (Harber 2004:35). Thus, the influential role of the teacher in the management of learner social dynamics becomes increasingly important (Craven *et al.* 2007:3). Furthermore, schools with low levels of supervision and poor management structures, experience more bullying than efficient schools that enjoy quality supervision and a superior management structure (Beane 2008:40).

Reports from many schools in the Uthungulu District suggest that another factor that promotes bullying behaviour is the peer group. “Peers play an integral role in the social development of children and adolescents. Emerging research has also shown that “peers are integral in supporting and maintaining bullying” victimisation and perpetration in our schools (Swearer *et al.* 2009:17). Peer group influence is particularly strong in the absence of adults and what allows bullying to thrive in secrecy is that learners who bully others do not want to get into trouble, and learners who are bullied by others do not want the bullying to worsen, which they often consider a likely outcome if they had to report it (Craven *et al.* 2007:3). Additionally, some learners who are bullies are among the most

popular learners and are taken in esteem by others. "If bullying is positively reinforced by the peer group and perceived by individuals to improve their position in the social hierarchy of the school," categorisation then of oneself into a group that is of high status and exclusive is likely to enhance one's sense of popularity (Craven *et al.* 2007:4). Individual characteristics are often believed to be the strongest risk factor for victims of bullying behaviour (Craven *et al.* 2007:4). Bullies who may be experiencing problems in their lives may want to take their frustration and anger out on others. To do this, they pick on learners who they view as weaker than themselves, exercising power and control over them in order to hurt them (Beane 2008:8). Vulnerable children who are often targeted by the bully possess the following characteristics- they may have a disability, wear glasses, weigh more than their peers, come from another school or just look physically weak or unattractive (Craven *et al.* 2007:4).

In more severe cases, harassment may be based on sexual orientation and in many schools in Britain, young gay men and lesbian women have been ostracised to such an extent by bullying that they have considered suicide because of homophobic bullying (Harber 2004:49). Furthermore, in America, a survey found that 70 percent of gay and lesbian students faced verbal, physical, sexual or physical harassment or assault at school (Goffe, in Harber 2004:49).

Hence, it is necessary to understand the theories associated with violent bullying behaviour, in order to conduct an empirical investigation into the problem as it manifests itself in secondary schools in the present time.

### **1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A number of theories on bullying were examined and formed an integral part of this study. However, only cursory reviews of these theories are presented at this stage.

According to Ainsworth (1979, in Williams 2011:18), the *attachment theory* states that attachments formed with the primary caregiver, as infants, determined a child's proclivity for deviant behaviour later in life (Williams 2011:18). This attachment could be secure or insecure, depending on the quality of early interactions with the caregiver. Securely attached infants tended to have better outcomes with regard to their cognitive and social

development than insecurely attached infants. Insecure attachments were related to increased instances of callous externalising behaviour, positively correlated with direct bullying as the child progressed to adolescence (Williams 2011:20).

The *behavioural theory* propounded by Skinner (1953) asserts that most human behaviour was learned through a process of conditioning and through interactions with the social environment (Ewen 2010:289). The *behavioural theory* was based on the control of behaviour through the manipulation of rewards and punishments. Feist and Feist (2009:450) concur with this view by adding that positive reinforcement increased the probability that children would repeat the same behaviour again.

Albert Bandura's (1973) *social learning theory* explains that behaviour will be continued, mimicked or modelled if reinforced, or if behaviour escaped punishment. According to the *social learning theory*, children learnt appropriate and inappropriate interactions through observing significant others in their environments. Learners who bully other learners, or are involved in bullying incidents may believe this behaviour is acceptable. Additionally, the *social learning theory* advocates that bullies may continue bullying in an attempt to gain further reinforcement or non-punishment from their peers, teachers or parents (Craven *et al.* 2007:4).

The *homophily theory* advocated by Cairns and Cairns (1994) suggested that learners in late elementary school through early high school tended to hang out or befriend peers who are similar to them in attitudes, interests, and behaviours. The theory emphasises that individuals within the same friendship group tended to report engaging in similar levels of bullying behaviours. Hence, proponents of the *homophily theory*, provided some notion that learners hung out with similarly minded individuals in relation to bullying. Simply put, the theory posited that bullies hung out with bullies (Swearer *et al.* 2009:18).

Another theory that was considered in the explanation of bullying behaviour in schools is the *differential association theory*. According to this theory, the phenomenon of bullying behaviour was more likely the result of the association of children with delinquent environments (Darmawan 2010:18). Studies of family life, for example, showed that aggressive children often modelled the violent behaviour of their parents. Furthermore, studies have also found that people who live in violent communities learnt to model the

aggressive behaviour of their neighbours. Adults in the community involved in crime and violence, racial prejudice in the neighbourhood, and the brazen flouting of the law by aggressive and violent members of the community, promoted a culture of aggression, violence and lawlessness among youth (Valois, MacDonald, Bretous, Fischer & Drane 2002: 459).

The *dominance theory* proposed by Bjorkland and Pellegrini (2002) offered an explanation as to how and why bullies socialise the way they do. Aggression has long been recognised as a means of establishing dominance among groups. The theory advocated that dominance status can be attained through either affiliative (leadership) or antagonistic (bullying) methods. Dominance was initially established through antagonistic methods late in elementary school, followed by affiliative methods later in middle school (Swearer *et al.* 2009:18).

Another theory relevant to understanding how peers influenced and maintained bullying perpetration in schools was *attraction theory*. The attraction theory (Moffitt 1993) posited that young adolescents became attracted to other youth who possessed characteristics reflecting independence, for example, delinquency, aggression, disobedience and are less attracted to those who possess characteristics more descriptive of childhood such as compliance and obedience (Swearer *et al.* 2009:19).

The *general strain theory* (Agnew 1992) was used to explain how stress or strain experienced by an individual can manifest itself in problematic emotions that led to deviant behaviour (Darmawan 2010:20). This theory proposed that strain created negative emotions in individuals such as anger, anxiety and depression that, in turn, influences delinquency and had a significant positive effect on bullying. In this regard, Olantunji and Lohr (2004:1) pointed out the relevance of *Beck's cognitive theory of anger* (1999) that confirmed that strong emotions resulted in negative phenomenological experiences that existed on a continuum in which the frequency, intensity and duration of the experience often led to impairment of the cognitive processes. Anger increased the bully's level of perceived injury, creates a desire for retaliation or revenge, energises the individual for action and lowers inhibitions (Agnew 1992:60).

The *social identity theory* (SIT) was also considered for this study since it focussed on inter-group behaviour and maintained that peer groups played an important role in bullying in schools (Duffy 2004:70). Moreover, Korte (2007:166) pointed out that the *social identity theory* developed with the purpose of understanding how individuals make sense of themselves and other people in the context of their social environments.

In addition, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) *social categorisation theory* was deemed to be relevant to this study as it entailed the categorising of people into groups to simplify our understanding of the world and to structure social interaction. *Social categorisation theory* proposed that groups formed when people categorized themselves with similar others and contrasted this category against those that were dissimilar (Duffy 2004:75).

*Dollard's frustration-aggression theory* proved relevant to this study as it shed light on how frustration caused aggression (Dollard 1931:1). The frustration-aggression hypothesis was based on the thinking that when people became frustrated (thwarting of goals), they responded aggressively.

In summary, the problem that this investigation aimed to highlight was the severe and often powerful impact of bullying on all stakeholders of the school in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher believes that the problem of bullying in secondary schools will continue unremittingly unless we sought answers to the many unanswered questions, and provided solutions in attempting to significantly reduce bullying in secondary schools.

#### **1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The foremost aim of this study was to identify the various types of bullying prevalent in secondary schools, establish the factors contributing to bullying among secondary school learners, determine the impact of bullying on all stakeholders of the school and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to manage the problem of bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

In order to achieve the central aim, several specific objectives were pursued.

These objectives were to:

- identify the various types of bullying prevalent in secondary schools.



- establish the contributory factors to bullying in secondary schools.
- determine the impact of bullying on all stakeholders of the school.
- develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools.

## **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Research is a process of systematic inquiry involving a logical process of collecting and analysing information (data) for a particular purpose and research methods are the ways in which one collects and analyses data (Faculty of Education UKZN 2010:6). For the purpose of this study, the research method adopted involved:

- a literature study of all available and relevant literature.
- an empirical investigation: A qualitative method of enquiry using observations, interviews and focus group interviews to gather the data required.

### **1.5.1 The literature study**

The literature study provided insight into what theorists in general, and what experts in particular, have already researched and documented with regard to the prevalence, manifestation and management of bullying in rural secondary schools. Journal articles, media clippings, books, papers presented at conferences and internet data from worldwide websites formed the basis of the theoretical foundation.

### **1.5.2 The empirical investigation**

In conducting the empirical investigation, the researcher used a qualitative research design as this approach gave a clear understanding of the participant's views and experiences and captured participant's perceptions as they occurred naturally (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:232) and in their actual words (Johnson & Christensen 2011:18). This design allowed the researcher to gather information- rich data through face-to-face interviews with the circuit manager, selected principals, teachers and learners with a fairly lengthy and deep involvement in their natural settings, which included the circuit office and the five secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

The design involved an interpretive paradigm that was primarily concerned with meaning and understanding people's "lived experiences" in the context of the conditions and circumstances of their lives; which in this particular instance, was bullying in secondary schools, occurring within a social context, which was the school (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston 2013:11). The interpretive paradigm involved understanding the participants' "inner-worlds" and required providing a valid, accurate account of the participants' perspectives (Johnson & Christensen 2011:265). Hence, the qualitative approach was aimed at enriching our understanding of the human experience.

Additionally, the interpretive paradigm placed emphasis on both experience and interpretation. It was considered hermeneutical (understanding and interpreting the experiences of the participants), naturalistic (giving a true reflection of the participants' situation) and constructivist, with an emphasis on the participant constructing conceptualisations (Babbie & Mouton 2007:30).

### **1.5.3 Sampling, site selection and selection of participants**

The researcher used a purposeful sampling technique because it required access to key informants in the field who could help with identifying information-rich cases for study in-depth (Suri 2011:66). Samples were drawn from the circuit office and five secondary schools (the sites) in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. The participants consisted of the circuit manager (individual perspective), the principals (individual perspective), the school management teams (SMTs) (focus groups), teachers (focus groups) and learners (focus groups). Prior arrangements were made with the circuit manager and the principal of each school and permission was sought from learners, teachers and parents before the sites were visited and interviews conducted.

### **1.5.4 Data collection methods**

The data collection and analysis processes were interactive and occurred in overlapping cycles (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:336). The researcher used interactive data collection techniques such as interviews, observations and focus group interviews to gather information-rich data (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:236). In order to capture the information from the interviews authentically, oral histories were conducted using a tape recorder. This

method complemented interviewer note-taking as it recorded the entire conversation, which could be played back for data analysis purposes (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:237).

#### **1.5.4.1 Interviews**

According to Edwards and Holland (2013:1), the interview is probably the most widely used method employed in qualitative research and is defined as a conversation with the purpose of gathering information to help understand a phenomenon. In this study, interviews were conducted with the circuit manager, principals, SMT, teachers and learners from five secondary schools in order to understand their perspectives with regard to the destructive impact of bullying in their schools. The interviews were conducted individually with the circuit manager, individually with principals and as focus groups with the SMTs, teachers and learners. This qualitative process allowed the researcher to enter into the inner worlds of the participants in order to gain an intimate understanding of their perspectives (Johnson & Christenson 2008:207), thus enabling the researcher to get to the root of the problem (Mncube & Harbor 2012:29).

The researcher used a semi-structured interview style compiling the questions to be asked beforehand (Creswell 2013:160). The questions were based on the literature study, focussing on the types and characteristics of bullying behaviour, the contributory factors, and the negative impact of bullying on all stakeholders of the school. It also took into account the participants' (circuit manager, principal, SMTs, teachers and learners) experiences of bullying in their schools and their perspectives on how the problem could be addressed in secondary schools. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and critically analysed.

#### **1.5.4.2 Field notes**

According to Pratt (2006:14), field notes are one of the main methods employed in qualitative research and are an integral part of in-depth interviewing. The critical aspect of taking field notes was to observe the participants' expressions closely and noting it down without interrupting or influencing the participants in any way. Observations enabled the researcher to gather information first-hand and to establish a deeper understanding by

looking out for non-verbal body language and facial expressions of participants in order to interpret the data accurately (Faculty of Education UKZN 2010:74).

#### **1.5.4.3 Focus group interviews**

This variation of the ethnographic interview was used as a data collection strategy by the researcher because it encouraged participants to “open up” and talk freely about bullying experiences in interactive groups (Ho 2006:2). Furthermore, the focus group interview was an appropriate research tool for data collection since participants tended to self-disclose information spontaneously and with remarkable consistency. For the purpose of this study, the researcher interviewed SMTs, teachers and learners as focus groups in each of the five secondary schools. By creating a social environment in which group members were stimulated by the perceptions and ideas of each other, the researcher increased the quality and richness of data via a more efficient strategy than is possible with one-on-one interviews (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:432). This strategy was used not only to increase the validity of the findings but also to enhance the credibility of the entire study.

#### **1.5.4.4 Data analysis and interpretation**

According to Chenail (2012:248), qualitative data analysis as a form of knowledge management, was a matter of managing analytical processes to transform data into information and information into knowledge and knowledge into wisdom. It involves a systematic process of coding, categorising and interpreting data to provide explanations of a single phenomenon, which in this instance, was bullying. The researcher used a process of coding to reduce the large quantities of descriptive information gleaned from the interviews (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:238). In order to make sense of the large volume of information gathered, the researcher employed an inductive process of organising the collected data into categories and sub-categories and identified the patterns that emerged (Faculty of Education UKZN 2010:116). Furthermore, the technique of comparing and contrasting was used during data analysis (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:264).

#### **1.5.4.5 Ethical considerations**

The researcher obtained permission from the Research Directorate of the Department of Education (KwaZulu-Natal Province) [Appendix B] as well as the University of South Africa

(UNISA) [Appendix C] before commencing with the empirical investigation. Furthermore, permission was sought from the principals of the five secondary schools before entering their premises and collecting data, since obtaining permission from the organisational personnel required contacting them before the start of the study (Creswell 2013:153). Likewise, informed consent from all the participants (circuit manager, principals, SMTs, teachers, learners and parents) were obtained, after having informed them of its purpose, the procedures to be followed, the risks, benefits, alternate procedures and the measures to be implemented to ensure confidentiality (Johnson & Christensen 2011:107).

As this research focussed primarily on human beings, the researcher was ethically responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of the participants since the study involved issues of physical and mental discomfort (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:16). In this regard, the researcher gained the trust and co-operation of the participants by giving them an assurance that the information collected would be highly confidential. From the outset, the participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and that they were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher ensured that a sense of caring, fairness and personal morality prevailed at all times during the person-to-person contact (Pratt 2006:13) and that the participants' right to anonymity was respected by ensuring that the settings and participants were not identifiable in print and that all names and places were coded (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:438).

## **1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS**

In conducting the research on the phenomenon of bullying, its characteristics, contributory factors and impact on the secondary school system, it was of vital importance to present a clear definition of the key concepts used in the research. The key concepts used in the study and their respective definitions are as follows.

### **1.6.1 Learner**

Mothatha, Lemmer, Mda and Pretorius (2000:94) define a learner as any person who is involved in any kind of formal or non-formal education and training activity; any person who receives or is obliged to receive an education.

### **1.6.2 Bullying**



According to the American Psychological Association, bullying is “persistent threatening and aggressive behaviour directed toward other people, especially those who are smaller or weaker” (Swearer *et al.* 2009:3). In turn, Colorosa (2005:49) defines bullying as a conscious, wilful and deliberately hostile activity that can be verbal, physical, or relational in which learners get pleasure from another learner’s pain –it is a powerful feeling of dislike towards someone considered to be worthless or inferior, combined with a lack of empathy, compassion or shame.

### **1.6.1 Cyberbullying**

Oosterwyk and Kyobe (2013:3) define cyberbullying as the use of information communication technology to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, with an intention, to harm others

### **1.6.2 Aggression**

The Encarta Concise English Dictionary (2001:25) defines aggression as “threatening hostile action, especially physical, directed against another person often without provocation.”

### **1.6.3 Aggressive behaviour**

According to Underwood (2003:31), aggressive behaviour is directed towards causing harm to others and is regarded as more heated, angry or impulsive, as opposed to other types of behaviour that are cooler, planned, calmer and more deliberate.

### **1.6.4 Violence**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines violence as “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (WHO 2002:5).

### **1.6.5 Stakeholders**

According to the Encarta Concise English Dictionary (2001:1408) stakeholders refer to a group of persons with a direct interest, or investment in an organization. In this study stakeholders refer to persons who have a direct interest in the school, namely, the principal,

school management team, teachers, learners, parents, and officials of the department of education.

## **1.7 CHAPTER DIVISION**

This thesis comprised six chapters made up as follows:

**Chapter 1** consisted of the introduction to and background of the investigation, the problem statement, aims of the study, research approach and methodology and the definition of key concepts.

**Chapter 2** provides a comprehensive literature review of the various theories that explained bullying behaviour in schools.

**Chapter 3** entails an in-depth literature study of the types and characteristics of bullying, the factors contributing to bullying, the impact of bullying on all stakeholders of the school and the legal implications of bullying in schools.

**Chapter 4** provides an explanation of the research design and methodology used to conduct the investigation.

**Chapter 5** involves a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the research findings.

**Chapter 6** consists of the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

In chapter 1, the researcher provided the reader with the background of the study, the problem being investigated and the aims of the study. The reader was alerted to the high incidence of bullying in secondary schools and the negative impact the problem had on all stakeholders in the school system. In addition, the reader was appraised with the research design and methodology used in the study, in terms of sampling, site selection and selection of participants, as well as the data collection methods used in the study comprising of interviews, observations and focus group interviews. The researcher further explained the procedures for data analysis and interpretation, ethical considerations and the chapter layout.

Chapter 2 presents an in-depth literature study on the various theories that explain the phenomenon of bullying in schools.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **BULLYING THEORIES**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

School bullying among children and adolescents have been the focus of many international studies over the past thirty years (Espelage & Swearer 2003:365). The daily reports in the written and electronic media of extraordinarily high levels of violence, physical and sexual abuse and gang related activities exacerbated by the carrying of knives, guns and other dangerous weapons to school has become a matter of grave concern to all stakeholders of the school system as it impacts negatively on education in general and in what happens in school in particular (Maphalala & Mabunda 2014:61).

Being a victim of school bullying is associated with a number of different dimensions of internal distress and psychological trauma (Thornberg, Halldin, Bolmsjo & Petersson 2013:309). Accordingly, White and Loeber (2008:380) argue that bullying in schools represent a major problem for children given that it has an effect on their perceptions of safety and the overall quality of their school experience. The fear of falling victim to bullies compels victims to miss classes, to avoid certain areas of the school and to play truant chronically as a response to victimisation. Additionally, the victimised youth report high levels of stress, anxiety, ill-health, depression and suicidal ideations than non-victimised youth (Espelage, Aragon & Birkett 2008:202).

According to Ewen (2010:4), human behaviour can be bewilderingly complicated and as such, useful theories help bring about order out of chaos by providing convenient descriptions, establishing frameworks for organising information, and focussing attention on matters that are of greater importance. In this chapter, the researcher provides an in-depth literature study of the various theories formulated by theorists to explain bullying perpetration. The following theories will form the basis of this study:

- The attachment theory
- The behavioural theory
- The social learning theory
- The homophily theory

- The dominance theory
- The attraction theory
- The differential association theory
- The general strain theory
- The social identity theory
- The social categorisation theory
- The frustration-aggression theory
- The cognitive theory of anger

The above theories are intended to provide a road-map for the explanation of bullying behaviour in schools. Furthermore, it is intended to justify the findings of the empirical investigation after surveys are concluded in each of the five secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. Although these theories have often only been examined directly in relation to bullying in a few contexts (most often schools), it is nevertheless argued that they may be relevant for providing insights into bullying behaviours (Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland & Coyne 2009:146).

## **2.2 BULLYING THEORIES**

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has identified twelve theories that are associated with and provide explanations regarding why bullying occurs among young adolescents in schools. One of the most dominant of these theories is the *attachment theory* which focusses on the affectional bond between a child and the primary caregiver that can either lead to secure or insecure attachment and which may potentially present a range of behaviours involving uncontrolled emotional reactions such as impulsive verbal and physical aggression (Kennedy & Kennedy 2004:247).

### **2.2.1 The attachment theory**

The *attachment theory* proposed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth respectively (1991), hypothesises that the quality of attachment to parents and caregivers influences the development of an internal working model (IWM) of relationships (Monks *et al.* 2009:146). The theory purports to secure attachment being significantly correlated with maternal sensitivity. Children who possess insecure attachment styles anticipate and accept

insensible and conflicting communications from others, whereas children who have a secure attachment style anticipate reliable and responsive interactions from others. (Swearer, Peugh, Espelage, Siebecker, Kingsbury & Bevins 2006:3). Hence, children of sensitive mothers tended to be securely attached to them, whereas children of less sensitive mothers tended to be insecurely attached to them (Bretherton 1992:759). Importantly, the insecure attachment may result in an individual responding to others with higher than expected levels of hostility and aggression (Monks *et al.* 2009:146). Additionally, attachment theorists argue that abuse during childhood can lead to the development of a negative or insecure attachment with an abusive caregiver (Hong, Espelage, Grogan-Kaylor & Allen-Meares 2012:167).

Bowlby suggests that there exists a psychological system that is specifically dedicated to parent-child relationships that he referred to as the *attachment behavioural system* (ABS) (Cervone & Pervin 2008:148). According to Bowlby, the ABS is innate; that is, all persons have such a system as a result of their biological endowment- a young child clinging to adults for comfort and security, then, would be an example of a behaviour motivated by ABS. Furthermore, a key prediction of the attachment theory is that the effects of developmental processes involving attachment are longlasting. Importantly, Cervone and Pervin (2008:149) assert that there is a three-part rationale that confirms this prediction:

- Firstly, child-parent relations are thought to create, in the child, symbolic mental representations involving the self and the caregivers.
- Secondly, once formed, these mental representations endure; early relationships leave a kind of mental “residue” that persists.
- Thirdly, these mental representations may result in different infants exhibiting different types of interactions with significant others (particularly mothers), or different attachment styles.

Bowlby's *attachment theory* focusses on childhood as a starting point and then extrapolated it forward to adulthood (Feist & Feist 2009:153). He maintains that both human and primate infants go through a clear sequence of reactions when separated from their primary caregivers, a phenomenon known as *separation anxiety*. Bowlby argues that the first stage is referred to as the *protest* stage when the caregiver is out of sight, infants will cry and search

for the caregiver. As separation continues, infants experience the second stage referred to the stage of *despair* where they become quiet, sad, passive, listless and apathetic. During the last stage- the stage of *detachment*, infants become emotionally detached from their caregivers and as they get older, they interact with others with little or no emotion and even though they may appear sociable, their interpersonal relations are superficial and lack warmth. Furthermore, the self-concepts of children with resistant attachments often included feelings of low self-worth, helplessness and incompetence, which are attributes targeted by bullies (Swearer *et al.* 2006:3). Bowlby firmly believes that the negative attachments formed during childhood have an important and profound impact on the behaviour of the child in adulthood (Feist & Feist 2009:153).

Ainsworth's (1991) *attachment theory* concurs, to a large extent, with that of Bowlby but went on to establish three attachment styles, namely, secure, anxious-resistant and avoidant (Feist & Feist 2009:154). In a *secure attachment*, infants are confident in the accessibility and responsiveness of their caregiver and this security and dependability provides the foundation for play and exploration. About 70 percent of infants were classified as being securely attached; secure infants were those who were sensitive to the departure of the mother but greeted her upon being re-united, were readily comforted, and were then able to return to exploration and play (Cervone & Pervin 2008:149). However, regarding an *anxious-resistant attachment* style, where about 10 percent of the infants were classified as anxious-ambivalent Ainsworth found that on the one hand, infants seek contact with their mother, while on the other hand, they squirm to be put down and may throw away toys offered to them by their mother (Feist & Feist 2009:154). In the *anxious-avoidant* attachment style, infants stay calm when their mother leaves; they accept the stranger that looks after them, but when their mothers returns, they ignore and avoid her (Feist & Feist 2009:154). According to Cervone and Pervin (2008:149), about 20 percent of infants displayed an attachment style that was labelled anxious-avoidant.

Various studies have related insecure attachment to involvement in bullying in childhood and adulthood. The attachment theory proposes relative continuity of the internal working model (IWM) over time. For this reason, a strong likelihood exists that the "continuity or discontinuity" of bully behaviour across different ages, could potentially be examined (Monks *et al.* 2009:153). While the *attachment theory* insists that negative attachment to

the primary caregiver leads to a child displaying coercive behaviour later as a teenager, the *behavioural theory* emphasises the learning of aggression through a process of conditioning within a social context (Gasa 2005:38).

### **2.2.2 The behavioural theory**

The *behavioural theory* formulated by B.F. Skinner (1953), maintains that most human behaviour is learned through a process of operant conditioning (Ewen 2010:289). Additionally, behavioural theory purports that all human behaviour- including violent behaviour- is learned through social interactions. This theory maintains that violent behaviour is not inborn but that children acquire violent qualities by modelling their behaviour on that of violent others in their surroundings (Ewen 2010:289). The basis of Skinner's operant conditioning procedure is the control of behaviour through the manipulation of rewards and punishments in the environment (Cervone & Pervin 2008:393). This conditioning is called operant conditioning because the organism operates on the environment to produce a specific effect. Reinforcement increases the probability that the same behaviour will occur again (Feist & Feist 2009:450).

According to Grace (2011:1), parents have long known that children respond to a system of rewards and punishments, which is based on a system of both positive and negative reinforcement, and this is accurately descriptive of the most basic aspect of Skinner's beliefs. When previous behaviours have been rewarded, children are likely to repeat those behaviours happily and willingly and this increases the probability of the same response occurring again. Alternatively, if the outcomes of the responses are unfavourable or non-reinforcing, then the likelihood of the operant response occurring again is decreased (Hjelle & Ziegler 1987:198). Thus, administering a painful and unpleasant reinforcer after an unwanted response decreases the probability of the same response occurring again (Grace 2011:1). Skinner believes that a better way to reduce the probability of an operant is by reinforcing acceptable behaviours that are incompatible with the undesirable ones- a parent may pay no attention to a child's temper tantrums, and respond only to more quiet and orderly behaviour. Since the child gets what it wants only after being calm, such behaviour is more likely to be repeated in the future (Ewen 2010:301).

Skinner recognised two kinds of conditioning, operant and classical conditioning (Feist & Feist 2009:448). While it is commonly known that behaviour is affected by its consequences, Skinner's theory of operant conditioning contends that the process does not require repeated efforts, but instead, an immediate reaction to a familiar stimulus (Grace 2011:1). Furthermore, operant behaviour (produced by instrumental or operant conditioning) is determined by the events that follow the response, that is, a behaviour is followed by a consequence and the nature of the consequence modifies the organism's tendency to repeat the behaviour in future (Hjelle & Ziegler 1987:198). On the other hand, with classical conditioning, a response is drawn out of an organism by a specific, identifiable stimulus, that is, a stimulus that is neutral initially, eventually elicits a strong response (Cervone & Pervin 2008:380) whereas in operant conditioning, behaviour is more likely to recur when it is immediately reinforced (Feist & Feist 2009:448).

According to Gasa (2005:38), behavioural theorists such as Skinner and Pavlov argue that aggressive behaviour "can be learned, maintained, and unlearned through the processes of classical and operant conditioning." Bullying behaviour may be learned through classical conditioning (a process in which a stimulus that is initially neutral eventually elicits a strong response) and strengthens and maintains through operant conditioning (Cervone & Pervin 2008:380). According to Pavlov's classical conditioning theory, "if a stimulus for an aggressive response repeatedly occurs at the same time and in the same place as some initially neutral environmental stimulus, that aggressive response will eventually begin to occur in the presence of the initially neutral stimulus" (Gasa 2005:38). Importantly, classical conditioning may also be responsible for more complex human learning phobias, fears, and anxieties (Feist & Feist 2009:449).

Skinner maintained that positive reinforcement through a process of reward increases the probability of the response being elicited again (Ewen 2010:293). Similarly, when adolescent involvement in aggressive behaviour is rewarded by the peer group, there is a greater likelihood of the aggressive behaviour being repeated. Furthermore, deviant adolescents interacting with deviant friends have been found to reinforce each other's talk of rule-breaking behaviour and peer rejection has been labelled as a punishment for not abiding by the rules of the peer group. Importantly, for the sake of peer acceptance, adolescents may be involved in bullying episodes to prove their loyalty to the group (Gasa 2005:38).

While Pavlov and Skinner maintained that reinforcement operates without our awareness, Albert Bandura (1977) disagrees and argues that we must be aware of reinforcement in order for it to be effective (Ewen 2010:344). In particular, reinforcement involves a change in our conscious anticipations- we are more likely to act in ways that we *expect* to produce rewards, and/ or to avoid punishment. Bandura contends “that if actions were determined solely by external rewards and punishments, people would behave like weathervanes, constantly shifting in different directions to conform to the momentary influences impinging upon them.” He argues that, in fact, people also “set certain standards of behaviour for themselves, and respond to their own actions in self-rewarding or self-punishing ways” (Ewen 2010:345).

The researcher believes that even though behavioural theory does not explain bullying perpetration in its entirety, it does to some extent, provide an understanding of how coercive and bullying behaviour among adolescents may be learned, maintained, and unlearned through a process of conditioning. While the focus of the *behavioural theory* was on conditioning behaviour, *social learning theory* maintains that people learn negative or positive behaviour by observing the actions of others through a process of modelling and reinforcement (O’Connell *et al.* 1999:438).

### **2.2.3 The social learning theory**

Albert Bandura’s (1977) *social learning theory* purports that family background characteristics are associated with bullying perpetration in schools (Monk *et al.* 2009:153). Additionally, the impact of family variables on bullying behaviour may be via social learning, with individuals learning bullying behaviour through observations, role modelling, and reinforcement. Bandura argued that individuals, especially children learn aggressive responses from observing others, either personally (behaviour, attitudes and actions) or through the media and environment (Isom 1998:1). Hong *et al.*. (2012:167) concur by stating that social learning theorists hypothesise that aggressive behaviour was acquired and maintained by emulating aggressive parents, abusive caregivers as well as deviant and antisocial peers.

According to Cervone and Pervin (2008:451) *social learning theory* rejects the basic tenets of behaviourism that depict organisms as controlled by environmental rewards and

punishments. Bandura was highly critical of Skinner's emphasis on a totally controlling environment (Ewen 2010:342). In contrast, he argued that people are at least, partly in control of their thoughts and actions- people's thinking abilities give them the capacity to motivate and direct their actions and to play a dynamic role in their growth and self-development. Bandura, in particular, felt that Skinner was short-sighted in believing that cognition does not play an important role (Grace 2010:1) since humans are quite flexible and capable of learning a multitude of attitudes, skills and behaviours through vicarious experiences (Feist & Feist 2009:480). Additionally, *social learning theory* also contrasts with behaviourism by showing how people learn new patterns of behaviour by observation, or modelling, even in the absence of reinforcement (Cervone & Pervin 2008:481). Furthermore, while Skinner maintains that human behaviour is environmentally determined, Bandura believed that human action is a result of an interaction between three variables- environment, behaviour and person (Feist & Feist 2009:483).

Moreover, Feist and Feist (2009:478) contend that *social learning theory* is based on several basic assumptions. Firstly, the outstanding characteristic of human beings is *plasticity*; that is, humans have the flexibility to learn a variety of behaviours in diverse situations. While Bandura (in Monks *et al.* 2009:153), concurs with Skinner that "people can learn through direct experience," he further emphasises the importance of vicarious learning that involves learning by observing others. Secondly, through a *triadic reciprocal causation model* that includes behavioural environment, and personal factors, people have the capacity to regulate their own lives. Thirdly, social learning theory takes an *agentic perspective*, confirming that humans possess the inherent ability to determine the direction and quality of their lives. Fourth, people regulate their conduct through both external factors (people's physical and social environments) and internal factors (self-observation, judgemental process and self-reaction). Fifth, when people find themselves in morally ambiguous situations, they typically attempt to regulate their behaviour through a *moral agency* (disregarding or distorting the consequences of their behaviour, dehumanising or blaming the victims of their behaviour) (Feist & Feist 2009:478-479).

Grace (2010:1) maintains that Bandura's *social learning theory* focusses primarily on observational learning (sometimes called imitation or modelling), which involves learning from observing from the actions of others. The extent to which behaviours are imitated is



determined in large part by the characteristics of the models, the behaviour observed, and the observed consequences of the behaviours (Akers & Sellers 2004:88). Bandura believes that observation allows people to learn without performing any behaviour; that learning through observations was an effective method of understanding the behaviour of others (Feist & Feist 2009:481). He postulates that aggression reinforced by family members is the most prominent source of behaviour modelling (Isom 1998:2). Bandura contends that once someone had witnessed another's behaviour, he/she may be inclined to adopt this behaviour as his/her own, for example, children who are raised in violent households may then act in a similarly aggressive manner, through a process of imitation and modelling, when interacting with their peers. Conversely, children who watch others being courageous, compassionate, or charitable are more likely to behave in similar ways (Ewen 2010:348).

With regard to the *social learning theory*, O'Connell, Peplar and Craig (1999:437) state that children are more likely to imitate and model behaviour when the model is a powerful figure, the model is rewarded rather than punished for the behaviour and the model shares similar characteristics with the child. Atlas and Peplar (1998:86) add that bullying flourishes when punishment is not meted out to the offender and when bystanders fail to discourage the bullying behaviour. According to O'Connell *et al.* (1999:437), fellow learners who witness a bully in action are able to establish for themselves first-hand how powerful a bully really is and the absolute control he exerts over his victims. Additionally, peers have the ability to reinforce the aggressive behaviours of bullies actively or passively through their attention and engagement. Conversely, peers may also shape the behaviours of victims by either intervening or ignoring the bullying behaviour (O'Connell *et al.* 1999:437).

According to Feist & Feist (2009:483-484), Bandura criticises those theorists who attribute the cause of human behaviour to internal forces such as instincts, drives, needs or intentions but instead, attributes human behaviour to actions arising from a process of observational learning. However, Gasa (2005:37) argues that Bandura's specific focus on observational learning may be shortsighted in that human beings not only learn behaviour through observing others, but they also acquire knowledge from their own direct experiences. Accordingly, adolescents do not only acquire coercive bullying characteristics by observing the behaviour of other people, but also through other contributing factors such as innate genetic and biological factors as well as through various environmental,

school and family factors (Gasa 2005:37). Venter, Poggenpoel and Myburg (2005:1) concur with this viewpoint by affirming that, in fact, biological factors contributing to aggression do include genetic, hormonal and neuro-anatomical factors respectively. This view is further entrenched by DiLalla, Elam and Smolen (2009:451) who argue that children having a genetic disposition may be more sensitive to certain environmental stimuli and may, therefore, be more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour.

Another major criticism levelled at the *social learning theory* is that it maintains that an individual's continued alliance with destructive peers heightens the chances of that individual displaying conduct that may be viewed as criminal (Akers & Sellers 2004:90). Nevertheless, critics point out that delinquent behaviour is not acquired by establishing an alliance with deviant peers, but that it is acquired long before the individual's contact with the group (Akers & Sellers 2004:90). However, social learning theorists have responded to this criticism by insisting that "the development of delinquent attitudes and behaviour prior to association with deviant peers is not inconsistent with the theory because group associations still influence behaviour, even if delinquency precedes the group membership" (Akers & Sellers 2004:90).

According to Ewen (2010:351), more than twenty years of laboratory and other experiments have confirmed Bandura's belief in the importance of observational learning and violence in the media: televised violence has a powerful negative effect on children's behaviour, beliefs and values. In this regard, he warns that children and adults acquire attitudes, emotional responses and new styles of conduct through filmed and televised modelling and is concerned that viewing escalating violence on television may transform children into bullies. Additionally, prolonged exposure to televised violence can have at least four different effects on viewers: it teaches aggressive styles of conduct, it lowers restraints on aggressive behaviour, it desensitises and habituates people to violence and it shapes people's images of reality, upon which they base many of their actions (Hjelle & Ziegler 1987:262). Furthermore, watching televised violence increases emotional arousal, which is particularly likely to affect children who have inherited a more aggressive temperament, as watching cruelty fosters an attitude of indifference (Ewen 2010:351).

From the aforementioned, it becomes evident that Bandura's *social learning theory* considers cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences as important factors in the explanation of human behaviour (O'Connell *et al.* 1999:437). Importantly, the social learning processes of modelling and reinforcement may operate to shape bullying behaviour on the school playgrounds. Hence, the fact that bullying episodes continue to persist in the presence of peers is an indication that peers play a supportive role in promoting and reinforcing bullying behaviour by acknowledging and encouraging the bully's actions (O'Connell *et al.* 1999:438). Accordingly, the *homophily theory* contends that peer groups and relationships are formed on the basis of similar characteristics, attitudes and behaviour (Espelage *et al.* 2007:61).

#### **2.2.4 The homophily theory**

According to Burns, Cross and Maycock (2010:209), one of the most influential socio-ecological factors in bullying behaviour is the peer group. Swearer, Peugh, Espelage, Siebecker, Kingsbury and Bevins (2006:4) concur by stating that "the peer context is a powerful and salient force in contributing to bullying and victimisation." Moreover, it has now become recognised that bullying is not just restricted to the conflictual dyadic relationship between those who bully and those who are bullied, but is also closely associated with and includes peer group relationships (Gini 2006:51). The *homophily theory* advocated by Cairns and Cairns (1994), is based on the proverb "birds of a feather flock together" and the homophily hypothesis confirms that bullying takes place in the context of the peer group (Espelage, Holt & Henkel 2003:205). This theory is based on observations of children in the higher primary and lower secondary phases who connect and associate with children who share similar characteristics, behaviours and interests with them (Swearer, Espelage & Napolitano 2009:18).

Espelage and Swearer (2003:375) contend that during the developmental time phase between late childhood and early adolescence, peer groups form based on similarities in propinquity, sex, and race and groups tend to be similar with regard to behavioural dimensions. This suggests that peer groups and relationships form and develop on the basis of within-group similarities (Espelage, Green & Wasserman 2008:1). According to Espelage *et al.* (2003:375), this *within-group similarity* is called *homophily*. It follows that the

homophily hypothesis provides some notion that children socialise with similarly minded individuals in relation to bullying-put simply, the theory purports that bullies mix with bullies, and members benefit from their group affiliation. Nevertheless, Burns *et al.* (2010:210) point out that although *homophily theory* contends that similarly minded children are drawn to each other, and bullies generally relate to learners who possess similar aggressive qualities as themselves, other theorists argue that bullies may also join non-bullies, suggesting that groups are likely to be comprised of learners who bully others and those who do not.

According to Gini (2006:52):

Social power, group status, and reputational support in addition to other group mechanisms such as social contagion, imitation, support for group norms, and diffusion of responsibility have been found to influence bullying behaviours or to facilitate the approval of bullying behaviours of others.

Accordingly, Burns *et al.* (2010:210) state that it is evident from this contention that bullying behaviours can contribute to social status both in the group as well as in the broader peer network through dominance and social superiority. Extensive studies of peer group ecology contend that a group leader, by virtue of the power he/she exerts within the group, may use his/her position to promote or relegate a group member as he sees fit (Burns *et al.* 2010:210). In this regard, Salmivalli (2010:112) affirms that it is usually the group that assigns the positions to members, thus making the bully completely reliant on all members of the group for his/her elevation and control of the group.

Rodkin and Gest (2010:8) argue that classrooms vary in terms of the degree to which relationships are organised around key behaviours such as achievement or aggression. According to Cairns, Cairns, Neckermann, Gest and Garipey (1988:815), the predominant behaviour of members as a group will determine the individual members' behaviour with respect to whether he/she will display aggression, deviant behaviour and academic engagement and motivation. Therefore, when the group adopts an aggressive, destructive stance, it may result in serious challenges with regard to classroom management. Accordingly, Farmer (in Rodkin & Gest 2010:8) notes that aggressive children display their group position more violently than non-aggressive children and interact with both aggressive and non-aggressive children alike.

According to Espelage *et al.* (2008:1) adolescents that choose friends with similar characteristics as well as adolescents that engage in problematic behaviour, tend to gather in social situations that foster this behaviour. The *homophily theory* is in line with Hirchi's (1969) *social control theory* which purports that the more closely attached members of the peer group are to one another, the more inhibited they will be to engage in destructive behaviour (Espelage *et al.* 2008:1). Additionally, the homophily mechanism also draws upon Sutherland's (1947) *differential association theory* in which the norms and values of the group are conveyed through their members in either promoting or discouraging bullying behaviour. Accordingly, Cairns *et al.* (1988:1) confirm that empirical studies have shown that homophily is associated with aggressive attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, adolescents who engage in negative behaviour are attracted to similar peers and these peers will further reinforce negative attitudes and behaviour in each other (Espelage *et al.* 2008:2).

Although the homophily hypothesis has been supported in studies of overt, physical aggression among elementary school students, only one study included an examination of the homophily hypothesis of bullying (Espelage & Swearer 2003:375). This study employed the social network analysis (SNA) in order to recognise peer networks and also used hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) to determine the extent to which peers influenced each other in bullying their peers. The results supported the homophily hypothesis for bullying and fighting among sixth to eighth graders in the study conducted over a one-year period. It was found that the effect was stronger for bullying than fighting, suggesting that peer influences play a bigger role for low-level aggression than fighting- this meant that students associated with other students whose level of bullying was similar to theirs in intensity and frequency. According to Espelage and Swearer (2003:375), the homophily hypothesis with respect to bullying was supported in terms of both male and female peer groups even though males displayed slightly more bullying than their female counterparts.

Therefore, it is evident that support for the homophily theory has been documented comprehensively in the bullying literature, which affirms that individuals within the same friendship group tend to engage in similar levels of bullying behaviours. In turn, other theories, like the *dominance theory*, offer some explanation as to how and why this socialisation occurs (Swearer *et al.* 2009:18).

### 2.2.5 The dominance theory

According to Pellegrini and Long (2002:259), the peer context is a powerful and salient force contributing to bullying and victimisation. Consequently, the *dominance theory* (Hawley 1999: 97) posits that aggression facilitates access to a central position in the peer network. Additionally, the dominance theory maintains that children use aggression against weaker children to gain access to resources, including a high sociometric status among peers (Moultapa & Valente 2004:2). Furthermore, Espelage & Swearer (2003:376) contend that early adolescence is a period during which bullying increases and a potential explanation for this increase lies in the *dominance theory*.

Establishing social dominance becomes an issue during times of social transition, such as the transition from elementary school to middle school where transitions require a change in primary affiliation groups and the need to establish a new social order (Swearer *et al.* 2009:19). Importantly, it is during these life transitions, such as the move to middle school from a smaller elementary school, that bullying behaviours between children increase dramatically. Bullying is often used during this period to establish control over other children and thus, the status that they assume in the peer group to leverage power, becomes important (Swearer *et al.* 2009:19).

Pellegrini and Long (2002:259) argue that the transition to middle school requires that children find ways to establish themselves in dominant positions within the newly formed groups by employing bullying tactics. Furthermore, aggression has long been recognised as a means of establishing dominance among children's groups. The need for dominance and developmental timing has offered some perspective on why the prevalence of bullying shifts over the school years as transitions often require a change in primary affiliation groups and a new school environment (Swearer *et al.* 2009:18). The dominance theory states that dominance status can be attained through either affiliative methods (for example, leadership) or through antagonistic (for example, bullying) methods. Accordingly, the research conducted concluded that bullies adopted hostile methods to establish control in late elementary school but employed leadership skills to dominate the group during middle school and later on with regard to the establishment of the peer group (Pellegrini & Long 2002:259).

Stewart (2015:8) affirms that the social dominance theory has been developed to describe intergroup relations. It further contends that societies and groups are categorised into several ranks of dominance (Nicol 2007:891). From a social dominance point of view, individuals are ordered along a vertical hierarchy where each position represents varying access to resources, for example, friendship or status within a group (Swearer *et al.* 2006:4). A study conducted with a sample of 87 boys found that in the first year of middle school, dominance and aggression were strongly correlated (Pellegrini & Bartini 2001:142). This study confirmed that aggression and dominance are used to establish dominance within a peer group and then the initial aggression diminishes because the peer group understands who occupies the higher status. Interestingly, bullying behaviours ebb and flow depending upon the need to assert and maintain dominance within the peer group. Hence, the inclusion or exclusion of peers provides fertile ground for bullying behaviours (Pellegrini & Bartini 2001:142).

In testing the dominance theory of bullying and aggression, Pellegrini and Long (2002:259) find, in one sample, at least, that bullying was used more frequently by boys who targeted their aggression towards other boys during this transition. Female bullies occupied less central network positions, where the fight for dominance is less frequent because aggressive females selected each other as friends based on their similar preferences for various behaviours, including aggressive behaviours (Mouttapa & Valente 2004:5). While this research supports the idea that males engage in more bullying than girls during this transition to middle school, it is important to note that this increase in male bullying occurs because of their craving to communicate with and seek attention from girls (Espelage & Swearer 2003:376).

Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth and Malle (1994:741) concur that in terms of the social dominance theory, boys are more social dominance-orientated (SDO) than girls. High-SDO children seek hierarchy enhancing roles, whereas low SDO children seek hierarchy-attenuating roles. Moreover, children who are social dominance-orientated have been reported to favour group inequality and are opposed to any forms of justice meted out to "unequal" groups (Pratto *et al.* 1994:741). According to McColgan (2009:3), the yearning for identity and a higher status and social role within the group, drives individuals to acquire authority and complete dominance of the group.

Additionally, social dominance-orientated (SDO) individuals tend to harbour negative attitudes towards individuals who are ranked low in the dominance hierarchy (Duckitt 2006:684). The level of power social dominance individuals possess, has been linked to individuals' failure to alter their authoritative attitudes resulting in these individuals retaining a division between group leaders and group followers (Nicol 2007:892). Social dominance-orientated (SDO) people view some groups as "simply inferior to other groups." Accordingly, studies conducted have reported the SDO to be a strong predictor of prejudice (Nicol 2007:892).

While the *social dominance theory* emphasises the use of bullying as a deliberate strategy to attain dominance in a peer group (Swearer *et al.* 2006:4), the *attraction theory* explains how and why adolescents are attracted to the peer group in the first place (Espelage & Swearer 2003:376).

### **2.2.6 The attraction theory**

A significant characteristic of the typical adolescent is the importance he attaches to his relationship with his peers in his school and community (Dijkstra, Cillessen, Lindenberg & Veenstra 2010:774). Hence, an important aspect of peer relationships that influences adolescents' social and emotional development is status in the peer group (Rubin, Bukowski & Parker 2006:571). Therefore, aggressive and anti-social behaviours are more likely to occur when there is peer rejection and also when individuals associate with delinquent others in their quest for position and power (Powers 2008:2). Accordingly, Powers (2008:2) affirms that aggression increases because of two reasons: when the individual suffers peer rejection, and when the individual associates with and is influenced by aggressive friends. Additionally, high levels of aggressive behaviour in elementary school increase the risk that the child will affiliate with antisocial peers in adolescence, fuelling substance abuse and delinquent activities (Dishion, Capaldi, Spracklen & Li, in Powers 2008:1).

*The attraction theory* posits that young adolescents become attracted to other youths who possess characteristics that reflect independence (for example, delinquency and disobedience) and are less attracted to individuals who possess characteristics more descriptive of childhood (for example, compliance and obedience) in their need to establish separation from their parents (Bukowski, Sippola & Newcomb 2000:147). Theorists believe



that aggressive child behaviour is rejected by non-aggressive children and this increases the probability that the aggressive child will join similarly aggressive children in order to strengthen and maintain deviant behaviours (Coie, in Powers 2008:2). Additionally, Bukowski *et al.* (2000:147) argue that early adolescents manage the transition from primary school to high school by aligning themselves with other aggressive adolescents. Hence, *the attraction theory* is based on the instrumentality of aggression during early adolescence (Swearer *et al.* 2006:5) and is particularly relevant to understanding how peers influence and maintain bullying perpetration in our schools (Swearer *et al.* 2008 :19).

Furthermore, the proponents of the attraction theory argue that adolescents seek independence by joining individuals who display characteristics reflecting dominance (such as aggression) and less compliant behaviours (such as prosocial behaviour). The social opportunities for affiliation with antagonistic and delinquent children during the middle school years, play a crucial role in escalating antisocial behaviour (Powers 2008:6). Similarity appears to promote affiliation among youth who share antisocial attitudes and proclivities and, once affiliated, these youth appear to influence each other's behaviour in ways that promote ongoing and escalating antisocial activity (Patterson, Dishion & Youerger 2000:3). The delinquents' move towards joining an aggressive peer group is a calculated and intentional act because they are attracted to other aggressive delinquent children who possess attitudes that embrace risk-taking and antisocial activities (Powers 2008:7).

In a study of 217 boys and girls during the transition from primary school to secondary school, Bukowski and colleagues found that girls' and boys' attraction to aggressive peers who were mean, cruel and demeaning, increased upon exit from elementary school and entry into middle school, while attraction to children with high classroom competencies, namely, those who were intelligent, smart, corporative and helpful, decreased (Swearer *et al.* 2009:19). The increase was greater for girls, which is consistent with Pellegrini and Bartini's (2001:142) findings that confirmed that girls chose boys whose characters reflected dominance as partners for their school parties and year-end dances.

According to Swearer *et al.* (2009:19), research findings on popularity show that bullies and aggressive peers are not always viewed negatively by other children and are certainly not rejected socially as is normally perceived. Instead, in some cases, it was found that

aggressive children and bullies have been nominated as popular by their peers in elementary school; while it was also found that they associate with individuals rated similarly in terms of popularity and aggression. Furthermore, popularity has been associated with prominence, visibility and admiration and leadership (Lease, Kennedy & Axelrod 2002:87). According to Dijkstra *et al.* (2010:774), in peer relationships, being admired by other children is a reflection of an individual's position, reputation and likeability in the group. Furthermore, likeability is primarily based on prosocial features, such as friendliness and being helpful, whereas popularity is based on a combination of prosocial as well as antisocial antecedents, including aggression. Swearer *et al.* (2009:19) maintain that, as children make their entry into middle school from elementary school, those children displaying aggressive tendencies are regarded as "cool" by similarly aggressive children confirming the belief that children who share similar characteristics of aggression and deviant tendencies are not only attracted to one another but also display substantial admiration for one another as well.

The *attraction theory* maintains the view that adolescents are attracted to other like-minded youth who possess characteristics similar to theirs and begin to learn delinquent and disobedient behaviour within this peer group, as is also propounded by the differential association theory that purports that criminal behaviour is learnt from family and friends.

### **2.2.7 The differential association theory**

The *differential association theory*, advocated by Edwin Sutherland (1939) postulates that coercive and criminal behaviour is learnt in interaction with others in a process of communication (Cressy 1954:29). This theory emphasises that criminal behaviour is primarily learnt from close associates such as family and peers- through associations with people who approve of illegal behaviour, individuals may learn to become criminals themselves. Akers and Jennings (2009:325) maintain that an individual's direct interaction with others who engage in certain kinds of behaviour (criminal/ deviant or conforming) will, in all likelihood, encourage the individual to adopt and participate in these behaviours. Akers and Jennings (2009:325) further argue that "learning through differential association occurs within the family in the early childhood years and using the associations formed in school, leisure, recreational, and peer groups during adolescence."

Reiss and Rhodes (1964:5) remark that most deviant and aggressive acts are performed as a group but if a single offender commits an act, he has most likely been coerced by his peers to commit it. Studies in the United States and similar studies in other countries clearly establish that most delinquent behaviour is committed as a group activity. Sutherland argues that if the individual acquires more attitudes and values that lean towards criminal activity, the individual will regard criminal behaviour as acceptable (in Matsueda 1988:281). Furthermore, when an individual learns favourable behaviour towards violations of the law in excess of the behaviours unfavourable to violations of the law, that individual is more likely to commit a criminal act (Akers & Jennings 2009:324).

According to Sutherland (in Akers & Jennings 2009:324), merely associating with criminals does not necessarily lead to criminal outcomes, nor does association with honest people lead to compliant behaviour. Rather, "it is the nature, characteristic, and balance of the differential association" that determines whether or not a person is likely to breach the law. Furthermore, when an individual is exposed to criminal conduct and this exposition increases in intensity for a certain period, it is expected that the individual will most likely indulge in criminal behaviour. The more a person is differentially associated and exposed to deviant behaviour and attitudes transmitted by means of his peer groups, the greater his probability of engaging in deviant or criminal behaviour (Akers & Jennings 2009:324-325).

According to the *differential association theory*, in as far as bullying behaviour is concerned, the phenomenon is more likely the result of the association of children with delinquent environments (Darmawan 2010:18). Roland and Galloway (2002:299) point out that "within the school environment, classroom management and social structure have been found to contribute substantially to bullying perpetration." Like the school climate, the home environment may also foster authoritarian styles that contribute to bullying perpetration where bullies tended to have more ambivalent perceptions of their relationship with their family members (Connolly & O'Moore 2003:559). Studies focussing on family dynamics have confirmed that when children display aggression, they are in fact, modelling the aggressive behaviour of their parents. Furthermore, studies have concluded that people who live in violent communities learn to model the aggressive behaviour of their neighbours. Additionally, adults in the community involved in crime and violence, racial prejudice in the neighbourhood, and the brazen flouting of the law by aggressive and violent members of

the community, promote the culture of aggression, violence and lawlessness (Valois, MacDonald, Bretous, Fischer & Drane 2002:459).

Research findings on juvenile criminals have mostly shown that those who associate with delinquent peers are more likely to imitate and engage in antisocial and delinquent behaviour (Darmawan 2010:19). Accordingly, Rigby (2003:583) argues that students are strongly influenced by a smaller group of peers with whom they are relatively associated. Moon, Hwang and McLuskey (2008:5) contend that by associating with intimates such as friends who exhibit antisocial behaviour and have favourable attitudes towards the violation of laws, students can easily learn the techniques of committing delinquent or criminal behaviours, as well as motives and attitudes that serve to promote criminal and antisocial behaviours.

Burgess and Akers (1966:128) point out that although Sutherland's *differential association theory* began to gain considerable attention throughout the sociological and criminological literature in the years after its emergence, the theory has still failed to receive considerable empirical support and had yet to be adequately modified in response to some of its shortcomings and the criticism it evoked. Perhaps the most serious criticism of the differential association theory is that the theory cannot be tested empirically (Matsueda 1988:284), added to this is the difficulty of operationalising the theory's concepts as they are rather vaguely specified (Akers & Jennings 2009:324). Sutherland maintains that when an individual develops a positive perception regarding violations of the law in contrast with unfavourable perceptions of violations of the law, that individual is more likely to commit a criminal act. However, Akers and Jennings (2009:324) argue that it becomes difficult to ascertain how the number of pro-criminal perceptions a person acquires could be measured with any precision, as it is not precisely outlined by Sutherland with respect to how many more criminal behaviours as opposed to lawful behaviours are required for a person to be classified as a criminal.

However, despite these criticisms, Cressy (1960:47) argues in favour of the *differential association theory* by stating that even though the theory may be untestable, it remains an important principle for organising our knowledge about the correlates of criminal behaviour. Furthermore, empirical studies of juvenile delinquency operationalised the

differential association theory using concepts of associations with delinquent peers and the frequency, duration, priority and intensity of such associations. Most of these studies have found general support for this theory, which may potentially explain why coercive bullying behaviour takes place in schools and communities (Matsueda 1988:285).

While the *differential association theory* maintains that coercive and criminal behaviour is learnt through associations with family and peers, the *general strain theory* asserts that peer victimisation is a source of strain for many children who experience anger and frustration as a result and who may then express these negative emotions through delinquent behaviour (Wallace, Patchin & May 2005:106).

### **2.2.8 The general strain theory**

*The general strain theory* (GST) advocated by Robert Agnew (1992) posits that several strains and stressors experienced by individuals in the environment increase the likelihood of negative emotions being invoked, such as anger, anxiety and depression which in turn influences delinquency (Agnew 2001:319). GST maintains that the anger and frustration experienced by people as a consequence of strain leads to their involvement in delinquent acts and criminal behaviour (Hinduja & Patchin 2010:1). Zavala and Spohn (2013:9) concur with this assertion by stating that strain, stress, irritation or intense anger may potentially lead to criminal behaviour (Zavala & Spohn 2013:9). Accordingly, Agnew (1992:60) points out that of the various types of negative emotions, anger plays a key role in mediating the effect of strain on delinquency and violence because anger increases the perpetrators' level of felt injury, creates a desire for retaliation or revenge, energises the individual for action and lowers inhibitions. Moreover, delinquency may be used to reduce or escape from strain (for example, stealing money, running away from abusive parents), seeking revenge from the people inflicting the strain through assault or vandalism or decreasing harmful feelings associated with the strain caused, for example, by the use of illegal drugs "against those who have inflicted the strain (e.g. assault, vandalism), or reduce the negative feelings that result from strain (e.g. illicit drug use)" (Agnew, Brezina, Wright & Cullen 2002:44).

Agnew (1992:48) maintains that *strain* refers to "relationships in which others are not treating the individual as he or she wishes to be treated." The experience of strain or mistreatment from others may foster negative emotions and low constraint and this

effectively increases the likelihood that individuals will perceive events as aversive or stressful (Agnew *et al.* 2002:47). In order to understand this theory better, the terms “objective strains” and “subjective strains” need to be discussed further. According to Agnew (2001:320), objective strains refer to events or conditions that are disliked by most members of a group- so when an individual is experiencing objective strain, it means that the individual is experiencing an event or condition that is usually disliked by members of his or her group. On the other hand, subjective strains refer to events or conditions that are disliked by those who have experienced the strain - so if an individual experiences subjective strain, it means he/she is experiencing an event or condition that he/she dislikes (Agnew 2001:321).

Peck (2011:1) purports that the *general strain theory* proposes three types of strain, which increases the likelihood or occurrence of criminal activity:

- **The failure to achieve positively valued goals**

This type of strain develops out of an individual’s failure to achieve certain goals that have a positive value (such as when an individual fails to achieve economic success through legitimate means, he/she may contemplate using illegitimate means to achieve it, since the acquisition of wealth is highly valued in modern societies).

- **The removal or threat of positively valued stimuli**

This strain occurs when the individual experiences the unjustifiable removal of something significant from his/her life (such as loss of a job, denial of a work promotion or the death of a friend) regarded by the individual as a positively valued stimulus.

- **The presentation of noxious or negatively valued stimuli**

This strain derives from the suffering experienced by an individual through the loss of one or both parents in childhood, sexual abuse, school bullying and sexual or racial discrimination in school, for example.

According to Zavala and Spohn (2013:10), further types of strain identified by Robert Agnew that lead to criminal and delinquent behaviour include experienced, vicarious and anticipated strain. Experienced strain is an individual’s personal experience with negative stimuli (that is, maltreatment by others). ‘Vicarious’ strain refers to the concept of

witnessing or knowing the negative experiences of others, especially those people with whom the individual has a strong bond. Accordingly, a loved one's own negative experiences can create strain for all those concerned and associated with the loved one's well being. Agnew (2001:326-336) points out that anticipated strain refers to an individual's negative expectations of the future. An individual may have good reason to believe that strain or negative maltreatment is forthcoming or that the stress and strain presently being experienced, is likely to persist (Zavala & Spohn 2013:10).

Moreover, Agnew (2001:326-336) argues that strains are most likely to result in crime when they are *seen as unjust*. Accordingly, unjust strains have the potential for the involvement of acts of criminal behaviour. Further criminal acts can be caused if the strains are *seen as high in magnitude* thereby influencing coping in a manner that is not criminal. Criminal acts can also be caused if the strains are *associated with low social control* such as the strain caused by erratic parental discipline and parental rejection. Lastly, strains can be the result of some enticement for engagement in criminal coping (the strain experienced influences the ability and appeal of non-criminal and criminal coping options-therby affecting the pressure or incentive to engage in crime). Additionally, Peck (2011:1) points out that certain strains that are more likely to cause delinquency and coercive behaviour include parental rejection, divorce, death in the family, child abuse and neglect, negative school experiences, residing in low socio-economic status communities, abusive peer relations, criminal victimisation, homelessness and experiences with prejudice and discrimination.

However, while several studies have provided empirical support for the propositions Agnew outlines in the strain theory, other studies have been critical of certain aspects of the theory. Accordingly, Wareham, Cochran, Dembo & Sellers (2005:118) argue that while strain has been significantly associated with anger or negative affect, the direction and role of anger as a mediating variable on certain types of delinquency, remains unclear. Some findings have concluded that anger plays a limited role in mediating strain-delinquency associations to acts of a violent nature only and not to actions of a non-violent nature such as property crimes and substance abuse. Furthermore, research examining forms of individual coping strategies posited to affect directly how the individual adapts to strain, have also lacked empirical consistency (Wareham *et al.* 2005:118).

Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, several studies have confirmed a significant positive relationship between the general strain theory and the phenomenon of bullying (Darmawan 2010:20). Additionally, GST is purported to be one of a few select “general theories of crime” capable of explaining a wide variety of deviant behaviours including bullying (Hinduja & Patchin 2010:1). Moreover, bullying is associated with other forms of antisocial behaviour such as vandalism, shoplifting, truancy, dropping out of school, fighting and drug use as well as negative emotions that are sometimes resolved in deviant ways. It is hypothesised, therefore, that some youth engage in bullying behaviours as a response to strains in their lives and the negative feelings they develop as a result (Hinduja & Patchin 2010:1). Furthermore, the findings from these studies would be consistent when considering GST as an explanation because they indicate that individuals who experienced physical and emotional abuse, maltreatment, rejection and anger are more than likely to engage in bullying behaviours (Darmawan 2010:20).

Whereas the general strain theory (Agnew 2001:319) focuses on behaviour that causes stresses and strains within a peer group, the social identity theory, focuses on behaviour between groups where there is an inter-group struggle for dominance, social position and power (Thornberg 2010:316).

### **2.2.9 The social identity theory**

The *social identity theory* (SIT) focuses on inter-group behaviour and maintains that the peer group plays an important role in bullying in schools (Duffy 2004:70). Tajfel and Turner (1979:40), the advocates of social identity theory, conceptualise a group as a cluster of similarly minded persons who share parallel emotions and achieve a collective view through compromise. Additionally, Trepte (2006:255) asserts that the SIT focuses on “the group in the individual” and assumes that one part of the self-concept is defined by our belonging to social groups. It is a social-psychological theory that attempts to explain cognitions and behaviour with the help of group processes. Furthermore, the SIT was developed with the purpose of understanding how individuals make sense of themselves and other people in the context of their social environment (Korte 2007:166).

Importantly, the social identity theory proposes that, when interacting with others, people tend to view them as individuals belonging to a specific alliance (Duffy 2004:71). Thus, in



comparison to most other social psychological theories, the SIT does not begin with assumptions concerning the individual, but rather with assumptions referring to a social group. Accordingly, Hornsey (2008:206) argues that human interaction ranges on a spectrum from being purely interpersonal on the one hand, to purely intergroup on the other. A purely interpersonal interaction involves people relating entirely as individuals, whereas, in a solely intergroup interface, the individual represents the views held by the group. As far as intergroup processes are concerned, Thornberg (2010:316) perceives bullying in terms of the individual's desire for acquiring status, power and friendship within the group as follows. Status positioning occurs when children manifest, maintain, or enhance their status or popularity, while power positioning takes place when children are struggling for power or peer authority and thirdly, friendship positioning is found where there is an incessant desire to win or keep friends. In the struggle for power, Korte (2008:170) argues that groups that are dominant in nature, endeavour to uphold their social standing, whereas, minority groups prefer to remain modest and uncontrolling.

According to Trepte (2006:255), to enhance their self-esteem, it becomes necessary for people to develop a positive social identity. Furthermore, the SIT is based on the assumption that people are motivated to achieve and maintain a positive social identity, and in order to accomplish this goal, it is necessary to make comparisons between the in-group and the out-group (Duffy 2004:72). The SIT assumes that people show all kinds of "group" behaviour, such as solidarity, within their groups and discrimination against out-groups as a part of social identity processes, with the aim of achieving positive self-esteem and self-enhancement (Abrams & Hogg, in Trepte 2006:256). Furthermore, it is generally assumed that people have a basic need to see themselves in relation to relevant others that is, to have an evaluatively positive self-concept) and that self-enhancement can be achieved in groups by making comparisons between the in-group and relevant out-groups in ways that favour the in-group (Hogg, Terry & White 1995:260). Importantly, when striving for a positive social identity, group members are motivated to think and act in ways that achieve or maintain a positive distinctiveness between one's own group and relevant out-groups (Hornsey 2008:207).

According to Tajfel and Turner (1979:43-44), when a group does not contribute positively to the members' social identity, members may react in one of the several ways. Firstly,

individuals may engage in the strategy of social mobility, where they might seek to change their group membership by moving to a more successful group. This usually implies attempts to achieve upward social mobility, on an individual basis, to pass from a lower-status to a higher-status group. Secondly, individuals may be inclined to use the strategy of social creativity, which involves comparing the in-group with the out-group on a new dimension, changing the value assigned to the attributes of the group, so that comparisons that were previously negative, are now perceived as positive and “changing the out-group (or selecting the out-group) with which the in-group” is compared- in particular, ceasing or avoiding the use of the high-status out-group as a comparative frame of reference. Thirdly, group members might choose to compete directly with the out-group, in order to achieve positive distinctiveness by trying to reverse the relative positions of the in-group and the out-group on salient dimensions. It follows that this strategy will generate conflict and antagonism between subordinate and dominant groups (Tajfel & Turner 1979:44).

According to the SIT, the need for social self-esteem is the motivating force behind inter-group behaviour where the need for positive self-esteem is satisfied by a positive evaluation of one’s own group (Treppe 2006:259). This view is further acknowledged by Hogg and Adams (1990:28) who suggested two corollaries in this regard. Firstly, inter-group discrimination enhances social identity and, therefore, elevates self-esteem. Secondly, threatened self-esteem promotes inter-group discrimination because of the need for positive self-esteem. However, recent research suggests that although self-esteem appears to be enhanced through discrimination, there is little evidence that it is a motivating force behind such behaviour. Proponents of recent research criticise previous research on the grounds that a variety of self-esteem measures have been used, when in fact, it is specifically social self-esteem that is proposed as motivating discrimination (Duffy 2004:73).

Despite its broad influence, the social identity approach has met with criticism from various theorists (Hornsey 2008:217). Some theorists argue that the theory has become so broad and powerful that it ceases to be unfalsifiable, as virtually any experimental outcome can be interpreted within its overarching framework. Other criticisms are that, with its focus on individual process and social cognition, the theory suffers from some of the flaws it points out in others; namely, being too reductionist and individualistic. Furthermore, there are repeated claims that the social identity approach is more comfortable explaining in-group

favouritism than out-group derogation and genuine intergroup hostility (Brewer 1979:307). Another controversy is the theory's disconnection between explanation and prediction- the SIT provides coherent but dubious explanations for past individual behaviour in social settings from which it is difficult to predict future behaviour (Hogg & McGarty, in Korte 2007:172).

Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, the SIT continues to be one of the most influential theories in the area of social psychology (Duffy 2004:73) as it has been used to explain a wide variety of behaviours, including in-group favouritism, group polarisation, minority influence, stereotyping and discrimination (Duffy 2004:70). Furthermore, the SIT has played a critical role in the resuscitation of interest in group processes both within and outside social psychology and interest in the theory seems to be accelerating with time. Hornsey (2008:217) argues that at a time when theories are becoming increasingly "micro" in their scope, the social identity approach is seen as a meta-theory that is ambitious in scope but ultimately rests on simple, elegant, testable and usable principles.

While the SIT has had as its focus intergroup processes, the SIT takes this thinking further by emphasizing the formation of groups into categories on the basis of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (Hogg *et al.* 1995:261).

### **2.2.10 The social categorisation theory**

Tajfel and Turner (1979:40) state that the *social categorisation theory* (SCT) entails the categorising of individuals into groups to understand better how they interact in their social environments. The SCT proposes that groups form when people categorise themselves with similar others, and contrast this category against those that are dissimilar (Duffy 2004:75). Whereas, the SIT is a theory of intergroup processes, the SCT is a theory that emphasises intragroup processes (Hornsey 2008:207). Tajfel and Turner (1979:40) point out that social categorisations are conceived as "cognitive tools that segment, classify and order the social environment," thereby enabling people to take many forms of social action and defines the individual's place in society.

The process of categorisation accentuates both perceived similarities between people belonging to the same category and perceived differences between people belonging to different categories (Hogg *et al.* 1995:260). Based on group categorisation, differences

between categories (inter-class differences) are accentuated and differences between members within the same category (intra-class differences) are underestimated or restrained (Trepte 2006:257). Categorisation of self and others in terms of either belonging to the in-group or the out-group, defines people's social identity and accentuates their perceived similarity to people's cognitive representation of the defining features of the group. This means that they act as embodiments of the relevant in-group prototype rather than as unique individuals (Hogg *et al.* 1995:261).

According to the self categorisation theory, people cognitively represent social groups in terms of prototypes- a subjective representation of the defining attributes such as beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (Hogg *et al.* 1995:261). Members of the same group generally find themselves placed relatively similarly in the same social field and have the same perspective in terms of habits, thinking, style, hopes and fears, while their prototypes are usually very similar-that is, shared. Importantly, group identity outlines the qualities necessary for an individual to belong to a group and stipulates the type of attitude and behaviour that is relevant and acceptable to the group (Hornsey 2008:209). Additionally, when a category becomes salient, important and of immediate relevance (Trepte 2006:257), people come to see themselves and other category members as individuals and more as interchangeable exemplars of the group prototype (Hornsey 2008:208).

Hornsey (2008:208) maintains that categorisation operates at three different levels of inclusiveness, namely, the super-ordinate level (human identity), the intermediate level (social identity), and the subordinate level (personal identity). According to the social categorisation theory, categorisation (including self-categorisation) occurs as a function of both *accessibility* and *fit* (Hornsey 2008:208). Accessibility relates to the value and emotional significance a person attaches to group membership (Trepte 2006:258). The *fit* of a categorisation is termed as the degree to which observed similarities and differences between people correlate with the expected social categories- hence, it is a fit between input and category specifications (Trepte 2006:258).

Hornsey (2008:208) stresses that one of the cornerstones of the social categorisation theory is the notion of depersonalisation that is assumed to underpin a range of group processes such as cohesion, influence, conformity, and leadership. Accordingly, Duffy (2004:74) asserts

that once individuals perceive themselves as belonging to a category, depersonalisation occurs- a process of self-stereotyping whereby individuals come to view their beliefs, attitudes, feelings and behaviours as reflecting those that are typical of the in-group. However, Tajfel and Turner (1979:38) argue that in-group bias is a remarkably omnipresent feature of intergroup relations. A number of studies confirm that the mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups-that is, social categorisation *per se*- is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination favouring the in-group. Furthermore, the sheer existence of an out-group is adequate to incite responses of a competitive and discriminatory nature from the in-group.

Thus, the basic and highly reliable finding is that the trivial, *ad hoc* intergroup categorisation leads to in-group favouritism and discrimination against the out-group (Tajfel & Turner 1979:39). Thus the superiority of the in-group is compared with the perceived inferiority of the out-group in subjective ways (Treppe 2006:258).

According to Duffy (2004:76) one of the main criticisms of the SCT was that previous studies focussed predominantly on adults and younger children were rarely the focus of investigations. However, evidence is now growing to suggest that the processes that guide group behaviour amongst adults are also applicable to children. Accordingly, the research findings confirm the relevance of the SCT in understanding bullying perpetration in schools by indicating that there is a positive interplay between the social representations on bullying causes and the more general process of social categorisation (Thornberg 2010:319). Therefore, when individuals classify themselves and other people, they do so by comparing their social standing in relation to their peers in the group and in terms of their influence in the community.

As far as social categorisation is concerned, Thornberg (2010:319) affirms that many social categories are polarised, such as normal versus deviant, powerful versus weak, high status versus low status, friends versus non-friends and in-groups versus out-groups. These social representations help children to make sense of bullying incidents they may have observed or themselves have been implicated in and to classify those involved into groups so that they acquire a better understanding of the various social categories of people that exist and the types of behaviour they exhibit. Hence, the SCT plays a pivotal role in explaining group

behaviour by specifying in detail the social psychological process that links identity to behaviour via depersonalisation and conformity (Hogg *et al.* 1995:263).

The SCT purports that children categorise themselves according to their similarities, differences, attitudes and behaviours. These categorisations may lead to heightened tensions between groups who are vying for power and status, which may then potentially create animosity, between groups leading to feelings of frustration experienced by the group who are seen as weak and who feel thwarted by the more powerful, aggressive group, as is explained by the frustration-aggression theory.

### **2.2.11 The frustration-aggression theory**

The *frustration-aggression theory* was formulated by John Dollard, Leonard Doob, Neal Miller, O.H. Mowrer and Robert Sears in 1939. Dollard *et al.* (1939:1) based their theory on the core assumption: "Aggression is always a consequence of frustration." This statement means that aggressive behaviour stems from some form of frustration experienced by the individual, and this frustration in-turn leads to the individual displaying aggression. Thus, the premise of the frustration-aggression hypothesis is that when people become frustrated through the thwarting of goals, they respond aggressively (Bjorkly 2006:33). This is clearly highlighted by Dollard and co-workers when they state, "The occurrence of aggressive behaviour is always as a result of frustration and, frustration often leads to aggression of some form or the other." (Dollard *et al.* 1939:11).

Furthermore, according to Dollard *et al.* (1939:9), aggression is a sequence of behaviour that has as its prime objective, the infliction of injury to the individual for which it is intended. These theorists view aggression as not merely the delivery of noxious stimuli but as an action having a fairly definite objective, which is, the infliction of injury.

Dollards' frustration-aggression hypothesis was modified by Miller (1941:338) in which he states that "frustration produces instigations to a number of different types of responses, one of which is an instigation to some form of aggression." Berkowitz (1993:45) concurs with this assertion by affirming that the instigation to aggression causes aggressive behaviour. However, just how the aggressor hurt the target was not especially important; different aggressive forms were theoretically interchangeable in that the performance of

any aggressive act would presumably lessen the thwarting-generated instigation to aggression (Dollard *et al.* 1939:50).

According to Berkowitz (1989:61) Dollard and his team identified several preventative elements that reduced the potency of the aggression from the very beginning by focussing on the strength of the drive whose gratification was blocked, the degree of interference with this drive satisfaction and the number of frustrated response sequences. Accordingly, Dollard and colleagues proposed that:

- The greater the satisfaction anticipated on attaining their objective, the more aggressively inclined people will become when kept from reaching their goal.
- Whatever partial gratifications are obtained will have the potential to reduce the potency of the instigated aggression.
- The frustration generated aggressive inclinations will summate over repeated instances of unsatisfied expectations.

According to Bjorkly (2006:33), the blocking of an ongoing goal response leads to a build-up of aggressive energy. This energy is noxious and must be released in the form of aggressive behaviour. The theory states that people who are motivated to behave aggressively by a frustration-produced drive and are frustrated by their personal negative circumstances caused by being deprived of valued rewards and being prevented from reaching their desired goals, aggressive energy is created and that energy activates dominant aggressive responses (Bandura 1973:31-33).

Dollard's frustration-aggression theory was modified by Berkowitz (1988:3) where he presented it as a reformulation as follows: "Frustrations produce aggressive inclinations only to the extent that they are aversive and give rise to negative affect." Basically, Berkowitz views frustration as an unpleasant, aversive stimulus that evokes a negative affect by automatically eliciting cognitions that are associated with aggressive tendencies (Dill & Anderson 1995:361). Furthermore, Berkowitz (1988:71) explains that:

...an unanticipated failure to obtain an attractive goal is more unpleasant than an expected failure, and it is the greater displeasure in the former case that gives rise to the stronger instigation to aggression. Similarly, the thwarted persons' appraisals and attributions presumably determine how bad they feel at not

getting what they had wanted so that they are most aggressively inclined when they experience strong negative affect.

Furthermore, Berkowitz proposes that “frustration induces an emotional reaction-anger that creates only readiness for aggressive acts” and that “aggressive responses will not occur, even given this readiness, unless there are suitable cues, stimuli associated with the present or previous anger instigators” (Van der Dennen 2014:8). Accordingly, Shaffer (2009:291) suggests that anger is caused by various factors such as hostile behaviour and an “aggressive cue” is necessary for an aggressive response because a person is bound to react aggressively if he is treated aggressively.

This aggressive cue hypothesis purports that a stimulus that was once associated with aggression, stimulates aggression from a person that is angry. Berkowitz further speculates that if the individual does not succeed in hurting the person responsible for his frustration, this inability to succeed causes greater frustration adding to the original anger (Gustafson 1989:6). According to Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olsen and Waterhouse (2012:226), more reprisals with regard to bullies and victims occur in cyberbullying, which may be the result of observing other acts of cyberbullying as the aggressive cue. Even traditional forms of bullying or aggression viewed on television or video games could serve as an aggressive cue.

According to Van der Dennen (2014:11), one of the fundamental criticisms and assumptions of the frustration theory is that “aggression is always a consequence of frustration.” However, this statement does not clarify whether frustration is declared to be a necessary or adequate, or both a necessary and adequate requirement for aggression (Van der Dennen 2014:11). Furthermore, not all children react aggressively to feelings of frustration as some are able to accept the situation and adjust to it non-aggressively. Dollard’s frustration-aggression hypothesis states that “frustration produces aggressive behaviour when people’s desired goals are blocked.” However, not all frustrations lead to aggressive behaviour because people prevented from reaching their desired goals become aggressively inclined only when the interference is thought to be illegitimate or unjustifiable (Berkowitz 1989:62).

Nonetheless, despite these criticisms, anecdotal material supporting the frustration-aggression theory is abundant (Van der Dennen 2014:13). The frustration- aggression theory



has been helpful in interpreting many sociological and anthropological observations. Additionally, in the sociological sphere, the frustration-aggression theory has been used to explain criminality. Furthermore, the theory is generally well structured and clearly articulated, which facilitates comprehension. Perhaps more importantly, the views of aggression purporting that it involves frustration, seem to have become widely adopted and accepted and may be used to explain bullying perpetration among children in schools (Van der Dennen 2014:1).

Therefore, according to the frustration-aggression theory, frustration always leads to some form of aggression. Moreover, frustration induces a strong emotional reaction in the form of anger, which creates a readiness for the perpetration of aggressive acts, as is outlined in the cognitive theory of anger.

#### **2.2.12 The cognitive theory of anger**

According to Sell, Tooby and Cosmides (2009:15073) anger is part of the basic biology of the human species, spontaneously appearing in infancy, effectively universal in its distribution across cultures and individuals and has a species-typical neural basis. With violent crime rising among adolescents, widespread familial abuse, continuing racial discord and numerous recent acts of bullying, attention has turned to anger as a major problem in human relations (Beck & Fernandez 1998:63). According to DiGiuseppe and Froh (2002:133), a number of theories have proposed cognitive models of anger where low self-esteem has been the most commonly proposed moderator of anger. Roseman, MacKinnon and Keating (in DiGiuseppe & Froh 2002:134) point out that other emotions theories suggest that anger arises from a person's high self-efficacy (when the person perceives himself or herself as stronger than the threat, the person experiences anger) or a sense of power.

*Beck's cognitive theory of anger* (1999) confirms that strong emotions result in negative phenomenological experiences that exist in a continuum in which the frequency, intensity and duration of the experience often lead to impairment of the cognitive processes (Olantunji & Lohr 2004:1). Beck contends further that low efficacy and low self-esteem play a crucial role in driving an individual to a state of anger and depression (DiGiuseppe and Froh 2002:134). *Beck's cognitive theory of anger* consists of a constellation of core beliefs, automatic interpretations and feelings that comprise the manifestations of anger

experiences. Importantly, anger is viewed as a condition that entails deep-seated negative feelings and physiological reactions associated with the intention to hurt someone either physically or emotionally (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones 2004:107). This conception of anger as a condition suggests that anger, hostility and aggression are positively linked especially if they stem from unpleasant circumstances. The theory purports that while aggression can be carried out “coldly” as an instrumental action with little if any accompanying anger, *affectively spurred* attacks are usually associated with a substantial degree of experienced anger (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones 2004:108).

According to DiGiuseppe and Froh (2002:134), other cognitions that have been proposed to moderate anger include the appraisal of immorality, perceptions of injustice and or grievance against oneself and the perceptions of another’s blameworthiness for an aversive act. It is widely accepted that an external agent (somebody or something) must take the responsibility for creating a negative episode that instigates anger- blame has to be apportioned to some person or some object for the negative incident for anger to occur (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones 2004:109). Furthermore, scathing personal insults and attacks on people’s self-esteem have provided a catalyst for the display of anger and aggression (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones 2004:109). Enright and Fitzgibbons (in DiGiuseppe & Froh 2002:135) assert that another cognitive aspect related to anger is thoughts of taking revenge on one’s transgressors because of the perception of the instigating incident as unfair or improper in some way. In this regard, Averill (1983:1149-1150) contends that anger for the person in the street, is an accusation that someone was responsible for a “perceived misdeed” and since the instigation was unfair, the affected individual believes that the demeaning offence is ameliorated the best by attacking the offender in order to overcome the obstruction and achieve the desired objective.

One of the key criticisms of *Beck’s cognitive theory of anger* is that substantial confusion exists concerning whether anger is related to high or low efficacy and self-esteem (DiGiuseppe & Froh 2002:134). *Beck’s cognitive theory of anger* fails to clarify in what way low self-esteem and efficacy caused anger and depression when these two emotions are actually extremely dissimilar to each other. Circumplex models of emotions suggest that anger and depression are opposite emotions and it is, therefore, unlikely that low self-efficacy or low self-esteem can cause both of these emotions without some other variable

mediating the effect (DiGiuseppe & Froh 2002:134). However, despite this criticism, anecdotal evidence substantiates that the emotion of anger is not only relevant to, but also plays a critical role in bullying perpetration in schools.

### 2.3 CONCLUSION

The various theories of bullying, outlined in this chapter, provide an insight into the possible reasons for bullying perpetration in schools and are, therefore, deemed highly appropriate and relevant to this study.

The instinct theories posit that aggressive, bullying behaviour is largely innate and related to the mother-child attachment in early childhood development. Accordingly, *the attachment theory* explains that children with insecure attachment styles learn to expect inconsistent and insensitive interactions with others, whereas, children with secure attachments come to expect consistent and sensitive interactions. Importantly, insecure attachments result in the individual reacting to others with a higher than expected level of aggression and hostility.

The *behavioural theory* maintains that most human behaviour is learnt through a process of conditioning. Bullying behaviour may be learnt through classical conditioning and strengthened and maintained through operant conditioning. Accordingly, the *social learning theory* confirms that bullying behaviour is acquired and maintained through direct experience and through observational learning where the presence of aggressive models increases the likelihood of imitation. Furthermore, the *differential association theory* purports that coercive and criminal behaviour is learnt primarily from close associates such as family and peers- through associations with people who approve of illegal behaviour, individuals may learn to become criminals themselves.

The *homophily theory* provides some notion that children align themselves with similarly minded individuals in relation to bullying. Accordingly, the *dominance theory* offers some explanation as to how and why this socialisation occurs, where aggression is viewed as a means of establishing dominance among children's groups. The crucial transition of children from primary school to secondary school is explained by the *attraction theory* that posits that young adolescents become attracted to other youth that possess characteristics reflecting independence such as delinquency, aggression and disobedience.

The *general strain theory* argues that individuals who experience strain, and as a result of this strain, experience anger and frustration, are more at risk of engaging in criminal or deviant behaviour. This assertion hints at a strong possibility that individuals who experience strain in their lives may resort to bullying in order to express their frustrations. The *social identity theory* may also be helpful in determining why people bully. The theory focusses on inter-group behaviour and maintains that the peer group plays a significant role in bullying perpetration. Following from this theory, the *social categorisation theory* proposes that groups form when people categorise themselves with similar others and contrast this category against those that are dissimilar.

Drive theories purport that bullying behaviour stems primarily from an externally elicited drive or motive to harm others. Accordingly, the *frustration-aggression theory* asserts that frustration elicits a persistent instigation (that is the drive) towards bullying behaviour. Cognitive models of aggression, on the other hand, suggest that the way people think about or interpret threats or provocation will influence how they feel and how they behave. Accordingly, the *cognitive theory of anger* affirms that strong emotions may lead to negative experiences where the individual vents his frustration by bullying targets who appear weak and vulnerable.

The researcher will make relevant and appropriate references to the above theories when attempting to justify the findings of the empirical research to be conducted on bullying perpetration in the five secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

## CHAPTER 3

### SCHOOL BULLYING: CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND OUTCOMES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Bullying is one of the most insidious and prevalent forms of violence in schools today impacting on the learning environment in significant ways (Dupper 2013: vii). It is a specific type of aggression that involves an imbalance of power where the perpetrator consciously intends to harm his or her victim either physically and/ or psychologically. Undoubtedly, bullying is traumatic and has a painful, corrosive and damaging impact on children, families and society at large (Miller & Lowen 2012:1). Learners who bully or who are targeted, are at risk of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, low academic achievement, and a host of other problems that, if left unaddressed, can continue into adulthood. Accordingly, Joyce and Mmankoko (2014:24) point to recent neuroscience research findings that provide evidence that bullying has a devastating impact on the victim's physical, emotional, social and educational well-being (Joyce & Mmankoko 2014:24).

According to Maphalala (2014:29) the types of violence suffered by learners range from assault and harassment experienced on the way to and from school to bullying, stalking, intimidation, sexual harassment and physical and mental abuse within the school premises. Beyond the rare events of gunshots at school are the common events of psychological stabbings- the millions of children who suffer emotionally at school (Fried & Sosland 2011: vii). Victims of this overt and aggressive behaviour are repeatedly teased, harassed and assaulted and are often socially rejected by their peers (Beane 2009:1). This incessant maltreatment of innocent children by violent and uncaring youth is a matter of serious concern as it goes against the very grain of children's rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa section 28(1) (d) (RSA 2009) that states that "Every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation."

It follows that, bullying in South African schools is a complex phenomenon that is increasingly becoming a matter of serious concern to all stakeholders of the school system (Mthanti & Mncube 2014:71) and which creates a chain of violent behaviours that impacts negatively on education in general and what happens in schools in particular (Maphalala & Mabunda 2014:61). Therefore, the researcher believes that, in responding to the challenges

of our time, it becomes imperative to find new and creative ways of observing, planning, and collaborating with all stakeholders of the school system to curb the incidence of bullying in schools. Importantly, it becomes our responsibility as stakeholders of the school system to intervene and stand up to bullying rather than to stand by, and create environments in our schools and communities where bullying is allowed to flourish to the extent that it becomes firmly established in schools by aggressive miscreants (Miller & Lowen 2012:1).

The researcher, therefore, believes that to achieve this through feasible and efficient interventions, it becomes necessary to have a thorough understanding of the phenomenon itself.

### **3.2 THE PHENOMENON OF BULLYING**

The definitions of bullying have been debated in the research literature and many view bullying as a subset of aggressive behaviour (Swearer *et al.* 2009:2). More specifically, Dupper (2013:7) declares that “bullying is a complex phenomenon that defies simple explanations and simple solutions”. According to Beane (2009:1), bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour that is intentional, hurtful (physically, psychologically or both), and persistent (repeated). In turn, Kim and Leventhal (2008:133) state that bullying is aggressive behaviour in which individuals in a dominant position intend to cause mental and or physical suffering to others. Others, such as Ngakane, Muthukrishna & Ngcobo (2012:39), are of the opinion that it is a combination of verbal and physical aggression directed from the agent towards the victim. Fried and Sosland (2011:21) contend that bullying perpetration occurs when the bully uses his age and superior physical strength to inflict injury on a substantially weaker and defenceless person intentionally. In effect, then, bullying behaviour occurs when there is an intent to harm the perpetrator who finds pleasure in the “taunting and continues even when the target’s distress is obvious.” Thus, there is an abuse of power (the abuser maintains power over the target because of his/her age, strength, authority and or gender) and when the target is vulnerable and unsupported (Fried & Sosland 2011:21).

Accordingly, Volk, Camilleri, Dane and Marini (2012:1) remark that bullying is characterised by an imbalance of power where the aggressor is intent on causing harm to a weaker individual either in person or via cyberbullying. Additionally, Jenson and Dieterich (2009:3) assert that bullying is a social process during which an adolescent exerts power or influence

over another learner in a negative manner to achieve the desired effect or outcome. According to the dictionary of the American Psychological Association (In Van den Bos 2007:139), bullying is “persistent threatening and aggressive behaviour directed toward other people, especially those who are smaller” or weaker.

Bullying behaviour exists on a continuum, from repeated teasing or name-calling to severe physical attacks with devastating and sometimes deadly results (Miller & Lowen 2012:4). Moreover, bullying has been observed in every society in which it has been examined and where it was found to peak around the age of 14 with a prevalence rate ranging between 10% and 60% of adolescents (Volk *et al.* 2012:1). As a result of this high rate of occurrence and to understand the phenomenon better, it becomes imperative to identify and understand the various types of bullying prevalent in schools today.

### **3.3 TYPES OF BULLYING**

Today, bullying is more complex, more lethal and considerably different in many ways from bullying in the past since bullying then was typically synonymous with physical abuse that rarely resulted in death; the verbal assaults children experienced were hardly taken seriously. Emotional bullying with its elements of sexual curiosity and teen angst, was ever present but not as devastating as it has become today (Fried & Sosland 2011:35).

Increasingly, adults are realising the importance of creating school environments that are bully-free where all learners feel a sense of belonging and acceptance (Beane 2009:1). In order to address this through anti-bullying programmes, it is necessary first to identify the various types of bullying prevalent in secondary schools.

#### **3.3.1 Physical bullying**

Direct bullying that involves physical contact of any kind and that hurts an individual in a tangible way is a form of physical abuse (Joyce & Mmankoko 2014:24). According to Miller and Lowen (2012:5), physical bullying is designed to intimidate, threaten or harm another person. This attack on a victim is physical in nature and includes fighting, hitting, kicking, poking, hair pulling, punching, choking (Dupper 2013:10), pushing and shoving, to more serious acts such as throwing another person down the stairs or bashing someone’s head against the wall (Venter 2013:242) head butting, wrestling, urinating on a victim, stabbings

and even shootings and physical destruction of property, such as cutting up belongings or setting fire to a person or property (Miller & Lowen 2012:5).

Harsh language and physical bullying are types of behaviour viewed as precursors to physical violence (Singh & Steyn 2014:83). Fried & Sosland (2011:36) mention that girls are more likely to bite, slap, pull hair, scratch, pinch, dig their fingernails into each other while boys are more likely to punch, choke, kick, throw objects and use dangerous weapons like knives and guns. Furthermore, bloody beatings, fistfights between girls, shootings and stabbings as a result of the increased use of weapons are becoming commonplace in schools today. A report by the World Health Organisation (WHO) confirmed that a staggering number of deaths in one year alone were attributed to firearm use with casualties in Great Britain at (19), Germany (54), France (109), Canada (153) and the United States at 5285 (Fried & Sosland 2011:36-37).

### **3.3.2 Verbal bullying**

According to Venter (2013:241), verbal abuse is one of the worst forms of direct bullying- it can vary from hurtful name-calling and malicious teasing to taunting, embarrassing and humiliating another person. Additionally, Fried and Sosland (2011:37) include swearing, gossiping, spreading rumours, making fun of a target's physical characteristics, imitating a lisp or stutter, ridiculing, talking about someone's mother or another family member, and being mean and sarcastic as verbal bullying. Furthermore, verbal abuse by teachers too appears to be a common form of violence in schools as teachers call learners by undesirable names, use vulgar words or swear, talk badly about the learners' parents and are rude to learners (Mncube & Netshitangani 2014:5).

Verbal bullying can also include threats of physical violence and can take place in person, or via electronic means online, through text messaging and emails (Venter 2013:82). Verbal bullying in its most vicious form, can affect a target's confidence, sense of self-worth, the way the learner defines himself, the activities he participates in, and many other aspects of the targets identity detrimentally (Miller & Lowen 2012:4). Additionally, many students have experienced emotional pain from being called names because of their race, culture, size, height or a perceived shortcoming of some kind (Fried & Sosland 2011: 38).



### **3.3.3 Emotional bullying**

Emotional bullying includes nonverbal and psychological bullying (Fried & Sosland 2011:38). Psychological abuse involves the subjection of the victim to behaviour that may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety (Chikwiri & Lemmer 2014:101). Nonverbal bullying includes staring, laughing, rolling your eyes, making faces, using hand signs that imply irreverent and sexual innuendos (Fried & Sosland 2011:38) as well as giving dirty looks and insults or threatening gestures (Miller & Lowen 2012:6). Girls are more likely than boys to display covert forms of hostility towards others by snubbing or ignoring them or by trying to undermine their relationships or social status (Singh & Steyn 2014:83).

Psychological bullying, which is more subtle than direct bullying, can be very harmful since it can isolate and ostracise someone from their peers and friends (Venter 2013:242). It involves “purposeful actions that lead to social exclusion or damage to a child’s status or reputation in an attempt to get others not to socialise with the victim” ( De Wet 2005b:83). Psychological abuse, sometimes referred to as the ‘invisible plague’, is largely unseen and victims suffer without complaint (Chikwiri & Lemmer 2014:95). It comes in the form of indirect abuse such as exclusion, isolation, rejection, shunning and ignoring.

According to Fried and Sosland (2011:38), one of the cruellest forms of punishment that humans can inflict on one another is total isolation. The wounds from this type of exclusion are internal but they may be more devastating and crippling than any other form of abuse. The confidence, self-esteem and dignity of the victim are seriously compromised (Venter 2013:242).

### **3.3.4 Relational/ indirect bullying**

Relational bullying is a form of bullying where the bully does not directly confront the victim but covertly attempts to socially isolate and exclude the victim from social groups and social events (Dupper 2013:10). This type of aggression is particularly problematic in junior high school- a time when most learners are desperately seeking to fit into a peer group and are most vulnerable to peer rejection (Miller & Lowen 2012:6).

Relational bullying includes the spreading of vicious rumours intended to damage the victim’s reputation, gossiping or lying about the target, rejecting and humiliating the victim

and manipulating friendships (Dupper 2013:10). The relational bully may manipulate a target's friend to turn against her or manipulate the friend to participate in the bullying- it is primarily aimed at destroying the target's friendship and peer acceptance. According to Miller and Lowen (2012:6), relational bullying most frequently takes place among girls who tend to be more sophisticated at understanding group social dynamics and who enlist the assistance of other girls in the group to isolate, shame, discredit, reject, and or socially destroy the chosen target.

### **3.3.5 Sexual bullying**

According to Dupper (2013:10), sexual bullying refers to a person's sexuality or gender. Sexual harassment, which includes physical and verbal bullying, is humiliating, degrading and demeaning to the victim (Venter 2013:242). Recent reports suggest that sexual harassment and sexual violations in South African schools has escalated (Tabane & Mudau 2014:37). Whitted and Dupper (2005:168) add that "sexual bullying includes passing inappropriate notes, jokes, pictures, taunts, or starting rumours of a sexual nature." It may also involve physically intrusive behaviour such as the grabbing of a victims private parts, hugging and kissing someone against their will, or pressuring a victim to engage in sexual behaviours that makes him or her feel uncomfortable.

Maphalala (2014:29) argues that girls are more likely to be the victims of certain severe forms of violence, such as sexual harassment and sexual assault, with serious impacts on their self-esteem, educational successes and long-term health and well-being. Harassment, particularly by male bullies, can take the form of certain hand and finger gestures, licking lips in a suggestive way or it can be just whistles or rude noises. Victims also experience indecent touching and groping, suggestive comments about body and dress, indecent speech, lifting of girls' dresses by male peers and male teachers as well (Chikwiri & Lemmer 2014:99). Additionally, sexual bullying may include the use of rampant and pervasive sexual language directed at learners regarding homosexuality such as "gay," "homo," "lesbian" or "queer." The taunting can be outrageous and unyielding and causing enormous pain to the hapless victim (Fried & Sosland 2011:64).

### **3.3.6 Cyberbullying**

Technological advancements in the twenty-first century have resulted in an even more devastating, far reaching form of bullying called cyberbullying where victims are harassed and threatened via the electronic media (Singh & Steyn 2014:83). This type of bullying involves sending harmful, rude or cruel text messages or images using instant messaging, emails or social network sites (Venter 2013:242). Furthermore, it includes “sexting,” which is the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photographs, primarily between mobiles (Dupper 2013:10).

The anonymity and unlimited dissemination of this form of harassment takes cruelty to a level never imagined and the visible detachment from the victim encourages a greater level of maliciousness (Fried & Sosland 2011:43). Someone who, therefore, was practically invisible and would never have the nerve to intimidate a peer publicly, can savage a person’s reputation at a whim. In addition to chat rooms and websites, cyberbullies use text messages, steal passwords, engage in online stalking, post hurtful comments on “Myspace,” “Formspring,” Facebook,” and “ChatRoulette,” post videos on “YouTube,” and manipulate any possible opportunity to use their technological knowledge to pursue victims relentlessly and cruelly thereby instilling pain on them continuously (Fried & Sosland 2011:44).

The extent of electronic bullying is now so alarming that The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention recognise it as an emergent health risk affecting nearly 75% teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17 (Myers, McCaw & Hemphil 2011:9). Studies have found that a minimum of 9% to 35% of all school aged children and 42% to 53% of children from the fourth to eighth grades have been cyberbullying victims. Furthermore, according to a 2008 California study, of the 75% who were bullied online, 85% had been bullied at school, and 51% of them reported that bullying was committed by their classmates (Myers *et al.* 2011:5).

### **3.3.7 Homophobic bullying**

A particular type of bullying that has received significant attention in the recent years is homophobic bullying (Harber 2004:49). According to Walton (2006:13), issues concerning gender and sexuality are rich fodder for homophobic bullying and even though homophobia is a prominent feature of schoolyard bullying, it is also one of the most unchallenged forms of bullying. For learners who are identified or are perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual or

transgender (LGBT), school can be especially harrowing, as these learners are frequently targeted for bullying. As a result of this, addressing the issue of homophobic bullying becomes one of considerable urgency (Walton 2006:13).

Research findings indicate that in the United Kingdom, approximately 46 000 secondary school learners are being bullied for their sexual orientation and that over half of young gay men and lesbian women have considered suicide because of homophobic bullying (Harber 2004:49). Additionally, an American survey found that 70% of gay and lesbian learners faced verbal, physical, sexual or physical harassment or assault at school. Moreover, the United States Schools Climate Survey (2011) that included 8000 participants found that more than "82 percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBT)" learners "reported being verbally harassed; 38 percent reported physical harassment and 18 percent reported being physically assaulted" (Potgieter 2014:6) and adds that the lack of tolerance of people's sexual orientation leads to victims being subjected to various forms of harassment at school. According to Potgieter (2014:6), "prejudice and homophobic attitudes do not just remain attitudes." The consequences of these attitudes include the various forms of abuse, which lesbians and gay men suffer. Potgieter (2014:6) asserts that "rape and murder are the consequential behaviour of these attitudes and beliefs."

Dupper (2013:41) confirms that LGBT learners face unrelenting bullying and harassment by their peers in many United States schools with 84.6% being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation, and 63.7% verbally harassed because of their gender orientation. In Great Britain, a Stonewall Report found that 65% of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) learners reported homophobic victimisation (Smith 2013:81). "Homophobic action encompasses hate speech, exclusion, marginalisation and violence against learners who identify as part of the LGBT community" (Potgieter 2014:6). Moreover, research in the United Kingdom found that more than 70 percent of the "lesbian and gay youth who had been bullied or abused at school, played truant or pretended to be ill to avoid a homophobic school environment" (Potgieter 2014:6). It is evident from these examples that schools are failing to protect learners from homophobic bullying, despite official political condemnation of such behaviour (Harber 2004:49).

### **3.3.8 Religious bullying**

According to Dupper (2013:56) religious bullying refers to repeated acts of aggression in which powerful “institutional religion is used to mock, humiliate, or threaten others who do not share the same religious beliefs or practices.” In a study conducted in the United Kingdom of over 800 children, it was found that “one in four children have been bullied because of their faith” or the wearing of religious symbols (Lipsett 2008:1). It was further established that of the 47% who practice their religion, 23% reported being bullied because of their religion or faith. The results also showed that one in five young people choose to:

...mix with friends of the same religion, while one in 20 said that their families do not approve of them having friends of other religious faiths. According to the study, those bullied because of their religious beliefs often began to question their faith, stopped talking about it, or even felt ashamed of it (Lipsett 2008:1).

In a study of 243 Hindu, Muslim, and Pakistani children in the United Kingdom, “57% of boys and 43% of girls reported being bullied because of religious or cultural differences and especially because they felt that they were different from” the normative group (Swearer & Napolitano 2011:4). Moreover, empirical research in the United States suggests that religious bullying in public schools may be a much broader and more pervasive form of bullying than many may currently want to acknowledge. According to Dupper (2013:57-58), a rural female student, who was a pagan, was bullied physically and emotionally over several years, beaten and ridiculed by other students for not being a Christian, repeatedly called a “satan worshipper,” was forced to attend regular Bible study classes during the school day and forced to lead the school and her class in prayer. In another case, a 14-year old girl in an Ohio school District was called a “dirty Jew” and told that she would “rot in hell” because she did not believe in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, learners’ clothing and diet that are part of their religious beliefs can trigger bullying incidents. It has been found that Muslim girls suffer most from bullying due to wearing clothes with long sleeves, long pants or skirts and the hijab headscarf (Dupper 2013:60).

### **3.3.9 Racist bullying**

Another form of violence that can reflect the wider society and that exists in schools relates to racial or ethnic discrimination, that is, hostility towards the other based on skin colour or cultural differences (Mncube & Harber 2013:6). Research findings indicate that racist

bullying (which refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, “both physical and psychological, that makes a person feel unwelcome,” marginalized, excluded, powerless or worthless because of their skin colour, ethnicity or culture) is becoming a worrying feature in many secondary schools (Smith 2013:84). According to Swearer and Napolitano (2011:3-4) involvement in bullying is a cross-cultural phenomenon that transcends ethnicity. However, research has shown that “students who are in the ethnic minority in a school are more likely to be bullied than students who are in the ethnic majority” (Jimerson, Swearer & Espelage 2010:228).

According to Harber (2004:85), schools have always played a part, via socialisation and indoctrination, in the creation, reproduction and modification of group identities and stereotypes. In South Africa, the colonial system of education, left a legacy of classifications, labels, and negative relationships which created unprecedented levels of mistrust and hostility between racial groups (Harber 2004:87). Despite progress since the advent of democracy in 1994, an audit of 90 desegregated schools across all nine provinces showed that racism in schools continued to be pervasive and with people continually labelled in terms of their race as “Black, “Coloured,” “Indian” and “White” (Mncube & Harber 2013:6). Accordingly, the researcher is concerned that even though South Africa achieved democracy some twenty years ago, incidences of racial bullying, particularly among learners in local multicultural secondary schools, is still prevalent and a matter of serious concern to teachers and management staff alike.

Bullying obviously involves a perpetrator or group of perpetrators who are doing the bullying, the target who is being hurt and the bystanders who either challenge the bullying or ignore it (Miller & Lowen 2012:7). Accordingly, the researcher believes that it is of important significance to explore the characteristics of the various role players in the bullying incident, namely, the bully, the victim and the bystander in order to better understand bully perpetration in schools.

### **3.4 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BULLIES, VICTIMS AND BYSTANDERS**

In order to obtain a holistic perspective and a clearer understanding of bullying perpetration in schools and provide solutions to the problem, it becomes imperative to first establish the personality characteristics displayed by bullies, victims and bystanders in the bullying episode.

### **3.4.1 The characteristics of a bully**

Dupper (2013:15) maintains that males consistently exhibit a higher probability of bullying than females and “tend to be physically stronger than other children.” Accordingly, Miller and Lowen (2012:32) point to research findings that indicate that boys are more likely to engage in bullying behaviours than girls, and also to be the targets of it, but irrespective of gender, children with bullying behaviour often share several common characteristics.

Bullies are generally more aggressive, temperamental and impulsive than the average learner at school (Schafer, Korn, Brodbeck, Wolke & Schulz 2005:323). They come from home backgrounds with little affection, more violence and low parental monitoring and value “aggression and bullying as a means of achieving power and influence” over other children at school (Smith 2004:100). According to Dupper (2013:15), bullies tend to be easily frustrated, have low levels of empathy, have difficulty following rules, are defiant towards adults, break school rules and are more likely to get into trouble with the law, have poorer school adjustment and are more likely to drink alcohol and use drugs excessively. Additionally, some bullies “have poor social skills, leading to difficulties in managing positive relationships, but others have advanced social competence, which enables them to manipulate others” (James 2010:8).

Fried & Sosland (2011:29) contend that bullies are aggressive children with poor impulse control, react to even an accidental bump as an act of provocation, have difficulty accepting criticism, are more likely to use violence in relationships, and have a greater likelihood of exhibiting antisocial tendencies in adulthood. In addition, bullies tend to be physically stronger than their peers having an advantage in terms of height, weight and muscle ratio thus functioning from a stronger position enabling them to dominate, intimidate and have total control of their victims and situations (Miller & Lowen 2012:31).

### **3.4.2 The characteristics of a bully victim**

According to James (2010:9) the majority of the victims of bullying can be described as passive and who have difficulty dealing with peer rejection, social isolation and loneliness, understandably “possess poor self-esteem, and a greater tendency towards depression and anxiety,” may also be prone to suicidal thoughts, attempt suicide or even carry out

acts of retribution. Bully victims are characterised by low peer acceptance, low self-concept, low physical strength, poor social skills and high internalising and externalising problems (Smith 2004:101).

Victims of chronic bullying consider school to be an unsafe and unhappy place, have low social status, are extremely fearful of riding on the school bus, making use of the school bathroom, have poorer grades and increased rates of truancy and dropping out (Dupper 2013:21). According to Fried & Sosland (2011:31) researchers have identified two types of targets, namely, passive targets (anxious and insecure) and provocative targets (hot-tempered and restless). Passive targets appear to do nothing to invite the bully's aggression and also do not attempt to defend themselves when attacked (they are soft spoken, shy and generally lack self-confidence). On the other hand, provocative targets create tension by irritating and annoying the bully and are more likely to fight back when attacked.

Furthermore, Fried and Sosland (2011:65) contend that victims tend to be at higher risk for mental and physical health problems such as depression, stomach aches, headaches and sleeping disorders, continue to experience higher levels of anxiety through adulthood, and suffer low self-esteem, anxiety and pervasive loneliness. Additionally, the cruel taunting, humiliation, and assaults can be so severe that victims are likely to suffer life-altering consequences as some targets begin to view themselves as stupid, ugly, worthless, and ineffective (Miller & Lowen 2012:43). Youth who are bullied have also been shown to be at greater risk of developing poor self-esteem, depressive episodes, and are at a greater risk of committing suicide (Dupper 2013:20).

### **3.4.3 The characteristics of bystanders**

According to Fried & Sosland (2011:31), bystanders or witnesses are children who witness cruelty and feel helpless to alter it. In the overwhelming majority of bullying incidences (85%-88%) bystanders play a pivotal role in either diminishing, encouraging or even prolonging bullying (Dupper 2013:24). Despite the fact that many peer witnesses and bystanders believe that bullying is wrong and that defending their bullied peer would be the right thing to do, peer witnesses and bystanders rarely offer support to bully victims fearing victimisation (Salmivalli, Karna & Poskiparta 2010:441).



Fried & Sosland (2011:33) observe that bystanders react to bullying in a variety of ways- by withdrawing from the action and building a wall around their feelings, by focussing on protecting themselves, by becoming annoyed at targets for not defending themselves, by receiving some sadistic pleasure out of viewing someone else's anguish, by directly or indirectly supporting bullies and giving them power, by feeling concern for the target but lacking confidence to intervene or by sometimes taking some action to relieve the targets pain. Available literature suggests that children and adolescents facing bullying problems as bystanders are trapped in a social dilemma (Salmivalli *et al.* 2010:441). Salmivalli *et al.* (2010:441) contends that, "on the one hand, they understand that bullying is wrong and they would like to do something to stop it"- on the other hand, they strive to secure their own status and safety in the peer group.

However, the researcher believes that the potential impact of peer witnesses and bystanders in combating bullying in schools is unmistakable. Smith (2004:99) argues that even though bullying is often watched by a number of children who are not re-enforcers, their non-intervention is in itself a form of complicity and a reinforcement of bullying behaviour. Importantly, bystanders have a significant role to play in intervening in bullying incidences, thereby curbing the potentially dangerous and devastating outcome of such instances.

According to Kim and Leventhal (2008:133), all participants in bullying are reported to be at a substantially increased risk of significant mental and physical sequelae of bullying. Significantly, the effects of bullying are so devastating that both victims and perpetrators suffer low self-esteem, severe depression, display anti-social behaviour and some even eventually consider suicide. It follows that urgent and appropriate interventions are necessary and these can only be effectively implemented after first establishing the contributory factors associated with bullying behaviour.

### **3.5 CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS, OUTCOMES AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF BULLYING**

In order to implement effective and appropriate interventions to address the problem of bullying in secondary schools, it is critically important to first establish the underlying factors contributing to bullying, determine the impact of bullying on all stakeholders of the school

and explore the legal implications of bullying before tangible solutions are sought and efficiently implemented.

### **3.5.1 Underlying factors contributing to bullying**

Bullying deposits its toxic power in the school, the family, the community, the workplace the nation, and ultimately the world (Fried & Sosland 2011:19). Not only are parents of bullies losing control, but the statistics demonstrate the very high levels of conflict both within families, the school, and the community (Fried & Sosland 2011:152). As a result of this, and in order to address the problem at all levels, the researcher believes that it is vitally important to first establish the influence of bullying from a family perspective.

#### **3.5.1.1 Influence at family level**

According to Swearer *et al.* (2011:4) families are the major socialisation agent for young children and add that, “Unfortunately, children are sometimes presented with less than ideal role models and learn” pro-aggression attitudes, develop an inability to regulate emotions, and often fail to gain the necessary problem-solving or coping skills to manage situations at home. “Specifically, it is argued that bullies possess a hot-tempered, impulsive and domineering temperament, reinforced by growing up in a family that tolerates aggression and the use” of power assertive discipline (Protogerou & Flisher 2013:121). Additionally, a synthesis of research on family characteristics of bullies found that bullies come from families with low social cohesion, little warmth, absent fathers, high power needs, permit aggressive behaviour, physical abuse, poor family functioning and authoritarian parenting (Swearer & Napolitano 2011:6).

#### **(a) Modelling effects**

Learners’ experiences of violence mirror the experiences at home and the broader community since the ways in which children acquire violent repertoires can only be understood by exploring the ecology of the context in which they grow up (Smith 2013:53). There is almost universal agreement that bullies generally become abusers through learned behaviour, acquired primarily from family members and friends (Fried & Sosland 2011:27). Bullies are more likely to have been abused themselves and may have witnessed their fathers abusing their mothers physically. As Szyndrowski (2005:11) points out,- a teenager

who observes his father beating his mother every time they have a difference of opinion, is likely to batter his partner in order to coerce her into submission.

In addition, bullies have been observed to come from families where the parents are more authoritarian, condone “fighting back” and the use of physical punishment to settle scores (Smith 2013:88). Furthermore, children who bully others may come from families lacking warmth, in which violence is common, and where discipline is inconsistent. Additionally, children raised by authoritarian parents- parents who are demanding, directive, and unresponsive- are the most prone to act out bullying behaviour (Fried & Sosland 2011:152). Not surprisingly, Swearer *et al.* (2009:20-21) maintain that domestic violence and child maltreatment are directly associated with bullying perpetration.

Research findings have demonstrated that parents of bullies are often cold and indifferent, inconsistent in their display of affection and are unable to set clear boundaries and this behaviour is reflected in the bullies’ behaviour both at home and at school (Protogerou & Flisher 2013:121). Moreover, parents who are aggressive, hostile, argumentative, short tempered, domineering or critical and generally demonstrate violent behaviour inadvertently serve as role models for their own children. These children harness their anger and implement the intimidation tactics employed by their parents to harass their peers at school (Miller & Lowen 2012:48). Furthermore, parents who abuse drugs and alcohol try to maintain a closed home environment where everyone is controlled (McAdams & Lambie 2003:1). This has a negative effect on adolescents who feel frustrated, neglected and abused and they, in turn, vent their anger by screaming and abusing others at school both verbally and physically. Learners who believe that aggression and violence are acceptable increase their chances of becoming bullies at school (Miller & Lowen 2012:24).

### **(b) Temperament**

The best documented individual factor in bullying perpetration is temperament (Dupper 2013:15). The Encarta Concise English Dictionary (2001:1486) defines temperament as “a prevailing or dominant quality of a person’s mind that is characterised by excessive moodiness, irritability or sensitivity.” Furthermore, temperament refers to the basic tendencies by children to develop certain personality styles and interpersonal behaviour. “Children who are active and impulsive in temperament may be more inclined to develop

into bullies” (Dupper 2013:15). These children have trouble responding to new situations, resist change and react to new stimuli with shock or rejection and this difficult temperament becomes a precursor for conduct disorders during adolescence when they display heightened irritability and react angrily at the slightest provocation through acts of physical and verbal bullying (Delfos 2004:86).

Furthermore, a wide range of emotions surround experiences of bullying perpetration and in this regard, “anger has been found to be a significant predictor of bullying perpetration” in schools (Swearer *et al.* 2009:16). Research findings indicate that learners who are prone to emotional instability and therefore have lowered self-esteem might channel their anger by bullying others in order to make themselves feel better. According to Dupper (2013:15), learners who have a low threshold for anger management bully their peers regularly, tend to be easily frustrated, have low levels of empathy, have difficulty following rules, view violence positively and are defiant towards adults. This anger, if not attended to, may result in the perpetration of delinquent and coercive behaviour and may potentially result in more serious criminal involvement (Swearer *et al.* 2009:16). In this regard, it becomes imperative for parents and teachers alike to teach children how to control their temper appropriately, to calm down when they are angry, and to handle their frustrations and their disappointments in healthy ways (Fried & Sosland 2011:155).

### **(c) Poverty and homelessness**

Living in economic hardship can be a serious threat to a family’s stability, leaving children more vulnerable to targeting or mocking (Miller & Lowen 2012:202). Additionally, Benette (in Tintswalo 2014:51) argues that “people who are exposed to chronic poverty, which is the case for the majority of township and rural dwellers, often have less resources or mechanisms which they can employ to exercise control over their lives”. In the Uthungulu District, where the researcher serves, poverty is an endemic problem where job losses as a result of retrenchments and staff-downsizing by struggling companies have left a number of families homeless, and this dire circumstance has rendered aggressive and bullying behaviour a risk factor in many schools. Consequently, violence then appears to be an attractive option as a child whose family is experiencing financial difficulties may unleash his anger and frustration on others around him (Tintswalo 2014:51).

According to Huston and Ripke (2006:426-427), low income families have a greater likelihood of producing poor performing and aggressive individuals and impoverished neighbourhoods that induce the youth to engage in antisocial lifestyles. However, while this may be the case, Miller & Lowen (2012:202) argue that bullying exists within all socio-economic groups and should definitely not be regarded as a “poor child’s problem” as even children from affluent families have the potential to become bullies because of their power and superior economic status. As a matter of fact, many resilient children who come from families that have experienced a wide range of challenges go on to become self-reliant, industrious, responsible and successful adults who fully understand the meaning of hard work, integrity and persistence (Miller & Lowen 2012:202).

However, despite the arguments for and against poverty being a risk factor for bullying, Fullam (2012:1) believes that poverty does make a difference in a child’s life and that, therefore, this difference could lead to the victimisation of the child by more affluent learners at school. Moreover, Fullam (2012:1) points out that children living in poverty and who suffer from low self-esteem and defencelessness can become aggressive as their frustrations can cause them to lash out.

#### **(d) Divorce and death in the family**

When parents divorce, it can be particularly confusing and distressing for children and stressful for everyone in the family (Miller & Lowen 2012:200). In fact, the trauma children experience before and after such actions remain etched in their minds for a long time and affects their moods, behaviour and self-esteem negatively. Therefore, the manner in which a child or adolescent deals with his/her emotions during this difficult time may increase his/her risk for acting aggressively or impulsively towards others. Delfos (2004:141) concurs with this view by stating that complicated divorce proceedings can be an extremely traumatic experience for a young adolescent who may resort to antisocial behaviour in order to cope with the trauma. Additionally, in single-parent homes, the absence of paternal authority and role models results in higher rates of adolescent aggression and violence (Gasa 2005:45).

On the other hand, the researcher believes that death in the family may pose another risk factor for the victims of bullying. The death of a loved one in the family can bring untold

grief and suffering to children and their families. While adults tend to grieve with deep and profound intensity, children “jump in and out of the grief process for an extended period of time,” feeling devastated, and in desperate need of adult empathy and caring (Miller & Lowen 2012:201). Victims experience anxiety and low self-esteem as a result of their loss and bullies are quick to observe this vulnerability, resulting in victims finding themselves on the receiving end of their thoughtless and insensitive comments and provocation. Miller and Lowen (2012:201) contend that the bullying situation becomes increasingly cruel and unbearable when it is established that the victim’s parent or loved one died as a result of suicide, as this provides the aggressor with ammunition to taunt and tease the bereaved victim about the circumstances of his parents’ passing.

### **3.5.1.2 Influence at school level**

The role of schooling in perpetrating and multiplying violence can only be understood in terms of its authoritarian nature (Harber 2004:69). According to Harber, schools have been established as authoritarian bureaucracies for the purposes of control, denying learners the fundamental human rights of participation. The researcher believes that this top-down approach to schooling can instil anger in learners who are forced to accept the views of others, particularly teachers, without question. The problem is further exacerbated by the controlled implementation of the prescribed curriculum by teacher-administered punishments (Mncube & Harber 2013:16).

#### **(a) Corporal punishment**

According to Mthanti and Mncube (2014:71) corporal punishment can be described as “any physical action that hurts a child in the name of discipline.” It is a form of violence institutionally sanctioned in many schools around the world (Mncube & Netshitangani 2014:2) The WHO reports that corporal punishment in schools in the form of hitting, punching, pinching, “beating or kicking remains legal in at least 65 countries despite the fact that the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has underlined that corporal punishment is incompatible with the Convention” (Harber 2004:75). In respect of the developed or industrialised world, it is illegal in France, Korea, Israel and a number of Australian and American states. In other countries where it is officially banned such as South Africa and China, it is still widely used, suggesting that corporal punishment in school still

exists in at least one third and perhaps as much as half of the countries of the world (Plan 2008:12-14).

Despite its official abolishment in schools in South Africa in 1996, the pervasive use of corporal punishment is widespread in most South African schools, particularly rural schools (Mthanti & Mncube 2014:72). Furthermore, a survey of 750 school learners in KwaZulu-Natal confirmed that it is still a common practice among teachers in schools to this day (Harber 2004:79). The 2012 National School Violence Study, the second such study conducted since 2008, rates KwaZulu-Natal as having the highest incidence of corporal punishment in South African schools (Payet 2014:6). The South African Council for Educators (SACE) chief executive officer, Rej Brijraj, confirmed that 185 incidents of corporal punishment were reported in the last financial year- of which 24 cases were from KwaZulu-Natal. Teachers often used a stick, PVC pipe, duster or ruler to punish learners while others resorted to slapping and kicking to discipline learners (Payet 2014:6).

The problem of corporal punishment is further compounded by the fact that it is justified on the grounds that it is a part of the "African culture" (Mncube & Harber 2013:16). Among African learners and parents, particularly from rural township schools, there is a strong public endorsement of corporal punishment (Mthanti & Mncube 2014:72). Learners often feel powerless against the harsh disciplinary measures and this is often exacerbated through an ideological justification of punishment expressed by teachers as being essential to make learners conform (Tintswalo 2014:53). However, the researcher is of the view that apart from the fact that corporal punishment is banned in South African schools, one should never forget the pain and suffering, shame and humiliation felt by the children who are abused by the very people who are supposed to protect them. Accordingly, the SACE Chief Education Officer (CEO), Reg Brijraj, asserts that corporal punishment is tantamount to assault and is, therefore, a criminal offence- a criminal act cannot be allowed. Instead, harsher sentences are more likely to be prescribed in future owing to the frequency of the incidences of corporal punishment (Payet 2014:6).

According to Harber (2004:80), there is strong and consistent research evidence that physical punishment and the deliberate humiliation of children is significantly linked to the development of violent attitudes and actions such as bullying. The research findings indicate

that learners “are being bullied by teachers to a surprising degree and in a wide range of destructive and harmful ways” (Whitted & Dupper 2008:329). Accordingly, children exposed to violence in their homes and at school tend to use violence to solve problems as they establish in themselves the belief that violence begets violence (Harber 2004:80).

### **(b) Authoritarian schooling**

While it is assumed that bullying results from flaws in the character of individual learners in school, research over many years have proven that interventions have had very little impact in reducing bullying because the school organisation and culture itself can be conducive to bullying (Mncube & Harber 2013:9). This is because authoritarian organisations provide an environment where learner “rights, needs and feelings can too readily be ignored or suppressed and where it is difficult” for them to act independently and to critique and challenge school rules and prescribed curricula (Harber 2004:20). Indeed, historically, authority and order in schools have consistently been associated with violent imposition in the form of physical punishment thereby creating an oppressive and authoritarian ethos (Mncube & Netshitangani 2014:2).

The researcher is of the view that when schools are designed purely for heightened control, without proper explanations, learners find it difficult to make sense of the rules, and become agitated and frustrated. Furthermore, the degree of control within authoritarian institutions varies from context to context and from institution to institution. In the majority of schools, power over what is taught and learned, when it is taught and learned, how it is taught and where it is taught and learned, is not in the hands of learners but in the hands of predominantly government officials, head teachers and teachers (Harber 2004:24). Consequently, a learner who feels marginalised and does not feel understood will not be inclined to follow the advice given by teachers, will be recalcitrant and this behaviour will be reinforced over time (Delfos 2004:194). The researcher is of the opinion that often school rules become punitive when teachers resort to policing the school environment to enforce school rules rather than educate learners regarding why the rules are necessary and it is this unexplained repression that provides the learner with a justification for aggression.

Harsh disciplinary measures such as beatings can prove detrimental to the secondary school learners who feels humiliated by such actions, and which results in them retaliating with



hostile, antisocial and aggressive behaviour (Delfos:2004:207). Furthermore, strong and consistent research evidence shows that physical punishment and the deliberate humiliation of children are significantly linked “with the development of violent attitudes and actions” (Harber 2004:80). According to Moeller (2001:278) this aggressive behaviour is further entrenched by the prevalence of an irrelevant and uninspired curriculum combined with teaching techniques that fail to engage the learners’ interest. As Carl Rogers (In Harber 2004:19) explains “Learners do not participate in choosing the goals, the curriculum or the manner of working. These things are chosen for the learners. Students have no part in the choice of teaching personnel, nor any voice in educational policy.” Consequently, and as Harber (2004:20) argues, rejection of imposed authoritarian forms can in itself lead to violence and bullying perpetration.

### **(c) School climate**

Konstantina and Piliou-Dimitris (2010:93) assert that, “research evidence indicates that a negative school climate is a contributing risk factor for bullying.” When the school climate is unhealthy and not supportive, then bullying and concomitant problems proliferate (Swearer & Napolitano 2011:5). Furthermore, classroom practices and punitive teacher attitudes are salient components of school climate that contribute significantly to bullying prevalence (Swearer *et al.* 2009:22). Accordingly, Allen (2010:1) points out that there is much more to classroom management than being able to influence and control student behaviour. In a study conducted with 99 teachers and 2002 learners, researchers found that classroom management had a direct impact as well as an indirect impact via social structure on the prevalence of bullying (Craven, Finger & Yeung 2007:3). This crucial finding demonstrates the influential role of the teacher in the management of student social dynamics (Craven *et al.* 2007:3).

Accordingly, Olweus (in Konstantino & Piliou-Dimitri 2010:95) emphasises the importance of developing a positive school climate to reduce bullying, ensuring clear rules, regulations and appropriate sanctions against bullying behaviours, learner participation in the formulation of rules and sanctions, rewards and encouragement of positive and non-violent behaviour of aggressive learners by teachers, non-punitive sanctions of aggressive behaviour, and collective activities that promote collaboration and positive interactions

among learners. Furthermore, Gottfredson *et al.* (2005:412) argues that the main factors of school climate related to high levels of learner victimisation include unclear, unfair and inconsistently enforced rules, ambiguous responses to learner misconduct, inconsistent discipline management, poor teacher-administration co-operation, and punitive or authoritarian attitudes on the part of teachers.

Another form of direct, internally generated violence within schools, which creates a negative ethos and tense school climate is the incessant bullying of learners by teachers (Mncube & Harber 2013:16). Accordingly, a study of violence in the Free State Province found that out of a sample of 800 teachers 43% reported that teachers in their schools had threatened one or more learners at their school over a period of a year, whereas 17% had attacked or assaulted one or more learners at their school during the same period (De Wet 2007:59). In sub-Saharan Africa, research suggests that female teachers often call on male teachers to carry out corporal punishment while they themselves resort to emotional abuse and insulting language to control learners (Plan 2008:13). In this regard, Charles (2014:283) urges teachers to establish a prevailing sense of civility, ethics, and trust among learners in their classrooms.

The researcher is of the opinion that teachers are the chief architects of producing a classroom climate that is warm, inviting and conducive to teaching and learning. Accordingly, Charles (2014:273) asserts that teachers have the supreme responsibility to transform their classrooms into “learning communities” which are places where learners feel safe and cared about and are encouraged to care about each other, where they experience a sense of being valued and respected. Additionally, teachers can positively improve their relations with their learners if they assiduously avoid the *seven deadly habits in teaching* that usually damage and destroy relations with learners, namely, criticizing, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing, and rewarding learners to control them. However, Charles (2014:273) argues that in order to improve relationships among learners even further, teachers should make regular use of the *seven connecting habits* of caring, listening, supporting, contributing, encouraging, trusting and befriending.

#### **(d) Peer group**

Emerging research has shown that peers are integral for supporting and maintaining bullying victimisation and perpetration in our schools (Swearer *et al.* 2009:17). Not surprisingly, Atlas and Pepler (in Mestry *et al.* 2006:48) report that 85% of bullying incidents occur in the context of the peer group. Early adolescence is the life stage marked by puberty as well as the stage where social status and peer affiliation become important (Nishina in Dupper 2013:5). Learners who are made to believe that violence and aggression are acceptable, may become vulnerable with regard to low self-esteem and succumb to peer pressure, which increases their chances of becoming bullies (Miller & Lowen 2012:24). Consequently, it is important to understand bullying within the context of peer group affiliation and also understand the importance of learners who witness bullying (bystanders) since their behaviours and reactions (for example, laughter and taunting) can encourage and even prolong bullying incidents (Dupper 2013:6).

Bystanders play a crucial role in perpetuating the cycle of bullying and although they assume many roles in the bullying episode (like joining in, cheering, passively watching and occasionally intervening) research indicates that 43% of peers try to help the victim, 33% state that they should help but do not, while 24% indicated that the bullying was none of their business. It is, nevertheless, reported that 83% of peers watching the bullying do feel uncomfortable, experience feelings of guilt or helplessness for not standing up to the bully on behalf of their classmate, and having nightmares about being the next victim (Mestry *et al.* 2006:49).

However, despite the fact that many peer witnesses and bystanders believe that bullying is wrong and that defending their bullied peer is the right thing to do, peer witnesses and bystanders rarely offer support to bully victims (Salmivalli *et al.* 2010:442). The literature suggests that children and adolescents facing bullying problems as bystanders are trapped in a social dilemma (Dupper 2013:24). On the one hand, they understand that bullying is wrong and they would like to do something to stop it- on the other hand, they strive to secure their own status and safety in the peer group. Some peers have even been reported to being “excited,” “energised” and “hyped” by the experience of witnessing peer-on-peer bullying (Kerbs & Jolley 2007:12).

#### **(e) Racist attitudes**

Harber (2004:87) asserts that under apartheid in South Africa, the entire education system was dedicated towards preserving racial inequality and creating hostility between racial groups. Moreover, this systematic attempt at racist indoctrination took place in schools and classrooms that were organised along authoritarian lines. With the advent of democracy in 1994, it was expected of all schools and institutions to ensure, through policy and practice, that racism and discrimination in all forms be eradicated completely. However, this is not the case in many schools around the country, particularly in post-apartheid multiracial schools where racist attitudes among learners and teachers continues to exist even to this day (Harber 2004:87).

As a result of the numerous reports from management and staff of local multicultural schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal, the researcher is convinced that racism, sectarianism, homophobia and religious intolerance are frequent phenomena in schools in our rainbow nation, subsequently spilling over from households and communities to the school environment. Discrimination and prejudice have been documented since Biblical times and prejudices such as homophobia, sexism, classism, and racism, set a fertile ground for bullying and victimisation (Swearer & Napolitano 2011:7). Consequently, some egocentric youngsters have the tendency to categorise people rigidly in terms of their skin colour (and the physical correlates of ethnicity) and favour the group to which they belong (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:513).

According to Mncube and Harber (2013:45), in a Western Cape school, one of the main sources of violence is racial tension amongst the isiXhosa and coloured learners. Historically, the school was a coloured school but with the dawn of democracy in South Africa, it opened its gates to all races. As a result, the changing dynamics of the school has exposed it to the potential for racial violence. According to the school principal, any clash or disagreement that involves a coloured and a black learner is immediately reduced to race, which results in heightened racial tension, hostility and violence (Mncube & Harber 2013:45).

However, Gross (2003:493) makes it clear that discrimination, prejudice and racist attitudes have far-reaching negative consequences for secondary school learners. He argues that the intolerance of learners towards people of other races, religions, cultures and sexual orientation can contribute significantly to bullying perpetration in schools. Institutional

racism inflicted either by learners-on-learners or teachers-on-learners, thwarts their efforts and aspirations and renders them embittered and angry. In the United States of America (USA), evidence indicates that African American children experience less positive school contexts than do other ethnic groups as African American children attending classes received instruction of a lower quality, on the one hand and more punitive discipline, on the other hand, than non-Hispanic white children did (Huston & Ripke 2004:427).

Accordingly, Mncube and Harber (2013:46) assert that while such tensions, hostility, and violence may reflect in schools and the surrounding communities, the critical question to be asked is to what extent schools openly confront issues of race and racial tension in their school policies and practices and in teaching about such matters in the classroom?

### **3.5.1.3 Influence at community level**

Bullying is not only strongly influenced at family and school levels, but is also influenced substantially at the community level where substance abuse, gangsterism, negative media influences and the use of dangerous weapons are widespread.

#### **(a) Substance abuse**

Swearer *et al.* (2009:34) contend that bullying is strongly associated with both alcohol and drug use. In fact, the drug phenomenon represents one of the biggest public health problems in the world today (Ramarola & Joyce 2014:11). In a study of middle through high school learners, researchers found that aggressive victims and aggressive non-victims were more likely than their non-aggressive counterparts to use drugs and alcohol and a study of 43 093 United States adults found that bullying was significantly correlated with lifetime alcohol and drug use (Swearer & Napolitano 2011:5). Furthermore, drugs and alcohol are in many cases also linked to violence in schools (Mncube & Harber 2013:47). The use of and trading in drugs, as well as the carrying of weapons to school, are the most widespread violence-related types of behaviour amongst secondary school learners (De Wet 2006:20).

According to Sewchurran (2013:1), bullying, extortion and drug dealing are a common phenomenon in Kwazulu-Natal schools. Drugs serve as a catalyst for a large number of violent crimes, while drug dealing exhibit an organised dimension, and crimes are often committed by drug addicts for the sake of satisfying their expensive addictions (Ramarola &

Joyce 2014:12). In the Uthungulu, Ilembe and Ethekeweni regions of KZN, the increased use of *dagga* is becoming increasingly prevalent because it is easily accessible (Maluleka 2010:1). Furthermore, in many township and rural schools, the so-called *whoonga* drug, a cocktail of heroin, *crystal meth (tik)* and *sugars*, has been blamed for an increase in violent crime and break-ins. It is either the drug dealers or the learners themselves who are responsible for bringing the drugs into the schools because they have a ready market on the premises (Maluleka 2010:1).

In an incident at the Queensburgh High School in Durban, a grade eight learner was forced to drink what is suspected to be a cocktail of drugs dissolved in cooldrinks and subsequently had to be hospitalised after vomiting continuously and losing consciousness (Sewchurran 2013:1). In another incident, a top Durban girl's high school sought to expel a learner caught with a list containing the names of other learners who had apparently placed orders for "space muffins" (muffins baked with *dagga*), also known as *dagga* cookies (Maluleka 2010:1). In addition to drug use, extortion is rife in many secondary schools where younger learners have been forcefully "taxed" between R50 and R150 at the toilet entrances by older learners who bully them into submission (Sewchurran 2013:1).

As a result of the rise in drugs and alcohol abuse among secondary school learners, unannounced raids by the South African Police and education officials are a common occurrence in many schools in KwaZulu-Natal in a bid to clamp down on dangerous weapons drugs and alcohol being smuggled into schools (Rondganger 2013:5). On a raid at Westham Secondary School in Durban, a knife, a stash of *dagga*, a knuckle-duster and a hammer were among the items seized by police. Even though high-tech surveillance equipment have been installed in schools, dealers have found ways to avoid the cameras and were still trafficking their drugs on the school premises (Haripersad 2013:1).

According to Haripersad (2013:1), the physical and psychological impact of drugs and alcohol on learners should not be underestimated. Alcohol consumption and the use of illicit drugs by adolescents can lead to life-long and irreparable brain damage and intellectual impairment. Furthermore, indulging in alcohol and drugs increases the likelihood of learners becoming a victim or a perpetrator of violent crime as alcohol and drugs have psychopharmacological effects that impair cognition and often produce psychomotor

stimulatory effects that lead to an increase in sensation-seeking and impulsivity, as well as an increase in aggressive, confrontational and provocative behaviour (Breslow & Smothers 2004:6).

### **(b) Gangsterism**

One of the themes of external violence affecting schools in all provinces in South Africa is gangsterism (Mncube & Harber 2013:42). According to Carter (2006:27) gangsterism is endemic and behind much of the violence experienced by youth in communities and schools today. As youth become increasingly independent of their parents, environmental contexts outside the family begin to assume increasing importance (Huston & Ripke 2006:248). Consequently, it is important to understand bullying within the context of peer group affiliation as early adolescence is a life stage marked by puberty as well as the stage where social status and peer affiliations become a priority and where “aggressive youth begin to affiliate with other aggressive youth” (Dupper 2013:6).

According to Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya (2014:43), gangs emerge from within communities themselves and this phenomenon has many root causes. On the one hand, there are the socio-economic conditions such as low-income, unemployment, and poor living conditions and on the other hand, in the school setting there are learners who are underachievers who perform poorly, or have language difficulties and who regard themselves as losers in the academic setting. As a result of their vulnerability, these learners are rich pickings for recruitment into gangs by gang leaders who view them as easy targets, luring them with the promise of fraternity and brotherhood (Mncube & Harber 2013:43).

In a study based on interviews with about 6000 learners, 121 principals and 239 teachers conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, it was established that one in five South African learners had either been threatened with gang violence or had been a victim of gang violence (Shaikh & Payet 2013:16). KwaZulu-Natal police spokesperson, Captain Thulani Zwane, acknowledged that drugs and gang rivalries were fuelling the violence at many schools in the province and where caches of knives and pangas are seized regularly (Zulu & Savides 2013:10). The availability of dangerous weapons such as knives and guns and the escalating violence and crime as a result, is becoming a matter of serious concern to education officials. Recently, a 16 year old learner lost his life in a school in Pietermaritzburg

after he was dragged from the schoolgrounds and stabbed by a group of teenagers during a lunchbreak, becoming another victim of rival gang violence and bullying at the school (Shaikh & Payet 2013:16).

Furthermore, gangsterism has reached an unprecedented level at Suid-Natal Hoerskool in Port Shepstone in the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal where a “Mafia gang” known as the “Untouchables” have terrorised learners and teachers at the school for the past five years. (Shaikh & Payet 2013:16). At the very same school, twins Waldo and Denzil Smith were attacked by the gang and suffered from whiplash, severe headaches and broken jaws. A similar incident took place at a Chatsworth School in Durban, KZN where a school boy, Zhain Abu-Baker, was attacked by a gang of 10 to 15 boys who did a brutal wrestling manoeuvre on him known as the “Tombstone Piledriver” that left him critically injured with the prospect of being permanently paralysed.

In Athlone on the Cape Flats, escalating gang violence and drug problems have been responsible for the fatal shootings of more than 20 people in a single month (Eggington 2013:8). The vicious power struggle between the “Hard Livings Gangsters” and the breakaway unit called the “Stuppa Boys” has left more than 20 people dead as gangs fight turf wars leaving anarchy and destruction in their wake. In another incident at Spes Bona High School in the Cape Flats, two youth with hoodies pulled low over their faces rushed up behind learner, Glenrico Martin, and pumped two bullets into his head. They fled the scene, oblivious to the horror on the faces of the learners who had just witnessed a cold-blooded gang execution (Eggington 2013:8).

Accordingly, Dupper (2013:86) maintains that both peer and community influence are significant factors in determining how children affiliate with one another both at school and outside it. Sometimes innocent learners can be drawn into violent behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse by joining gangs as well, as this provides them with a sense of identity and belonging (Mncube & Harber 2013:45).

### **(c) Media influences**

The researcher is of the opinion that the high levels of violence as depicted in the media today and which are increasing at an alarming rate, has the potential of reaching dangerous



proportions. Research over several decades has consistently established that exposure to media violence causes an increase in violent behaviour (Brown & Tierney 2011:453).

Importantly, as children grow into adolescence, independent, unsupervised access to media, technology and the internet pose special problems as they play a large role in facilitating school violence by indiscriminately stimulating and tutoring children in behaviours and norms that may be at odds with those of their parents and civil society at large (Wong 2007:4). Additionally, the increasing technological sophistication of children at a young age increases their access to the “World Wide Web,” the virtual reality of cyberspace poses more than the threat of exposure to information, it can expose children and adolescents at risk with ideology that supports and encourages hate and violence (Wong 2007:4).

Miller and Lowen (2012:23) assert that the graphic, violent and often irresponsible nature of much of today’s media and the effect it has on children is becoming a matter of grave concern to many as images of violence are seen as a justification for violent and abusive behaviour in real-life relationships. Accordingly, the research findings have confirmed the correlation between television watching and aggressive bullying behaviour as teenagers who watched three or more hours of television a day were five times more likely to commit aggressive acts in the next several years as those who watched less than one hour a day (Fried & Sosland 2011:28).

Bullying behaviours continue to be celebrated in our cultures when children are exposed to viewing mobster programmes on television, such as mob boss Tony Soprano and other idolised bullies of the hit series *The Sopranos*, to reality show put-downs by *American Idol’s* Simon Cowell (Miller & Lowen 2012:23). Many prominent voices in the media and public today use their voices to put down women, celebrate aggression or engage in disrespectful political discourse. Furthermore, apart from television viewing, research findings have determined that there is an even stronger relationship between playing violent computer games and aggressive behaviour (Fried & Sosland 2011:28). In fact, a meta-analysis of studies conducted to examine the effect of exposure to violent video games, television and film, clearly support the fact that media violence is correlated with aggressive and antisocial behaviour (Gentile, in Swearer & Napolitano 2011:6). Additionally, teenagers who played violent video games such as *Wolfenstein* and *Grand Theft Auto*, where the object is to kill

the enemy brutally, begin to internalise and accept this type of behaviour as a norm and display consistently aggressive behaviour towards their peers as a result (Fried & Sosland 2011:28).

According to The American Medical Association, media violence causes an increase in mean-spirited aggressive behaviour; causes increased levels of fearfulness, mistrust and self-protective behaviour towards others; contributes to desensitisation and callousness to the effects of violence and suffering of others, provides justification for resorting to violence when children think they are right and fosters a culture in which disrespectful behaviour becomes a legitimate way for people to treat each other (Fried & Sosland 2011:29). According to Brown and Tierney (2011:453), in the short-term, exposure to violent media can lead to an increase in violent thoughts and behaviours through physiological excitation as well as specific behaviour imitation. Over the long-term, repeated exposure to violence can influence sensitisation towards violence and reset accepted norms about the relevance of violent behaviour. Miller and Lowen (2012:24) affirm this point by emphasising that when these portrayals of violence, insensitivity and brutality in the media are accepted as the norm rather than the exception, children's concepts of appropriate behaviour and expectations become misdirected.

#### **(d) Use of dangerous weapons**

The carrying of dangerous weapons by learners to school is prohibited as is outlined in The South African School's Act 84 of 1996 in Schedule 4(2) where it is clearly stated that no person may:

- Allow any dangerous object on public school premises;
- Carry any dangerous object onto public school premises.

However, despite these prohibitions, The National School Violence Study, compiled by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, confirmed that 17.2% of firearms and 50.5% of other dangerous weapons were easily accessible in homes and this has had a strong negative impact on the violence perpetrated by learners at school (Anthony 2013:1). While it may be argued that weapons do not cause violence, they nevertheless make the potential consequences of a violent dispute or attack more serious (Mncube & Harber 2013:49). The

researcher concurs with this viewpoint as he believes that the carrying and use of guns by learners increases the likelihood that, at the slightest provocation, violent conflict has the potential to result in injury or even death.

Incidences of violence perpetrated by learners using dangerous weapons to settle differences is escalating at an alarming rate in many South African schools plunging them into a state of anarchy (Zulu & Savides 2013:10). At Oaklands High School in Cape Town, police have investigated how a 14 year old boy managed to sneak a stolen gun loaded with 13 live rounds inside a school bag and shoot a 14 year old victim in the left leg as well as a 16 year old, in the left thigh (Nombembe 2013:5). In another incident that sparked widespread condemnation and outrage, a teacher had to undergo emergency surgery to remove a bullet after being shot in his lower right thigh at a school in Sasolburg (Monama 2013:2). The death of 15 year old, Khanyisani Mnqayi, of Fairvale Secondary School in Durban after being stabbed by a fellow schoolmate, has traumatised his two siblings to such an extent, that they have been forced to relocate to another school (Barbeau 2013:3).

The use of dangerous weapons by learners at schools has prompted the South African Police Service (SAPS) and officials of the Department of Education to conduct unannounced raids on schools in an effort to clamp down on guns and dangerous weapons smuggled into schools (Rondganger 2013:21). In a raid at Queensburgh High School, South of Durban, about thirty officers from the SAP's Crime and Intelligence and K9 units recovered various bags of unprocessed dagga, as well as screwdrivers and knives during a surprise search on more than 640 learners of the school (Haripersad 2013:1). Consequently, the National Teachers' Union (NATU) has endorsed a resolution unanimously calling on the Department of Basic Education to beef up security at schools following a spate of attacks on teachers and learners (Govender 2013:10). Not surprisingly, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) made a similar plea condemning the violence perpetrated by learners against fellow learners and teachers and demanding the provision of safe schools (Monama 2013:2).

#### **3.5.1.4 Inborn traits**

Dupper (2013:6) contends that there may be a biological explanation for bullying behaviour since evolutionary biologists believe that striving for social dominance is a part of our

human nature. Research on genetic linkages to traits associated with bullying and evidence for bullying among nonhuman animals strongly support the possibility of a genetic basis for bullying in humans (Volk, Camilleri, Dane & Marini 2012:9). Evolutionary developmental psychology suggests that some behaviour develops because they are at least in part due to evolved mental adaptations that are a response to past evolutionary pressures. An evolved adaptation is a physical trait or behaviour, tied at least probabilistically to (if not the direct result of) genes, that increases the likelihood that an organism would reproduce and pass on those genes down to future generations successfully (Dawkins 1989, in Volk *et al.* 2010:2).

Furthermore, research over many decades have shown that children are more likely to become bullies as a result of inborn traits, such as those who were crack babies, who suffered from the foetal alcohol syndrome and some children with attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) whose disruptive behaviour patterns may have a biological basis (Fried & Sosland 2011:27). According to Dilalla (2002:593), recent studies suggest that bullying in children may indeed be heritable and that during prenatal development, the mothers nutritional level, whether she smokes, consumes alcohol, takes drugs, has any diseases or has undergone exposure to radiation, are determining factors in whether a child will develop psychological problems after birth and any genetic dysfunction increases the likelihood of overt aggressive behaviour.

### **(a) Biological nature of bullying**

Neuroscientists have long argued that it is impossible to separate the brain from behaviour (Swearer & Napolitano 2011:7). Furthermore, studies of early social deprivation have demonstrated that the social environment alters brain chemistry and functioning. The stress of being bullied has been hypothesised to depress immune functioning and research has found that cortisol moderated the link between being bullied and physical health (Swearer & Napolitano 2011:7).

According to Corvo and Delara (2010:185), endocrine factors play a major role in adolescent aggression. Some children are born with neural, endocrine or psycho-physiological dispositions that launch them on a path that predisposes them to develop behavioural problems in late adolescence or early adulthood (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:108). Recent tests

conducted with both aggressive and non-aggressive boys and girls for levels of cortisol, testosterone, prolactin, and growth hormone produced important findings (Yu & Shi 2009:44). Controlling for age, grade, stage of pubertal development and the economic status of families, the test findings indicate that testosterone levels were significantly positively correlated with aggressive behaviour in both boys and girls. Furthermore, McDermott (2006:7) asserts that it is more likely that individuals with higher levels of testosterone will engage in aggressive actions than those who possess relatively lower levels of testosterone.

The major predictors of childhood and youth aggression include biological and individual factors such as a low heart rate and high impulsivity (Farrington in Corvo & Delara 2010:185). As a consequence, aggressive or violent youth display hyper-arousal, including startle responses, sleep disturbances, anxiety, motor hyperactivity and low resting heart rates (Newman & Newman 2006:297). This, in turn, translates into low autonomic arousal leading to sensation-seeking and risk taking. Crucially, internal vulnerabilities such as emotional or cognitive deficits may provide an environment that promotes aggressive bullying behaviour (Corvo & Delara 2010:185).

### **(b) Adaptive nature of bullying**

Traditionally, bullying researchers have viewed bullying as the result of maladaptive, problematic development occurring on a staggering cross-cultural, environmental, geographical and historical scale. However, the prevalence and ubiquity of adolescent bullying suggests an alternate explanation, that adolescent bullying may serve an adaptive purpose for some adolescents (Volk *et al.* 2012:2). Thus, for bullying to be an evolved adaptation, it must display two necessary components- firstly, it must solve adolescent problems ultimately related to reproductive success and secondly, it must be heritable, that is, it must be reliably related to the specific expression of one or more genes (Williams, in Volk *et al.* 2012:2).

Research suggests that bullying is evolutionary, that it has occurred over time in the ancestral environment. This Environment of Evolutionary Adaptations (EEA) is not a single time or place, but rather a combination of environments in which adolescents evolved over time (Volk *et al.* 2012:2). While it is difficult to make definitive observations of these past

environments, some basic properties of the (EEA) can be inferred. Konner (in Volk *et al.* 2012:2) states that in as far as the adaptiveness of bullying is concerned, adolescents had two important goals from an evolutionary perspective: growth, health, survival and securing appropriate mating opportunities.

### **(c) Genetic basis of bullying**

A recent study conducted in Quebec, Canada, has shown a strong link between genetics and bullying (McQuigge 2014:1). The behaviours that most lead to exclusion and victimisation in the classroom or schoolyard have their roots in a child's genes; the study argues that children's genetic make-up has a direct impact on the quality of interactions they enjoy with their peers. Additionally, children's genetic endowments, as well as their surrounding environments, influence which children become victims, bullies and bully-victims (Ball, Arseneault, Taylor, Maughan, Caspi & Moffitt 2008:104). Indeed, a recent behavioural genetics study of the heritability of bullying provides some evidence that genetic factors play an important role in the development of bullying in schools (Volk *et al.* 2012:9).

As mentioned before, evolutionary adaptations require a genetic linkage that allows natural or sexual selection to alter the ratio of genes in future generations based upon the effects of the adaptations (Dawkins, in Volk *et al.* 2012:8). In humans, complex behaviours are almost certainly polygenic and as such bullying is expected to be related to a host of genes, including those that are already known to control for a wide range of developmental factors including temperament, personality and general aggression (Volk *et al.* 2012:8). Genetic-based individual differences in temperament plays a significant role, because research has shown that bullies exhibit a higher level of negative emotionality than do uninvolved peers, reacting to stressful situations or provocations with stronger emotions (Pellegrini & Bartini, in Volk *et al.* 2012:8).

According to Ball *et al.* (2008:104), in a recent study on genetics, investigators found that in a nationally representative cohort of 1116 families with 10 year old twins, genetic differences accounted for 73% of the variation in victimisation and 61% of the variation in bullying, with environmental factors accounting for the rest of the variation. This means that there is sufficient genetic linkage for evolution to have acted upon bullying and, without any genetic linkages, evolution could not have influenced the traits related to bullying. Hence, it

can be argued that bullying satisfies the necessary criterion for adaptation; it is heritable; has genetic links and is thus selectable by natural or sexual selection (Volk *et al.* 2012:9).

#### **(d) Neurological abnormalities**

Recent research outcomes confirm that neurological abnormalities such as deficit ADHD, ADD as well as the localised dysfunction of the brain may lead to aggression and dyscontrol (Gosalakkal 2003:9). Aggression can be seen both in previously normal children who develop pathology following an acute injury (for example, a head injury) and then become unable to control their behaviour as well as frontal lobe epilepsy in children in association with other psychological deficits. Furthermore, rage outburst and increased aggression have been noted to occur in higher rates in children with temporal lobe epilepsy (Gosalakkal 2003:9).

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), also known as ADD is one of the most common childhood neuropsychiatric disorders that persists into adulthood (Konrad & Eickhoff 2010:904). According to the Centres for Disease Control (CDC), ADHD is a relatively common neurobehavioural disorder and reports estimate that between 3% to 15% of school-aged children in the United States have been diagnosed with ADHD (Miller & Lowen 2012:205). Furthermore, ADD may be taken as a prototype of a global disorder with aggression as a manifestation or co-morbidity. Follow up studies of children with this disorder have shown a high incidence of delinquent behaviour and explosive personality disorder (Gosalakkal 2003:10). The psychopathology of this disorder is marked by developmentally inappropriate and pervasive expressions of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness (Konrad & Eickhoff 2010:904). A profile characterised by behavioural and cognitive impulsivity and emotional lability may indicate a greater likelihood of the progression to adult antisocial behaviour and violent impulse-control disorders (Gosalakkal 2003:10).

According to Konrad and Eickhoff (2010:904), ADHD is also associated with functional impairments across multiple academic and social domains and is commonly accompanied by a range of externalising and internalising disorders. Miller and Lowen (2012:206) concur by stating that children with significant symptoms of ADHD may face social-emotional, academic, and behavioural challenges, including the risk of being targeted by bullies or bullying others themselves. Moreover, other children can become annoyed by the

impulsive, distracting or insensitive behaviours and comments of the child with ADHD as well as the time teachers may have to spend redirecting or responding to the needs of the ADHD child (Miller & Lowen 2012:206). Accordingly, Konrad and Eickhoff (2012:206) argue that given the associated burden to society, family and the individual child, understanding the causes of ADHD and developing new and more effective treatments targeting these underlying causes, is an important goal for neuroscience research.

In addition to ADHD, in the past several years, a mounting number of children who have been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, a mild form of autism, are entering the school system (Fried & Sosland 2011:27-28). Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is characterized by patterns of delay and deviance in the development of social, communicative, and cognitive skills. According to Fried & Sosland (2011:28), psychiatrist Leo Kaaner was the first person to apply the term "autism" to children who were socially withdrawn, preoccupied with routine, and had difficulty with language yet often possessed a level of intelligence that ruled out mental retardation. Later, Hans Asperger, applied the term to children who were socially awkward and consumed with bizarre obsessions, yet highly verbal and very bright. As a result of social skills issues, these children have shown up as targets and occasionally have shown to display bullying behaviour (Fried & Sosland 2011:28).

According to Miller and Lowen (2012:212), another neurological disorder that may be a risk factor for bullying perpetration is the Tourette syndrome (TS). Children who have TS exhibit repeated involuntary vocal or physical tics such as shoulder shrugging, eye blinking, facial grimaces, throat clearing or involuntary sounds and as a result of this, may be vulnerable to bullying or social rejection. Children who have TS may also have features of the obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), ADHD or mood disorders. TS children are particularly vulnerable to being targeted because their unusual vocal and motor tics make them stand out and they can have considerable difficulty trying to control these mannerisms (Miller & Lowen 2012:212).

The researcher believes that while it is important to understand the contributory factors associated with bullying perpetration to provide appropriate solutions, it is equally important to ascertain the outcomes of bullying in order to introduce intervention strategies effectively.



### **3.5.2 Outcomes of bullying and victimisation**

The ubiquity of bullying is matched by the frequency with which bullying is associated with a wide range of serious negative outcomes (Volk *et al.* 2012:1). According to Swearer *et al.* (2009:17), there is considerable evidence confirming that involvement in bullying, either as a victim, a bully, or a bully-victim is associated with serious short- term and long -term psychological and academic consequences. However, despite this level of evidence, many children who suffer from mental and physical health symptoms go unnoticed by parents, teachers and family physicians. Additionally, reducing or eliminating bullying is more difficult because many teachers and parents view bullying as an inevitable part of school life and growing up, though this is not necessarily the case (Mncube & Harber 2013:8).

However, it is of utmost importance to notice any systemic changes in a child's or adolescent's mood or academic performance (Swearer *et al.* 2009:17) and to observe any signs relating to feelings of shame, social anxiety, truancy, concentration difficulties, reactive aggression, stress and serious psychological problems (Mncube & Harber 2013:8-9) in order to address the problem appropriately and effectively. Moreover, recent studies reveal that school violence and bullying in particular, leads to drug abuse, dropping out of school, truancy, psychological problems such as anxiety and depression and poor learner performance (Maphalala 2014:29).

#### **3.5.2.1 Achievement difficulties**

According to Joyce and Mmankoko (2014:19), violence in schools often results in lower learner achievement. In this regard, Bester and Du Plessis (in Joyce & Mmankoko 2014:19) contend that South African teachers are battling to cope with the increasing demands for learner performance in the midst of an inherent culture of violence and intimidation that spills over into classrooms. Recent studies have confirmed that the youth who bully others are at an increased risk of academic problems and violence perpetration later in adolescence and adulthood (Dupper 2013:21). Additionally, the victims of bullies also suffer deteriorating performance levels as they lose interest in their schoolwork because of the violence perpetrated against them at school or outside the school premises (Maphalala 2014:32).

A large national survey of American youth found that self-reported bullies had significantly low school achievement (Nansel, in Farrington & Baldry 2010:6). Additionally, studies in academic achievement conducted in Greece (Andreou, in Farrington & Baldry 2010:6) discovered that bullies tended to have low academic self-efficacy. Furthermore, in the Cambridge Study conducted in England, it was found that low non-verbal intelligence and low school attainment at ages eight to ten significantly predicted bullies, for example, 26% of the boys with a low intelligence quotient (IQ) at the age of 8 to 10 years became bullies compared with 15% of the remainder and that they tended to leave school at the earliest possible age, which was around 15 years (Farrington & Baldry 2010:6).

According to Dupper (2013:20), apart from bullies, victims of bullying also experience poor school adjustment resulting in lower academic achievement and school connectedness. Furthermore, the research findings confirm that the connection between being bullied and low academic achievement is more robust when there is low parental support and school disengagement (Swearer & Napolitano 2011:4). A British study of youth aged between 8 and 13 years found that a relationship existed between bullying behaviours and academic competence (Dake, Price & Telljohann 2003:176). This study confirmed that for these British students, both bullies and victims showed poorer scholastic competence than non-involved children with victims being more affected than bullies.

A study in the United States, paralleled findings of the British study in which it was established that both victims and bullies experienced lower academic competence (Dake *et al.* 2003:176). Moreover, victims of persistent bullying often develop a series of somatic complaints, including headaches and stomach aches and these poor mental and physical health problems increase the likelihood that victims may suffer impaired concentration, decreased academic performance, truancy from school or absence from special school activities (De Wet 2005b:708).

### **3.5.2.2 Truancy, criminality and delinquency**

When learners do not feel safe at school, they resort to truancy and their academic performance is adversely affected as a result (Maphalala 2014:32). A truancy study was conducted in the United States with 25 000 eighth-grade learners in some 1000 schools over time, to identify the reasons why learners play truant or drop out of school. One of the main

findings of this study was that “push factors” –situations from within the school were chiefly responsible for alienating learners, by making them feeling unsafe, feeling as if they did not belong and more significantly, avoiding confrontations with bullies (Fried & Sosland 2011:11). Additionally, learners who believe that violence is tolerated in their schools feel extremely unsafe, disheartened and hard done by and may eventually give up and drop out of school (Maphalala 2014:32).

A substantial body of literature investigated over many decades confirms that a positive relationship exists between bullying and behavioural misconduct that usually consists of problem behaviours such as physical fighting, weapon carrying, theft, property damage, substance abuse, cheating and breaking the law (Dake *et al.* 2003:175). Furthermore, bullying can also be a precursor to violent behaviour as Govender and Dlamini (2010:66) point out that violence in society at large could be a factor contributing towards why individuals bully or on the other hand, bullying could lead to the bully becoming a violent criminal and contribute towards general social violence. According to Hymel, Rocke-Henderson and Bonanno (2005:1) a growing body of evidence suggests that bullying behaviour in school predicts later criminality and delinquency.

Swearer *et al.* (2009:16) contend that bullies are more likely than their peers to engage in externalising behaviours such as conducting problems, to report lower levels of school belonging and to engage in delinquent behaviour. Additionally, negative peer influence was found to predict involvement in bullying. Swearer and Napolitano (2011:5) refer to a recent study that found that the strongest predictor of both bullying and victimisation was delinquency (measured as engaging in vandalism, being a member of a gang and carrying a weapon onto school property). Consequently Hazler (in Dupper 2013:21), confirms that bullies are five times more likely than their classmates to wind up in a juvenile court, to be convicted of crimes and when they become adults, to have children with aggression problems.

Furthermore, 60% percent of boys who were bullies in middle school and high school were convicted of one or more crimes before they reached the age of 25, while 40% had three or more convictions (Dupper 2013:21). In more extreme cases, bullying has been linked to school shootings. Research evidence suggests that youth who bully their peers are more

likely to report that they own guns to gain the respect of others and to frighten others (Dupper 2013:21). In addition, crime and violence corrupts the social fabric of communities and the nation as a whole and endangers the health of both children and adults and destroys respect for human rights (Mncube & Harber 2012:17).

### **3.5.2.3 Shame, anger and rage**

Corvo and Delara (2010:186) claim that children who are victims of bullying and harassment are made to feel ashamed of who they are. According to Dupper (2013:19), there is substantial evidence, based on the findings of longitudinal studies to confirm that being a victim of bullying is consistently associated with loneliness, social anxiety, school phobia, low self-esteem and a deep sense of embarrassment. Victims of bullying feel ashamed, humiliated, hurt and confused when they are shunned by their peers after a bullying incident in which they have been shown to emerge as weak. This is especially damaging for developing adolescents who are dependent on the approval of peers for a sense of self-acceptance as well as group acceptance (Corvo & Delara 2010:186).

Bullies who possess a difficult temperament are generally moody and display heightened irritability and react angrily at the slightest provocation through acts of physical and verbal aggression (Singh & Steyn 2014:83). As a result, victims experience overwhelming feelings of fear, hurt, disappointment, frustration, anxiety and anger (Miller & Lowen 2012:52). Nevertheless, in order to avoid the pain and humiliation of social exclusion from a group, victims are often willing to put up with a certain amount of bullying, harassment and hazing while at school (Corvo & Delara 2010:186). However, the rage that some children and adolescents build up over time by being bullied either directly or indirectly may become a risk factor for domestic violence later in life (Corvo & Delara 2010:186). Pent up anger and frustration accumulated by victims of bullying over many years have the potential to be unleashed with uncontrolled ferocity, aggression and brutality onto family members and friends with disastrous consequences (Miller & Lowen 2012:53).

Furthermore, some victims of targeting or bullying may try to reconcile their feelings of deep hurt and rage through retaliation and revenge (Miller & Lowen 2012:53). For example, in April 1999, two high school students, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, who had reportedly been bullied for years, committed suicide after killing 13 people and injuring over 20

students and faculty members at Columbine High School in the United States. In another incident in April 2007, a Virginia Polytechnic Institute student, Seung-Hui Cho, who was rumoured to have been bullied in high school, shot and killed 32 people and wounded 15 others before killing himself (Miller & Lowen 2012:53).

Victims of bullying usually feel ashamed and embarrassed because they are unable to stand up to the bully or fight back and make the bullying stop (Miller & Lowen 2012:51). Consequently, teaching adolescents to manage their anger is a critical task of both parents and teachers at school (Fried & Sosland 2011:155). The researcher believes that families in particular and society in general need to find better ways to deal with anger and rage. Importantly, adolescents need to learn how to express anger appropriately, to calm down when they are ready to explode, and to handle their frustrations and disappointments in healthy ways (Fried & Sosland 2011:155).

#### **3.5.2.4 Fear and anxiety**

According to Swearer and Napolitano (2011:7), the psychological outcomes of bullying are well established in research literature. Individuals involved in bullying have higher levels of stress, fear, anxiety and other externalising behaviour. Threats, intimidation and harassment engender fear which traumatises both educators and learners resulting in high rates of absenteeism and school avoidance (Maphalala 2014:33). According to the National Education Association, 160 000 children stay away from school every day for fear of what might happen to them on the bus, on the playground, in the cafeteria, in the bathrooms, in the locker rooms , in the hallways, or in the classrooms (Fried & Sosland 2011:11). Additionally, teenage victims are at an impressionable age and associate bullying with being a “children’s” problem and feel embarrassed to be involved in such a “juvenile dilemma.”

Of the approximately 13 million American children that are bullied in school every year, three million miss school every month because they are fearful for their safety at school and those who are targeted at school are prone to anxiety (the feeling of being worried, nervous, frightened, or apprehensive in the face of a challenge or uncertainty), are hyper-vigilant and suffer undue emotional stress (Miller & Lowen 2012:210). The long-term effects of bullying and damaged self-belief have serious and far reaching implications that may potentially lead to lowered self confidence and to acute mental health problems (Dosani

2008:116). Swearer *et al.* (2009:17) state that it is not surprising that those students who are often victimised at school report higher levels of state and trait anxiety. Their victimisation is often unpredictable and happens in places where there are few adults, which can create fear and hyper-vigilance, fuelling the anxiety.

According to Miller & Lowen (2012:209), children who have been bullied are likely to develop many symptoms of anxiety disorders which can potentially make them vulnerable to targeting because they frequently lack self-confidence, have low self-esteem, and have difficulty asserting themselves. Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health disorders and include, amongst others, separation anxiety disorder, generalised anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder and panic attacks (Miller & Lowen 2012:210-211).

### **3.5.2.5 Stress and ill-health**

According to Dosani (2008:219) the damage inflicted by bullying is commonly underestimated. With reference to physical health, (Baldry, in De Wet 2005b:708) found that victims of persistent bullying suffered a series of somatic complaints, including headaches and stomach aches because of the immense stress associated with it. Research conducted by Dr. Stephen Joseph, a psychologist at Warwick University, with 331 children in England confirmed that 40% had been bullied at some time and that about a third of those bullied showed signs of elevated stress including nightmares, explosive rages, severe headaches, tummy aches, feeling sick, being hypersensitive and being constantly worried (Dosani 2008:219-220).

Carter (2006:27) argues that victims of bullying perpetration often cannot cope with the resulting stress, anguish and humiliation and such victims may suffer poor health as a result. Delfos (2004:137) states that the reaction to a traumatic incident may include experiences of intense fear, horror or helplessness, irritability and excited chaotic behaviour that may lead to sleeping disorders, hyperactivity and temper tantrums. Furthermore, the high levels of stress caused by school-based violence can result in victims becoming depressed to the extent that they absent themselves from school for days on end because of ill-health and in order to minimise the stress they are experiencing (Dibetle 2008:7).

According to Kim and Leventhal (2008:133), bullying is a serious public health problem, with the international prevalence ranging from 9% to 54%. Victimised children are reported to have a myriad of clinical problems, including bed-wetting, sleep difficulties, anxiety, depression, school phobia, feelings of insecurity, and unhappiness at school; they may also suffer from low self-esteem, loneliness, isolation and somatic symptoms. In addition to the physical harm and injuries inflicted by bullying incidents, mental stress often results in physical symptoms such as tics, eating disorders, nausea, self harm, obsessive behaviours and feelings of perpetual worry and fear (Miller & Lowen 2012:164). Additionally, depression has also been found to be a common mental health symptom experienced by male and female victims of bullying (Swearer *et al.* 2009:16).

### **3.5.2.6 Depression**

For the victim, the consequences of bullying can be long-lasting and severe as often these are linked to serious psychological trauma, from the inability to concentrate at school to low self-esteem, and clinical levels of anxiety and depression (Govender & Dlamini 2010:66).

Miller and Lowen (2012:213) concur by stating that bullying is linked to psychological distress and may be one of the risk factors that increase the likelihood of developing depression in some individuals. Additionally, Swearer *et al.* (2009:17) agree that the incessant harassment of victims result in them questioning their own identity, wondering what it is about them that contribute to their victimisation, and these thoughts could then lead to distressing feelings, such as lowered self-esteem or self-confidence and depression.

Research findings provide substantial evidence that there is a higher incidence of depression in children who have been bullied, have witnessed bullying or have bullied others. As a matter of fact, emerging research has confirmed that bully-victims, victims, and bullies all experience depressive disorders (Swearer & Napolitano 2011:5). The injury inflicted is usually intangible and includes loss of reputation, loss of associations and intentional infliction of emotional distress (Myers *et al.* 2011:8) and these intense and unrelenting feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and worthlessness that persist over time significantly interferes with normal functioning and provides warning signs of a depressive disorder (Miller & Lowen 2012:212-213).

Evidence from recent studies conducted confirm that 18% of bully victims, 13% of bullies, and 10% of victims experienced depression (Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Puura, in Swearer & Napolitano 2011:5), which is higher than the estimated 8.3% of adolescents diagnosed with a depressive disorder. Other research has supported the finding that bully victims are at the greatest risk for experiencing co-morbid internalising and externalising problems (Cook, Williams, Guerra & Kim 2010:347). Furthermore, recent studies have established that depression and suicidal ideation were predictors of both bullying and victimisation (Swearer & Napolitano 2011:5).

### **3.5.2.7 Self-harm and suicide**

Victims of bullying are significantly more likely to become involved in self-destructive behaviour in dealing with the intense humiliation and intolerable hurt inflicted upon them by aggressive youth (Miller & Lowen 2012:52). Consequently, some young people attempt to deal with stress and relieve their feelings of frustration, anger and depression by cutting themselves. Furthermore, some victims are unable to cope with the incessant harassment and deep emotional pain, become socially withdrawn, sedentary, physically weak, depressed and ultimately resort to taking their own lives (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:572).

According to Fried and Sosland (2011:14), in 2010, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention reported that suicide was the third leading cause of death among youth. Young people who have experienced bullying are increasingly attempting to commit suicide and some succeed in committing suicide (Miller & Lowen 2012:53). Dupper (2013:20) affirms that among middle school students, bullying victims were three times more likely to report seriously considering suicide compared with those who were neither bullied nor victimised. Several studies have shown that gay, lesbian and bisexual youths face an increased suicide risk (Fried & Sosland 2011:14). LGBT children report greater incidents of bullying and violence than their heterosexual peers (Miller & Lowen 2012:214) and research findings indicate that gay high-school children are 14 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts (Fried & Sosland 2011:14).

Recent studies have confirmed that electronic aggression is not only pervasive, but its associated effects, which include emotional distress, depression and suicide, are becoming increasingly significant (Myers *et al.* 2011:9). Although all bullying behaviour has been



identified as increasing suicidal ideation, cyberbullying is reportedly a stronger predictor of suicidal thoughts than regular bullying. A 2009 survey conducted by the Associated Press (AP) reported that middle school victims of cyberbullying are more likely to commit suicide than are all the other victims. Significantly, the study found that 8% of cyberbullying victims and 12% of sexting victims have considered ending their own lives, compared to 3% of people who have not been bullied and who were involved in sexting (Myers *et al.* 2011:9).

It follows, that schools do not only have a moral obligation but also a legal duty to provide learners with a safe and secure environment and to protect them from deviant behaviour that affects their well being and infringes on their basic rights to security, human dignity, privacy and education (Squelch, in De Wet 2005b:709).

### **3.5.3 Legal implications of bullying**

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa section 28(1) (d) states that “every child has a right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation.” However, reports in the media suggest the opposite- there are regular cases in schools of violence, abuse, humiliation and maltreatment arising from bullying incidents (Venter 2013:241).

Bullying not only infringes on the child’s right to receive education in a safe and secure school environment, but may also have dire consequences for a child’s academic, relational, emotional and behavioural development (De Wet 2005b:709). It should further be noted that schools in South Africa have a legal duty to provide learners with a safe and secure environment and to protect them from deviant behaviour that affects their well-being and infringes on their basic rights to security, human dignity, privacy and education (Squelch, in De Wet 2005b:709).

According to Joyce and Mmankoko (2014:20), legislation in the form of the South African Constitution (108 of 1996), Employment of Educators Act (76 of 1996) and South African Schools Act (SASA) (84 of 1996) have been designed to protect the rights of children. Furthermore, the teacher’s social responsibilities are also embodied in the SASA. Additionally, teachers are guided by the “Code of Professional Ethics” of the South African Council for Educators (SACE) whereby any infraction of the code renders a teacher liable to expulsion from the profession.

The South African School's Act (SASA) Act 84 of 1996 provides for the prohibition of violent activities in schools (RSA 2009). However, Govender and Dlamini (2010:67) argue that it does not say how these activities should be prohibited, nor does it prohibit equally harmful activities such as emotional bullying. While the policy does not extend to cover bullying, the government has introduced the *Signposts for Safe Schools* initiative, which is a substantial document developed to guide schools in terms of the type of policies and interventions they should implement in their schools. Furthermore, it provides detailed and clear directions on how to identify bullying and appropriate ways of addressing it (Govender & Dlamini 2010:67).

To demonstrate their seriousness about the safety of learners in schools, the South African Government passed the Education Amendment Act 31 of 2007 (quoted by Mncube & Netshitangani 2014:5) that provides guidance pertaining to drug testing, and random search and seizures at school. Section 8A of the act prohibits any person to bring any dangerous object and illegal drugs to school (Mncube & Netshitangani 2014:5). Additionally, the South African School's Act No. 84 of 1996, gives direction in Chapter 2 (Government Gazette No. 17579) for the development of a School's Code of Conduct for learners that will guide teachers and management staff on the sanctions that need to be imposed for specific behavioural misdemeanours (SASA 1996:8). Both the Safety Policy and the Code of Conduct Policy must be institutionalised to include all stakeholders of the school system including parents, teachers and learners in its formation (Joyce & Mmankoko 2014:20).

In terms of the Code of Conduct Policy for Learners, the provisions contained in the SASA (in chapter 2 Section 8) (RSA 2003) are as follows:

8. (1) Subject to any applicable provincial law, a governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for learners after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school. 8. (2) A code of conduct referred to in subsection (1) must be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process.

The South African School's Act clearly outlines the procedure to be followed when a learner should to be suspended or expelled from a public school for severe misdemeanours (in chapter 2 Section 9) as follows:

9. (1) Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, the governing body of a public school may, after a fair hearing, suspend a learner from attending the school:(a) as a correctional measure for a period not longer than one week; or (b) pending a decision as to whether the learner is to be expelled from the school by the Head of Department.

9. (2) Subject to any other provincial law, a learner at a public school may be expelled only (a) by the Head of Department; and (b) if found guilty of serious misconduct after a fair hearing

However, a learner or the parent of a learner who has been expelled from a public school may appeal against the decision of the Head of Department to the Member of the Executive Council, and should the appeal be successful, the Head of Department then has the responsibility to make alternative arrangements for the learner to be placed in another school (RSA 2003:10).

In the United States, although federal laws governing children and schools do exist, public schools are regulated primarily at the state and local levels (Swearer *et al.* 2009:54). Currently, 33 states have anti-bullying laws in place at District level, with four states (California, Indiana, Maine, and Vermont) required to create their own policies and two others (Maryland and Nevada) controlled by anti-bullying policies devised by the State Department of Education. State legislatures, in particular, have a great deal of power to dictate the rights and responsibilities of learners, teachers and school administrators and through state statutes, provide general guidelines for school and District policies on a wide range of educational issues, including bullying (Swearer *et al.* 2009:54). When bullying violates the protections guaranteed by Title IX of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act, the federal government has the authority to intervene (Miller & Lowen 2012:132).

Under the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) guidelines, all schools' personnel are legally required to address bullying as part of their responsibility to uphold civil rights laws (Miller & Lowen 2012:133). Furthermore, if a hostile school environment is created through peer harassment and bullying based on disability, race, colour, national origin or gender and school staff have not responded or addressed the behaviour appropriately, that school may be in violation of Title IX of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act. This act also protects young people from harassment on the basis of their LGBT status, as well as those who do not

identify as LGBT but are bullied on the basis of their perceived sexual identification or gender stereotype (Miller & Lowen 2012:132).

According to Fried and Sosland (2011:17), bullying lawsuits, handled by the juvenile justice system, are becoming more prevalent. For example, the Howard County school system in Baltimore, Maryland, is facing a ten million dollar lawsuit where the Maryland State Division on civil rights determined that the Board of Education had only addressed individual bullying incidents but did not take any proactive measures to prevent this behaviour school-wide. In another incident, a jury awarded two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to a Kansas high school student on the plaintiff's claim that the school District was deliberately indifferent to a same-sex student-on-student harassment in violation of Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972 (Fried & Sosland 2011:17).

In 2005 South Africa, the Department of Education of the Gauteng Province was named as the respondent in an average of 12 civil cases per month that centred on injuries inflicted by learners on other learners on school premises (De Wet 2005b:709). According to Makgalemele (in, De Wet 2005b:709), these cases are in line with Section 60 of the South African Education Law and Policy Handbook which outlines that the state is liable for damage or loss due to any act of omission in connection with an educational activity conducted by a public school.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter highlighted the various types of bullying prevalent in schools today and its profound impact on all stakeholders of the school system, particularly, the victims. Research findings provide substantial evidence that bullying is a serious problem provincially, nationally and internationally and even though numerous studies provide recommendations on what needs to be done to reduce the problem, the fact that it remains insidious and pervasive to this day indicates that it continues to plague administrators even in our modern times.

The contributory factors, as outlined in this chapter, have been found to occur at various levels of influence, namely, the family, the school, and the community. Research findings also point towards inborn traits that play a significant role in determining violent behaviour leading to bullying perpetration. It, therefore, becomes imperative to address these

problems at the point through effective interventions. Pretending or displaying ignorance may potentially lead to the violent, aggressive behaviour spiralling out of control and rendering the school environment unmanageable and completely unsafe for teachers to fulfil their educational mandates effectively.

Furthermore, the research findings have confirmed that the repercussions of bullying and victimisation are enormous. Apart from devastating mental health problems, bully victims have been shown to engage in truancy, criminality and delinquent behaviour in response to the fear, anxiety and stress experienced which in turn contributes to achievement difficulties at school. In fact, the depressive state of mind may be such that victims may attempt to engage in self-harm by cutting themselves to express their deep pain and to even go to the extent of committing suicide.

As a result of the serious consequences of bullying perpetration, this chapter also dealt with the legal implications of bullying and the significance of the School's Code of Conduct in providing a blueprint to effectively address the problem in secondary schools.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

An in-depth literature study highlighting the contributory factors, outcomes and legal implications of bullying in secondary schools, as well as the relevant theories associated with the phenomenon have been presented in Chapters 2 and 3. Against the background of this literature survey, this chapter specifically focused on the research design and research methods used in conducting the empirical investigation. Additionally, the justification for the choice of the research approach and data collection methods implemented, are provided. Moreover, the data collection and analysis techniques as well as the validity and reliability of the data collected as well as the measures to ensure their trustworthiness are explained. In addition, the researcher discusses the sample groups selected for the research, the basis for a pilot study before the research procedures are explained and the ethical measures adopted in conducting the investigation.

Furthermore, the research design was influenced by the research questions (general research problems) and the aims of the study (specific research problem) as outlined in Chapter 1 (see sections 1.2 and 1.4).

#### **4.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIMS**

The main research problem as stated in Chapter 1 (see section 1.2) is as follows:

*What model can be developed to address the problem of bullying effectively in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal?*

Accordingly, the over-arching aim of the study was to identify the specific factors that contributed to bullying, the impact that this negative action had on the victims and the strategies that needed to be employed to curb the intensity of the phenomenon in secondary schools.

The following specific research questions were advanced to direct the research:

- What types of bullying are prevalent in secondary schools?

- What are the factors contributing to bullying in secondary schools?
- What is the impact of bullying in secondary schools?
- How can bullying be addressed positively using an effective and appropriate model?

#### **4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Neser (2005:65) confirms that a research design is not only a plan of action in answering the research question, but also indicates how data will be collected, analysed and interpreted. In the case of this study, the researcher adopted a qualitative research design when conducting this empirical investigation as qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam 2009:13). Furthermore, qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena and helps us to understand the social aspects of our world (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge 2009:7).

This approach was deemed appropriate as it was a people-centred approach incorporating essential characteristics and qualities that were systematic (carefully planned and carried out), credible (realistic and believable), verifiable (evidence could be checked and verified), justifiable (a convincing case could be made for undertaking this research), useful (its findings could be applied in practice), valuable (it would enhance current practice), and trustworthy in that it was honest, genuine and based on sound research ethics (Atkins & Wallace 2012:20-21). Furthermore, the qualitative design used in this study is exploratory, naturalistic, inductive, ideographic and descriptive/ interpretive (Chenail 2011:1713). Therefore, the researcher collected descriptive-narrative and visual-non-numerical data to gain insights into the phenomenon of bullying (Gay, Mills & Airasian 2011:381). This method also allowed the researcher to obtain a richer and more intimate view of the educational world by placing emphasis on inductive reasoning and incremental understanding (Check & Schutt 2012:201).

Furthermore, qualitative research, for the most part, is a naturalistic type of enquiry conducted in natural settings capturing participants' perceptions as they occur naturally and in their actual words (Wiersma & Jurs 2012:234). The qualitative researcher constantly tries to understand the people being observed from the participants' or natives' or actors'

viewpoints (Johnson & Christensen 2008:36-37). Accordingly, the researcher focused on understanding the “insider’s perspective” of people and their settings, by engaging in direct personal and often participatory contact. This approach afforded the researcher the opportunity to understand the participants’ experiences and allowed them the platform to express their views about a problem without fear or favour (Johnson & Christensen 2008:35). In addition, the qualitative approach provided an in-depth, intricate and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours that were well served by naturalistic enquiry. It gave voices to participants and probed issues that lay beneath the surface of behaviours and actions presented (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011:219).

Moreover, a qualitative design allowed the researcher to gather data through face-to-face interactions through a process of interviews conducted with principals, circuit managers, SMTs, teachers and learners as focus groups in natural school settings, which in this instance, were the five secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal, where this empirical investigation was conducted. This approach afforded the researcher the opportunity to gather rich and illuminative data from participants and establish the responses from SMTs, teachers and learners first-hand about acts of bullying perpetration in their schools and the impact it had on the whole ethos of the school (Atkins & Wallace 2012:160).

This research design involved an interpretive perspective in that it was primarily concerned with meaning and it attempted to ascertain participants’ understanding of a particular social phenomenon (bullying in secondary schools) taking place within a social context (the school). However, since the interpretive perspective acknowledges some degree of subjectivity in the researcher’s own viewpoint, values and preconceptions, it became imperative for the researcher to take measures to prevent personal perceptions from contaminating the data (Atkins & Wallace 2012:22-23). Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm involved taking people’s subjective experiences and making sense of these experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they have to say to understand their true meaning. According to Johnson and Christensen (2011:256), it involved understanding the participants’ “inner worlds” and required providing a valid, accurate account of the respondents’ perspectives. It follows that the researcher used an



interpretive paradigm since it placed considerable emphasis on both experience and interpretation.

Given that interpretive validity requires that the actions and words of the participant be accurately portrayed (Johnson & Christensen 2011:277), the researcher engaged in prolonged participation at the study site, made persistent observations, used member checking strategies (participant feedback), listened carefully and attentively to respondents, observed and recorded their physical and facial responses, conducted peer debriefings and reviews of audio recordings and recorded and reported on the data collected as accurately as possible (Gay *et al.* 2011:392-394).

The research design also involved a constructivist paradigm in that it emphasised the importance of exploring how the different stakeholders in a social setting constructed their beliefs and expressed their feelings (Check & Schutt 2012:15). Accordingly, the researcher placed emphasis on understanding the participants' responses, analysing them within their social setting or context (the school) and exploring the meaning participants held in respect of the problem of bullying in secondary schools. The researcher achieved this through social interaction at the school sites (through the process of interviews and focus group interviews) conducted between the researcher and the participants in the research setting (the school) in order that "a consensus among respondents is developed that is credible, truthful and well-informed" (Check & Schutt 2012:15).

The research methods used in this investigation are now discussed with regard to interactive and non-interactive methods of data collection.

#### **4.4 RESEARCH METHODS**

Two methods of data collection were considered in conducting this enquiry, an interactive method and a non-interactive method of data collection.

##### **4.4.1 Interactive method**

This method required formal face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the participants as part of the data collection efforts. Accordingly, the researcher collected data through process of interviews which included one-on-one interviews as well as focus group interviews (Wiersma & Jurs 2012:23). An interview was considered as a purposeful means of

interaction in which one person (the researcher) obtained information from another (principals, management teams, teachers, learners and a circuit manager) (Gay *et al.* 2011:386).

Consequently, the researcher conducted interviews with the selected participants (principals, the SMT, teachers, learners and circuit manager) at the school in order to glean information first-hand from them. The data collected were in the form of texts (written notes taken during and after the interviews through a process of observation and listening) and verbal responses (responses from participants in their own words to specific questions posed in the interview itself by the researcher). The interview was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data from the transcripts were then carefully examined and critically analysed.

#### **4.4.2 Non-interactive method**

The non-interactive method of data collection included field notes of the observations done during the pilot study, during visits made to schools before the interviews, during the interviews proper and after the interviews with participants. Since field notes are a key form of data collection, the researcher kept field notes in which all the information received was recorded meticulously, and all the observations and impressions relevant to the study were captured in detail (Atkins & Wallace 2012:155). The verbal and facial expressions and attitudes exhibited when questions were answered, how well the questions were interpreted, participant contributions and reactions to discussions and also when the researcher required clarity with respect to certain aspects of the tape-recordings (sections that were not clear), were duly noted.

Apart from the interactive and non-interactive methods of data collection, the researcher regarded ethical measures, measures to ensure the trustworthiness of this research as well as data collection and data analysis as important components and processes of the research methodology.

#### **4.4.3 Ethical measures**

Since it is of vital importance that all research studies apply the ethical principles of autonomy, nonmaleficence and beneficence (Durrheim & Wassenaar, in the Faculty of

Education KZN 2010:50), the researcher ensured that he respected the (autonomy) of all the people participating in the research and ensured that the research benefitted the participants, other researchers and society at large (beneficence) (Faculty of Education KZN 2010:50).

Given that interviews have an ethical dimension as they concern interpersonal interaction and produce information about the human condition (Cohen *et al.* 2011:442) and since conducting face-to-face interactions with humans have the potential for creating a great deal of physical, emotional and psychological harm (Johnson & Christensen 2011:105), the researcher took certain ethical and legal considerations into account during the data collection process seeing that the qualitative approach increased the probability of harm because of the intrusive nature into the feelings and perceptions of the participants (Wiersma & Jurs 2012:436-437). In order to ensure that participants do not get harmed in any way, either physically or psychologically (non-maleficence), the researcher considered certain ethical measures that guided and assisted the empirical investigation as will be discussed next.

#### **4.4.3.1 Informed consent**

The American National Research Act of 1974 requires that research participants are informed about their role in the research and that they give their written consent for participation (Wiersma & Jurs 2012:437). Consequently, the researcher obtained permission from the Research Directorate of the KZN Department of Education to conduct research in the five secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. Furthermore, ethical clearance was sought and obtained from the ethics committee of the University of South Africa (UNISA) in accordance with Section 7 of the document (University of South Africa, 2007) before the research was undertaken.

Since the research was conducted in an educational setting, permission was requested for and granted by the school principals of the five secondary schools to enter their sites before the commencement of the empirical investigation. In addition, informed consent was obtained from all the participants (principals, members (SMTs), teachers, learners from the RCL of the school, parents/ guardians of learners, as well as the circuit manager) after having informed them of the purpose of the study, the procedure involved, the risks,

benefits, alternative procedures, duration of the research, and the measures adopted to ensure confidentiality (Johnson & Christensen 2011:109). Hence, consent was obtained from all participants before the commencement of the interviews (Refer to Appendix F).

#### **4.4.3.2 Risk-free interaction**

Qualitative interviews require face-to-face interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Since qualitative research entails understanding and describing the world of human experience, the researcher had to maintain his humanity throughout the research process (Muhammad, Muhammad & Muhammad 2008:35). In focus group interviews, the interview is conducted among a number of interviewees and sometimes sensitive issues are articulated in the presence of other participants. Since the interaction with the learners was of a sensitive nature with the possibility of some emotional responses from learners, the researcher made arrangements with the school counsellor to be available to counsel learners in the event that they became affected emotionally or psychologically during the interviews.

Furthermore, in order to ensure a safe and risk-free interaction with learners as participants, the researcher sought permission from the parents/guardians of learners of the RCL of the school to participate in the interviews. In addition, since the consent of the learners themselves was vital, the researcher gave a clear explanation of what the research expected of them, so that they could make an informed choice to participate voluntarily in the research (Faculty of Education UKZN 2010:50).

#### **4.4.3.3 Voluntary participation**

The participants were informed that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they could terminate participation at any time without any consequences (Check & Schutt 2012:57). This is in accordance with The American Educational Research Association (AERA) ethical standards which states explicitly that “research participants have the right to withdraw from a study at any time without penalty” (Johnson & Christensen 2008:117). In this way, the researcher abstained from any form of coercion or exploitation and respected the freedom of the participants to decide for themselves whether or not to participate in the study, thereby upholding the highest ethical code and by not violating their rights to self-determination. The researcher’s thorough understanding of the ethical

codes and stringent application of the ethical procedures ensured that no participant was made to feel obligated or coerced into participation in any way and that their participation was purely of their own free will.

#### **4.4.3.4 Anonymity and confidentiality**

The researcher assured all participants that the information provided by them would be held in strict confidence and that their identities would not be revealed in any report, record or tape-recording and that there will be no link between the data and the participants (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:121). In order to maintain the participants' privacy effectively, the researcher assured the participants that no names of people, places or schools would be given or printed in any report or analysis, thus ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the research results. In order to achieve this, the researcher requested the participants not to include their names and addresses nor the names and addresses of their schools so that traceable details of both participants and their schools would not become known. Instead, code names for people and places were used to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the study. In this way, the researcher ensured that neither the names of the participants nor their identities were known to anyone, thereby protecting their privacy.

#### **4.4.3.5 Protection from harm**

The most important and fundamental issue confronting the researcher is the treatment of the research participants since the conduct of research with humans has the potential for creating a great deal of physical and psychological harm (Johnson & Christensen 2008:118). Accordingly, Atkins and Wallace (2012:39) argue that (apart from informed consent and the right to privacy) protection from harm forms the main traditional ethical concern in qualitative research. Researchers have the supreme responsibility to ensure that they do no harm to the participants either physically, emotionally, socially or otherwise (Faculty of Education UKZN 2010:50). The researcher was sensitive about the emotions that participants could possibly express during the interview and accordingly had prior arrangements made with the school counsellor to be on hand to counsel learners when they became emotionally and psychologically upset. Furthermore, the researcher formulated the questions in such a way that they held minimal or no risks for the participants in their

responses to the questions, thus protecting them from mental and physical harm (Johnson & Christensen 2008:118).

#### **4.4.3.6 Honesty and transparency**

Ethical reporting and written research results need to be reported honestly, shared with participants, not published previously, not plagiarised, not influenced by personal interest and duly credited to authors that are cited (Creswell 2012:279). Furthermore, honest and transparent reporting requires that researchers not falsify data to substantiate a research question or omit troublesome results to present a more convincing story. In order to ensure honest and transparent reporting, the researcher went back to the participants in the schools to verify whether the transcripts of the interviews reflected a true account of what transpired in the interviews. Moreover, the analysis of data was done purely from the data obtained in the transcripts after identifying the themes and placing the relevant information into appropriate categories. Furthermore, data could not be falsified in any way because all the quotations elicited from the participants in the interviews could easily be traced back to the transcripts for verification purposes. In order to avoid plagiarism, the researcher ensured that all quotations from authors were duly recorded with complete references.

#### **4.4.3.7 Permission to tape-record interviews**

As pointed out previously, the researcher used the qualitative interview approach to explore and probe participants' responses in order to gather in-depth data about their experiences and feelings. This method of data collection was preferred because it allowed the researcher to examine the participants' attitudes, interests, feelings, concerns, and values more easily and first hand in a face-to-face interaction (Gay *et al.* 2011:386).

Although taking notes during the interview and writing notes after the interview are also important data collection methods, the researcher regarded tape-recording as the data collection method of choice because it provided a verbatim account of the interview session. Accordingly, and in order to capture all the information without missing any vital information, the researcher tape-recorded all the interviews. Permission to tape-record the interviews was requested from the participants beforehand and the participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable or

intimidated by the presence of the tape recorder. The researcher ensured that the tape recording never proceeded without the knowledge and consent of the participants. As a result of this transparent approach, the researcher avoided deception and in so doing, upheld the highest degree of professional integrity and objectivity (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:119-123).

#### 4.4.4 Measures to ensure trustworthiness

Research validity and reliability in qualitative research is often referred to as “trustworthiness,” where the researcher as the main data collection instrument, justifies and defends the accuracy, credibility and authenticity of the findings of the study (Gay *et al.* 2011:392). In order to achieve this, qualitative researchers use various strategies and criteria to ensure that their research is trustworthy, is robust, and contributes significantly to an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, the different qualitative techniques have been suggested in the literature precisely for the purpose of establishing validity (accuracy, meaningfulness and credibility of the research project as a whole) and reliability (the degree to which the research findings are true) with regard to the four corresponding design tests of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Riege 2003:83). Accordingly, in order to ensure trustworthiness, the researcher employed E.G. Guba’s “Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic Inquiries” in accordance with the following four criteria (Gay *et al.* 2011:392):

- **Credibility (truth-value)** relates to the researcher’s ability to take all the complexities that present themselves into account and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained by giving a true and accurate account of the findings (Gay *et al.* 2011:392). The question the researcher needs to answer is “Do the findings reflect the ‘reality’ and lived experiences of the participants?” In order to maintain credibility, the researcher ensured that the information obtained from participants were recorded and analysed accurately. Furthermore, the researcher used triangulation techniques such as multiple sources of evidence, investigators and methods during the data collection and data analysis phase of the research to enhance credibility (Riege 2003:83). Additional strategies commonly integrated to establish credibility included the use of reflection or the maintenance of field notes and peer examination of data (Baxter & Jack 2008:556).

- **Transferability (applicability)** indicates to what extent the findings from the study are context-bound and whether they apply to other settings, contexts or groups (Gay *et al.* 2011:392). To ensure applicability, the researcher presented sufficient descriptive information as well as context-relevant statements in this study that would add value to future research. Additionally, the use of specific procedures for coding and analysis such as symbols, signs, and others during the data analysis phase helped to ensure transferability (Riege 2003:83).
- **Dependability (consistency)** refers to the stability of the data, whether the findings will be consistent with future studies of the same kind, using the same subjects and similar contexts (Gay *et al.* 2011:392). In order to ensure dependability, the researcher accounted for variables that could possibly cause changes in the future in terms of the emergent nature of the design. Dependability was also achieved in the research design phase by safeguarding against the researcher's theoretical position and biases (Riege 2003:84).
- **Confirmability (neutrality)** deals with the neutrality or objectivity of the collected data, the freedom from bias and subjectivity in the research procedures and findings (Gay *et al.* 2011:393). In order to achieve this, the researcher engaged in member-checking which involved taking the interpretation and the descriptions of the data analysis back to the participants to verify their accuracy, credibility and authenticity (Brikci 2007:26). Furthermore, raw data such as field notes, tapes, transcripts another documents compiled during the data collection stage were kept safe by the researcher for later inspection by the supervisor or auditor if required (Riege 2003:83).

Additionally, the following strategies were employed to ensure trustworthiness in this research study (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:330):

#### **4.4.4.1 Participants' language**

Simple, user-friendly language was used by the researcher to ensure maximum understanding on the part of the participants and to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. The interviews were conducted in the participants' language of teaching and learning, which



in this case, was English, and in which they were easily and confidently able to express themselves without any feeling of fear, anxiety or intimidation. The questions posed were simply worded and easy to understand to the extent that participants were able to respond naturally without hesitation.

#### **4.4.4.2 Natural settings**

Given that qualitative research is a kind of naturalistic enquiry, which entails obtaining data in as natural a setting as possible with the intention of minimising the influence of an unrealistic research environment (Newby 2010:81), the researcher conducted interviews in a real life setting, the participants' natural settings, the schools (Johnson & Christensen 2008:293) in order to reflect their lived experiences (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331). The natural settings reflected the reality of their experiences more accurately with the participants expressing themselves more openly and more confidently because they were comfortable in their own school environment.

#### **4.4.4.3 Disciplined subjectivity**

Researcher bias in the form of selective observations and selective recording and analysis of information is a potential threat to validity and objectivity (Johnson & Christensen 2008:275). Subjectivity reflects a range of the researcher's personal interests, values, abilities, assumptions, aims and ambitions that are reflected in biased reporting. In this study, the researcher monitored himself constantly and consciously for subjectivity and biases by ensuring transparency and objectivity at all times during the course of the study. Furthermore, the researcher engaged in critical self-reflection actively about his potential biases and predispositions through reflexivity and in so doing controlled and minimised the bias-effect (Johnson & Christensen 2008:275).

#### **4.4.4.4 Verbatim accounts**

A verbatim account is the lowest inference descriptor of all because the participant's exact words are provided in direct quotations (Johnson & Christensen 2008:278) and since verbatim accounts do not leave room for speculation or doubt about what was said by the participants as they are recorded word- for- word, the data collection method of choice in this study was audio recording because it provided a verbatim account of the interview

session, was convenient and reliable and ensured that the original data was available at any time (Gay *et al.* 2011:387). Accordingly, the researcher extracted the verbatim accounts as well as direct quotes from the transcripts of the interviews to illustrate the sense, intentions, feelings, tone and emotion of participants.

#### **4.4.4.5 Low-inference descriptors**

Low-inference descriptors refer to descriptions that are phrased very similarly to the participants' accounts and the researchers' field notes (Johnson & Christensen 2008:277). These descriptors help the reader to experience the participants' actual language, dialect and personal meanings. In this way, the reader can hear how the participants think and feel about issues and experiences. Accordingly, the researcher used concrete, precise descriptions from field notes and interview elaborations (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331).

#### **4.4.4.6 Mechanically recorded data**

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used a tape recorder to record the interviews since tape recorders and other audio-visual equipment provided accurate and relatively complete records of conversations between participants (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331). Furthermore, the audio recorder captured the entire interview and allowed for the careful review of the data, made a complete transcription possible and allowed the researcher to check the accuracy of transcripts with interviewees (Atkins & Wallace 2012:90). In addition, tapes are convenient and reliable and the retrieval of data from it can be made whenever necessary (Gay *et al.* 2011:387).

#### **4.4.5 Data collection**

During this phase of the study, the researcher identified and selected the sites and the individuals for study, obtained their permission to be studied and gathered information by observing their behaviour and by asking them questions related to the phenomenon of bullying primarily through an interactive process comprising of in-person interviews and focus group interviews (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:236).

The researcher chose the interview method of data collection because it provided opportunities to gather rich and illuminative data, done face-to-face in the participants own environment and also because the method allowed for probing of the participants to clarify responses or to gain additional information (Johnson & Christensen 2008:203). Moreover, this method allowed the interviewer flexibility to ask follow-up questions which naturally emerged during the qualitative interview. Focus group interviews were also considered because it was less time consuming than conducting numerous individual interviews; group dynamics have been shown to elicit valuable information and participants have been shown to be more confident in expressing their true feelings within a group, which provides the support of peers than in individual interviews (Lessing & Schultz 2003:161).

The researcher used semi-structured interviews (a combination of both structured and unstructured approaches) for this phase of the study (Gay *et al.* 2011:386). Open-ended questions were posed (See Appendix D) which allowed for a detailed response and elaboration from participants in an unconstrained manner. Furthermore, questions were sufficiently flexible to facilitate responses and contributions from participants in a manner that was appropriate to them (Atkins & Wallace 2012:162). Additionally, the order in which questions were read and answered could be controlled by the interviewer, the physical and social circumstances of the interview could be monitored and participants' interpretations of questions could be probed and clarified. Hence, the researcher was well placed to gain a full understanding of what the participant really wanted to say (Check & Schutt 2012:174).

#### **4.4.5.1 Sampling**

In view of the fact that probability sampling procedures are not always appropriate or desirable for qualitative study (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:342), the researcher used a purposeful sampling technique in this investigation where he made specific choices about which people to include in the sample (Faculty of Education, UKZN: 43). Various participants were identified as rich sources of information for this study (Chenail 2011:1718). Consequently, information-rich participants (principals, SMT, teachers, learners and circuit manager) were chosen for in-depth study after first specifying the characteristics of the population of interest and then locating individuals with those characteristics (Johnson & Christensen 2008:239). The schools selected for the investigation were schools in which the problem of

bullying was most prevalent. The choice of schools was informed by the problem being highlighted by principals at circuit and District level meetings where principals of the selected schools complained about the high incidence of bullying perpetration in their schools. The researcher also ensured that in selecting the sample, the participants chosen for the interviews were informative, articulate, reflective and thoughtful, and experienced with the research topic and setting.

Five secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal were chosen as sites to conduct the investigation. The details of the sample in respect of the schools, circuit and the participants were as follows:

**Table 4.1: School details**

School Name	School Type	Area	Learner Numbers	Teacher Numbers	Sample: Principal	Sample: SMT	Sample: Teachers	Sample: Learners
School A	Secondary	Semi-rural	1100	34	1	4	8	8
School B	Secondary	Semi-rural	741	26	1	4	8	8
School C	Secondary	Semi-rural	560	23	1	4	8	8
School D	Secondary	Rural	317	14	1	4	8	8
School E	Secondary	Rural	213	12	1	4	8	8

**Table 4.2: Circuit details**

Circuit Name	Area	Number: Schools	Number: Primary Schools	Number: Secondary Schools	Sample: Circuit Manager	Sample: Schools
Circuit X	Semi-rural	126	85	40	1	5

**Table 4.3: Total sample used in this investigation**

Number: Schools	Number: Principals	Number: Circuit Manager	Number: SMT Members	Number: Teachers	Number: Learners	Total: Participants
5	5	1	20 [4x5]	40 [8x5]	40 [8x5]	106

The codes used for the different categories of participants are shown below in Table 4.4

**Table 4.4: Codes used for the different categories of participants**

School:	(School A, School B, School C, School D, School E)
Principal: (P)	Circuit Manager: (CM)
School management team:	(SMT1, SMT2, SMT 3, SMT 4, SMT5)
Teacher:	(T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8)
Learner:	(L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, L6, L7, L8)

The sample consisted of the following participants as per Table 4.1 and 4.2 above:

- The principals from each of the five secondary schools were interviewed individually and this provided a principal-perspective as well as a management-perspective of the problem of bullying in their schools.
- Four SMT members from each of the five secondary schools (comprising the deputy principal and heads of department were interviewed as a focus group. The SMT members provided a management-perspective of the problem of bullying in their schools.
- Eight teachers from each of the five secondary schools were interviewed as a focus group. They provided a teacher-perspective of the problem of bullying in their schools.
- Eight learners from the representative council of learners (RCL) selected from each of the five secondary schools were interviewed as a focus group. This provided a learner-perspective of the problem of bullying in their schools.
- The circuit manager from the circuit in which the schools were located was interviewed individually. This provided a circuit perspective of the problem of bullying in the circuit.

It follows that the researcher conducted individual interviews with five (5) principals as well as individual interviews with the one (1) circuit manager of the circuit in which the five schools are located. Furthermore, the researcher conducted focus group interviews with the four (4) SMT members from each of the five schools (20 in all), focus group interviews with eight (8) teachers from each of the five schools (40 in all), and focus group interviews with the eight (8) RCL from each of the five schools (40 in all). The total number of participants in the sample used in this study amounted to 106. Maximum variation sampling was used (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:327) to ensure that the sample included participants from both genders and from different race and age groups. This method was employed to illuminate different aspects of the research problem and thus, deliver information-rich data.

The principal of each school assisted in selecting the participants for the focus group interviews for the SMT, the teachers, and the learners. These selections were based on the first-hand experiences of bullying by these participants either directly or indirectly. The teachers were selected according to their tenure, gender, different age groups, and most importantly, on their first-hand experiences of bullying in their schools (three young teachers, three middle-aged teachers and two senior teachers). The RCL consisted of eight democratically elected learners, one from each grade, proportionately represented according to gender and race. The circuit manager was chosen as part of the sample because the five schools fell directly under his supervision. This close and personal association with the schools enabled him to contribute significantly to the investigation because of his personal involvement in addressing bullying related issues at these schools.

Each interview was conducted at a convenient time and place in terms of advance and negotiated arrangements with the participants. The interviews for the principal and SMT members were conducted in the principal's office while the interviews with the teachers and learners were concluded in the school library at each of the schools. The interview for the circuit manager was conducted at the circuit office. The researcher ensured that the settings for the interviews projected a warm and inviting climate, was easily accessible to the participants and provided relative quiet. All the participants were assured that the information gleaned from the interviews would be held in strict confidence. The interviews were then tape-recorded with the participants' permission and transcribed verbatim. The process of member-checking was also conducted to clarify information that was not clearly

discernible from the tapes and to ensure the accuracy, credibility and authenticity of the transcribed data.

#### **4.4.5.2 The researcher as instrument**

The researcher served as an instrument in this study since he was responsible for conducting the entire interview process and ensuring that all the participant responses were collected, recorded and analysed clinically. The researcher understood the fundamental importance of ensuring that he fulfilled the necessary skills, capacity and competency requirements in undertaking the investigation and avoid researcher bias by not allowing his personal views and perspectives to contaminate data interpretation and analysis (Johnson & Christensen 2008:275). Additionally, in order to ensure competency and avoid researcher bias, the researcher undertook to:

- Conduct the investigation with due regard to the ethical code of conduct required of all researchers.
- Execute the interview process according to the interview guide in terms of wording, format, recording procedures and allowable probes.
- Ensure that transcriptions from interviews were recorded word- for- word.
- Maintain a neutral stance during the full duration of the interview process.
- Conduct the interview in a courteous and professional manner paying due regard to participants' feelings, emotions and needs.
- Maintain objectivity in respect of participants at all times by not influencing their perceptions and not making value judgments that might bias the research findings.
- Desist from selective observation and selective recording of information.

In terms of academic competency, at the time this research was conducted, the researcher held a Bachelor of Arts degree (BA), a Bachelor of Education degree (B.ED), a Human Resource Management certificate (HRM) as well as a Masters' degree in Education Management (M.ED.), all from the University of South Africa. Additionally and in terms of workplace experience, the researcher is a school principal with thirty-two years of teaching experience. Being a member of management for the past fifteen years, the researcher has had extensive interviewing experience and has been supervised in his studies by a highly

efficient, experienced and competent university professor. This would attest to the reasonably appropriate level of competence of the researcher in conducting this research.

#### **4.4.5.3 Pilot study**

The researcher conducted a pilot study to field-test whether the questions to be asked in the actual interviews were appropriate, clear and unambiguous and whether they required reformulation (Gay *et al.* 2011:121). Accordingly, the purpose of the pilot study was to determine how the design could be improved by identifying flaws in the measuring instrument (interview questions). The researcher conducted a pilot test with two management personnel, two teachers and two learners at a local secondary school to establish the following:

- Are the questions easy to understand?
- Are the questions relevant to the study?
- Is there a good flow of questions in the interview guide?
- How long does it take participants to answer questions?

The responses from the participants in the pilot study confirmed that the questions asked were appropriate, clear, unambiguous and relevant to the study. Therefore, no changes were required in the interview schedule.

#### **4.4.5.4 Interview schedule**

The researcher used the interview approach because interviews remained the most common data collection method in qualitative research and are a familiar and flexible way of asking people about their opinions and experiences (Moriarty 2011:8). Furthermore, this approach was adopted not only because it provided an appropriate avenue for accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definition of situations and constructions of reality (Punch 2009:219) but also because it provided the added advantage of generating a considerable amount of data from an interviewee in a relatively short space of time. The researcher explored educational issues using qualitative methods such as open-ended interviews that provided data based on the participants' perspectives and their actual words (Johnson & Christensen 2008:19). Accordingly, an interview schedule with a list of questions to be asked during the interview was compiled in relation to the topic being investigated. The questions



asked were short and to the point with the researcher eliciting more details through nondirective probes.

The researcher formulated and asked questions based on the themes discussed in the literature study (See Appendix D). The researcher asked all the interviewees the same basic questions in the same order as the exact wording and sequence of questions were determined in advance (Johnson & Christensen 2008:205). This approach was preferred because the participant's responses to the same set of questions made it easier for the researcher to compare the data from the responses received, thus facilitating the organisation and analysis of the data. The questions asked were formulated in such a way that it maximised the extraction of information-rich data from the participants in respect of the characteristics of bullies in schools, the underlying causes of bullying, the negative outcomes of bullying, and the strategies that need to be employed to curb the problem. Accordingly, the main questions (in each interview) included the following (refer to Appendix D):

- What is your experience of bullying in your school?
- What characteristics do bullies portray in your school?
- What are the underlying causes of bullying in your school?
- What is the effect of bullying in your school?
- How can the problem of bullying be effectively addressed in your school?

The written questions appearing in the interview schedule were asked orally in exactly the same order and with the same wording with appropriate probing questions where deemed necessary (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:206).

#### **4.4.5.5 Field notes**

The researcher ensured that the field notes compiled (recordings of observations and reflections on them) were complete, detailed and as true as possible to what was observed and heard (Check & Schutt 2012:199). The field notes were compiled in such a way that social processes and settings were described in rich detail with ample illustrations. The field notes consisted of observations made during the pilot study; observations made during the interviews, information gleaned during the pilot study and comments made by participants

before and after the interviews. Descriptive field notes included descriptions of the methodology and interview procedure as it unfolded while reflective field notes captured the researcher's personal reactions to observations-feelings and thoughts about statements made by participants during the observation sessions that made him feel threatened, intimidated or disgusted (Gay *et al.* 2011:382). The field notes took into account whether the participants focused on the questions asked, how well they participated and contributed to the group discussions and their expression, attitudes and general body language when responding to questions.

#### **4.4.5.6 Official documents**

Official documents such as the minutes of school meetings, school policies, District policies, learner-incident/defaulters books, personal journals, newspaper articles and letters provided the researcher with a valuable source of information in qualitative research (Creswell 2012:223). Additionally, since the school governing body (SGB) plays an important role in disciplinary matters, the researcher referred to the minutes of the SGB meetings where disciplinary matters were attended to, discussed and recorded. The researcher collected these documents from the sites, after obtaining permission from the principals to use them, and analysed their contents carefully (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle 2010:131). As far as the school policies were concerned, the researcher analysed each school's code of conduct policy and checked to see whether these policies were in line with the District policy on carefully discipline, particularly in respect of bullying.

The official documents were used not only to supplement the information-rich data obtained from the field notes and interviews but also to validate participant responses in the interview (Bogdan & Biklen 2007:64). In addition, the researcher referred to official documents because it provided the added advantage of being in the language and words of the participants. Furthermore, these documents were already printed as they contained handwritten, typed or computer generated text (Gall, Gall & Borg 2010:437) and were , therefore, ready for analysis without the necessary transcription that is usually required with observational or interview data (Creswell 2012:223).

#### **4.4.6 Data analysis**

In order to analyse the data collected from the field notes compiled from observations as well as audio recordings of interviews that were conducted, the researcher transformed all information into typed text. These transcripts assisted the researcher with organising, categorising, synthesising and analysing the data in a dependable and accurate manner (Johnson & Christensen 2008:534). The researcher used the inductive reasoning approach starting with the raw data collected and then proceeded to detect patterns and regularities that emerged from the data (Faculty of Education UKZN 2010:116-117). The method of analysis chosen for this study was a hybrid approach of qualitative methods of thematic analysis and coding (Fereday & Muir-Chochrane 2006:4).

#### **4.4.6.1 Thematic analysis**

The researcher prepared a transcript of the interviews. He then proceeded to divide the data into meaningful analytical units by reading through the text line-by-line. Through careful reading and re-reading of the data and through a form of pattern recognition within the data (Fereday & Muir-Chochrane 2006:4), the researcher identified topics which emerged and duly wrote down the topics in the margin of the transcript (Faculty of Education UKZN 2010:119).

After having identified the topics, the researcher compiled a master list of the topics that had emerged and checked for any duplication. Similar topics were classified or categorised together in order to limit the large number of categories. After the categories were delimited, the main emerging themes were identified.

#### **4.4.6.2 Coding**

In the process of identifying themes from the large volume of data, a process of coding was adopted where segments of data were identified by means of symbols and category names (Johnson & Christensen 2011:520). The researcher identified passages of text and applied labels to them to indicate that they were examples of some thematic idea or pattern (Babbie 2010:400). The coding process involved the researcher recognising (seeing) an important moment and encoding it prior to the process of interpretation and this captured the qualitative richness of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, in Fereday & Muir-Chochrane 2006:4).

The topics identified were abbreviated to a code and the code names were then written next to the appropriate pieces of data for easy reference and analysis (Faculty of Education UKZN 2010:119). For example, physical bullying was referred to as PB, verbal bullying was indicated by VB, cyberbullying was indicated by CB. Accordingly, inborn traits were indicated by IT, family influence by FI, depression by D and so forth.

Apart from this, face-sheet-codes, which applied to single complete transcripts, were also used to enable the researcher to search for group differences. For example, focus groups one, two, three, four and five were coded as FG1, FG2, FG3, FG4, and FG5 respectively. Similarly, principal 1 was coded as P1, Teacher 2 in school 5 was coded as T2 (S5), learner 3 from school 4 was coded L3 (S4) and so on. Additionally, the researcher employed *in-vivo* coding to identify the main themes and categories as well as to “prioritize and honour the participant’s voice” in the study (Saldana 2009:74).

#### **4.4.6.3 Developing a code manual**

The choice of a code manual was important because it served as a data management tool to assist the researcher in data interpretation (Crabtree & Miller in Fereday & Muir-Chochrane 2006:4). After developing all the category names, they were placed on a master list (code manual) together with their symbolic codes. This master list included each code followed by the full code name and a brief description of the code. The codes on the master list were then applied to new segments of the text every time new and appropriate sections were found. These new categories and codes were added to the master list as and when it was required and this provided a clear trail of evidence for the credibility of the study.

#### **4.4.6.4 External coder**

The raw data was sent to the external coder (the researcher’s supervisor) who checked the categories and themes as well as the coding system applied. The supervisor also checked for inter-coder reliability (for consistency in the appropriate codes between the researcher and the supervisor) as well as intra-coder reliability (to ensure consistency in the researcher’s own coding).

## **4.5 CONCLUSION**

For the purpose of this research, the researcher elected to implement a qualitative research approach. Accordingly, this chapter outlined the research design and methodology used in the empirical phase of this study. The main research problem, specific research problem, research design and methodology, data collection and data analysis methods used in the study, were explained. A pilot study was conducted to test and modify the questions used in the interviews. The participants were selected purposefully in accordance with the research requirements. Furthermore, the researcher made use of individual interviews and focus group interviews to achieve the aims of the study. The results and findings of the empirical investigation will be discussed and presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings of the qualitative study are presented and discussed. Data collection for this study, involved interviews conducted at five secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal, as well as an interview with the circuit manager, to determine the prevalence and impact of bullying on the various stakeholders of the school system. The management strategies that are currently adopted by the Department of Education and schools to manage the problem are also discussed. Accordingly, a qualitative research design was employed to establish the views of the circuit manager, the principal, SMT, teachers and learners on the problem of bullying as it manifests itself in secondary schools at the present time. On the basis of the findings from the empirical study, a model to curb bullying is also presented.

The interviews, which were recorded and transcribed, were conducted at a convenient time and in the natural setting of the participants as outlined in the table below:

**Table 5.1 Participants, venues and interview type**

<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>VENUE</b>	<b>INTERVIEW TYPE</b>
Circuit manager	Circuit office	Individual
Principal	Principal's office	Individual
School management team (SMT)	School library	Focus group
Teachers	School library	Focus group
Representative council of learners (RCL)	School library	Focus group

This chapter, therefore, analyses the findings of the interviews and provides a detailed interpretation of the findings that are guided by the theoretical framework outlined in section 1.3 as well as the literature study reported in chapters two and three.

## 5.2 THEMES AND CATEGORIES

As mentioned before, five secondary schools were selected by the researcher for the purpose of this study. A qualitative data analysis process was employed to analyse and interpret the large volume of raw data that emerged from the interviews. The researcher used a system of coding to reduce the large quantity of descriptive information gathered from the interviews (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:238) by organising and sorting the data into categories and by noting patterns or relationships between these categories (Faculty of Education UKZN 2010:118). During the first scanning, the information was read through carefully, line by line. During the second scanning, the data were coded and categorised and during the third scanning, the main themes were generated. The generation of the themes and subsequent categories and sub-categories were based on the guidelines for data analysis and interpretation outlined in sections 1.5.4.4 and 4.4.6 as well as in the aims and objectives of this study as outlined in section 1.4. The main themes that emerged from the data were as follows:

- Types of bullying
- Factors contributing to bullying
- The impact of bullying behaviour
- Managing bullying

The table below outlines in detail the main themes and categories that emerged from the verbatim transcripts.

**Table 5.2: Themes and categories**

<b>THEME 1</b>	<b>5.3.1 TYPES OF BULLYING</b>
Category 1	5.3.1.1 Physical bullying experiences
2	5.3.1.2 Verbal & Emotional bullying
3	5.3.1.3 Cyberbullying experiences
4	5.3.1.4 Xenophobic and homophobic bullying
5	5.3.1.5 Racist bullying experiences

<b>THEME 2</b>	<b>5.3.2 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO BULLYING</b>
Category 1	5.3.2.1 Influence at family level
2	5.3.2.2 Influence at school level
3	5.3.2.3 Influence at community level
<b>THEME 3</b>	<b>5.3.3 THE IMPACT OF BULLYING</b>
Category 1	5.3.3.1 The impact of bullying on learners
2	5.3.3.2 The impact of bullying on teachers
3	5.3.3.3 The impact of bullying on school management
<b>THEME 4</b>	<b>5.3.4 MANAGING BULLYING</b>
Category 1	5.3.4.1 The role of the Department of Education
Category 2	5.3.4.2 The role of the circuit manager
Category 3	5.3.4.3 The role of the school
Category 4	5.3.4.4 The role of outside agencies

A detailed discussion of the findings pertaining to the main themes and categories as they appear in Table 5.1 above is presented in the next section.

### 5.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Discussions of the key findings that emerged from the data are now presented in detail. The researcher used verbatim quotes to ensure that the voice of the participants were heard (Faculty of Education UKZN 2010:128). Consequently, in highlighting the main themes and categories, the researcher employed *in-vivo* coding (Creswell 2007:153) to “prioritise and honour the participant’s voice” in the study (Saldana 2009:74). The categories that emerged from the data were the following:

- Types of bullying: *“It is something like a cancer...an ulcer to us for 25 years.”*
- Factors contributing to bullying: *“Bullying is a result of socio-economic deprivation.”*



- The impact of bullying: *“The biggest consequence is that it (bullying) decreases the person’s self esteem.”*
- Managing bullying: *“All stakeholders need to work hand-in-hand on this issue.”*

### **5.3.1 TYPES OF BULLYING: *“It is something like a cancer...an ulcer to us for 25 years!”***

The survey conducted in the five secondary schools in the Uthungulu District revealed that the most prevalent forms of bullying experienced in schools were physical bullying, verbal and emotional bullying, cyberbullying, xenophobic and homophobic bullying and racist bullying. This observation was confirmed by various participants, namely, the circuit manager, the principals, SMTs, teachers and learners who participated in the interviews. Physical bullying, particularly shootings and stabbings, appeared to be rampant in most schools and a cause for grave concern among most principals with one principal expressing his deep seated frustrations by stating *“It (bullying) is something like a cancer...an ulcer to us for 25 years!”*

#### **5.3.1.1 Physical bullying: *“He went into the toilet...and he was brutally stabbed!”***

The overwhelming response from most participants indicated that this particular form of bullying was widespread in most secondary schools. The circuit manager (Mthunzini Circuit, Uthungulu District) , Principals from schools A, B and C, SMT members from schools A, C and E, teachers from schools A, B, C and E, and learners from schools A, B, C, D and E confirmed that physical bullying was a common occurrence in their schools.

The circuit manager of the Mthunzini Circuit related an extremely distressing incident that had taken place in a neighbouring circuit, namely the Esikalensinkosi Circuit (also in the Uthungulu District), where the perpetrator allegedly took his grandfather’s gun, forced his way into a classroom, fatally shot the other learner and fled the scene:

*The question comes at the right time when the circuit is experiencing a lot of bullying. I will cite a few examples. One of them is (High School Y) in (Circuit A) where...in fact the boy...because the boy was aggrieved that the other boy had taken his girlfriend...went straight to the class and shot the boy. As I’m talking to you now, the school is not functional. That school also has a history because there was a teacher that was also shot a few years ago and now teachers are afraid...they don’t want to go into class and learners are now stranded.*

The principal from school A highlighted an incident in which a learner was stabbed:

*Eh...there was this boy who stabbed another boy...it was a case of two boys fighting over a girlfriend and one of them seeing that he had lost the fight in keeping this girl, brought a knife to school and during break waited in the toilet for the other boy and as he went into the toilet, he was brutally stabbed.*

In another incident, teacher (4) from school C expressed concern about the serious turn bullying was taking in secondary schools at that time:

*We had a serious case where someone from the outside came in and stabbed my class child several times...the child almost died. I had to put him in my car and drive him to the hospital...that is how serious the case was...the person who came in was a principal's son from another school and because he was on drugs, that's what he chose to do...very serious case...he nearly die in the car, he was only passing out all the time.*

A SMT member (SMT 2) from school E cited the following experience of physical bullying in her school:

*You see you have a learner who is in grade 8 and he seems to be older than the others. Then another learner (bystander) came to us and showed a video they took after school where this learner was hitting the other learner with a big stick. And you can see in the video that this learner is a tough learner who was bullying the other learner and the others could not do anything because he threatened to beat them up.*

SMT member 3 from school C highlighted her experience of physical bullying that was of a sexual nature:

*The incident I will relate is of one boy (in grade 9) who was just pushing girls around, he would just touch them whenever he wanted to...and it went to the extremes of him even touching the girl's bums. And they were afraid of reporting him because he would threaten them with physical violence.*

Similarly, learner 1 in school B, recounted an incident where two girls bullied a boy into showing them his private parts:

*You know...there was this guy and there were these two girls who were very persistent...they wanted to see his private parts. And he was like running in school...and they were chasing him...they were behind him...then he went to the office and when he came out, they were still there waiting for him...they wanted to touch him and now he is not in school...and I think that is why he left.*

The high incidence of physical bullying cited above validates the findings by the Progress in International Reading Literature Study, as stated in section 1.1 (Loynes 2013:14), that 68% of the learners in schools feared being physically assaulted or threatened with a dangerous weapon. The findings also concur with the report of the WHO (cited in section 3.3.1) which confirmed that a large number of bullying incidents attributed to shootings and stabbings. Furthermore, the above expositions coincide with *Dollard's frustration-aggression theory* (used to explain criminality) cited in 2.2.1.1, which emphasised aggression as not merely being the expression of negative stimuli but as an action having a definitive objective, which is, the intentional infliction of injury to another person.

Apart from physical bullying, the prevalence of verbal and emotional bullying is at an all time high in secondary schools. According to Venter (2013:241) and as cited in section 3.3.2 verbal abuse is one of the worst forms of direct bullying that can not only be malicious, but also embarrassing and humiliating to the affected person.

#### **5.3.1.2 Verbal and Emotional bullying: *"They said I was fat...I looked like a pig!"***

Many of the participants in all five secondary schools confirmed that verbal and emotional bullying was common among learners at their schools. The responses from participants from schools A, B, C, D and E attest to this assertion.

Teacher 3 from school C related an incident where verbal bullying was used in a very subtle but effective way:

*Also, if it is the learner's birthday...if it is the bully's party, he'll go around the whole class collecting money...you know "Give me money to celebrate my birthday!" And of course, learners oblige because they are so scared of the bully.*

Similar sentiments were expressed by learner 2 (school E) when he stated:

*So I was just looking at these two guys and the bigger guy gave, the younger guy 10 cents and said, "Go buy me a vetkoek. Come back with the change!" So I was like surprised because how is it possible with such small cash to get the vetkoek and bring the change. I felt sorry for the guy.*

Related comments from SMT member (3) in school D confirmed that verbal bullying had been effectively implemented by bullies in his school:

*Sometimes you get an incident where a senior learner tells a junior learner "Carry my bag!" and of course, I think they may be afraid to say "No" because of the size of the person asking them. So they just carry the bag. And when you call the young learner aside and ask him "Are you happy doing that?" and he says, "No, I did it because...obviously...he's matric!" So the junior learner is clearly doing it against his will.*

The data from the interview transcripts confirmed that emotional bullying was on the increase in secondary schools. This was evident from the views expressed by teacher 1 (school A):

*When I went to my class, I saw a small girl in front of my classroom crying. Upon finding out, I realised that one of the boys was taking her money to buy food. So the girl was without her money for lunch. She was very upset and couldn't understand why he was doing that.*

Teacher 4 (school B) also highlighted the effect of emotional bullying on a junior learner at his school:

*The incident I witnessed was of Grade 8 learners who picked on a learner who was coming from a very poor background...and they picked on the fact that his teeth were all not white and they would take his pens away from him and they would make him feel very bad.*

Similar sentiments were echoed by teacher 1 (school D): *"We have had incidences where it's more psychological...excluding someone deliberately to hurt his feelings...like there was this young guy who was quite consistently name-called and excluded by the other boys."* Learner 2 (school C) also expressed similar feelings: *"Ya...the guys like bullied me...they called me an idiot and stuff. You know, emotionally. Most of the times they used to like tell me things that hurt me a lot."* Learner 3 (school C) continued: *"I was constantly bullied you know...they said that I was 'fat,' I looked like a 'pig'...they said really mean stuff!"*

From the participants' responses reported above, it is clear that their perceptions concurred with *Hawley's Dominance Theory* as discussed in section 2.2.5 which maintains that that children use aggression against weaker children to establish control over them. The dominant nature of the bully in practising social exclusion are not only devastating and crippling but also seriously compromises the confidence, self-esteem and dignity of the victim, as discussed in section 3.3.3. This concurs with the views espoused by Venter (2013:241) as cited in section 3.3.2 who explains that verbal bullying and psychological

bullying in its most vicious form can affect the targets' sense of self-worth detrimentally as a result of the emotional pain experienced.

While verbal and emotional bullying can have a negative impact on a person's self-esteem, another serious problem afflicting young teenagers today is cyberbullying (Comins 2010:5) that is a form of electronic aggression that takes cruelty to a level never imagined before and which is becoming increasingly prevalent in schools in the modern time (Fried & Sosland 2011:43) as cited in section 3.3.6.

#### **5.3.1.3 Cyberbullying: "It is very demeaning and it affects them (victims) a lot."**

While the invention of the cell phone has brought to the modern world a quick and reliable way of disseminating information to people all across the globe, it has also brought with it unimaginable emotional abuse of innocent people not least of which are learners in schools. The use of cell phones by learners to bully their counterparts is becoming a serious problem in many schools and has brought untold misery to the many victims who have been subjected to its wrath.

The principal of School D highlighted the growing incidence of cyberbullying in his school.

*The thing that has been surfacing in my school over the last couple of years is cyberbullying...where children are sending each other threatening text messages. We had an incident where two girls were involved in a fight in the school premises because of accusations made by each other via the short message system (SMS).*

This was verified by SMT 3 (school D) who confirmed the prevalence of bullying via cell phones in schools:

*We noticed also over the years bullying taking place via the use of cell phones. "I sent you a nasty message because you stole my boyfriend" and "I'm gonna get you tomorrow." So cyberbullying is rife in secondary schools today...you know...the use of modern technology to get at people.*

Teacher 6 (school B) related an incident where bullies in her school got hold of a video from one of the learners and sent it to everyone in the school:

*Then there was this girl in Grade 8...she took half-naked pictures to send to her friends but it got into the wrong hands (bullies) and all of a sudden...it was all over the internet...the whole school actually knew about that...she was a pretty girl and I told her to go up to the bullies and face up to them.*

Apart from the actual cyberbullying that takes place by the use of cell phones, another problem facing schools is that cell phones are brought into the premises and learners bully each other over ownership as the principal of school B asserted:

*The other type of bullying that takes place at my school is one involving cell phones. And some of my learners...even though the code of conduct eh...expressly bans the use of phones...cell phones are brought in nevertheless...and the bullies take it from the learners and demand the junior learners purchase airtime for them.*

The problem of cell phones in schools was also highlighted by the principal of school C who stated: *“Another case of bullying that I can recall, is cell phones...when learners (bullies) take cell phones from other learners and they cannot locate their memory cards...and then I have to sort the problem out in the office.”*

The above assertions confirm the viewpoints espoused by Venter (2013:242) and Dupper (2013:10) as cited in section 3.3.6, who pointed out that bullying via electronic media not only involved texting (sending harmful, rude or cruel text messages) but also included “sexting” (sending sexually explicit messages or photographs) as confirmed by teacher 6 (school B) above. The above findings also confirm *Dollard’s frustration-aggression theory* that purports that aggression is a sequence of behaviour, the goal response to which is the injury (physically or emotionally) of the person to whom it is directed. Frustration induces an emotional reaction-anger that creates a readiness for aggressive acts. Law *et al.* (as cited in 2.2.11) confirm that there is more retaliation between bully and victim among cyberbullying which could be due to observing other acts of cyberbullying as the aggressive cue.

Apart from the increased incidence of cyberbullying in secondary schools in the present time, xenophobic bullying has reared its ugly head in South African schools recently, where learners have been harassed and threatened because of their immigrant status. Additionally, the lack of tolerance of people’s sexual orientation leads to victims suffering various forms of harassment in schools (Potgieter 2014:6) as cited in section 3.3.7.

#### **5.3.1.4 Xenophobic and homophobic bullying: “We are going to burn you...go back to Lesotho!”**

The recent xenophobic attacks on foreigners in different parts of South Africa had a profound effect on the thinking of the youth in our country. The problem filtered down and

escalated at the level of the school. Children in schools began to model their countrymen and directed their anger and hatred towards people from foreign nations. Responses from participants from schools B and C show how easily learners can be influenced to become violent.

SMT member 3 from school B related a shocking incident of xenophobia experienced at his school:

*This year you will recall there was this national problem of xenophobia and we've got a child from Lesotho who is doing grade 8...who was being bullied...some of the classmates were saying "We are going to burn you!" and "Go back to Lesotho!" and this youngster was just terrified! So the child was being bullied...being abused because he was a foreigner.*

Teacher 3 (school B) confirmed the view expressed by SMT member 3 (school B) when she stated, "In our school we have foreigners. I have two foreigners in my class. During the xenophobic attacks, they were actually surrounding the children and chanting for them to go back from wherever they came from."

Parallel views were echoed by the principal of school C who blamed the increase in bullying in schools on the violence screened on television:

*The TV news is very violent. Imagine showing someone burning...it's a big thing. You know, children can be influenced by it and feel nothing to see somebody else burning. If you look at the xenophobic attacks that took place...and children are watching and they think nothing of that and that is something that we should never be tolerating.*

Equally devastating was the problem of homophobia where learners who are regarded as "straight" show repugnance towards people with homophobic "gay" tendencies even though they may not necessarily be gay in reality. Learners in school A, D and B, expressed outrage at the false labelling of people just because they "look gay" or "sound gay."

Learner 2 (school A) expressed disgust at being bullied because he was "supposedly gay:"

*From the first day I entered this school in grade 8, they actually used to call me...used to say I'm gay which I took as folly because I'm not gay, wasn't gay, won't be gay but they will be like "I'm gay" ...some cheesy kind of bullying. And because I was accused of being gay, I did change who I was. I used to have two girlfriends...three girlfriends just to prove people wrong...that I'm not gay.*

A similar view was articulated by learner 4 (school D) when he declared:

*I've also been bullied because of the way I speak...people think I'm gay. And people are raving about that...not to be rude but they're very narrow-minded and when they find a stigma, you are like attached to that stigma. So they make it hard for you...you get people mumbling behind your back or pushing you aside because they don't want to be associated with you because you are gay...when you actually not.*

These findings authenticate *Beck's cognitive theory of anger* as discussed in section 2.2.12 which confirm that strong emotions results in negative phenomenological experiences that drive an individual to a state of anger and aggression that is carried out coldly as an instrumental action. Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones (2004:109) as cited in section 2.2.12 validate this theory by pointing out that someone or something, an external agent, must be seen as responsible for the negative event if there is to be anger- someone or something must be blamed for the negative event if anger has to arise. Importantly, this anger and attitudinal hostility are viewed as a syndrome of relative specific feelings, cognitions, and physiological reactions linked associatively with an urge to injure some target. Additionally, Harber (2004:49) as cited in section 1.2 affirms that harassment may be based on sexual orientation as in many schools in Britain, young gay men and lesbian women have been ostracised to such an extent by bullies that they have become depressed and considered suicide because of homophobic bullying.

According to Smith (2013:84), research findings indicate, that apart from xenophobic and homophobic bullying, racist bullying, which involves a range of hurtful behaviour, both physical and psychological, and which is designed to make a person feel unwelcome, marginalised, worthless or powerless because of their skin colour, ethnicity or culture, is becoming a worrying feature in most multi-cultural secondary schools (as cited in section 3.3.9).

**5.3.1.5 Racist bullying: *"There is a problem of racism here where learners are bullied because of their race."***

The interview transcripts confirm that in multi-racial schools, the problem of racism is deeply entrenched even though South Africa became a democracy two decades ago. Learners have a tendency to bully others on racial lines in order to have power over them. This is evident from the responses from participants from schools A, B, and C.



Teacher 5 (school B) was quite vocal about the problem of racism at his school:

*What I have noticed, and this might sound controversial, with our school having a racial mix, is the problem of racism where learners are bullied and picked on because of the race. And I also recall a senior learner being picked on because of being fair (skinned).*

The principal (school C) also attested to the existence of racism in his school because of its multi-cultural ethos and that might be fertile ground for bullying to grow:

*Eh...you know this is a multi-racial school and, of course, there might be incidences of where race is prevalent. We have like out of 24 teachers; we have like half of them or 60% of them who are Indian teachers and the rest are African teachers...and their adjustment to the climate after 1994 is taking some time.*

Learner 6 (school A) also commented on observations made that were discriminatory in nature:

*I've seen the RCL in class actually being bullied. I don't know whether it is because of discrimination or race. But the RCL was an Indian actually. I don't know whether they underestimate her or what. She follows the rules and stuff, does all the work herself and helps everyone in the class but the one problem was they couldn't like listen to her. So people underestimate and discriminate for some reason.*

The problem of racism was further articulated by teachers in school C who lamented the occurrence of bullying in their school on racial lines. Teacher 2 (school C) was vociferous about the problem stating that it was rampant at her school:

*Another underlying cause of bullying is racism...because in class the learners react differently to an Indian teacher compared to an African teacher. No...I've seen it...I've seen the change in terms of posture, I've seen the change in terms of language, I've seen the eyes drop down. But as soon as the (African) teacher comes in, it's like a "switch on, switch off!" And the work is done for that teacher, come hell or high water. Yet I am more understanding, I'm the total opposite of that teacher, yet they give that teacher more respect compared to me. I think that race is a very big factor when it comes to bullying.*

Teacher 4 (school C) continued:

*You know the way they react to us (teachers) in the classroom...is very different. You can't say anything to a Black child because he can stand up to you...and then he gets the backing from management...because of their 'poverty', because of their 'difficulties'. So we just can't say anything...it becomes a racial issue.*

In some instances, Black children exert power and authority over Indian children to the extent that the Indian child is powerless to respond as Teacher 5 (school C) pointed out:

*You also find that when a Black child bullies an Indian child, he (Indian child) doesn't retaliate you know...he just gives up...he will sit quietly you know and he will say "Ya...fine it's your right to do whatever!" in his mind you know. But you don't see an Indian child bullying a Black child at this school.*

The above statements confirm *Tajfel and Turner's social categorisation theory*, as cited in section 2.2.10, which entails the categorising of people into groups on the basis of their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. The theory focuses on intra-group processes that involve segmenting, classifying and ordering the social environment according to In-groups and out-groups. Trepte (2006:258) believes that this perception of belonging to two distinct groups is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination and favouritism, superiority and inferiority in subjective ways. Swearer and Napolitano (2011:3-4) as cited in section 3.3.9 affirm that students who are in the ethnic minority in a school are more likely to be bullied than students in the ethnic majority. Accordingly, Mncube and Harbor (2013:6) as discussed in section 3.3.9, attest that an audit of 90 desegregated schools across all nine provinces showed that racism in schools continues to be pervasive with people being continually labelled in terms of their race as "Black," "Coloured," "Indian" and "White."

As a result of the above findings in respect of the various types of bullying experienced in secondary schools at the present time, it becomes crucially necessary to establish the factors contributing to bullying among learners by extrapolating the views held by the Circuit Manager, principals, teachers and learners with regard to the problem at hand.

### **5.3.2 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO BULLYING: "I would attribute bullying to be a result of socio-economic deprivation."**

The findings from the empirical investigation confirm that the contributory factors to bullying are influenced at three levels, namely, influence at family level, influence at school level and influence at community level. Participants attributed the high prevalence of bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District to various factors with the principal of school B attributing the problem to high levels of poverty experienced by people in under-privileged communities when he said:

*I would attribute bullying to be a result of socio-economic deprivation. The majority of the parents are poor okay...they are not in a position to cater for their children...in some cases they have quite a number of children and when these children look at what the others have they are tempted to do things...you know...to*

*enrich themselves. And one of the easier ways is to bully those who have it...especially the junior learners and get whatever they want. So I would say the main reason is socio-economic deprivation.*

Additionally, participants agreed that the main cause of bullying stems from the home, that the influence at family level precipitates the problem as the principal (school A) confirmed: *“There are many reasons that we can put in place that could lead to a child being bullied at school. But 9 out of 10 times, the main one would be the background the child brings to school.”*

### **5.3.2.1 Influence at family level: “60% to 70% of our learners come from broken homes!”**

An overwhelming majority of participants in all five secondary schools attributed the escalation of bullying in schools directly to the influence at the family level. Broken homes, poor upbringing, the absence of positive role models and the influence of media violence on learners have had a negative impact on the culture of discipline, teaching and learning in the classroom and the general ethos of schools.

#### **(a) Broken homes**

Data from the interviews revealed that most learners who exhibited aggressive bullying behaviour came from broken homes. Most SMTs believed that the child’s family background contributed significantly to the behaviour problems displayed at schools.

SMT 1 (school A) stated that the problem stems from the home:

*Some learners are brought up by single parents, so they are always angry because they don’t know their father...most of them are born outside marriage...so you find that the home is dysfunctional. So when they come to school, they see these other learners coming from good families...so they envy them. And then little things will become huge problems because they would interpret things in the wrong way. So there’s no love sometimes in other children’s homes and that’s why they always have problems.*

SMT member 2 (school E) concurred with the above comments by stating, *“The children have no parents...they live with their grandparents. And one of the learners said to me that she had no-one because she lost her mum when she was seven years old and they grow up frustrated coming from these broken homes.”*

SMT member 1 (school B) mentioned that bullying takes place as a result of the learner's socio-economic standing in their homes:

*The socio-economic factor...it is rife in our school because we have learners here...60% to 70% of our learners come from broken homes...and when they come to school you find that some of our learners cannot afford to dress as they are expected to dress...some come from struggling families... and you find that learners in the class are always passing remarks, they will laugh...make jokes and always talk about that learner.*

Teacher 5 (school C) agreed with this assertion by stating: *"I think its poverty. Lots of kids are bullying for money. They want to have what other learners have ...in many instances they don't have it all. They are coming to school not eating enough in the morning, not carrying lunch."*

The problem of child-headed homes surfaced when SMT member 1 (school E) pointed out, *"I think the one who is bullying the other learners...she is the eldest at home, so she is not used to be ruled. So she uses that power at school because she is the one who is giving the rules to her siblings."*

These findings support *Bandura's social learning theory*, discussed in section 2.2.3, which demonstrates how family background characteristics are associated with bullying perpetration in schools. Miller and Lowen (2012:200) as cited in section 3.5.1.1 supports social learning theory by stating that when parents separate or divorce, it can be particularly confusing and distressing to children and stressful to everyone in the family. Therefore, the manner in which a child deals with his emotions during this difficult time may increase his risk for acting aggressively or impulsively towards others. Additionally, as cited by Gasa (2005:45) in section 3.5.1.1, in single parent homes, the absence of paternal authority and role models results in higher rates of adolescent aggression and violence.

In addition to broken homes that play a critical role in bullying perpetration in schools, poor upbringing of children by parents, who are unable to instil proper discipline and administer appropriate care, also contributes significantly to disruptive, antisocial behaviour.

#### **(b) Poor upbringing**

Poor upbringing and lack of parental control were factors that contributed appreciably to learners exhibiting belligerent bullying behaviour in schools. Principals from School D and

School E, the SMT members from schools A, B and C, and teachers and learners from schools A, B, C and D established this in their responses.

The principal of school E suggested that poor upbringing leads to ill-discipline, *“When you look at these students, we are tempted to think that poor upbringing contributes to this. Eh...sometimes you find that the learner himself bullies others, he comes from the environment where there is no discipline.”*

In addition, the principal of school D had similar thoughts about bullies and blamed their aggressive behaviour on poor parental control:

*Ya...they (bullies) feel aggrieved, upset and have no way of handling a situation. While you are in a discussion, they react violently. If I have to give a reason for this, I would say parents pretty much are not controlling the situation. When parents come to school, they treat the other person violently, and obviously parental control is not happening from home.*

Parallel views were shared by SMT member 3 (school B) who stated: *“The underlying factor that I have noticed is that of poor parental guidance in terms of teaching the child...their upbringing, I can say poor upbringing...how you raise your child, how you teach your child.”*

Teacher 4 (school B) lamented the time spent by parents to communicate with their children because both parents work and come home late each day: *“I think it’s a lack of parenting and guidance eh...from home. Could be because both parents are working as well...they don’t have time for their kids...they come home tired and they don’t know how to deal with problems.”*

SMT member 3 (school C) complained about parents spoiling their children to the point that they become aggressive and expect everything without putting in any effort: *“And upbringing you know...some parents they spoil their children. They give them a mentality that whatever you want, you will get. So now they grow up with that mentality, so now they use aggressiveness to get what they want.”* A similar view of entitlement was shared by learner 2 (school A) who stated: *“If I don’t get discipline from home, if my parents don’t discipline me at home, I take that to school...I’m the only child and my mum...what I want, I get...so when I go to school, I’ll want anything. If I want you to go buy one vetkoek for me, you have to do that.”*

The above findings concur with *John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth's attachment theory* discussed in section 2.2.1, which hypothesises that the quality of attachment to parents and caregivers in early childhood influences relationships later in life. Swearer *et al.* (2006:3) as cited in section 2.2.1, support this theory by stating that a child with a secure attachment style comes to expect consistent and sensitive interactions, whereas, a child with an insecure attachment style learns to expect inconsistent and insensitive interactions. Importantly, and as Monks *et al.* (2009:146) points out, insecure attachment to primary caregivers may result in an individual responding to others with a higher than expected level of hostility and aggression.

According to Swearer *et al.* (2009:20) as cited in section 3.5.1.1 families are supposed to be the major socialisation agent for young children, but unfortunately, children are sometimes presented with less than ideal role models and learn pro-aggression attitudes, develop an inability to regulate emotions, and often fail to gain the necessary problem-solving or coping skills to manage situations at home.

### **(c) Poor role models**

Participants in the study lamented the absence of positive role models in the children's lives. Most parents display aggressive behaviour themselves and the problems encountered at home manifests itself when learners play out their frustrations at school.

The principal of school B highlighted this point when he stated, *"The parents themselves display characteristics of bullying where they show that they are the bosses of their homes, they bully their family...so some of these aggressive qualities are genetically imported by the learners from their parents."*

SMT member 2 (school A) expressed similar sentiments:

*Sometimes we find that they are having problems...they are being ill-treated so because they are ill-treated they are applying what's being done to them to other people. So it's what is ingrained in their hearts...the way to be is to ill-treat somebody in order to appear superior.*

SMT member 2 (school E) agreed with the opinion expressed by SMT member 2 (school A):

*I think a lot of it...bullying...is from examples that come from home where children emulate what they see at home. You know, when a child comes into class*

*and walks past somebody else and just gives him a klap (slap) because he can, you ask why does he do that? 'Ah...my brother does it to me at home as well!' So maybe it's kind of...they learn from what they see.*

SMT member 1 (school C) confirmed that children model the behaviour of their parents:

*Ya...sometimes you find that the parents are fighting at home, so they always witness those things. The mother's drink, they have boyfriends with them...change boyfriends...so I mean the children see all these things. So you find that when they come to school that brings frustration and they become aggressive...and that causes them to be bullies.*

Teacher 1 (school B) concurred with the views expressed by SMT member 1(school C), *"And also with regard to parents...husbands are abusing wives...right...kids see these things. Kids see violence as a way of sorting out and solving problems. So in school, they straight away resort to violence because 'mummy and daddy do it at home!'."*

The above findings are in keeping with *Skinner's behavioural theory* as cited in section 2.2.2 which purports that all human behaviour, including violent behaviour, is learned through interactions with the social environment. Smith (2013:53), as pointed out in section 3.5.1.1, argues that bullies become abusers through learned behaviour acquired primarily from family members and friends. Miller and Lowen (2012:48) concurred with this viewpoint by asserting that parents who are aggressive, hostile argumentative, short-tempered, domineering or critical and generally demonstrate violent behaviour inadvertently serve as poor role models for their own children. As discussed in section 3.5.1.1, these children harness their anger and implement the intimidation tactics employed by their parents to harass their peers at school.

In addition, to poor parenting, Swearer and Napolitano (2011:6) assert that media violence is another factor correlated with aggressive and antisocial behaviour. According to Brown and Tierney (2011:453), as cited in section 3.5.1.3, exposure to violent media can lead to an increase in violent thoughts and behaviours through physiological excitation as well as specific behaviour imitation.

#### **(d) Media violence**

Research on violent television and films, video games and music reveals unequivocal evidence that media violence increases the likelihood of aggressive and violent behaviour in

both immediate and long-term contexts (Anderson 2003:81). Principals, SMT members and teachers from schools B, C and D, highlighted the influence of the media in perpetrating violence amongst learners in schools.

The principal of school C complained about the uncensored material screened on television, *“I think also television is a problem...because after 1994, a lot of our films are not censored in terms of violence and all that...the TV news is very violent! You know, children can be influenced by it...and I think TV influences our learners to become bullies.”* This is in keeping with what teacher 2 (school D) mentioned when she commented, *“I also think that they don’t have good role models in society. I mean you look at the movies...there is always violence and aggression and I think that they find that to be acceptable behaviour.”*

SMT member 2 (school B) explained how fear of violence can lead to victims being meek with the result that they just give in, in the face of adversity, *“Eh...media as well plays a role because you watching lots of violence on television and you try to do the same thing at school and you also see the benefits of this...when people are scared, they give in. So the fact that the learner gives in... spurs the bully on even more!* The principal of school D agreed with this assertion and blamed the media for the violent behaviour displayed by learners in schools: *“And a lot of this bullying comes from the media...where there is violence in the media and there are no consequences for this violence.”* Teacher 4 (school B) described how listening to rappers (singers) can encourage learners to make derogatory remarks and swear at innocent people by emulating what they say:

*Especially the males, they use certain swear words on other learners and they get these words, I’m told, from the popular rappers that are out there so they call each other the “N-word” because they are getting it from the songs. And they not afraid of, for example, males referring to females as “bitches” or “whores” and things like that.*

From the participants responses reported above, it is clear that their perceptions concurred with *Skinner’s behavioural theory* as cited in section 2.2.2 which purports that all human behaviour, including violent behaviour, is learnt through interactions with the social environment including the media. Brown and Tierney (2011:453) as cited in section 3.5.1.3 support this theory by stating that research over several decades has consistently established that exposure to media violence causes an increase in violent behaviour.



Accordingly, Miller and Lowen (2012:23) assert that the graphic, violent and often irresponsible nature of much of today's media and the effect it has on children is becoming a matter of grave concern to many as images of violence is seen as a justification for violent and abusive behaviour in real-life relationships.

While it is evident from the above findings that the influence at the family level is substantial in respect of bullying perpetration, the influence at the school level is equally significant and must be given due consideration.

### **5.3.2.2 Influence at school level: “The foremost problem here is peer pressure!”**

An overwhelming number of participants in the study attributed the problem of bullying to be influenced at the school level. Peer pressure, age cohort, power and attention, low self-esteem, poor performance, physical appearance, racism, anger and jealousy and retribution were some of the major reasons advanced by most participants for the factors contributing to bullying in secondary schools.

#### **(a) Peer pressure**

SMT member 1 (school B) highlighted the problem of peer pressure and the need to belong to a group as a critical factor in advancing bullying in schools, *“I think the foremost problem here is peer pressure! I think that is the number one cause because as we were discussing early on...the more senior learners tend to look at the smaller learners as easy targets...to basically get to them.”*

This view was supported by learner 3 (school A) when he said:

*I think bullying...let's say I come from a family...we are coming to school from different backgrounds. Then I find myself in the wrong group...doing the wrong things. Then because of peer pressure, they are forcing me to do things...that can cause bullying...peer pressure.*

The principal (school C) elaborated on how bullies recruit other learners so that they become bullies too in order to expand the group:

*Peer pressure could be a big influence...you know... you want children who want to be identified to be like that and when you don't join them there is going to be a problem. So here are a few bullies who create more bullies in the school and when the others join the central guys, then there is a big group of bullies. So peer pressure is an important contributory factor.*

Learner 6 (school C) added, *“He could become a bully himself and form a bigger group...and they become stronger and they bring more kids to join them and then it goes out of control with gangs and gangsterism and all that.”*

Learner 4 (school B) was of the opinion that learners join groups because they want to become popular and be in a position of power, which will enable them to instil fear in others:

*Eh...peer pressure...that in order for you to become famous, maybe you’ll have to join a group in school and then they’ll tell you to do stuff like take lunch money from this kid here and you can be part of the group and become popular in school...and you feel good about yourself...you are well known and the people are scared of you...and when people are scared of you, you tend to develop a good self-esteem about yourself.*

The above comments support the *homophily theory* advocated by Cairns and Cairns (1994), as cited in section 1.3, which suggests that learners in late elementary school through early high school tend to hang out or befriend peers who are similar to them in attitudes, interests, and behaviours. This view is corroborated by Nishina (in Dupper 2004:35), as discussed in section 3.5.1.2, which explains that early adolescence is the life stage marked by puberty as well as the stage where social status and peer affiliation become important. The findings also concur with *Moffit’s attraction theory* as discussed in sections 1.3 and 2.2.6 which posits that young adolescents become attracted to other youth who possess characteristics that reflect independence (for example, delinquency, aggression, disobedience) and are less attracted to those who possess characteristics more descriptive of childhood (such as, compliance and obedience). Miller and Lowen (2012:24) as cited in section 3.5.1.2, share similar sentiments by stating that learners who are made to believe that violence and aggression are acceptable, may become vulnerable to low self-esteem and succumb to peer pressure, which increases their chances of becoming bullies.

Apart from peer pressure, another factor that plays a noteworthy role in learners exhibiting coercive bullying behaviour in schools is the learners’ need for power and attention.

#### **(b) Power and attention**

Teacher 1 (school A) articulated the main reason why learners bully other learners in school: *“At times, they want to get famous...be a hero. By trying to extort money from the young*

ones and take their food...others just praise them by applauding them. So they want attention...that's it...they want attention." Learner 3 (school C) agreed with Teacher 1 (school A), by stating that it's all about gaining attention, being popular, and seeking power in school:

*I think that bullies are actually looking for attention. They want to be popular in school with everyone. They call them "cheese-boys" yes...they want a lot of girlfriends; they want girls to notice them. They just love attention, they want to feel superior, and they want to be in a position of power.*

Similar views were shared by SMT member 3 (school E) when she stated, "Yes, so I think most of the learners here are neglected and they are undermined. They lack attention so they bully to gain attention." Learner 2 (school A) concurred with this assertion, "Eh...I think what causes bullying is that we go out to get attention- we want to belong...like I have to hit somebody to be known in school. So I have to make people scared of me to get the attention." Learner 4 (school B) felt that learners who are abused seek out ways to draw attention to themselves, "Maybe the child is abused at home and tends to bully other children in school because they want attention and stuff...and they use that to forget what's happening to them at home by bullying other kids at school."

From the participants responses reported above, it is clear that their perceptions concurred with the *attachment theory* advocated by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (1991) as cited in section 2.2.1 which purports that the quality of attachment to parents and caregivers influences the development of relationships. The theory emphasises that children of sensitive mothers tended to be securely attached, whereas, children of less sensitive mothers were more likely to be classified as insecure. Hence, insecure attachment, as discussed in section 2.2.1, may result in an individual responding to others with higher than expected levels bullying behaviour to gain attention and a feeling of superiority over others (Monks *et al.* 2009:146).

Additionally, *Hawley's dominance theory*, as cited in section 2.2.5 provides an explanation to the above assertions by maintaining that children use aggression against weaker children to gain a higher socio-metric status among peers. Swearer *et al.* (2009:19) as discussed in section 2.2.5 point out that bullying is often used to establish control over other children and directly impacts the roles that children and adolescents assume with the peer group.

While the above assertions confirm the bullies need to acquire power, attention and a feeling of superiority over other learners, the bully's age is a crucial factor that allows him or her to be dominant over other learners.

### **(c) Age cohort**

The majority of the management personnel and teachers interviewed focussed on the age cohort of the learner as being one of the most predominant factors contributing to bullying in schools.

Accordingly, the principal of school C pointed out:

*I think that many of the incidences that happen in school are related to the age factor of our learners. Well, you know the age factor is something the Department of Education has not controlled. We have bullying in grade 8 classes where you have a learner who is older, for example, you might have a learner who is 18 years old and he is with a learner who is 13 years old...and you know there's no policy on age as such. In the past, if you were 18, you would have most probably left school by then.*

Similar sentiments were expressed by SMT member 3 (School D) who remarked:

*Some of the learners are repeating grades. You find that the learner who is repeating the grade, he sits with learners in grade 6 when he supposed to be in grade 7. He feels that he knows the system and he tries to dictate to these youngsters...and bully them around.*

Teacher 3 (school C) complained about the increasing number of over-age and troublesome learners recruited to the school from other schools:

*Invariably they are too old to be in school. You get people who are over-age, you get people who are 18 years old in grade 8...we even have a 21-year-old in grade 12. So to increase the roll of the school, we are filling the classrooms up with over-age learners...learners who are expelled from other schools suddenly have a space in this school...so the problem is exported from other schools to our school.*

SMT member 1 (school C) blamed the existence of over-age learners in certain grades because of the Department of Education's Policy on progression:

*I would blame it on the system...our education system. You know saying that a learner must be progressed because of years in the phase...the learner cannot read, the learner cannot write. So you are frustrating the learner...you are conducting a lesson here, some of the learners are reading...he cannot read. When it's time to write the work, he cannot write. So the child is frustrated but the child has*

*progressed because he spent so many years in grade 7. So they have no choice...4 years in the phase...so he is progressed because of the number of years in the phase.*

The above findings concur with *Hawley's dominance theory*, as cited in section 2.2.5 which provides an explanation to the above assertions by maintaining that children use aggression against weaker children to attain a higher socio-metric status among peers. Nicol (2007:891) validates this point in section 2.2.5 by confirming that in the dominance theory, societies and groups are categorised into several ranks of dominance. Accordingly, Swearer *et al.* (2009:19) as discussed in section 2.2.5 point out that bullying is often used to establish control over other children and directly impacts the roles that children and adolescents assume within their classroom environments and within the peer group. Bullies who are usually older and physically stronger seek hierarchy enhancing roles, are more socially dominance-orientated, favour inequality, and resist fairness.

Apart from the age factor, many learners are bullied because of their physical attributes such as weight, size, disability and appearance.

#### **(d) Physical attributes**

Some participants were of the view that the physical attributes of a child actually determines whether or not he would be a victim of bullying.

Accordingly, the principal of school B pointed out:

*The learners who are pious, who are fragile, who appear to be weak in structure and stature...they are the ones who sometimes fall victim to these bullies. And they suffer...you know we've seen learners who come to the office and shed tears okay...saying that they didn't ever expect that in an environment like this that the children would be such victims.*

This view was shared by teacher 3 (school A) who stated:

*I actually think...what I've noticed sometimes is that the child ...there is something very different and noticeable about the child...like a child who is slightly overweight or has a physical disability. And someone makes a remark and maybe it will affect them a lot.*

Corresponding views were shared by teacher 2 (school A), *“Maybe the child is being bullied in terms of the weight...this can result in the child starving herself trying to shape-up then the child gets different diseases like anorexia and all those things.”*

SMT member 3 (school B) agreed with this viewpoint by suggesting, *“And another thing is they bully each other according to how...how they look like... maybe your eye has a problem...all those things...physical appearance...for them they are young, what they see it is a joke.”*

The above findings concur with the *social categorisation theory* cited in section 2.2.10, where Tajfel and Turner (1979:40) explain the categorisation of people according to similar and dissimilar qualities and attributes. The *social categorisation theory*, conceives categorisations as cognitive tools that segment, classify and order the social environment and people. Hogg *et al.* (1995:261) validates the theory by pointing out that the categorisation of people into in-group and out-group defines people’s social identity and accentuates their perceived similarity to people’s cognitive representation of the defining features of the group (see section 2.2.10). However, this intergroup categorisation leads to in-group favouritism and discrimination against the out-group, in this instance, on the basis of physical features and characteristics. Thus, Trepte (2006:258) points out that the superiority of the in-group (bullies) is compared with the inferiority of the out-group (victims) in subjective ways (see section 2.2.10). Furthermore, Craven *et al.* (2007:4) as cited in section 1.2, confirms that vulnerable children targeted by bullies have a disability, wear glasses, weigh more than their peers, or just look physically weak or unattractive.

In addition to the above factors that contribute to bullying perpetration, anger and jealousy plays an important role in bullies exhibiting anti-social behaviour. According to (Singh & Steyn 2014:83), as cited in section 3.5.2.3, bullies who have a difficult temperament are generally moody and display heightened irritability and react strongly to the slightest provocation.

#### **(e) Anger and jealousy**

Learners from all five secondary schools in the survey were in agreement that anger and jealousy were factors that contributed to bullying perpetration in their schools. Learner 4

(school A) related how bullies lash out in anger when they are frustrated by their personal circumstances:

*So the only way to get rid of that anger is by taking it out on someone else. And he won't take it out on someone he's age, he'll go to someone younger than him...even if they are of the same age...one is weaker so he knows "okay I could do anything to him.*

Learner 2 (school B) expressed similar sentiments when he stated:

*Sometimes you...like hate the world for some reason...some way I donno...but then for some reason you hate the world. Like you taking this anger out on every one...like every one you come across, you bully them...you feel the urge to be like aggressive on them and get them to do what you want and ya...just to be dominant on people.*

While bullies may want to express their anger by lashing out at others, the reverse is also true where the victim may want to avenge their humiliation by expressing anger towards the bully as learner 5 (school E) pointed out:

*I believe that em... anger would be another consequence of bullying because once somebody is bullying another one, you get angry. It's something...you just get to the point where it just breaks you and you feel that maybe you should avenge yourself. At all times, they try by all means to make sure that once they embarrass you, they want the whole school to recognise what they've done. So someone who is bullied may want to avenge that also in front of everyone.*

Data from the transcripts have shown that people bully others because of a deep-seated jealousy they may have of the other person because he or she is more intelligent or performs better than them as learner 3 (school D) confirmed:

*Eh...other causes of bullying...let us say a learner has passed and some of the learners are very jealous of that learner...that particular learner...he is a clever learner. He or she is top of the class, top of the grade... all of the grades even to matric. If you looking at the results, you can see the learner in grade 10 or 11 is tops. So learners they can be jealous...they can bully that child.*

This assertion was corroborated by learner 2 (school C) who said:

*First of all its jealousy because sometimes you tell yourself that okay "I own everything!" like "I'm more powerful than everyone." And then suddenly you find that someone is like capable of doing something you cannot do...then you try in every way to bring that person down.*

A similar view was expressed by learner 6 (school D) when he stated: *“I think its jealousy. When a certain person in your class gets a high position, maybe a class monitor, some people just try harder to make the educators see that you are weak.”*

The above comments are in line with *Beck’s cognitive theory of anger* (1999) as cited in sections 1.3 and 2.2.12 which confirms that strong emotions result in negative phenomenological experiences that exist on a continuum in which the frequency, intensity and duration of the experience often leads to impairment in the cognitive processes. Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones (2004:107) validate this theory by stating that anger is viewed as a syndrome of relatively specific feelings, cognitions, and physiological reactions linked associatively with an urge to injure some target.

In addition to anger and jealousy, another contributory factor to bullying perpetration in schools is retribution- when a learner wants to avenge the wrong that was done to him or her by another learner.

#### **(f) Retribution**

The interview transcripts demonstrate that many participants have viewed retribution as a significant contributory factor to bullying as learner 2 (school A) contends:

*You know in high school I think they do it because it was done to them too. Every year they bully, they don’t only bully the grade 8 and 9 but sometimes the grade 10 as well. They like to try to stand up to them...there is a need...any need actually, you can’t say only for money, maybe a need for lunch...maybe you hungry, you may need to...shine in class or something. Like this cool guy, wants to make people do what he wants them to do. So like I said in high school...they do it because it was done to them.*

The principal of school D mentioned that bullies bully others because they have been hurt themselves and they bully back as a defence mechanism:

*I think sometimes it’s deliberately done...they know what they’re doing because they’ve been hurt themselves. As with the case of cyber-bullying, the incident with the girls I mentioned before...the one cursed the other girl, and she was now hurt and she called the other girl a slut and things like that. It was a revenge attack. She obviously knew what she was doing and she used it as a weapon in her defence.*

Learner 3 (school C) stated that she bullied back because she wanted to avenge the attacks made on her by the bullies:



*You know... I bullied them. The reason why I did that was because I was bullied by them. They said that I was "fat", "I looked like a pig!" So I just watched them and acted like I didn't care. And then I showed them who I was. I caught them by their (hushed tone)... "balls" and gave it to them! I wanted to show them that I was powerful and after that, I started bullying everyone.*

The participant's perceptions concurred with the *general strain theory* advocated by Agnew (1992), cited in section 1.3 and 2.2.8, which explains how stress or strain experienced by an individual can manifest itself in problematic emotions that lead to deviant behaviour. The theory proposes that strain creates negative emotions in individuals such as anger, anxiety, and depression, which in turn, influences delinquency and has a significant positive effect on bullying. Zavala and Spohn (2013:9) as discussed in section 2.2.8, concur with this assertion by stating that strain, stress, irritation or intense anger may potentially lead to deviant behaviour.

While it is evident from the above findings that the influence at the school level contributes considerably to bullying perpetration at schools, the importance of the influence at the community level should not be underestimated.

### **5.3.2.3 Influence at the community level: *"They come from that violent environment."***

Participants from schools A, B, C and E were of the opinion that bullying was strongly influenced at the community level. The absence of after-school programmes and a lack of facilities, particularly in rural communities, have misdirected youngsters into engaging in other destructive vices, albeit forming gangs and indulging in drugs and alcohol, to keep themselves occupied.

#### **(a) The environment**

The principal of school A confirmed that the environment the child comes from significantly influences his behaviour, *"It could also be the case of the environment that they come from- of late we have also been exposed to gangsters and they would then take the same attitude of gangsterism to school and would want to come in and ...and practice that."*

This view was affirmed by the principal of school E who stated:

*Ya...sometimes you find that the learner himself bullies others, he comes from the environment where there is no discipline at all eh...learners do whatever...and*

*sometimes we don't know whether they learn it from their parents...the environment...the society where they come from but it's there...ya.*

Teacher 2 (school B) held a strong belief that the child's behaviour in school is a reflection of the community from which he hails:

*Sir, I think they bring everything from home...what we have in the community is what we are seeing in the school. Because to them when you explain to the child that's not the way to behave, they look at you like "Are you for real! This is what we are seeing, this is how we live in ...our community.*

A similar view was confirmed by teacher 3 (school E) when she stated, *"Yes, there may be people in the community who are influencing the learners so that he or she can do the wrong thing...you know environment and community influence...they teach them how to steal, how to use drugs and so on."*

The above findings concur with the *differential association theory* advocated by Edwin Sutherland (1939) as cited in sections 1.3 and 2.2.7, which postulates that bullying behaviour is most likely the result of the association of children with delinquent environments. Valois *et al* (2002:459) as discussed in section 1.3 support this theory by suggesting that adults in the community involved in crime and violence, racial prejudice in the neighbourhood, and the brazen flouting of the law by aggressive and violent members of the community, promote a culture of aggression, violence and lawlessness among youth.

In addition to the above, Swearer *et al.* (2009:34) contend that bullying is strongly associated with both alcohol and drug use, and according to Ramarola and Joyce (2014:11), as cited in section 3.5.1.3, represents one of the biggest public health problems in the world today.

### **(b) Drugs and alcohol**

An overwhelming number of participants attested to the prevalence of drugs and alcohol in their communities, which is having a devastating effect on the lives of children and contributing significantly to disruptive, coercive behaviour. Principals, SMT members, teachers and learners of all five secondary schools confirmed the existence and consumption of drugs and alcohol in their schools.

The principal of school B was vocal about the prevalence of drugs and alcohol in his school:

*Yes, you see our learners have not been spared of the latest drugs that is, you know, prevalent in the urban areas...whoonga comes to mind. And yes my learners have been victims of that as well and under the influences of these intoxicating beverages...okay and eh...eh...drugs that you know manifest themselves in different ways...whoonga and the like you find that that governs the type of behaviour these bullies eventually display. Yes, I would say drugs do play a big role in my school.*

The principal of school E alluded to the fact that drugs and alcohol are a major problem facing communities and schools today:

*You cannot run away from the fact that our society is infected with these social ills like for instance abuse of drugs, alcohol and such. For instance, one of the three learners I talk about from the Umgababa area, one of them indulged in drugs and even alcohol. Ya...there are also taverns around, although they are not close to the school. When learners pass from their houses to the school, they pass the taverns on the way. Ya...so alcohol and drugs have a serious impact and influences what we are.*

Members of the SMT (school E) highlighted the damaging effect of drugs and alcohol on learners who come from poor backgrounds and broken families. SMT member 1 (school E) had this to say, "As I said, some of the learners are living on their own. Then they take drugs...that is the cause, the real cause of bullying because drugs can make a child feel like he's bigger than the others and he can do anything to them." SMT member 3 (school E) continued, "Yes...besides drugs, others are taking alcohol. There are drugs like...inside the muffins. And the children who drink alcohol, they bring it from home. And you find that the learners who take alcohol are learners who are coming from poor families."

Teacher 4 (school C) complained about the problem of drugs at her school:

*I think a lot of children that are on drugs bully other children for money because they don't have it. They steal from the bags of the children or they bully them out of what they have. Lots of children are on drugs here and when they are in class, they don't want to do anything. While you are teaching, they will just walk out. Ya you know...drugs here are dagga, whoonga...ya.*

Teacher 6 (school E) expressed dismay about the effect drug use has on teaching and learning in the classroom:

*The other factor is drugs...where the learners use drugs. They come to class usually after break, hey...you can't teach them and you can't control them because they are using drugs and try to bully other learners especially the girls. Here in the rural areas the drugs they use is 'sangu' which is dagga. And there is also 'whoonga' here.*

Teacher 4 (school E) added, *“And also alcohol. Whenever they make ‘Zulu beer’ at home ...eh...eh ‘African beer’...they come with it to school and they hide it on the ground and take it during break time.”*

Learners 6 (school B) validated that the use of illegal substances fuels bullying among learners, *“In some cases it’s the substances...alcohol and drugs eh...which controls their mind. They eventually do something they not even thinking about at the time they’re doing it. So I’d say substances contribute to bullying in a big way.”* Learner 1 (school E) agreed with learner 6 (school B) when he stated, *“And the other thing is, it’s drugs and substance abuse. Like I told you those bullies who were bullying me...I found out that they were smoking, drinking...doing lot of other stuff.”*

The above perceptions concurs with *Bandura’s social learning theory* as cited in section 1.3 and 2.2.3 which purport that children learn appropriate and inappropriate interactions through observing significant others in the media and environment such as abusive caregivers, and deviant and anti-social peers. Swearer *et al.* (2009:34) as discussed in section 3.5.1.3 support this theory when they contend that bullying is strongly associated with both alcohol and drug use. Ramarola and Joyce (2014:12) also share similar views, as cited in 3.5.1.3, when they point out that drugs serve as a catalyst for a large number of violent crimes committed by bullies, while drug dealing exhibits an organised dimension and crimes are often committed by drug addicts for the sake of satisfying their expensive addictions. Additionally, Breslow and Smothers (2004:6) confirm that indulging in alcohol and drugs produces psychomotor stimulatory effects that lead to an increase in sensation seeking, impulsivity, confrontational and provocative behaviour.

Apart from environmental factor, and drugs and alcohol abuse, the findings of the survey confirm that cultural background and religion contribute significantly in promoting bullying behaviour in schools.

### **(c) Cultural background and religion**

Data from the transcripts revealed that the learners’ cultural background and religious beliefs were significant contributory factors to bullying behaviour in secondary schools, particularly in rural schools.

The circuit manager (the Mthunzini Circuit) confirmed that cultural background plays a critical role in bullying perpetration:

*And the way they are brought up...our cultural background...we are used to corporal punishment, verbal punishment and the child practises what he learns from his home and school. In our cultural background especially the mono-cultural school...you will find that over the weekend they will be having a function and they would drink Zulu beer. All they will talk about is fighting...they (learners) see it happening...they fight and to them it's normal. When they come to school they want to practise the same thing they see happening at their respective places. And if someone has died...like at (High School X) one of my school's here, it's a remote rural school...all people here they like stick-fighting, drinking Zulu beer when they have rituals and traditional weddings...So when the other group won the fight at the function, they come to school...they want to settle the fight at school.*

The circuit manager also highlighted the problem of bullying that takes place on religious lines because the community is divided in their religious beliefs:

*Of late I've realised that fighting over religion...like at (High School Y) the community is divided in two...there are Nazareths and Christians...so each want to dominate the area...so they want to take this to school too. So the contextual factors around the school create problems for the school.*

The above assertions concur with the *social categorisation theory* of Tajfel and Turner (1979:40) as cited in section 2.2.10 and which entails the categorization of people into groups where people categorise themselves with similar others, and contrast this category against those that are dissimilar. Trepte (2006:257) supports this theory by stating that based on group categorisation, differences between categories (interclass differences) are accentuated and differences between members within the same category (intraclass differences) are underestimated or restrained. Accordingly, Tajfel and Turner (1979:38) confirm that the mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups (in-group and out-group) is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination that results in intergroup discord.

From the participant responses above it is clearly evident that the contributory factors to bullying behaviour are many and occur at the family, school and community levels. These factors have a significant impact on all the stakeholders of the school system, particularly the principal, SMT, teachers and learners of the school.

### **5.3.3 THE IMPACT OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR: “The biggest consequence is that bullying reduces a person’s self-esteem.”**

The findings from the interviews confirmed that bullying behaviour is damaging to the morale and self-esteem of individuals who are victims of it and highly destructive to the day-to-day functioning of secondary schools. Principals, SMT members, teachers and learners expressed deep concern about the impact of bullying in their schools. The toxic nature of bullying is such that it has a devastating effect on the ethos of the school and impacts negatively on the performance of learners, teachers and the management of the school.

#### **5.3.3.1 The impact of bullying on Learners: “He will have a fear of coming to school, fear of being around people.”**

A number of participants in the study agreed that one of the most noticeable effects of bullying was the sheer fear it invoked amongst learners in the school. Additionally, low-self-esteem, depression, truancy, absenteeism, under-performance ill-health and criminality were some of the knock-on effects of bullying on vulnerable victims.

##### **(a) Stress, fear and anxiety**

Data from the interview transcripts confirmed that fear had a profound impact on the victims of bullying as the principal of school A pointed out:

*Eh...well it...it...it will always boil down to the fact that...if there is something that is not going down well with you in school...eh...you will have fear- fear of coming to school, fear of being around people and fear of just being yourself of course. So it leads to fear.*

Similar sentiments were expressed by Principal (School E) when he declared:

*It affects the learners especially those young ones who are being bullied. Sometimes you may find that the learner is even afraid to come to school and that makes the rate of absenteeism to be high. Eh...some of them you can hear from parents reporting that so and so is not well...he’s sick... and when you look at it closely, it might happen that his not sick but because of this bullying...he is running away because he is afraid of being bullied by this learner.*

SMT member 1 (school A) expressed the fear victims feel because they are unable to fight back:

*He will not want to come to school, he will not want to do his work, he will always be afraid because he doesn't know when they are going to bully him again. You will find out that other learners are busy playing together but he'll be standing there in the corner because he is so afraid to associate with the other learners because of these bullies. The children, they don't report these incidents of bullying...they don't because they are afraid of the bully because they will say 'if you report me, I'm coming for you...after school, I will get you'.*

Learner 2 (school E) stated that fear of a bully can lead to a person reaching a state of dejection and hopelessness:

*Every time someone is bullied, every time he sees the guy who bullied him, he becomes afraid. He just feels like he's not important anymore, he just don't feel loved anymore, doesn't feel like he's a person...the bully just makes him feel like nothing. He loses concentration over everything...just give up on life...gives up on his dreams.*

Swearer and Napolitano (2011:7), as cited in section 3.5.2.4, concur with the viewpoints expressed by the above participants when they pointed out that individuals involved in bullying and victimisation experience high levels of stress, fear, anxiety and other externalising behaviour. Maphalala (2014:33) expresses similar sentiments when he indicates that threats, intimidation and harassment engender fear which traumatises both educators and learners resulting in high rates of absenteeism and school avoidance. The above assertions support *Agnew's general strain theory* cited in section 1.3, which explains how stress or strain experienced by an individual can manifest itself in problematic emotions.

Apart from the stress, fear and anxiety, victims of bullying also suffer low self-esteem because of the constant humiliation and harassment. As Dosani (2008:116), cited in section 3.5.2.4 points out, the long-term effects of bullying and damaged self-belief have serious and far-reaching implications that may potentially lead to lowered self-confidence and acute mental health problems.

#### **(b) Self-esteem**

SMT member 2 (school B) highlighted the effect of bullying on a person's self-esteem:

*I think the biggest consequence is that it decreases the person's self-esteem. Many of our learners don't have a high self-esteem and bullying makes it even worse. When a learner gives a speech, then everyone's laughing...that to me is*

*bullying in a way... because they don't do it to everyone...they know who to do it to...criticising, making a noise and so forth. So it affects them quite a bit...and that's a sad thing because none of us will ever know what the child is going through, more especially because they fear to come and speak about it. But I think the biggest thing about bullying is that it reduces you to feel like you nothing.*

SMT member 1 (school B) concurred:

*Basically we are talking about the learner morale...the child's morale drops completely. The child basically increases fear in him...the child becomes more anxious...the child becomes withdrawn and 90% of the time the child sits in the class and is in a different world.*

Teacher 7 (school A) pointed out that low self-esteem can have a harmful effect on individuals in the long term:

*It is going to create very passive and reserved adults. It could lead to these learners eventually not being able to exert their thoughts and feelings in their adult life. And also...even a child with potential will be limited because of the fear...because the moment you draw attention to classroom...put yourself out there to be victimised and to limit their potential.*

Learner 1 (school B) spoke of the crushing psychological impact bullying has on a person's self-worth:

*Bullying...bullying changes the inner voice inside you...it kind of squashes you...it forces you...undermines your confidence...your core system, everything gets ruined...destroyed. It actually destroys the 'whole you' the future you had, the vision...everything in one action seems useless because no one believes in you...because they're scaring you...anyone can do whatever they want to you because nobody cares what you feel.*

The above expositions confirm that stress and strain results in the victims of bullying suffering from low self-esteem. This concurs with *Agnew's general strain theory* as cited in sections 1.3 and 2.2.8, which posits that several strains and stressors experienced by individuals in the environment increase the likelihood of negative emotions of fear, anger, anxiety, humiliation and low self-esteem being invoked that result in deviant behaviour. The experience of strain or mistreatment from others may foster negative emotionality and low constraint and this effectively increases the likelihood that individuals will perceive events as aversive or stressful and thereby experience low self-esteem.

Besides the victims suffering from low self-esteem, absenteeism and truancy resulting from bullying perpetration can lead to achievement difficulties among victims. Maphalala



(2014:32) contends in section 3.5.2.2 that when learners do not feel safe at school, they resort to truancy and their academic performance is adversely affected as a result.

### **(c) Absenteeism, truancy and performance**

The interview transcripts validate the high rates of absenteeism in schools because of bullying behaviour amongst learners.

The principal of school C had this to say:

*Absenteeism is a problem. Sometimes the learners themselves are scared of the bullies in class...so sometimes the learner's attendance gets affected. So when children are absent for many days, it is maybe because they are being bullied in school. And their progress gets affected and their performance also drops.*

Similar views were expressed by SMT member 3 (school B) who confirmed, "It also stimulates absenteeism, a child comes to school today, tomorrow he doesn't come... and so the rate of absenteeism goes up."

With the high rate of absenteeism, learner performance is adversely affected as SMT member 1 (school B) attested:

*The child's response in the class is reduced...okay... the child's mental capacity in the class is also reduced. There is no longer that vigour in him or her to move forward...So basically character-wise in general, the performance of the learner will be affected.*

SMT member 2 (school D) concurred by stating:

*Their performance is affected...and their love of school is diminished because they are afraid. It affects their love for school...as maam said it increases their absenteeism on the side of the victim. And ya...if you are stressed you know...you can't perform well in schoolwork. You can find that a learner was doing very well, and now he is not doing well in his tests. Only to find that he is stressed by this someone who is bullying him.*

Teacher 4 (school B) related an incident of how a bright learner's performance dropped substantially after he was bullied:

*I think it affects the way a learner performs. I had a poor learner, he was actually a very good learner at the beginning of the year and when it came towards the end of the year, he was not doing his work...his book was not up-to-date...and I think this year he actually dropped out of school. He's no longer in the grade 9 class because I always used to talk to him because he's such a bright learner- now*

*he's no longer there. So I dunno whether it's because he was being picked on by other learners that he left but I noticed that he's school performance dropped drastically because he stopped doing the work...because constantly learners were taking his book or pulling something from his bag. So I think it affects the learner's performance in school.*

Principals, SMT members and teachers were vocal about the devastating effects of bullying on victims where the frustration levels become so high that they engage in anti-social behaviours such as truancy as the principal of school B contended: *"It also brings about the element of delinquency....where they stay away from school... they play truant and sometimes it takes us managers a long time to come to the root of the problem."*

SMT member 3 (school E) highlighted the negative effect bullying had on the victims to the extent that they took transfer to other schools and eventually dropped out of school because they couldn't handle the humiliation, *"This can go as far as the victim's parents deciding to take the child out from the school. They keep on changing schools. They even drop out from school. They get frustrated with the violence. And eventually, they get fed up and drop out of school."*

Learner 4 (school C) related an incident of how pressured he was to get transferred because of how badly the bullying had affected him:

*I actually attempted getting away from school...I tried ways of getting transferred and I wouldn't tell my mum what's actually wrong...I've got a single parent...not much my mum could do with regard to druggies and getting involved in druggies would actually result in bloodshed so best thing I can do is find a way of getting out of this school. And up until the very end, my mum actually sat me down and asked me 'what's wrong...why the sudden pressure to leave the school?' Then that's when I actually spoke...and said it's because of such things I'm facing at school.*

From the participant's perceptions above, it is clear that bullying results in truancy, high rates of absenteeism, transfers to other schools and eventual drop-outs. Maphalala (2014:29) as cited in 3.5.2, points out that recent studies reveal that school violence, and bullying, in particular, leads to drug abuse, truancy, school dropouts, psychological problems, and poor academic adjustment. Joyce and Mmankoko (2014:19), as cited in section 3.5.2.1, subscribed to this viewpoint by asserting that violence in schools often results in lower academic achievement. Additionally, and as Maphalala (2014:32) attests,

learners who feel unsafe resort to truancy and may eventually dropout of school (see section 3.5.2.2).

In addition to learners suffering achievement difficulties as a result of bullying, they may also become seriously ill, suffer severe depression and ultimately consider suicide. Dibelte (2008:7), as cited in section 3.5.2.5, confirms that the high levels of stress caused by school-based violence can result in victims becoming depressed to the extent that they absent themselves from school for days on end because of ill-health and face an increased suicide risk (Fried & Sosland 2011:14).

#### **(d) Depression, ill-health and suicide**

A number of participants expressed concern about the negative effect stress and depression had on victims and how this eventually led to ill-health and sometimes suicide.

The principal of school B articulated this when he declared:

*Obviously it has an impact on their self-esteem and when you chat to them you can actually see that they are depressed...they are stressed out and eh...you know this type of problem eh...has been there for some time in my school I would say and the junior learners are the ones who are mostly the victims. The bully instils such fear in these victims that the victims don't want to even speak up...they are just quiet and they suffer in silence.*

This view was shared by learner 4 (school B) who added:

*You change as a person, you find that a child that was once a child that was active at home, outspoken appears to be afraid now, loses self-esteem and may develop depression and eventually the child becomes suicidal...and suicide causes a lot of pain in your family.*

SMT member 2 (school A) expressed concern about the serious consequences of bullying on victims:

*And also they can become very sick because of these other learners who are bullying them and hitting them and causing the problems. And due to this sickness, they feel this anxiety inside them. And sometimes they even become suicidal –they consider committing suicide because they feel worthless and they look at life as worthless -like kill themselves. You find that they try drinking, overdosing medication or like scratching their neck with a sharp object so that they bleed to death if the problem is not identified earlier.*

Learner 1 (school C) expressed similar sentiments when he insisted: *“The consequences of bullying are very, very big. I know a story about somebody who actually committed suicide because of bullying...that is how serious the problem is.”*

The above findings concur with the views of Baldry (in De Wet 2005:708) as cited in section 3.5.2.5 who confirmed that victims of bullying suffered a series of somatic complaints, including headaches and stomach aches because of the immense stress associated with it. Furthermore, Miller and Lowen (2012:52) as discussed in section 3.5.2.7, contend that the victims of bullying are significantly more likely to become involved in self-destructive behaviours because of their depressive state and resort to cutting themselves (with a sharp object) to relieve themselves of their suffering and pain. Furthermore, as cited in section 3.5.2.7 some victims are unable to cope with the incessant harassment and deep emotional pain, become socially withdrawn, sedentary, physically weak, depressed and ultimately resort to taking their own lives (Shaffer & Kipp 2010:572).

Apart from the severe impact of bullying on learners, teachers have also been subjected to the nefarious and negative impact of bullying in schools not only suffering apprehension and humiliation but also becoming severely affected by the loss of teaching time and the inability to cope with the problem because of the lack of training.

### **5.3.3.2 The impact of bullying on teachers: *“They are absent because they feel nothing is being done to assist them.”***

Bullying not only creates an unconstructive classroom climate, but by its very violent nature, also instils fear, anxiety, undue stress and frustration among teachers. The circuit manager, principals and teachers from the five secondary schools lamented the acerbic effect bullying had on teaching and learning at schools.

#### **(a) Apprehension and humiliation**

The circuit manager expressed his concern at the severe impact bullying had on principals and teachers at schools:

*In some cases principals are threatened...they are threatened with knives and guns. You know when violent incidents occur in school the poor principal is supposed to play the role of a police, a magistrate, is a social worker, a peace officer...and all this is overwhelming... there is no support from the outside...very*

*frustrating ...it has a great, great effect. Most of the teachers are resigning, some teachers are asking for transfers...they find it very difficult. It impacts negatively because in some cases when we intervene as circuit, we ask for the school to close...we stop teaching for the situation to settle or the dust to settle down. And that affects our education dearly...it's costing the Department of Education a lot. And in terms of absenteeism...the learners and educators...they don't come to school.*

The comments made by the principals of school A, C and E highlight the plight of teachers when faced with the problem of bullying in schools:

The principal of school A spoke about the fear teachers experience because of bullying incidents:

*And as old as we are, it does affect us teachers in one way or the other because in some cases there are teachers who will be afraid to go to class. There are teachers who will not be in a position to present a lesson to the best of their potential because of this bullying ...we are now even afraid of the kids we are teaching in our classes.*

The principal of school C pointed out that young teachers feel particularly vulnerable in the class that comprises learners who are over-age:

*Some teachers experience a deep sense of apprehension and dread because some learners are big in size...they (teachers) come from university age 23 and some learners are 20...sometimes lady teachers feel insecure when they are in a high school classroom with learners who are 18 and 19 and they are afraid to provoke the learners because they are bigger in size. But you know we have learners in our school also who are bullies and don't want to learn...they sleep and when they see a teacher who is timid, they will take advantage of the teacher.*

In turn, the principal of school E highlighted the fact that bullying can be very humiliating to the teacher to the extent that he or she begins to lose faith in the teaching profession:

*And to educators to keep learners in their class who are bullies...really it's very demotivating. You find that a very energetic educator now loses that energy because he or she knows that every time he has to make a concerted effort to discipline these learners.*

The above expressions support Agnew's general strain theory cited in section 1.3 which explains how stress or strain experienced by an individual can manifest itself in problematic emotions. Agnew points out that several strains and stressors experienced by individuals in the environment increase the likelihood of negative emotions of fear, anxiety and humiliation. Maphalala (2014:33), as cited in 3.5.2, validates the theory by stating that

threats, intimidation and harassment engender fear that traumatises teachers resulting in high rates of absenteeism and school avoidance.

In addition to the apprehension and humiliation suffered by teachers at the hands of bullies, teachers also lose instruction time when they have to leave their classes to attend to bullying-related problems with parents and the school management in the office.

### **(b) Loss of instruction time**

Principals and teachers were unanimous in their declaration that a great deal of teaching time was lost as a result of the problem of bullying in the classrooms causing heightened frustration on the part of both teachers and learners. The principal of school A confirmed this when he stated that:

*On the side of the teachers of course, eh...eh... if you have kids that are being bullied...it means you have a problem of discipline. And in terms of class management you will need a lot of other strategies you can put in place otherwise a lot of time is lost in terms of teaching and learning- time to sort this bullying thing out instead of doing the core business which is teaching and learning.*

Likewise, the principal of school C expressed concern about the loss of teaching time and the problem of absenteeism amongst teachers as a result of bullying:

*Ya...bullying disturbs the discipline in the classroom because you know you have to spend your time and energy on this child. And then the majority of the class has a problem because they losing out on time and the lesson. So generally, contact time is lost when there are cases of bullying. Sometimes teachers get frustrated; they say 'I'm not getting anything out from these classes!' They take a couple of days off... so absenteeism is a problem.*

Bullies not only disrupt lessons but sometimes deliberately taunt the teachers so that they will react angrily as teacher 1 (school B) pointed out:

*As an educator in the classroom, you find that where there's incidence of bullying we find that it is not conducive to teaching. There is disruption...the bullies in a subtle way they also bully teachers by making comments or whistling or making a noise...just to like try to get the teacher to react in a way. Now, it's deliberate, it's calculated...so it affects teaching and learning.*

Sometimes bullying takes a violent turn which compromises the safety of both the teacher and learners in the classroom as teacher 4 (school C) confirmed, *"I think also it disrupts your classroom. And sometimes it does become very violent. I mean we've had a boy hitting*

*another boy in the presence of the teacher...throwing the desk around...and you are there...your own life is compromised.”*

From the participants' responses it becomes evident that their perceptions concur with *Dollards frustration-aggression theory* as cited in section 2.2.11, which states that frustration produces instigations to a number of different types of negative responses when people are frustrated by their personal negative circumstances; when they are blocked from reaching their desired goals. The loss of time in delivering the syllabus to learners as a result of time spent on attending to bullying-related problems creates heightened frustrations and anxiety on the part of teachers. Dill and Anderson (1995:361 validate this theory), as cited in 2.2.11, by viewing frustration as an unpleasant aversive stimulus that evokes negative emotions.

Data from the interview transcripts confirmed that teachers have not been trained at colleges and universities to manage bullying in schools, particularly at the level the problem has escalated to at the present time.

### **(c) Lack of training**

Participants expressed concern that teachers have not been trained to manage this type of problem because bullying has escalated to violent levels in schools:

The principal of school D was forthright in his comment:

*It's obviously highly disruptive in the lessons when this type of coercive behaviour is exhibited during lesson time. And I think teachers...they haven't had any specific training to cope with the problem. It's a pretty serious situation in schools at the moment.*

The lack of training amongst teachers to deal with the escalating disciplinary problems associated with bullying was highlighted by the principal of school B as follows:

*Let me start off with my staff they...they complain to the office about discipline. They sometimes fail to deal with the discipline of learners who are particularly under the influence (of alcohol). Teaching and learning in the class falls prey to this...eh...the teachers themselves...they get absent because they sometimes feel that nothing much is done by the office to assist them. They take days off...as much as sick leave is their right but eh...instances in my school they have sighted bullying...this anti-social behaviour is something they haven't been trained for at their campuses you know. So it is something that is new to them and they can't*

*come to terms easily with that...so they do suffer, their performance in the classroom suffers and there were stages when they complained of ill-health too.*

The researcher believes that the above assertions point to training is an important part of teacher development. The absence of appropriate training to curb the ongoing problems related to discipline in schools can further frustrate delivery of quality teaching and learning in schools. Importantly, the Department of Education in conjunction with SMTs need to intervene to provide relevant support to teachers so that they are adequately equipped to deal with the changing circumstances related to the intensity of bullying in schools.

Just as teachers are severely affected by bullying, the principal and the SMT are equally affected by the amount of time lost dealing with bullying-related cases and the impact the problem has on the general ethos of the school.

#### **5.3.3.3 The impact of bullying on school management: *“So we (principals) lose a lot of time chasing behind this type of problem.”***

The principals of schools A, B, C, D and E as well as the SMT members and teachers all agreed that a considerable amount of valuable management time was wasted trying to solve problems stemming from bullying incidences in schools.

The principal of school A commented as follows, *“Eh... on the management side, well we spend a lot of time dealing with these kids...we spend a lot of time dealing with them- time that could be used somewhere else but we sit in our offices and we try and address things”*.

In turn, the principal of school E concurred with principal (school A) when he added, *“Ya...you see it disturbs a lot...it affects management a lot because sometimes you have to sit every now and again...sitting for cases and that takes a lot of our time. Instead of focussing on our work, we are now doing something else...ya.”*

SMT member 1 school C) echoed similar sentiments to those expressed by the principals of schools A and E by asserting, *“You end up spending a lot of time solving cases. So it means now, your focus has to change. Yes...we end up spending a lot of energy, time and effort trying to sort out these cases.”*



Importantly, the principal of school B declared that all levels of management are affected by bullying, including parents themselves who are unable to handle the problem:

*So bullying has a ripple effect- from the teacher's right up to the management. Parents themselves sometimes say that they don't know how to deal with this- they themselves believe they are victims and they expect social agencies like the welfare bodies to assist and so forth.*

Teacher 6 (school C) expressed concern about the time wasted by parents who come from their place of employment to attend to problems at school:

*Well, I am going to talk from the parent's point of view. Firstly, the parent is afraid of his child's safety. Then, the parent will have to take time off from work to go and sort the matter out. And also the class is going to miss out...like when the teacher is going to leave the class to sort out the problem...basically there's a lot of time wastage...the syllabus is compromised.*

The above expressions confirm that in the absence of specialist interventions, the principals of schools are burdened with the added responsibility of dealing with bullying-related problems in schools instead of directing their energies to other pertinent administrative and management functions. Accordingly, *Dollard's frustration-aggression theory* as cited in section 2.2.11, points out that management personnel become frustrated by their personal negative circumstances because they are blocked from reaching their desired goals in terms of the progress and development of the school, both professionally and academically.

From the above comments by participants, it becomes evident that the problem of bullying, as it manifests itself in schools at the present time, cannot be addressed by individuals alone. Therefore, a collaborative culture needs to be created by the school where all stakeholders work purposefully and collectively as a team to develop skills and strategies to manage the problem (Steyn 2015:161).

#### **5.3.4 MANAGING BULLYING IN SCHOOLS: "All stakeholders need to work hand-in-hand on this issue."**

It is evident from the data from the transcripts that managing the problem of bullying in secondary schools is a serious challenge facing SMTs at present. While some schools have an effective system in place to manage the problem (and these schools have been found to be mostly in the minority), the majority of schools are confronted with a dearth of problems because of the absence of an effective code of conduct policy and a lack of support from the

various stakeholders of the school system. The role played by the Department of Education, the school, the parent and outside agencies (like the SAPS, Social Welfare Agencies, Religious organisations, to name a few) are of considerable importance in collectively addressing the problem of bullying in secondary schools.

The principal of school E pointed out: *“All stakeholders need to work hand-in-hand on this issue so that the problem is appropriately and effectively addressed.”* This significant comment was corroborated by the circuit manager of the Mthunzini Circuit when he stated, *“So bullying is there and the Department has to do something...it’s not only a one man’s exercise. Everybody must have an input- the NGOs (non-governmental organisations), parents, politicians, Department of Education- because teachers (and learners) are vulnerable.”*

#### **5.3.4.1 The role of the Department of Education: *“We need to get more psychologists, specialists... our own in each circuit.”***

Most participants in the study complained about the lack of support from the Department of Education in terms of the provision of counselling and psychological services to schools. The participants regretted the absence of guidance counsellors and school psychologists who previously played critically supportive roles in addressing learners with behavioural difficulties. However, even though the Department of Education has (of late) commenced with the establishment of service centres in the various Districts, the services are ineffective largely because the centres are severely understaffed and under-resourced making it extremely difficult for these personnel to reach all schools.

SMT member 1 (school C) commented about the problem of service centres: *“Because the service centres...they (personnel) also complain that they have so many schools and they can’t see all of them. We understand their plight because they are based there and they have so many schools to work with.”*

SMT member 3 (school C) continued:

*I think we need to get more psychologists and specialists, maybe if we have our own in each circuit...where he or she is going to deal with fewer schools. Rather than having one psychologist in the whole District. It’s not working. If there can be*

*more specialists, then we know that when we refer this child, maybe within a period of two weeks, you will be attended to.*

The principal of school B expressed concern about the absence of school psychologists who used to visit schools in the previous system to attend to problems referred to them by teachers and the management personnel of schools:

*Unfortunately...and I must emphasise this and I'm glad you have brought this to the fore that school psychologists are by and large absent...they are visibly absent in schools and hence their contribution is sadly being missed. It is lacking and had it been like it was in the previous dispensation where we had school psychologists attached to different schools, these types of problems were addressed in a much better way. But their absence...there's visible absence from the schools...I would say it's actually adding to the problems...you know our politicians say a lot of things...we gonno re-open colleges, have more school psychologists in training...I hope that during my tenure that this takes place but until such time that happens I cannot see how we can really address the problems the way it should be addressed.*

The principal of school E further elaborated on the diminishing role of psychologists in schools: “

*Ya...it's true in the past years we used to use psychologists...one of them was Mrs L...they were assisting a lot because when we used to find that learners...this one has got a serious problem of bullying...we used to report to them but off late they are not as active as before.*

The principal of school C also expressed disappointment with the poor response from school psychological services, “*You know...I can tell you now...there are learners who I referred to psychological services but because of financial constraints, they never come to school to deal with learners with serious challenges.*”

SMT member 2 (school C) recommended the employment of more specialised staff by the Department of Education to support schools that are experiencing behavioural problems:

*Yes, but I'd love to see those specialists going to each and every school. If you look at a problem, you refer your child to the specialist who is within the plant. But now when we are having a learner who has a psychological problem, we have to phone someone far away to come and deal with the issue. Meanwhile in the private schools, the psychologist is on the site. So I think that's what the department needs to do in terms of trying to solve the problem. So there is a need for greater recruitment of specialised personnel.*

Apart from school psychologists, the principal of school D highlighted the importance of having guidance counsellors (teachers) in every school:

*I think the department they did away with guidance counsellors. And it was one of the saddest things. The guidance part is extremely important and I think it's becoming far more important than we realise. But the department is not prepared to spend the money on it. It's becoming far more important because the children...the world's changing rapidly...and at a lot of the children aren't being helped to cope with it. We...more than a third of our children are not living with their parents...they are living with relatives. As I said it's a very important aspect...and it's not in terms of guidance in bullying alone, it's in terms of guidance of children having other social problems, pregnancies and things like that. And a lot of it comes back to guidance if it's done properly.*

The above comments by principals and SMT members confirm the absence of guidance and psychological services in schools and validate an urgent need for the Department of Education to re-instate guidance and counselling services and to improve on the delivery of psychological services to schools. According to Ajowi and Simatwa (2010:263-264), guidance and counselling services are essential elements in the discipline management of learners and necessary for the shaping and guiding of an individual's behaviour patterns in a way that the learner's basic psychological needs are satisfied through the medium of education. Additionally, Moola and Lazarus (2014:1) point out that the psycho-social aspects of the learner need to be attended to as well and thus, school psychologists play an invaluable role in establishing and implementing special programmes to address such issues as gangsterism, violence, substance abuse, bullying and child abuse in schools.

#### **5.3.4.2 The role of the circuit manager: “Empower your principals to deal with conflict.”**

According to the “Policy on the Organization, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts” Government Gazette: Notice 180 of 2012 of the National Department of Basic Education, one of the foremost roles of the circuit manager is to support school principals, SMTs and school governing bodies in the management, administration and governance of schools (RSA 2012). Circuit managers play a critically important role in ensuring that the schools that fall under their jurisdiction are properly functional. The professional guidance and assistance received by the principal from the circuit manager, will determine how confidently and enthusiastically the principal will manage the school.

The response to the question on what role he should play in addressing bullying in schools received the following comment:

*Well...eish! It's very difficult to come with one strategy here. As a circuit manager, you must empower your principal's on how to deal with conflict by actually...I usually tell my principal's that they must be...before any bullying or any violence can take place devise strategies whilst it's still at the simmering (starting) stage...it starts with simmering. And then if it goes and graduates from there, then you must have a committee to deal with it.*

The circuit manager went on to explain that whenever principals meetings are called by the circuit, the code of conduct and issues of school discipline like bullying must form an important part of the agenda of the meeting so that principals experiencing success with discipline in their schools can share strategies with principals experiencing problems so that they may be empowered to deal with the problems at their schools:

*So whenever we meet as principals, like today, I'll be meeting my principals discussing SGB functionality and the code of conduct. One of the items on the agenda I'm going to touch with them is bullying. And where is the strategy...there are so many strategies that you can use...it's just that we neglect these things...we let it graduate higher...we only address it when it is at our door. Address it while it is at the class teacher's level or as it is happening outside the schoolyard and treat it with a very harsh...firm hand to indicate that you don't want any bullying.*

The circuit manager suggested that principals ensure that a similar strategy be used when SGB meetings are held so that the matter can be addressed at all levels of governance:

*Even the governing body in their meetings, it must be a standing item...the code of conduct. Remember they are going to be the people who are going to exercise discipline; they are going to give sanctions to the learners. You (principal) report the child to the governing body...okay minor cases you can do it...but these critical ones must be addressed by the governing body.*

Furthermore, it becomes imperative that principals clearly differentiate between the responsibilities of the SGB from those of their own and that one should not over-lap with the other as the circuit manager suggested:

*Sometimes we (principals) take the powers from the governing body and we want to do it ourselves...we become the principal and the governing body. Yet the governing body must set a tribunal ...that is a disciplinary committee that will investigate, reprimand and issue sanctions. If you (principal) confiscate a knife,*

*hand it to the disciplinary committee to deal with, which I always advise principal's to do.*

However, despite the suggestions made in respect of the role circuit managers should play in supporting the school to manage the problem of bullying, the circuit manager did allude to the fact that bullying has escalated to levels that even circuit managers are finding extremely difficult to contend with at the present time:

*My suggestion as a circuit manager, the role that I play...is to keep on preaching (what should be done), keep on preaching...but we are not reaping any fruit because the problem is huge...it's more than circuit manager and principals alone. This is a societal challenge. Even the policies (code of conduct) are not feasible, they are not practical because teachers cannot stay in after school and supervise detention because they travel in car groups and don't live near the school. Well, they were designed for the elite...put it that way...but for the rural schools it's not working... we even not supposed to make the children clean the toilets because the parents will take us to task.*

Consequently, the circuit manager called for the intervention of the Department of Education to address the problem of bullying, which he firmly believes, is getting completely out of control in schools:

*They need to review the policies and empower them (teachers and principals). And I'm telling you, from now on it's going to be worse because the learners are becoming more and more and more violent bullies because they drink, they take drugs, there's gangsterism and we really have to capacitate and develop principals.*

The above findings concur with Murray (2010:7) who points out that in the area of discipline, the circuit manager ensures that District policies are upheld in schools, and works directly with principals on strategies for improving school and classroom management through the school's code of conduct policy. The circuit manager's job is to ensure that these policies are not only clearly articulated to the principal and his staff and management team, but also to parents and learners; to make certain that proper procedures and due process are respected in each particular case, in accordance with the relevant legislation, and in line with the District and Department Policy. Importantly, circuit managers need to emphasise continuing professional teacher development (CPTD) in their schools by engaging principals, SMTs and teachers in collaborative activities at circuit and school levels to enhance their professional development, in all areas of school management including bullying and learner discipline (Steyn 2015:160).

#### **5.3.4.3 The role of the school: “It is very important to have a code of conduct.”**

The data from the transcripts confirm that the most important policy document that every school should develop and meticulously implement is the learner code of conduct. The learner code of conduct is a document that is compiled after consultation with all stakeholders of the school, namely, the SMT, teachers, learners and parents. The code of conduct guides the school on the sanction that should be imposed for particular misdemeanours.

Many participants complained that the code of conduct policy is ineffective since its compilation has to be in line with the South African Constitution which many believe is very restrictive when it comes to implementing punitive measures. A number of participants also alluded to the fact that they did not have a particular policy on bullying at their school but a general policy on school discipline.

The principal of school A bemoaned the restrictions imposed on drawing up the school code of conduct:

*Eh...I don't really think it is working ... you know for bullying in particular. Eh...it actually has a lot of gaps and shortcomings coming from the fact that...with the rights, in particular, being given to these kids, it really becomes difficult for us as a school eh... to work in such a way that we are able to set examples eh... in cases where we handle these for the next person not to do this. So it actually fails to address this bullying head-on because we are being restricted a lot obviously by the South African Law, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and so on. So it is silent to tackle this bullying if I may put it that way.*

Teacher 4 (school E) corroborated the views expressed by the principal of school A when she stated:

*You know the code of conduct when it comes to actual implementation, really it does not work. We do have it but it is not working most of the time because you find that the learner is bullying because of the background...social problems. No the problem is that even the code of conduct should have something in line with the constitution of the country.*

Learner 3 (school E) suggested a change in policy to address bullying more effectively, “I think we should make it clear that bullying is not acceptable. When you bully someone, you must get punished. So maybe they can make a change...a little change in the school's policy.”

Teacher 6 (school A) commented on the ineffectiveness of the maximum sentence of suspension in the school's code of conduct policy:

*It is worse now when they get a suspension. When they come back, they joke about it to their friends in the class...so they don't really take suspension seriously. For them, it's more like a holiday that is given to them by the school. They don't see it as a punishment or corrective measure. They just see it as a piece of paper given to them telling them they can stay at home. Most of them look at it that way.*

SMT member 2 (school B) suggested that schools have a specific policy on bullying since it is such a major problem in schools at the moment:

*We have a policy on uniforms and hairstyles and so forth...just like that if we have a policy on bullying we will be able to curb bullying...it's in the policy but we don't highlight it...so if we highlight it, we will be able to take the necessary steps to deal with it. It's there...but only today I have realised we can make that a special policy.*

SMT member 3 (school D) explained the need to continuously re-evaluate the code of conduct each year so that it is relevant and effective to the present time:

*Every year we review the code of conduct...are we too lenient? Are we too strict? We change accordingly. Again the type of child coming to this school now compared to the type of child we used to have...you know...now we have the spoilt child, the immature child...you have to push them, encourage them. The child yesterday was mature, he came here to learn, did the job. So you had the odd child who was getting into trouble. Now, obviously we have the number of cases increasing every year.*

According to Bagarette (2012:97), The SASA 84 of 1996 places the governance of every public school in the hands of the SGB (RSA 2003). One of the chief responsibilities of the SGB is to ensure that a safe, secure and positive environment exists for effective teaching and learning to take place (Mestry & Khumalo 2012:97). Accordingly, Joubert and Bray (2007:80) point out that the SGB should play an important role in the establishment and maintenance of sound discipline by adopting a code of conduct for learners aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment. However, Mestry and Khumalo (2012:98), stress that the effectiveness of the learner code of conduct lies in its fair and consistent enforcement where code violations are appropriately sanctioned. Furthermore, the code of conduct must be reviewed and refined each year by all stakeholders of the school and appropriate changes made to the policy (within the rules of SASA) for its effective functioning (RSA 1996).



The critically important role that the school principal plays in guiding policy formulation in managing discipline in schools cannot be understated. According to Steyn (2015:163), the principals' leadership has an influence at all levels; on professional relationships (amongst management staff, teachers and learners), professional development and school development. Furthermore, by means of motivation and encouragement, support and capacity building, principals have a responsibility to promote a school culture that reduces discipline problems by adopting a code of conduct for learners.

#### **(a) The role of the principal**

The principal, as head of the institution, plays a pivotal role in guiding the formulation of rules and regulations in the school and creating a climate conducive for effective teaching and learning to take place. Hence, the importance of the principal in establishing an orderly school climate cannot be overemphasised (Murray 2010:8).

The principal of school C highlighted the role of the principal in ensuring that the code of conduct is understood thoroughly by all stakeholders, particularly the learners:

*Ya...you know I think it is very important to have a code of conduct...you need to know the code of conduct through and through. Many learners sign the code of conduct without reading it. I ask my Life-Orientation teachers to read the code of conduct to the learners in the first period early in the year. And of course, the code of conduct should be reviewed every year because things change. So I think the code of conduct is important for the learners, teachers and parents too. I want also for my teachers to be observant; they mustn't just teach, they must teach with a heart...know the parents of the child they are teaching...then you will be able to understand the background before acting on the child. Teaching is all about knowing your children...your students...because we are dealing with the majority of the learners who are living on the bread-line or even below the bread-line.*

The circuit manager (Mthunzini Circuit) echoed the sentiments of the principal of School C by placing emphasis on the understanding of the school's code of conduct by learners:

*The morning assembly is very important. You know, read the code of conduct. It should be your duty as the principal or as a senior member to read the code of conduct for five or ten minutes...you're not going to do it all on one day...take a few clauses at a time...and explain to the learners once a month or twice a month...let the children "sink in" the code of conduct because in most cases principal will have a very good code of conduct but it will be in the file...gather dust and only use it when the child has committed a mistake or when an educator has transgressed.*

The principal of school B explained his role in managing bullying in his school:

*In my school, where we have an RCL, we have statutory bodies...we do have as I mentioned a safety and security policy, there's a committee that deals with that...the disciplinary committee and in that committee we have members of the police (whose children are in our school) they form a very integral part of the safety and security policy. Our general school policy spells it out quite clearly that this type of behaviour where learners are bullied into submission, it's the one thing that we want to have zero tolerance of. We do liaise with parents and I must add that our parents, by and large, they are quite active in the life of the school and they assist us and it is the old African adage that it takes a community to raise a child...not just the parents. Our school "code of conduct" is a very tight document in it-self...and look...when you work with teenagers, however, tight the document is, teenagers will find a way of breaching it. So we are addressing bullying because it is such a major issue and we are winning but the battle won't be won completely.*

In addition, the principal of school D explained his role in curbing the problem of bullying in his school:

*We don't have a policy as such on bullying but we have a code of conduct. And it is a serious offence in the code of conduct. I'm sure that the code of conduct in general is discussed at the beginning of the year by the teachers. I have spoken about it in the assembly and I've warned the children about the consequences. I've warned them that once we send the message (file), that message is in somebody else's file and there's evidence against you. And it could be used as further action against you outside the school. So you are not protected by the school in that situation even if we want to. So, I've made them aware of the consequences and that sort of thing. And we have to in our policy protect the victims as much as possible.*

Similar sentiments were expressed by the principal of school E when he indicated:

*Ya...the principal, first of all, and his SMT has to ensure that there are policies in place; policies must be there, as for instance, the learners code of conduct which is a major policy that we have to implement in disciplining learners. So here in our school, we have a very sound code of conduct that helps us a lot when we discipline learners and mete out sanctions depending on the level of offence. If a school doesn't have a code of conduct and if a school doesn't implement the code of conduct, then it becomes very difficult to curb discipline problems like bullying.*

Learner 4 (school B) suggested that the principal of the school should focus on investing more on sports to curb bullying, *"I think that the teachers and principal should invest more in sport so that the children can stay away from drugs and alcohol that leads to this bullying...and peer pressure...so that we occupy ourselves instead of bullying the kids."*

Learner 5 suggested that the principal should beef-up security in order to reduce the incidence of bullying in schools:

*I also think that school management should increase security because you find that a child will be bullied and will be afraid of reporting to school...you find that the car will drop off the learners but there is no one at the gate...so there should be a security at the gate so learners feel safe.*

Learners 3, 4 and 5 from school E recommended that principals spend time engaging with learners with behaviour problems and also open the lines of communication so that problems can be collectively addressed. Learner 3 suggested:

*Maybe the principal and teachers should call the person who caused the bullying, maybe to hear their story...maybe there is a story behind it all. Maybe if the principal address to this learner that this is wrong, it's unacceptable. So maybe that person will change his mind about what he's doing.*

Learner 4 recommended, "Eh...the role of the principal and teachers...maybe they can emphasise the consequences of hurting others...that it's not a good thing because they make them feel afraid and maybe they make them feel lonely." Learner 5 stated that proper communication can assist the school in curbing bullying: "I think improving communication among the school administrators, and also the parents, teachers and learner...maybe if all get involved the bully can see that this is wrong."

In concurrence with the above findings, Kelly and Vaillancourt (2012:16) assert that many learners with behavioural and discipline issues have a negative view of school and often associate the principal with punishment. Hence, as learner 3 above suggested, reaching out to these learners in a supportive and encouraging manner will send the message that they are cared about and that their principal shares in their problems and the common goal of a healthy development and success in life for them. Additionally, the principal must in collaboration with the school governing body, teachers, learners and parents establish a code of conduct policy that does not only focus on punishment but also focuses on promoting pro-social behaviours (Kelly & Vaillancourt 2012:12) and ensure that justifiable disciplinary measures are fairly and properly enforced (Murray 2010:8). Furthermore, Murray (2010:9) points out that the importance of being visible is a key strategy for effective school management- the principal who is regularly seen in the corridors, the stairwells and the schoolyard is a constant influence; the principal who is present before trouble can arise stands a better chance of preventing that trouble, while a principal who is rarely seen represents no real authority for would-be troublemakers.

In order for the principal to action the policies that have been formulated after consultation with all stakeholders in respect of discipline, it becomes imperative for the school management team to support the initiatives of the principal in implementing policies as agreed upon by all stakeholders.

**(b) The role of the school management team (SMT)**

The role of the SMT in supporting the efforts of the principal in managing discipline problems in secondary schools cannot be overemphasized. Participants were vocal about the role SMT members need to play in the quest to curb bullying in schools.

Teacher 4 (school E) emphasised the need for SMTs to ensure that learners are involved in policy formulations at school, *“One of the solutions is that whenever, school policies are being made, learners should be involved and then whatever decision that is taken, should be collectively taken into consideration.”* Furthermore, SMT members must make sure that the code of conduct is understood by learners as SMT member 3 (school E) suggested:

*As SMT, first we must present the code of conduct to each learner so that they know what the rules of discipline are...not only presenting it but clarifying it ...give them practical examples about bullying. And they must understand the relevant punishment...all of them must know that this and this is wrong.*

Teacher 7 (school A) recommended that SMTs should create a good rapport among all stakeholders of the school system:

*The most important thing is that management need to have an open communication with parents, community and...if all parties agree that this thing about children...what’s going on at home, and what is going on in school... and children become very aware of their actions when they know that they are being monitored by their parents and their educators. So, that type of communication is very important.*

SMT member 2 (school A) agreed with this viewpoint by adding:

*We need to create an open pathway for them where they are free to come anytime o us. We also need to get parents on board...we got to get parents in a meeting and explain to them that this is a problem...we need to create an open-door-policy... and say ‘you can walk in and let us know- don’t have any fear in coming to complain about bullying.’ So we got to address those kind of issues.*

Some participants were of the view that the role of the SMT is to provide pastoral care by engaging with the learner on a one-to-one to establish why he is behaving in that way. As

SMT member 2 (school A) pointed out: *“Practising pastoral care helps a lot because that is when we are able to identify the problems in each and every learner...and that is why it’s easier for us to identify when there’s a bully earlier before the problem becomes very huge.”*

This view was shared by SMT member 3 (school D) who stated:

*We try as much as possible to counsel the learners. You know, obviously we try not to attack first, we try to tell them the bad things about bullying and what it is not acceptable. We make them aware of the consequences of bullying from the school side...and obviously we hope that it stops.*

SMT member 2 (school C) strongly believed that bullies should be spoken to because they are still young and need to be guided:

*Once you’ve identified a learner who is bullying, we need not to forget that these are learners, they are here in order to be moulded, shaped and assisted. So when you address a learner who is a bully, you need to have a welcoming gesture...the learner must feel that now I’m before somebody who is showing interest. That learner then will be able to talk openly because you are open to him or her. I think also you should refrain from using sarcastic remarks. Sit down with the learner and talk about the issue...not talk about the learner. But it’s not an easy task...we are not specialists. So there must be this understanding.*

SMT member 1 (school D) concurred with this when she said that it is important to understand where the child comes from:

*And in a way it helps you empathise and try and understand where these learners are coming from- they all come from different situations and backgrounds in our school. And a lot of our learners, I find are emotionally immature, that they actually haven’t learned the correct way to emotionally handle a situation. Some of them do tend to shout, and not think before they speak or physically react in the sense of them being insolent or rude by walking away, instead of dealing with the situation. We have a good rapport with our learners, we try to guide them and counsel them.*

However, SMT member 1 (school C) felt that counselling these learners fell outside the ambit of the SMT’s duties and responsibilities since they were not specialists to deal with serious behavioural problems and complained about the lack of support from parents, social workers and psychologists:

*Actually our role when it comes to that is complicated...because we get the reports mostly from educators. Then we do follow-up...but we are not experts when it comes to dealing with these cases. When we see that the behaviour is persistent, we will contact the psychologist and social workers from education. Now the challenge there is they don’t respond promptly. There is a case I’m talking about...eh... we*

*called them...they are not based very far, I think it is about 20km... you know... the service centres. Then the lady came, gave us forms to fill and the parents you know...and you don't get a positive response from the parents because they have to give consent for the child to go through a certain programme so that they can try to help the child. So our hands are really tied on that one because we are not psychologists.*

The suggestions from participants above in respect of the roles SMTs should play coincide with the views of Kelly and Vaillancourt (2012:16) who purport that SMT members should make an effort to reach out to learners with behavioural problems in a manner that is encouraging and supportive and that allows them to open up to the problems they are experiencing. Furthermore, SMT members by virtue of their position and administration time, should consider proactive strategies, rather than reactive strategies, when dealing with perpetrators of bullying so that they can create a climate that is conducive to healthy discourse (Murray 2010:9). Moreover, in order to assist the teacher and the principal of the school, with very serious cases, they should access specialised instructional support from social workers and school psychologists. Furthermore, as middle managers playing a supportive role to the principal, they can prevent incidences from taking place by their mere presence in the corridors and school grounds (Murray 2010:9).

The role of the teacher in curbing bullying in schools is of paramount importance. According to Veenstra *et al.* (2014:1137), the level of bullying would be substantially lower when teachers had a stronger anti-bullying attitude, had a high degree of efficacy in battling bullying, and put an effort into reducing bullying in schools by promoting pro-social behaviour through open communication and dialogue.

### **(c) The role of the teacher**

The teacher is the one person who is in direct contact with the learners on a day-to-day basis and is appropriately positioned both inside and outside the classroom to observe children who are exhibiting aggressive behaviour and to respond to it accordingly. While some teachers in the study gave an indication of the strategies that are currently being employed to address the problem of bullying, others complained that the system allowed learners far too many rights leaving teachers helpless in instituting disciplinary measures.

Teacher 7 (school A) recommended positive reinforcement in shaping the behaviour of bullies:

*I think what is important is for the educator to use positive re-enforcement not on the victim of bullying but on the child who is displaying bullying behaviour as well because that behaviour is usually linked to some sort of insecurity so by highlighting the child's academic work or the child's personality or things of that sort ...you can build some sort of awareness that they do not have to do these negative things for attention.*

Learner 4 (school B) believed that teachers should be observant during ground duty:

*I would say...the teachers should spend more time on the ground and other areas during lunch breaks because that's where children get bullied a lot. And when the bully is bullying them, they shouldn't just suspend without finding out the reasons because sometimes they are emotionally affected and that can be solved by talking and helping that child get out of those situations.*

Learner 2 (school B) suggested that teachers identify and address bullies on how to behave appropriately despite the challenges they may be experiencing in their personal lives:

*I think that the teachers...they can be counsellors themselves...counsel the bullies and they should find out what their problems are. Sometimes the bullies are the victims too in bullying and they need to be shown how to do things, how to handle things. If this fails, teachers can request for a professional counsellor so that the bullies can attend private sessions.*

Teacher 2 (school A) was of the opinion that children should be kept purposefully occupied to avoid bullying incidences:

*These are attention seekers, give them exercises, ask them to read for the class...ask them to do something so they will feel important...and praise them even for a small thing they did because they need to feel recognised...to feel loved so we need to support them also...keep them busy...praise them all the time. Additionally, they must be made to participate in group activities, like sports activities, cultural activities...to keep them busy and away from trouble.*

Learner 7 (school B) was vocal about the administration of corporal punishment by some teachers even though it is abolished according to the South African School's Act, Act 84 of 1996 (RSA 2003), "I also think that teachers should reduce corporal punishment because learners say that if the teacher is hitting them "why can't I do the same?" "I'm getting the punishment, why can't I do the same?"

According to teacher 3 (school C), teachers are restricted by South African Law in terms of learner discipline and this is very frustrating because there are very limited alternatives to punishment:

*You see as teachers, our hands are tied. We don't have the authority to discipline learners the way that we should because that role is now taken away by the governing body of the school. We all have to operate within the law as well...we can't just suspend learners for doing this and doing that. I believe children have far too many rights...and some of them are abusing their rights. And as a result, of that, I think we are being hamstrung in a big way.*

Teacher 6 (school E) strongly believed that teachers should be trained to deal with bullying in schools: "I think the department must organise workshops on bullying so that teachers will know how dangerous bullying is and they will also know how to respond when they are confronted with these situations."

The suggestions by teachers and learners in the study, in respect of the role of the teacher in managing bullying in schools, concur with the views espoused by McClowry, Rodrigues, Spellman, Carlson and Snow (2013:283) who point out that proper teacher preparation (before lessons are delivered) and professional development programs (workshops and seminars) can assist teachers to use evidence-based strategies to manage learner classroom behaviour better. This view was corroborated by Allen (2010:12) who stated that knowledge of effective teaching practices, particularly around pedagogy, indicated that best practices included learner-centred environments where teachers fostered student autonomy through engaging learning activities that kept learners purposefully occupied for the full duration of lessons. Additionally, while it is necessary to create a warm and inviting climate for learners to feel comfortable (Murray 2010:10), teachers who are seen to stand up against bullying create an atmosphere and school climate where more learners find it easier to abstain from bullying (Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huitsing, Sainio & Salmivalli 2014:1135).

While the role of the principal, SMT and teachers in curbing bullying in schools is of critical importance, the role of the learners in reducing bullying is equally important. However, despite evidence that learners can be effective at reducing bullying, there is also evidence to suggest that learners are often not willing to intervene in bullying episodes (Veenstra *et al.* 2014:1135).



#### **(d) The role of the learners (RCL)**

According to the South African School's Act 84 of 1996, all secondary schools are required to elect from its learner component, the representative council of learners to represent each grade in the school (RSA 2003). These learners form a statutory body called the RCL whose express purpose is to liaise with the management of the school in respect of learner queries and problems. The RCL of the school plays a critical role in assisting the SMT in the smooth running of the school. Learners in all five schools in the survey suggested how RCL's can play a supportive role in managing learners with behavioural difficulties.

Learner 1 (school A) suggested an all-embracing role that the RCL needed to play to deal effectively with problems perpetrated by learners:

*To be chosen as an RCL I believe is a great responsibility. The RCL should neither be hard nor cold...he should be able to communicate with the low people...that are the so-called low life's in the school. They should be able to communicate with the people higher up as well- he is like the middle man in class between the teacher and the class. As an RCL, you must have that much love for the people you are leading. And if the case is bad you can start introducing the teacher to the situation, the principal to the situation...maybe the person is being threatened...the bully is saying he is going to catch them after school. So as an RCL you should have good communication, be friends with everybody and communicate sympathetically.*

This viewpoint was corroborated by learner 1 (school C) who revealed:

*The thing is the victim of bullying, they're actually scared to come out. The RCL must find a way to make them comfortable, so they can talk about bullying. If you're being bullied, it's like they put you in a bottle and you can't come out. We must find a way for them to come and talk to us. Sometimes it's much harder for them to talk to the teachers, because they're scared of the teachers. So as RCL we got to level with them and make it easier for them to talk to us.*

Learner 3 (school D) was of the opinion that learners should be listened to and their problems discussed in a meeting with all RCL members to provide solutions:

*I think as RCL we need to be the voice of the learners. What we can do is listen to what they are saying and discuss their problem in a group, share ideas and take it up to management. Management as well needs to investigate what is really going on. From that if it is a huge problem, the problem should be taken to the principal who will also use the school code of conduct and we as well will make our input as RCL.*

However, learner 2 (school B) disagreed with the above assertion by expressing the view that the RCL should rather report bullying to the teacher or SMT in case of reprisals from the bullies themselves:

*You know you can't do anything as an RCL because we are also afraid of being bullied and being the victim. Now you like taking the bullet for the guy who is being bullied. Ya...the best thing you can do is report it to the teachers silently...not tell them that "I'm reporting you" because they'll come for you...so just write the incident down and give it to a person in authority to manage it...the management.*

In order to remain anonymous, learner 6 (school E) recommended that learners experiencing problems should actually drop off notes in a box for the RCL to attend to, *"I think as RCL members, we must come up with ideas like... a box...where learners can express their feelings, they can write down their problems and drop it in the box, so that we will be able to help them."*

Learner 2 (school E) highlighted the need for the school to focus on sports so that bullies can give vent to their frustrations in a controlled way:

*As RCL, I think it will be a good idea for us to maybe come up with an idea...of maybe sports...make time for sports and focus on sports because sports will be the place for us all to be united. Let's say maybe for soccer, you have two teams, and it's important for learners to understand that as a team they are playing with each other and not against each other. So the bullies will feel like they are part of the team.*

The above comments concur with Pendlebury (2010:44) who states that the RCL has demanding responsibilities. Apart from representing fellow learners, the RCL is expected to promote good relations and communication among learners, staff, and the school community; assist in maintaining order and promote responsible leadership, by both positive example and by helping to ensure that learners abide by school rules and regulations. Additionally, as learner 1 (school C) and learner 1 (school A) pointed out RCLs have a responsibility to create good communication among learners and an inviting climate that will allow learners with problems to speak out without fear or mistrust.

Apart from the RCL, another important component of the school system according to the South African School's Act No.84 of 1996, is the parent, whose responsibility is to support the efforts of the school at all levels including interventions with respect to discipline problems exhibited by their children at school (RSA 2003).

**(e) The role of the parents: “Parents think that high school is one big crèche. They come and admit their children and then forget about them.”**

Parents are important stakeholders in the school system and play a vital role in supporting education. The success of the school in all its endeavours rests to a large extent on the support it receives from its parent component. Ignoring this important responsibility can have devastating effects on the school climate and the growth and development of the school, particularly the learners. Participants in the study presented mixed reviews on the role of parents in schools.

Principal (school B) appreciated the support he received from parents in his community:

*Our parents, by and large, have a hands-on approach but to curb bullying, you know, it goes much further...it goes beyond just parental involvement. At my school, the chairperson of my governing body has been a mayor so we have got parental involvement at the political level as well where he makes it his duty to get the councillors and local chiefs involved. Our chairperson actually goes on home visits; he engages parents at his own cost and at his own time, so the level of involvement of the parents and the community is commendable...they are coming on board, and that is why the level of bullying has been reduced to some extent at my school.*

However, the majority of the participants lamented the lack of support by parents in their communities. The principal of school C expressed his frustration at the lack of parental involvement at his school:

*Ya...eh...I can tell you something...I’m 13 years in this school...one of the most important things that I have not achieved as yet is the parental involvement in our school. Parents think that high school is one big crèche. Come and admit their children and then forget about them. I’ve picked up this for a long time because when I have meetings out of 600 learners here, probably I have about 350-400 parents if you include brothers, and sisters and cousins living together...but when I have a meeting, I don’t get even 50 parents. Parents have divorced themselves from responsibility in this town.*

Similar sentiments were echoed by SMT member 3 (school D) when she stated:

*A lot of children in the area, their parents just come and dump their child at school, find a room out there, maybe they sharing with two or three other boys...and that’s where they are. I’ve got learners in Mpushini Park, I’ve got learners in the townships...no guardian to give them support. Very, very sad and that’s the problem.*

SMT member 1 (school D) expressed the wish that parents played a greater role in the education and behaviour modification of their children:

*We wish there was more parental involvement. A lot of our children don't have parental input, and that is negatively affecting their behaviour, their emotional maturity, their decision making that is not necessarily their fault. So I find myself playing a more motherly role...nurturing role and that's emotionally draining on us.*

Learner 3 (school D) corroborated the sentiments expressed by SMT member 1 (school D):

*Parents have a vital role to play in disciplining their children. Children are to sit at home and learn values...coming to school they should know what is right and what is wrong...good morals and values...that bullying being not good values. Therefore, the parents should teach their children about bullying, the consequences of bullying and the effects as well.*

Learner 6 (school C) suggested that parents play a supportive and caring role in the lives of their children in order to better manage them:

*I think that parents should...make their children feel more wanted, they must give them more love, make them feel appreciated...if someone feels appreciated, there's no need for them to go and hate another person. They must give them comfort...they must be able to share things with their parents...sometimes the father comes drunk at home, and he bullies the child...beats the child and the child takes it out on other people. So parents should love their children more and show them they are wanted and loved.*

The assertions by the principal of school B concurs with the views espoused by Murray (2010:13) who points out that parents and guardians play a pivotal role in the development of responsible attitudes towards school, appropriate behaviour and respectful interactions with others. Ngidi and Qwabe (2006:529) expressed similar sentiments when they pointed out that parental involvement or school-community partnerships can help curb discipline problems and create a culture conducive to teaching and learning in schools. Furthermore, school-community partnerships enable parents to play many roles including governance and support. However, most participants in the study lamented the non-involvement of parents in their children's education, particularly when it came to responding to problems related to discipline. Clearly, these participant comments point to a greater responsibility and role that parents need to play in the education and behavioural development of their children.

In the absence of parental involvement in the governance and support of the school, it becomes imperative to reach out to other NGOs and social partners to assist in the managing of bullying in schools.

#### **5.3.4.4 The role of outside agencies: “They [SAPS] should have more raids in school for dangerous weapons.”**

Most participants in the study commented on the important role outside agencies played in supporting the efforts of teachers and SMTs with discipline problems. These agencies include the SAPS, social workers, psychologists, counsellors, pastors and chiefs.

Learner 4 (school A) felt that the SAPS should conduct raids more often in schools:

*I think something else needs to be taken into consideration with regards to the physical bullying where some maybe get beaten up by the druggies. They should have more raids in the school for dangerous weapons and also just to make sure that there aren't any drugs being taken into the school premises because that's when they actually go high on drugs. The SAPS should be more involved.*

Apart from conducting raids or searches in schools, the SAPS should make themselves more visible in schools and play a more educative role to prevent coercive behaviour from taking place teacher 4 (school C) pointed out: “We must get policemen to address learners in the assembly on discipline, on bullying and the legal consequences of these actions.”

However, the principal of school C emphasised the need for policemen to address learners in a manner that is palatable so that they (learners) do not react aggressively to what is being said:

*We also call the police...but I can tell you the level of policing...some of the police don't have strategies to deal with children...they come across as very abrupt with the learners...the days of the police being very arrogant and abrupt and cheeky and forceful are over. But in the new South Africa, police need to address children in a language that is palatable to them.*

Participants in the survey highlighted the invaluable role of social workers and psychologists in curbing bullying in schools. While the availability of social workers has helped to reduce the instances of bullying in schools, school psychologists have been largely absent as the principal of school E explained:

*Yes...we do have social welfare agencies, we have a lady who is very active by the name of Mrs B...the social worker who services this area. She works with a group of other assistants. We refer to them, talk to them just to correct learner behaviour. As far as psychologists are concerned... ya...ya...ya... I think that is very important. Ya...it's true in the past years we used to use psychologists...one of them was Mrs L...they were assisting a lot because when we used to find that learners...have got a serious problem of bullying...we used to report to them but off late they are not as active as before.*

The circuit manager (Mthunzini Circuit) suggested that apart from the use of professionals outside the school working in isolation of each other and the SGB functioning as an organ of the school system on its own, that additionally, a sub-committee comprising of leaders in the community be formed to support the efforts of school and the SGB in curbing bullying in schools, *"You have a tribunal...a group of people outside...a sub-committee of maybe police, judges, pastors, retirees...all those people of good standing in the community coming together so that they can assist you in enforcing discipline."*

Some participants emphasized the need for motivational speakers like ex-students of the school who have enjoyed success in their adult lives to address learners in the assembly with the intention of dissuading learners from committing bullying behaviour. As teacher 4 (school C) pointed out, *"You know apart from social workers, and policemen we must get a successful student who made a mark in life to talk to the children in school so that they can be steered away from bad behaviour and moved in the right track."*

Additionally, bullies themselves and even people who have been convicted of serious offences and who are now rehabilitated should be approached to address learners on the negative impact their violent actions have had on their lives and those of their families because of time spent in jail as the circuit manager (the Mthunzini Circuit) suggested:

*In some cases even those bullies...make use of them, you'll be surprised what they will tell the children. Ex-convicts ...let them be part of the committee...because those are the people that are going to assist you in enforcing discipline at school. That's what I always tell my teachers, my principals.*

The above findings in respect of the important role outside agencies play in supporting the school with discipline issues concur with the views propounded by Moolla and Lazarus (2014:2) who point to intersectoral collaboration to generate solutions for complex problems experienced in schools. This certainly has implications for the recognition, of every

sector or member at every level of society for the much needed multisectoral provision of learner support and intervention. They argue that all sectors, working as a team, build a sense of belonging and form a crucial network of support in which accountability and responsibility are shared by those working in partnership to address the many challenges faced in schools in the present time. Importantly, such support systems need to be nurtured and encouraged by school authorities and the Department of Education officials at district and provincial levels (Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla & Sylvester 2014:12).

In addition to accessing much needed assistance and specialist support from NGOs and other social partners in education, the role of the local councillors and the role of the chief (Nkosi) in rural communities are becoming increasingly significant, particularly in the present time, when violence in schools has escalated to dangerous levels. Ward councillors living in the area the school is located in (particularly in rural areas), and the chief (who is in charge of the area under his jurisdiction) generally know every family residing in that particular area and are, therefore, particularly well placed to intervene and assist the school in curbing discipline problems.

The principal of school B explained the active role played by the local councillors and chiefs in curbing bullying in his community:

*Our councillors play a big role in my school, and we allow them the latitude because they have a role to play...they are people elected by the community. And also what benefits us to a large extent, is the role of the local chief. The local chief eh... when they are confronted...okay...they treat this very seriously and in their meetings in their community they raise these matters...about children being abused, being bullied...they raise these problems about alcohol and drug abuse, they raise the problem of teenage pregnancies and all of these things which are the evils that schools face...they do assist us to a considerable measure.*

The circuit manager of the Mthunzini Circuit (the area in which this survey was conducted) was vocal about the role that the chief plays in the school community and found the use of his services not only helpful but also absolutely necessary:

*I will cite an example of (High School X) which is nearby...it's a rural school. I engaged the services of the Inkosi (which is the chief) and the headmen (which happens to be the Induna) and all influential people in the area...we sat down with them outside the school...called them even on weekends, holidays even at night to resolve the problem. I will cite another example...(High School Z) where I had to assist to resolve a serious problem. The problem was not resolved at*

*school; the problem was resolved at the traditional court because we invited all the unions and all the traditional leaders and the Nkosi had to be strong to say "If you (bully) continue with this, then you must take your goods and bags and leave my area!" So it's important for the community leaders, the headmen and the Nkosi to be involved in this so that they can give direction to the community. Look, the school is a public institution...you know once the community disowns the school, then you have a problem...then you have a problem.*

The circuit manager went on to explain that even though the school was a state institution, by allowing the community access and a feeling of "ownership," the school will be able to enjoy order and stability:

*I will set an example, here at (High School A)...although High School A is the most troublesome school but the principal of the school and the community around, are part of the decision making... they "own" the school. Once you distance the school from the community, they (learners) are going to start bullying, not only that, they will start to vandalise the school...to indicate to you that "we are not part of this!" Once they understand that "this is our property", they will look after it.*

The above assertions are in keeping with the views of Mbokazi and Bhengu (2008:49) who contend that most schools are not safe centres of community life, because community ownership of schools has either been partially or not achieved at all. Prof Kader Asmal the(then national Minister of Education) and Ms Ina Cronje (then MEC for Education in KwaZulu-Natal) identified partnerships as one way of addressing matters of serious concerns in schools and one of the partners that they identified to address the situation are the traditional leaders whom they regarded as having an important role to play in the provision of quality education.

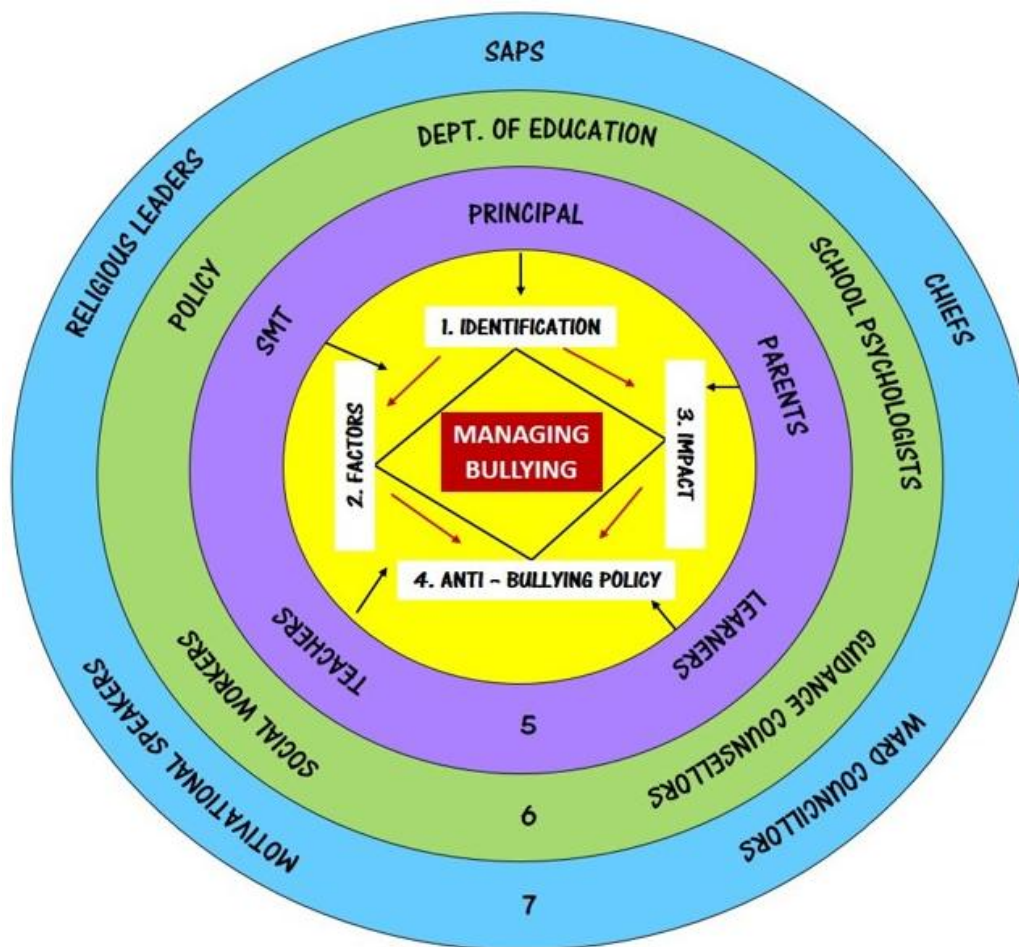
Accordingly, Beall, Mkhize and Vawda (2008:13) state that in March 1998, the White Paper on Local Government accorded traditional leaders an important development role in local government and presents them as overseers of local disputes. Most rural schools refer all cases of a serious nature involving learners carrying dangerous weapons into the school premises to the Inkosi. The rationale of this outsourcing is that schools compromise discipline and, therefore, a neutral institution like the traditional leadership, is deemed appropriate to address it. Hence, the significance of the role of traditional leaders such as the chiefs (Inkosi) and Indunas in rural KwaZulu-Natal schools have implications for the success or otherwise of many decisions and processes that impact on schooling (Mbokazi & Bhengu 2008:55).



The main themes that emerged from the data presented in this chapter may be described in the form of a model developed from the responses from the circuit manager, principals, SMTs, teachers and learners of the five secondary schools with respect to the management of bullying in schools.

#### **5.4 A MODEL TO CURB BULLYING**

On the basis of the findings from the empirical study, a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal, is proposed. Figure 5.1 depicts bullying as a problem that requires school-wide intervention from all stakeholders of the school system. It begins with the school first identifying the specific types of bullying prevalent in the school, establishing the reasons for the bullying taking place in the school, and then determining the impact of bullying on all stakeholders of the school. This is an important exercise as the information collected will play a critical role in guiding the school in devising an anti-bullying policy that would provide guidelines on the management of bullying in the school. This policy must be drawn up in consultation with all stakeholders of the school namely, the principal, SMT, teachers, learners and parents. The successful implementation of the policy must be supported by all the stakeholders both within and outside the school. The model in Figure 5.1 depicts how each stage flows from one to the other and how each relates to and is inter-linked to the management of bullying in secondary schools.



**FIGURE 5.1 A MODEL TO CURB BULLYING**

#### **5.4.1 MANAGING BULLYING**

In order to manage bullying, in accordance with the model depicted in Figure 5.1 above, the following steps are proposed for school principals to follow to curb bullying in their schools:

##### **5.4.1.1 STEP 1: Identify the types of bullying most prevalent in the school**

Firstly, the principal, the SMT, teachers and learners should identify which types of bullying are most prevalent in the school. This investigation is critical as it would guide policy formulation on the necessary sanctions that need to be imposed depending on the severity of the type of bullying experienced. For example, if physical bullying is most prevalent in your school, followed by verbal bullying and then racist bullying, the sanctions for physical bullying (for example, stabbing) would require a higher level of sanction than, for example, verbal bullying. The various types of bullying perpetrated in the school should be prioritised

from the most serious to the least serious and the relevant sanction depicted for each type of bullying prevalent in the school according to its severity.

#### **5.4.1.2 STEP 2: Establish factors contributing to bullying in the school**

After the types of bullying are identified, it becomes necessary to establish the factors contributing to bullying in your school. Establish at what level the family, the school and the community has an influence on learners becoming bullies. Understanding what influences bullying behaviour is absolutely necessary as this will guide you towards getting the relevant role players involved in helping resolve bullying-related problems experienced in the school.

#### **5.4.1.3 STEP 3: Determine the impact of bullying on all stakeholders of the school**

Determining the impact of bullying on all stakeholders of the school is of paramount importance because the severity of the bully's actions will again determine the level of sanction that needs to be imposed for that particular act. Violent behaviour will warrant higher order sanctions as opposed to behaviour that is non-violent and of a lower severity.

#### **5.4.1.4 STEP 4: Develop an anti-bullying policy for the school**

Once the school has identified the types of bullying prevalent, has established the factors contributing to bullying, and has determined the impact it has on all stakeholders of the school and community, then on the basis of these findings, draw up an anti-bullying policy with sanctions clearly stated based on the severity of the bullying act, starting with the most severe types of bullying, for example, physical bullying (shootings, stabbings) to the less severe acts such as verbal bullying (name-calling and insulting).

#### **5.4.1.5 STEP 5: Involve all relevant stakeholders at the school level**

The anti-bullying policy must also not only be punitive but also pro-social in its design in the sense that it must help rehabilitate the offender. The policy must be implemented fairly and consistently. Once sanctions are imposed on the defaulting learner, the principal, SMT, teachers, learners and parents need to simultaneously play an encouraging role in the bully's rehabilitation. Furthermore, the victim of the bullying must also be attended to through support and counselling at school level.

#### **5.4.1.6 STEP 6: Involve the Department of Education in addressing the problem**

The Department of Education should also consider the appointment of a guidance counsellor in each school to specifically attend to learners with behavioural problems as well as to attend to the victims who experience psychological distress emanating from their encounter with bullies. Should the problem not be adequately addressed at school level, the principal should request assistance from the Department of Education for specialised personnel such as social workers or school psychologists to address the problem.

#### **5.4.1.6 STEP 7: Involve outside agencies in addressing the problem**

While sanctions are imposed on the defaulting learner, outside agencies should simultaneously be consulted to help the aggressive learner understand the severity of his actions and the need for him to undergo correctional supervision. The important role played by outside agencies such as the police, religious leaders, ward councillors, chiefs (in rural areas) and motivational speakers cannot be overemphasized. Their direct involvement and influence will have a strong bearing on how quickly and efficiently the problem is attended to as learners generally fear leaders and elders from their own communities. This collaboration will go a long way towards curbing bullying in schools since the responsibility for addressing the problem will now not only lie with the school and Department of Education, but with the leadership of the broader school community as well.

### **5.5 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 5 involved the analysis of the research findings from interviews conducted with the circuit manager as well as the principals, SMTS, teachers and learners of the five secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal with respect to the problem of bullying in secondary schools. The researcher indicated how data from the interview transcripts were analysed after first identifying the main themes, categories and sub-categories. Additionally, the research findings resulting from the emergent themes were discussed using the participant's verbatim accounts. The researcher used in-vivo coding to prioritise and highlight the participant's voice in the study. Furthermore, various bullying theories together with relevant evidence from the literature study conducted in chapters two and

three were used to support the findings. On the basis of the research findings, a model to curb bullying in secondary schools was developed and presented.

The final chapter, which follows, will provide recommendations to curb bullying in secondary schools, outline the limitations of the study and demarcate areas for further research.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The rationale of this chapter was to provide a summary of the findings of the literature study conducted in chapters two and three as well as present the results of the empirical investigation presented in chapter five. Accordingly, the researcher investigated the various types of bullying experienced in secondary schools, determined the factors contributing to bullying in secondary schools, established the consequences of bullying perpetration on the various stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, developed a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. A qualitative research approach was deemed most suitable for this study and for that reason a qualitative research design and methodology was highlighted and described in chapter four.

This chapter also focussed on the conclusions drawn from the literature study as well as the conclusions drawn from the empirical investigation. Furthermore, recommendations were made with respect to managing bullying in secondary schools on the basis of the findings from the empirical investigation. The researcher also offered recommendations for further study and likewise pointed out the limitations of the study.

#### **6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

In chapter one, the researcher highlighted the severity of bullying perpetration in South African schools, particularly in secondary schools as it manifests itself at the present time. The large number of violent incidents and the increasingly brutal nature of the bullying acts have become a matter of serious concern to all stakeholders with regard to the school system. In KwaZulu-Natal, the levels of assault have increased substantially in recent years (section 1.1) severely compromising the safety of learners and teachers at schools. Revenge attacks by learners with dangerous weapons such as guns and knives have become all too common in many secondary schools in the province leading to disastrous consequences with some learners experiencing poison attacks, violent stabbings and even fatal shootings (section 1.1).

The researcher also focussed on the devastating effects of bullying on victims and the general ethos of the school (section 1.2). The fear experienced by both teachers and learners led to high rates of absenteeism that adversely affected teaching and learning and ultimately, the academic performance of learners. In addition, and of greater severity, was the psychological impact bullying had on the victims who were made to feel insignificant, powerless, embarrassed, humiliated, socially excluded and deeply hurt to the extent that they were reported to experience anxiety and depression for significant periods of time with many victims even exhibiting suicidal tendencies (section 1.2).

Chapter two concentrated on a comprehensive literature study of the appropriate theories that provided an explanation of the bullying phenomenon in schools (section 2.1). These theories were considered suitable by the researcher because it assisted with the validation of the findings of the empirical investigation presented in chapter five.

The twelve theories that were found to be relevant to the study were Ainsworth's *attachment theory* (which propounded that a child with a secure attachment style exhibited consistent and sensitive interactions with others; whereas a child with an insecure attachment style exhibited insensitive and inconsistent interactions with others) as cited in section 2.2.1. A second theory was Bandura's *social learning theory* (which advocated that family background characteristics were associated with bullying perpetration in schools) as cited in section 2.2.3; while a third theory was Cairn and Cairns *homophily theory* (which contended that children tended to hang out with peers who were similar to them in attitudes, interests and behaviours) as cited in section 2.2.4. A fourth theory was Sutherland's *differential association theory* (that postulated that coercive and criminal behaviour was learnt through a process of interaction with others) cited in section 2.2.7; whereas Bjorkland and Pellegrini's *dominance theory* cited in section 2.2.5, posited that aggression facilitated access to a central position in the peer group. A sixth theory was Moffitt's *attraction theory* cited in section 2.2.6 that advocated that young adolescents in their need to establish separation from their parents became attracted to youth that reflected independence (delinquency and disobedience).

A seventh theory was Agnew's *general strain theory* that contended that several strains and stressors experienced by individuals in the environment increased negative emotions that

influenced delinquency (section 2.2.8); while Skinner's *behavioural theory* (maintained that most human behaviour is learnt through a process of conditioning) as cited in section 2.2.2. A ninth theory was Tajfel and Turner's *social identity theory* that postulated that individuals who saw themselves as members of the same social category, shared some emotional involvement and achieved some degree of social consensus about their group and their membership of it (section 2.2.9) and the tenth theory was the *social categorisation theory* (which contended that social categorisations were conceived as cognitive tools that segmented, classified, and ordered the social environment and defined the person's place in society) as cited in section 2.2.10. The eleventh theory was Dollard's *frustration-aggression theory* that pointed out that when people became frustrated, they responded aggressively (section 2.2.11); and the twelfth theory was Beck's *cognitive theory of anger* (which confirmed that strong emotions resulted in negative phenomenological experiences and often led to impairment of the cognitive processes) as cited in section 2.2.12.

In chapter three, the researcher conducted an in-depth literature study of the phenomenon of bullying. Various types of bullying were explored and explained in detail (section 3.3) namely, physical bullying, verbal bullying, emotional bullying, relational bullying, sexual bullying, cyberbullying, homophobic bullying, religious bullying and racist bullying. In addition, the characteristics of bullies (section 3.4.1), the characteristics of victims (section 3.4.2) and the characteristics of bystanders (section 3.4.3) were clearly articulated.

Chapter three also explored the factors contributing to bullying in secondary schools (section 3.5.1), the outcomes of bullying and victimisation (section 3.5.2), and the legal implications of bullying in schools (section 3.5.3). The study found that the influence at the family level (section 3.5.1.1), the influence at school level (section 3.5.1.2) and the influence at the community level (section 3.5.1.3) were critical factors contributing to bullying perpetration in schools. Furthermore, the literature study concluded that inborn traits played a significant role in learner's exhibiting coercive bullying behaviour (section 3.5.1.4). The study further concluded that the impact of bullying perpetration in secondary schools was severe and associated with both short term and long term psychological and academic consequences (section 3.5.2). In section 3.5.3, the researcher explored the legal implications of bullying by referring to The South African Constitution (108 of 1996) (RSA 2009) the Code of Professional Ethics of the SACE (SACE 2007), the Educators Amendment Act 31 of 2007,



and in particular the SASA Act No 84 of 1996 which gives direction on the development of the all-important School's Code of Conduct for learners (RSA 2003).

Chapter four highlighted the research design used for the empirical investigation. The researcher adopted a qualitative research design that involved an interpretive and constructivist paradigm as it allowed for data collection through face-to-face interactions during an interview process in the participants natural settings (section 4.3). Individual interviews were conducted with the circuit manager as well as the principals of the five secondary schools while focus group interviews were conducted with the SMTs, teachers and the RCLs of each of the five secondary schools (section 4.4.5.1). *In-vivo* coding was employed in order to highlight the main themes and categories and also to prioritise the participant's voice in the study (section 4.4.6.2).

The researcher considered various ethical measures such as informed consent, risk-free interaction, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality, protection from harm, and honesty and transparency in protecting the rights of the participants in the study (section 4.4.3). The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis purposes (section 4.4.3.7). Data analysis was conducted according to the four steps outlined in section 4.4.6. In order to ensure reliability and validity, the data was analysed according to Guba's "Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries" according to the four criteria outlined in the model namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (section 4.4.4) (Gay *et al.* 2011:392).

Chapter five focused on the analysis of findings from the empirical investigation conducted with the circuit manager, the principals, SMTs, teachers and learners of the five secondary schools in the Uthungulu District. In analysing the interview transcripts, the researcher identified the main themes, categories and sub-categories that emerged (section 5.2). The four major themes that emerged from the data (as well as the appropriate *in-vivo* coding assigned to each theme) were as follows:

- Types of bullying  
*"It is something like a CANCER. It has been an ULCER to us for 25 years!"*
- Factors contributing to bullying  
*"I would attribute bullying to be a result of socio-economic deprivation."*

- The impact of bullying behaviour  
*“The biggest consequence is that it [bullying] decreases the person’s self-esteem.”*
- Managing bullying  
*“All stakeholders need to work hand-in-hand on this issue.”*

After having considered the research results of each of the themes, categories and sub-categories, definite conclusions were reached and specifically discussed.

### **6.3 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY**

An in-depth literature study was conducted on the phenomenon of bullying in schools, where the factors contributing to bullying, the outcomes of bullying and victimization, and the legal implications of bullying were investigated.

#### **6.3.1 Factors contributing to bullying**

The literature study conducted in section 3.5.1 established that bullying was influenced at three levels, namely, family level, school level and community level. At the family level, poor role models, temperament, poverty, homelessness, divorce and death in the family emerged as critical factors that played a major role in children displaying bullying behaviour (section 3.5.1.1). At the school level, factors such as corporal punishment, authoritarian schooling, negative school climate, peer group and racism contributed substantially to bullying perpetration in schools (section 3.5.1.2). At the community level, substance abuse, gangsterism, media influences, and the use of dangerous weapons by learners emerged as factors responsible for escalating bullying to considerable levels. Apart from the aforementioned factors, the literature study also confirmed that inborn traits may provide a biological explanation for bullying among children (section 3.5.1.4). Accordingly, a comprehensive literature study of the biological nature of bullying, the adaptive nature of bullying, the genetic basis of bullying as well as neurological abnormalities related to bullying provided evidence that genetic factors played an important role in the development of bullying in schools.

#### **6.3.2 Outcomes of bullying and victimisation**

Evidence from the literature study confirmed that bullying was associated with a wide range of serious negative outcomes (section 3.5.2). The study found that the youth who bullied

others were at an increased risk of academic problems (section 3.5.2.1). Even victims of bullying were found to suffer deteriorating performance levels because of the violence perpetrated against them. Furthermore, bullying was responsible for increased truancy and delinquency levels in schools, which contributed appreciably to learner dropout rates (section 3.5.2.2).

This, in turn, led to bullies becoming violent criminals contributing to the general social violence experienced in communities and society at large. Victims of bullying have been found to experience intense feelings of shame, anger and rage that had the potential to be unleashed with uncontrolled ferocity and aggression with disastrous consequences (section 3.5.2.3). This study also confirmed that threats, intimidation and harassment engendered psychological outcomes such as fear and anxiety that traumatised both teachers and learners resulting in high rates of absenteeism and school avoidance (section 3.5.2.4). In addition, the study confirmed that victims of persistent bullying suffered somatic ailments emanating from the immense stress associated with it (section 3.5.2.5) resulting in low self-esteem and clinical levels of anxiety and depression (section 3.7.2.6). Moreover, the study concluded that depressed victims of bullying engaged in self-destructive behaviour by cutting themselves to relieve their feelings of frustration and ultimately resorted to committing suicide because of their inability to cope with the situation (section 3.5.2.7).

### **6.3.3 Legal implications of bullying**

From the literature study in section 3.5.3, it is evident that the perpetration of serious acts of bullying had legal implications. The South African Constitution (108 of 1996) (RSA 2009), as well as the SASA Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA 2003), have been designed for the express purpose of protecting the rights of children and the prohibition of violent activities in schools (RSA 1996). SGBs have a legal responsibility to draw up a school code of conduct for learners clearly stipulating the misdemeanour and the appropriate sanction for it. From a legal perspective, only sanctions up to and including suspensions may be handled by the school after a fair hearing by the Disciplinary Committee of the SGB and subject to any other provincial law, a learner at a public school may only be expelled by the Head of the Department (section 3.5.3). In recent times, bullying lawsuits are becoming increasingly prevalent in South Africa, where provincial Departments of Education are being taken to

court (as per Section 60 of the South African Education Law and Policy Handbook) for serious injuries inflicted on learners arising out of bullying incidents committed on the school premises (section 3.5.3).

#### **6.4 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION**

The four main themes that emanated from the empirical study (Table 5.1) were bullying experiences, factors contributing to bullying, the impact of bullying, and managing bullying in schools.

##### **6.4.1 Types of bullying**

Data from the transcripts revealed that the most prevalent types of bullying experienced in schools were physical bullying, verbal and emotional bullying, cyberbullying, xenophobic and homophobic bullying and racist bullying (section 5.3.1). Physical bullying, particularly shootings and stabbings, appeared to be rampant in most schools and a cause for grave concern among most principals (section 5.3.1.1). The study also found that verbal and emotional bullying had increased in most schools and detrimentally affected the targets self-worth with the victim's self-esteem and dignity seriously compromised as a result of social exclusion (section 5.3.1.2). Additionally, cyberbullying had gained momentum in schools with learners making use of technology to harass and bully each other (section 5.3.1.3). The study also highlighted xenophobic bullying where learners were threatened and attacked because of their foreign status; as well as homophobic bullying where learners were humiliated and besmirched on the basis of their sexual orientation (section 5.3.1.4). The data further revealed that racist bullying was rife in secondary schools where learners were shamed and tarnished on the basis of their race (section 5.3.1.5).

##### **6.4.2 Factors contributing to bullying**

The data from the transcripts concluded that the factors that significantly contributed to bullying perpetration in schools were influenced at three levels, namely, the level of the family, the level of the school, and the level of the community (section 5.3.3). At the family level, the study revealed that broken homes, poor upbringing, poor role models and media violence contributed significantly to bullying in schools (section 5.3.3.1). The school factors included peer pressure, power and attention, age cohort, physical attributes, anger and

jealousy and retribution (section 5.3.3.2). At the community level, the environment, drugs and alcohol, and cultural background and religion promoted bullying in schools (section 5.3.3.3). The study found that belief systems based on religious grounds categorised people into distinct groups triggering inter-religious discrimination and provided a catalyst for bullying perpetration in schools (section 5.3.3.3).

#### **6.4.3 The Impact of bullying behaviour**

The data from the interviews conducted with the circuit manager, principals, teachers and learners concluded that bullying had a negative impact not only on the victims but on all stakeholders of the school (section 5.3.3). The study found that the impact of bullying on learners was destructive and damaging to their morale and self-esteem and resulted in learners experiencing stress, fear, anxiety, depression, ill health and suicidal thoughts (5.3.3.1). In addition, bullying contributed appreciably to learner absenteeism, truancy, under-performance and drop-out rates. The data from the transcripts confirmed that bullying had a severe impact on teachers in schools causing them considerable humiliation and apprehension. Teachers expressed concern about the loss of teaching time because of the time taken to resolving bullying-related problems and complained about the lack of training to deal with bullies (section 5.3.3.2). Similarly, the study concluded that bullying had a negative impact at school management level because a great deal of administration time was spent setting up meetings with parents and outside agencies to solve the problems (section 5.3.3.3).

#### **6.4.4 Managing the problem of bullying**

The empirical findings confirmed that managing the problem of bullying in secondary schools was a serious challenge facing SMTs mainly because of the absence of an effective code of conduct policy and a lack of support from the various stakeholders of the school system (section 5.3.4). Most participants alluded to the fact that the learner code of conduct, when applied in its present form, was ineffective and required an urgent review. Additionally, all role players (the Department of Education, the school, the parents and outside agencies) needed to work collectively and collaboratively on this issue so that it is appropriately and effectively addressed (section 5.3.4). The participants emphasised the important role that needed to be played by the Department of Education in providing

counselling and psychological services to the schools (section 5.3.4.1). The role of the circuit manager regarding supporting the efforts of the school in addressing the problem and empowering principals to deal with conflict was also highlighted (5.3.4.2). At the level of the school, the roles of the principals, the SMT members, teachers and learners (RCL) were not only significant but also absolutely necessary in dealing with bullying (section 5.3.4.3). Furthermore, the role of outside agencies such as the SAPS , social workers, community leaders, religious leaders, motivational speakers, councillors and chiefs (particularly in rural areas) were critical with regard to supporting the efforts of the school in curbing bullying (section 5.3.4.4).

## **6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the basis of the research findings and taking the views of the participants in the study into account, the following recommendations are made to manage bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

### **6.5.1 The role of the Department of Education**

The fundamental responsibility of the Department of Education (DOE) is to provide support to schools so that they are able to carry out their mandate successfully with regard to providing quality teaching and learning in schools. However, data from the transcripts confirmed that support from the Department of Education was considerably lacking and schools were left to their own devices to manage the problem of bullying that was widespread and spiralling out of control in most secondary schools (section 5.3.4.1).

Most participants in the study complained about the lack of support from the Department of Education with respect to the provision of counselling and psychological services to schools (section 5.3.4.1). Furthermore, the participants expressed concern about the absence of specialist personnel such as guidance counsellors and school psychologists who previously played a pivotal role in supporting schools by providing individual attention to learners with behavioural difficulties thereby allowing teaching and learning to continue uninterrupted in classrooms. While the participants acknowledged the recent establishment of service centres in each circuit, the services were found to be largely ineffective because of serious staffing shortages and a lack of resources that made it impossible for these

personnel to reach all schools as only one counsellor and one psychologist was attached to each circuit that served over a hundred schools (section 5.3.4.1). Apart from this, the unavailability of transport for officials to visit schools was a serious problem as only a few or sometimes no vehicles were available at circuits to cater for the various department officials who needed to visit schools.

Accordingly, the DOE must ensure the provision of counselling and psychological services to schools when providing appropriate and effective support to schools, as these are essential elements with regard to discipline management of learners and necessary for guiding and shaping learners who display disruptive and violent behaviour through special programmes (section 6.5.1.1). Service centres should be appropriately staffed and sufficiently resourced to cater for schools in the whole circuit where these specialised personnel are able to reach every school on a monthly basis or at least twice every term to assist with learners who display behavioural and psychological problems. For that reason, the creation of a separate budget for the recruitment of these specialised personnel and the extension of the existing fleet of vehicles at all circuits should become the top priority for the Department of Education when budgets are drawn up each year.

### **6.5.2 The role of the circuit manager**

The role of the circuit manager in supporting the efforts of the school in addressing discipline problems and empowering principals to deal with conflict situations cannot be overemphasised (section 5.3.4.2). Circuit managers have an instructional leadership role to play in order to promote development and provide support to their schools (Mafuwane & Pitsoe 2014:443). Of foremost importance, is the circuit manager's responsibility to support school principals, SMTs and SGBs in the management, administration and governance of schools (section 5.3.4.2). Accordingly, the researcher recommends that circuit managers should make frequent visits to schools as this will have a direct impact on the general discipline and ethos of the school and promote a climate for effective teaching and learning to take place. By their mere presence at schools, circuit managers should influence the actions of the principal, teachers and learners positively and constructively.

Additionally, the circuit manager has a responsibility to ensure that circuit and district policies are upheld in schools and must work directly with the stakeholders of the school

with respect to the strategies that may be employed for improving school and classroom management in accordance with the school's code of conduct (section 5.3.4.2). Furthermore, when providing support to the principal and staff, the circuit manager, must ensure that the learners' code of conduct is developed within the parameters of relevant and existing legislation and as propounded by the SASA Act No: 84 of 1996) and clarified to all stakeholders of the school, namely, principal, SMTs, teachers, parents and learners (RSA 2003). The circuit manager interviewed in this study recommended that whenever principals meetings are called by the circuit, the code of conduct and issues of school discipline such as bullying must form part of the agenda of the meeting so that principals experiencing success with discipline in their schools can share strategies with principals experiencing problems so that they may be empowered to deal with the problems at their schools (section 5.3.4.2).

However, Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014:439) point out that the reality is that circuit managers are mostly in contact with school principals at service meetings and workshops and seminars, but seldom meet teachers to discuss matters pertaining to development and support. For that reason, it is recommended that circuit managers play a proactive role and provide programmes for the development and support of all staff in their circuits with a view to improving learner performance and learner discipline. Importantly, circuit managers need to emphasise CPTD in their schools by engaging principals, SMTs and teachers in collaborative activities at circuit and school levels to enhance their professional development, in all areas of school management including bullying and learner discipline (Steyn 2015:160) as cited in section 5.3.4.2.

### **6.5.3 The role of the school**

All the stakeholders of the school have a responsibility to work collaboratively and collectively towards the holistic development of learners by promoting pro-social behaviour and discouraging anti-social behaviour. The data from the transcripts confirmed that the single most important policy document in as far as learner discipline is concerned is the learner code of conduct, which every school should develop and implement clinically and meticulously and in consultation with all stakeholders of the school (section 5.3.4.3). However, the participants in this study complained that the code of conduct policy was



extremely vague on discipline issues and was as such, ineffective and restrictive with respect to appropriate sanctions for code violations.

Therefore, it becomes imperative for every school to review the school code of conduct to include bullying as an important sub-section of the policy that will deal specifically with bullying-related transgressions where code violations are sanctioned appropriately according to the severity of the bullying incident. In this regard, the crucial role played by the principal, the SMT, the teachers, learners of the RCL and parents in reviewing the policy for relevance collectively and collaboratively, provided it is maintained within the ambit of the South African School's Act, becomes increasingly significant.

#### **6.5.3.1 The role of the principal**

The important role that the principal plays in leading the school at all levels is well established. Accordingly, the primary responsibility of the principal as head of the institution is the establishment of an orderly school climate conducive to teaching and learning (section 5.3.4.3). However, the principal needs to establish a disciplined school environment first before an effective learning environment can be achieved. The principal, as head of the institution, plays a pivotal role in guiding the formulation of rules and regulations in the school, specifically the school's code of conduct policy, in order to maintain good discipline and orderly conduct. However, the difficulty for school principals is that the options for punishing learners to discourage inappropriate behaviour have been removed from their repertoire of possible actions as policies have to be drawn up within the constraints of the SASA Act 84 of 1996 (section 5.3.4.3) (RSA 2003). Hence, any punitive action of a physical nature would be illegal as corporal punishment in South African Schools is abolished. Therefore, in adopting other strategies principals of schools must:

- Develop an effective code of conduct policy for learners in consultation with teachers, learners and parents.
- Clarify the contents of the code of conduct policy with teachers and parents during meetings and with learners during morning assemblies until it is well understood.
- Apply the code of conduct consistently and fairly to all learners.
- Make time to listen to the victims of bullying as well as the perpetrators.

- Make bullies understand the consequences of their actions and emphasise the need for them to adopt a pro-social attitude.
- Request outside assistance (social workers, psychologists, police, local councillors, religious leaders , for example) whenever required.
- Refer extreme cases of bullying to the disciplinary committee
- DC of the SGB for a full investigation.
- Engage learners in extra-curricular activities such as sports and co-curricular activities such as speech and debates during breaks and after school.
- Be visible in the school corridors, on the stairwells and the schoolyard, on the playing fields so that learners are aware of your constant presence within the school premises.
- Ensure that the ground duty roster is available to all teachers so that their constant presence at the various duty points may prevent possible bullying incidents.

#### **6.5.3.2 The role of the school management team (SMT)**

The SMT comprising of the deputy principal and heads of department play an important supportive role to the efforts of the school principal in the management of the school in general and in curbing discipline problems in particular (section 5.3.4.3). Data from the interviews with the various participants in the study provided important suggestions for consideration by SMTs to manage the problem of bullying better. As such, SMTs must:

- Involve learners in policy formulation so that they take ownership of the rules that have been agreed upon.
- Clarify the code of conduct to all learners to ensure that the sanctions for misdemeanours are well understood.
- Adopt an open-door policy and have a good rapport with learners so that they can openly discuss problems in an unrestricted manner.
- Provide pastoral care not only to victims of bullying but to the perpetrators as well.
- Counsel learners and engage in frequent follow-up sessions so that they are moulded in the right direction.
- Delve into the child's background to understand the social issues affecting the child and engage with the relevant members of the community in identifying problems and providing solutions.

- Engage in proactive rather than reactive strategies to improve behaviour and promote a healthy and open discourse conducive to free expression.
- Access support from social workers, school psychologists and other social partners when required.

### **6.5.3.3 The role of the teacher**

The teacher as a classroom practitioner, has an important responsibility amongst others, to maintain discipline in the classroom. The authority and responsibility for discipline must reside with teachers (Abrikian 2012:1). Teachers play a central role in managing and preventing bullying and should be decidedly involved in the implementation of bullying interventions within their schools (Roberts 2011:77). Participants in the study highlighted the role teachers should play in reducing bullying in schools (section 5.3.4.3). Teachers must:

- Supervise learners properly both inside and outside the classroom.
- Devise strategies to magnify learning and behavioural expectations.
- Discuss the code of conduct thoroughly with learners so that its contents are well understood.
- Re-direct learners unable or unwilling to participate in learning activities through positive reinforcement.
- Be observant of disruptive learner behaviour during class lessons and when on ground duty.
- Keep learners purposefully occupied both in class and during break times.
- Prepare adequately and thoroughly before presenting lessons.
- Engage learners in learning activities that keep them purposefully occupied for the full duration of the lesson.
- Stand up against bullies so that a safe and disciplined climate is created in the classroom.
- Engage learners in sports during lunch breaks where learners will manage their frustrations through the process of play rather than through violent means.
- Not inflict corporal punishment on any learner as this is not only unlawful, but also exacerbates aggressive behaviour.

- Attend workshops and training sessions on conflict resolution and management of bullying behaviour.

Work hand-in-hand with the management and parents of the school in addressing bullying-related problems through frequent follow-ups and on-going dialogue.

#### **6.5.3.4 The role of the representative council of learners (RCL)**

The participation of learners in school governance in South African secondary schools was legislated in 1996 through the SASA Act No. 84 of 1996 (Phaswana 2010:105). As such, learners have a critically important role to play in supporting the efforts of the principal, SMT and teachers through a partnership that addresses the problem of bullying in schools positively. Accordingly, participants in the study made the following recommendations in respect of the responsibilities of RCL members. The RCL should:

- Have a good rapport with learners; they must be available and accessible to learners who are experiencing stressful situations and challenges in their lives.
- Arrange one-on-one meetings with both the victims as well as the perpetrators and try to nip the problem before it can escalate to higher levels.
- Communicate sympathetically with victims as well as perpetrators so that a compromise can be achieved.
- Create a climate conducive to easy dialogue since RCL members operate at the same level as learners and will be able to express themselves more freely with each other.
- Listen attentively to what the victims and perpetrators are saying and take notes so that they may discuss solutions to the problem at their RCL meetings.
- Refer extreme cases to the teachers, SMTs and principal to manage.
- Support the efforts of outside agencies proactively when required to give evidence or important information.
- Create a “help desk” where learners write their problems down and drop it off in the box for discussions and possible solutions.
- Request management to provide more sports facilities so that learners may be purposefully engaged during breaks and after school.
- Create a variety of board games such as draughts, chess, dominoes, for example, which may be played in groups indoors under RCL supervision.

### 6.5.3.5 The role of the parent

The importance of a strong partnership between the school and the home cannot be overemphasised. Parents play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes that produce good behaviour in schools and their inculcation of proper discipline in their children can hardly be overestimated (Wolhuter & Steyn 2003:530). Parents have a duty to assist the school in enforcing high standards of learner conduct in order that education may be carried out in an atmosphere that is free of disruption and threats to persons and property. Participants in the study expressed concern about the absence of parental involvement in the education of their children and complained about the final responsibility falling on their shoulders in school (section 5.3.4.3). Therefore, it becomes imperative that parents begin to show more interest in their children's welfare and support the school by responding positively to requests from schools for their assistance. Accordingly, parents have the ultimate responsibility to:

- Teach their children good moral and ethical values.
- Listen attentively to their children and support them emotionally.
- Provide their children with the basic needs such as food, water and shelter.
- Be a role model for their children by behaving appropriately and responsibly at home and in their communities.
- Provide pastoral care to their children by showing them unconditional love, caring and support.
- Enjoy a good rapport with their children that promotes a healthy two-way communication.
- Use proactive discipline strategies to guide appropriate and acceptable behaviour.
- Develop their children in such a way that they embrace responsible attitudes towards school.
- Know where their children are at all times.
- Attend parent meetings called by the school.
- Find time to meet with teachers at least once a term, to discuss the child's progress and behaviour.

- Support the school and SGB by addressing learners in the school assembly on issues of discipline and behaviour.
- Consult with the school immediately when it is suspected that something is wrong with the child's sudden change in behaviour or sudden drop in performance.
- Co-operate with the school, social workers, school psychologists, and police in their investigation of serious misconduct by approaching the problem with a fair and mature attitude rather than being defensive and overly protective even though there is ample evidence against the child.

#### **6.5.4 The role of outside agencies**

Paramount to the managing of bullying in secondary schools, is the supportive role that should be played by the police, councillors, religious leaders, motivational speakers and chiefs from the community (section 5.3.4.4). Participants in the study emphasised the need for outside agencies to collectively and collaboratively respond to the problems emanating from schools with regard to bullying behaviour. The following are recommendations with respect to what outside agencies should do to assist schools with discipline problems:

- The SAPS should conduct regular raids for dangerous weapons and drugs and alcohol in secondary schools.
- The SAPS should also address learners on a regular basis on various social issues including coercive bullying behaviour and its consequences for learners and the community at large. This should be presented in a constructive rather than in an intimidating manner so that the problem is reduced rather than escalated.
- The ward councillors of the ward in which the school is located should play a proactive role in liaising with parents of bullies and encouraging them to co-operate with the school in solving bullying related incidents.
- Ward councillors should also take the lead to mentor and guide learners with disciplinary problems in their communities to follow the correct path, thereby, assisting schools in their quest to curb bullying.
- Ward councillors have an important responsibility to secure funds from their respective municipalities for the improvement of sports facilities in their communities to keep youngsters purposefully occupied and out of trouble.

- Religious leaders in the community have an important duty to instil moral and religious values in the children of the community that they serve. They should visit the families where children exhibit bullying behaviour with the intention of creating an awareness of what behaviour is acceptable and what is not through the imparting of religious literature, careful coaching and prayer.
- Motivational speakers, like doctors, lawyers, successful businessmen, nurses, police officers, rehabilitated convicts, rehabilitated drug addicts and alcoholics should be contacted to make motivational speeches in the school assembly on the need for children to become responsible citizens by denouncing ill-discipline and violence and embracing a path that will lead to educational growth and excellence.
- Chiefs in charge of rural communities have a responsibility to discipline learners exhibiting violent behaviour in rural schools that fall under their area of domain. They need to work in collaboration with their Indunas who are in charge of the various tribal areas to identify children displaying violent behaviour and to discipline these learners in a tribal court so that law and order are maintained in schools within the chief's jurisdiction.

## **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

The following recommendations are made for further study:

- Since this study concentrated on rural and semi-rural secondary schools in the Uthungulu district of KwaZulu-Natal, further studies on the phenomenon of bullying should be conducted in urban secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal so that the outcomes may be compared for similarities and differences.
- The participants in this study included the circuit manager, principals of schools, SMTs, teachers and learners but excluded participants such as directors at district and provincial levels as well as parents. Further study should include these participants so that a more holistic perspective on the phenomenon is achieved.
- The study focussed on the perspectives of learners from the RCL. Further studies should focus on the perspectives of the actual victims of bullying as well as the perspectives of the bullies themselves so that a more intimate and first-hand account is received with

respect to the extent to which victims suffer at the hands of bullies and also why bullies bully other children in the first place.

## **6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The limitations of the study are as follows:

- Since this study was conducted in rural secondary schools, the findings of the study cannot be generalised to urban secondary schools.
- Parents, the actual victims of bullying, the bullies themselves and the higher level department officials such as directors and the regional head of department, were not incorporated in the study and could have provided a more in-depth perspective of the problem of bullying and the management of bullying from a district and regional perspective.

The five secondary schools studied came from the same circuit in the Uthungulu district. Schools from the other circuits in the Uthungulu district could be included as well in further studies to gain a district-wide perspective on the phenomenon.

## **6.8 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study was to highlight the severity of bullying perpetration in secondary schools in the Uthungulu district of KwaZulu-Natal. Furthermore, the study set out to identify the factors contributing to bullying in secondary schools, determine the impact of bullying on all stakeholders of the school, and on the basis of the findings provide a model to curb bullying in secondary schools. In order to achieve this, a qualitative research design and methodology was employed where the circuit manager, principals, SMTs, teachers, and learners (RCL) of five secondary schools were interviewed to obtain their perspectives on the phenomenon. Strict ethical principles were adhered to throughout and the study was evaluated for reliability and validity.

The study found that the factors that contributed considerably to bullying perpetration in secondary schools were located at the level of the family, the school and the community. In addition, the study established that the impact of bullying was so severe that it affected the day-to-day functioning of the school from a management perspective where a great deal of



time was spent managing the problem, which substantially reduced valuable teaching and learning time. The impact was also felt significantly among victims who experienced low self-esteem, humiliation, embarrassment, and palpable levels of stress and anxiety, which ultimately led to appreciable rates of absenteeism, truancy, school drop-out, transfers to other schools, ill-health, depression and even suicide.

On the basis of the findings, a model to curb bullying in secondary schools was presented, which required all the stakeholders of the school working collectively as a team to manage the problem effectively and efficiently so that a discernible reduction of the problem was observed and the core business of teaching and learning could be pursued uninterruptedly. In addition, the recommendations for further study were offered with the limitations of the study clearly outlined.

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ANNEXTURE A



0825 M1RST

SINGH G D MR  
P O BOX 1630  
STANGER  
4450

STUDENT NUMBER : 0522-029-7

ENQUIRIES NAME : POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS  
ENQUIRIES TEL : (012) 441-5702

DATE : 2015-01-13

Dear Student

I wish to inform you that your registration has been accepted for the academic year indicated below. Kindly activate your Unisa mylife (<https://myunisa.ac.za/portal>) account for future communication purposes and access to research resources. Please check the information below and kindly inform the Master's and doctoral section on [mandd@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mandd@unisa.ac.za) on any omissions or errors.

DEGREE : DED (EDUC MANAGEMENT) (98437)  
TITLE : Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu district of Kwazulu-Natal  
SUPERVISOR : Prof GM STEYN  
ACADEMIC YEAR : 2015  
TYPE: THESIS  
SUBJECTS REGISTERED: TFE05 D ED - EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

A statement of account will be sent to you shortly.

If you intend submitting your dissertation/thesis for examination, complete form DSAR20 (Notice of Intention to Submit) before 30 September. If this deadline is not met, you need to re-register and submit your intention for submission by 15 April and submit your dissertation by 15 June.

Your supervisor's written consent for submission must accompany your notice of intention to submit.

Yours faithfully,

Prof QM Temane  
Registrar (Acting)



University of South Africa  
Pretorius Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)



education

Department:  
Education  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

APPENDIX B

Enquiries: Nomangisi Ngubane

Tel: 033 392 1004

Ref.:2/4/8/403

Mr GD Singh  
PO Box 1630  
STANGER  
4450

Dear Mr Singh

#### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "DEVELOPING A MODEL TO CURB BULLYING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE UTHUNGULU DISTRICT OF KWAZULU-NATAL", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 May 2015 to 30 June 2016.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Connie Kehologile at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

UThungulu District

Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD  
Head of Department: Education  
Date: 29/04/2015

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa ...dedicated to service and performance

PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004 beyond the call of duty

EMAIL ADDRESS: [kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za](mailto:kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za) / [Nomangisi.Ngubane@kzndoe.gov.za](mailto:Nomangisi.Ngubane@kzndoe.gov.za)

CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363; Fax: 033 392 1203 WEBSITE: [WWW.kzneducation.gov.za](http://WWW.kzneducation.gov.za)

APPENDIX C



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

15 July 2015

Ref #: 2015/07/15/5220297/21/MC  
Student#: Mr GD Singh  
Student Number #: 5220297

Dear Mr Singh

**Decision: Ethics Approval**

**Researcher**

Mr GD Singh  
Tel: +27 32 5515164/+2778 411 2366  
[gdsingh@telkomsa.net](mailto:gdsingh@telkomsa.net)

**Supervisor**

Prof GM Steyn  
College of Education  
Department of Education Management and Leadership  
Tel: +27 12 6644256/+2782 886 7468  
[Steyngm1@unisa.ac.za](mailto:Steyngm1@unisa.ac.za)

**Proposal:** Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of Kwazulu-Natal

**Qualification:** D Ed in Education Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for 2 years.

**For full approval:** The application/ resubmitted documentation was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee on 15 July 2015.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the College of Education Ethics Review Committee.



University of South Africa  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

## **APPENDIX D**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: CIRCUIT MANAGER [INDIVIDUAL]**

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. Describe your experience of bullying in secondary schools in your circuit.
2. What types of bullying behaviour are largely prevalent in the schools that fall under your circuit?
3. As a circuit manager, what would you regard as the main causes of bullying in the schools that fall under your jurisdiction?
4. From your experiences of visits to your schools, what impact does bullying have on all stakeholders of the school?
5. What policies do the circuit and districts have in place to manage bullying?
6. Explain your experience of interventions you made in schools where bullying occurred.
7. What role should circuit managers play in addressing bullying in schools?

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: PRINCIPAL [INDIVIDUAL]**

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. What is your experience of bullying at your school?
2. What personality characteristics have you observed bullies displaying at your school?
3. What in your opinion causes bullying in schools?
4. What are the consequences of bullying behaviour on the various stakeholders in your school?
5. Please give an example in which you were involved in addressing bullying in your school?
6. What role should a principal play in addressing bullying in schools?
7. Can you explain the extent of parental involvement in curbing bullying in your school?

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: SMT [FOCUS GROUP]**

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. How serious is the problem of bullying in your school? Please elaborate.
2. What are your experiences, as the school management team, of bullying in your school?
3. What in your opinion are the underlying causes of bullying at your school?
4. From your observation and management of bullying in your school, what are some of the visible consequences of bullying on the victims?
5. What role should the SMT play in addressing the problem of bullying?
6. What is the school policy on bullying in your school?



## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: TEACHERS [FOCUS GROUP]**

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Could you please relate an incident of your experience of bullying at your school?
2. From your observation, what personality characteristics do bullies generally display in your classroom?
3. What characteristics do victims of bullying display?
4. What would you say are the underlying causes of bullying at your school?
5. What are the consequences of bullying on victims?
6. What role can teachers play to curb bullying in schools?
7. What role do you think managers (principals, SMT, circuit managers) should play in addressing bullying in schools?

## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: REPRESENTATIVE OF COUNCIL LEARNERS [FOCUS GROUP]**

### **QUESTIONS**

1. What are your experiences of bullying in your school?
2. What do you think causes bullying behaviour?
3. What are the consequences of bullying behaviour?
4. What role should the principal and teachers play to reduce bullying in schools?
5. What role should parents play in addressing the problem of bullying in schools?
6. What can the RCL do to help reduce bullying in this school?

## **APPENDIX E**

### **APPENDIX E [1]: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN DOE INSTITUTIONS**

**Request for permission to conduct research in selected schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.**

P.O. BOX 1630

STANGER

KWAZULU-NATAL

4450

**Title: Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.**

Dr. Nkosinathi Sishi

Head of Department: Education

KZN Department of Education

Private Bag X 9137

Pietermaritzburg

3200

Dear Dr. Sishi

I, Gunam Dolan Singh, am doing research towards a Doctorate of Education degree with the University of South Africa, with Prof G.M. Steyn, a Professor in the Department of Education Management. We are inviting schools in the Uthungulu District to participate in a study entitled: Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

The study will entail the purposive selection of five secondary schools whose school principals will participate in thirty minutes long in-depth interviews aimed at soliciting their experiences in the problem of bullying in secondary schools. The school principals of the selected schools will help the researcher select, three SMT members (School management team) as focus group interview, as well as six to eight experienced and beginner teachers at each of the selected schools who will participate in focus group interviews which will be approximately forty minutes long. Furthermore, principals will assist in selecting eight learners representing the schools representative council of learners (RCL) to participate in a focus group interview. Additionally, the circuit manager of the selected schools will be interviewed individually to provide information on the problem of bullying in

the schools that fall under her jurisdiction. The interviews will be audio recorded. The researcher will also analyse school policies, department policies and incident record books at schools for more information.

The purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, determine its impact on all the stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of these findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal. The benefits of this study are that the experiences of principals, teachers, learners and the circuit manager will provide invaluable feedback to policy makers in an attempt to reduce the incidence of bullying in secondary schools.

There are no known or anticipated risks to participants in this study. Furthermore, all information gathered from participants will be held in strict confidence and schools and participants will not be identifiable in print as code names will be used throughout the study. In this way, the researcher will guarantee the participant's privacy and anonymity. I will make the final report available to all research participants, including the Department of Education as well as the University of South Africa for future reference and use. I may be contacted at any time on 0784112366.

I, hereby, request the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to grant me permission to conduct the research in five selected secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

I trust that this request will be viewed favourably.

Yours sincerely

Gunam Dolan Singh

(Researcher)

**APPENDIX E [2]: LETTER REQUESTING CIRCUIT MANAGER TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW**

P.O. BOX 1630

STANGER

KWAZULU-NATAL

4450

DEAR MR/ MRS/ MS .....

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study that I, Gunam Dolan Singh, am conducting as part of my research as a doctoral student entitled: Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Professor GM Steyn. Permission for the study has been given by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience related to my research topic. In this individual interview I would like to have your candid views and opinions on this topic.

The purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, determine the consequences of bullying behaviour on all the stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings of the study, to develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately forty five minutes in length to take place at the location of your choice at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or to clarify any points. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password

protected computer for 12 months in my locked office. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 0784112366 or by e-mail at [gdsingh@telkomsa.net](mailto:gdsingh@telkomsa.net).

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the interview consent and confidentiality form which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Gunam Dolan Singh

(Researcher)

**APPENDIX E [3]: LETTER REQUESTING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW**

P.O. BOX 1630

STANGER

KWAZULU-NATAL

4450

Dear Mr/ Mrs/Ms .....

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study that I, Gunam Dolan Singh , am conducting as part of my research as a Doctorate of Education student entitled: Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Professor GM Steyn. Permission for the study has been given by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise related to my research topic. In this individual interview I would like to have your candid views and opinions on this topic.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately thirty minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

The purpose of the study is to identify the root cause of bullying in secondary schools, determine the consequences of bullying behavior on all stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or to clarify any points. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 12 months in my locked office. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 0784112366 or by e-mail at gdsingh@telkomsa.net.

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the consent form which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Gunam Dolan Singh

(Researcher: Unisa)

**APPENDIX E [4]: LETTER REQUESTING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS TO ALLOW THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM, TEACHERS AND LEARNERS TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW**

P.O. BOX 1630

STANGER

KWAZULU-NATAL

4450

Dear Mr/ Mrs/Ms .....

I hereby request the school principal to allow your School Management Team (SMT) , teachers and learners to participate in a study that I, Gunam Dolan Singh , am conducting as part of my research as a Doctorate of Education student entitled: Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Professor GM Steyn. Permission for the study has been given by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise related to my research topic. In this individual interview I would like to have your candid views and opinions on this topic.

The participation of members of the school management team, teachers and learners in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview with the school management team (SMT) comprising a deputy principal and two heads of department (approximately thirty minutes), between six to eight teachers as a focus group (approximately forty minutes) and eight representative of council learners (RCL) as a focus group (approximately forty minutes) to take place at your school at a time convenient to you. Participants may decline to answer any of the interview questions if they so wish. Furthermore, they may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

The purpose of the study is to identify the root cause of bullying in secondary schools, determine the consequences of bullying behavior on all stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

With the kind permission of all participants, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send participants a copy of the transcript to give them an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of the information and to add or to clarify any points. All information provided by participants will be considered completely confidential. Their names will not appear in any



publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with their permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 12 months in my locked office. There are no known or anticipated risks to participants in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information, please contact me at 0784112366 or by e-mail at [gdsingh@telkomsa.net](mailto:gdsingh@telkomsa.net).

I look forward to a favorable response and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If the participants mentioned above accept my invitation to participate, I will request them to sign the consent form which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Gunam Dolan Singh

(Researcher: Unisa)

**APPENDIX E [5]: LETTER REQUESTING MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT) TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW**

P.O. BOX 1630

STANGER

KWAZULU-NATAL

4450

DEAR MR/ MRS/ MS .....

This letter is an invitation to members of the school management team to consider participating in a study that I, Gunam Dolan Singh, am conducting as part of my research as a doctoral student entitled: Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Professor GM Steyn. Permission for the study has been given by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience related to my research topic. In this focus group interview I would like to have your candid views and opinions on this topic.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview with the school management team (SMT) to take place at your school at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

The purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, determine the consequences of bullying behavior on all stakeholders of the school system, and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or to clarify any points. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 12 months in my locked office. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 0784112366 or by e-mail at gdsingh@telkomsa.net.

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the interview consent and confidentiality form which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Gunam Dolan Singh

(Researcher)

**APPENDIX E [6]: LETTER REQUESTING TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW**

P.O. BOX 1630

STANGER

KWAZULU-NATAL

4450

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms .....

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study that I, Gunam Dolan Singh, am conducting as part of my research as a doctoral student entitled: Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal, at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Professor GM Steyn. Permission for the study has been given by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience related to my research topic. In this focus group interview I would like to have your candid views and opinions on this topic.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve a focus group interview of approximately forty minutes in length to take place at your school at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

The purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, determine the consequences of bullying behavior on all stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

With your kind permission, the focus group interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or to clarify any points. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 12 months in my locked office. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 0784112366 or by e-mail at gdsingh@telkomsa.net.

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the focus group interview consent and confidentiality form which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Gunam Dolan Singh

(Researcher: Unisa)

**APPENDIX E [7]: LETTER REQUESTING PARENTS TO ALLOW LEARNERS TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW**

P.O. BOX 1630

STANGER

KWAZULU-NATAL

4450

DEAR MR/ MRS/ MS .....

This letter is an invitation to parents/ guardians to consider participation of your child/ ward in a study that I, Gunam Dolan Singh, am conducting as part of my research as a doctoral student entitled: Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Professor GM Steyn. Permission for the study has been given by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. I have purposefully identified you child/ward as a possible participant because of their valuable experience related to my research topic. In this focus group interview I would like to have your child/ward's candid views and opinions on this topic.

Your child/ ward's participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately forty minutes in length to take place at the school at a time convenient to the principal and learners. You child/ ward may decline to answer any of the interview questions if they so wish. Furthermore, your child/ward may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

The purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, determine the consequences of bullying behavior on all stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send your child/ward a copy of the transcript to give them an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or to clarify any points. All information they provide is considered completely confidential. Your child/wards name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your child/ward's permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this

study will be retained on a password protected computer for 12 months in my locked office. There are no known or anticipated risks to your child/ward's participation in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 0784112366 or by e-mail at [gdsingh@telkomsa.net](mailto:gdsingh@telkomsa.net).

I look forward to speaking with your child/ward and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation for your child/ward to participate, I will request you to sign the interview consent and confidentiality form which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Gunam Dolan Singh

(Researcher: Unisa)

**APPENDIX E [8]: LETTER REQUESTING REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL OF LEARNERS (RCL) TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW**

P.O. BOX 1630

STANGER

KWAZULU-NATAL

4450

DEAR MR/ MRS/ MS .....

This letter is an invitation to members of the representative council of learners (RCL) to consider participating in a study that I, Gunam Dolan Singh, am conducting as part of my research as a doctoral student entitled: Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Professor GM Steyn. Permission for the study has been granted by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience related to my research topic. In this focus group interview I would like to have your candid views and opinions on this topic.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview with eight members of the representative council of learners (RCL) to take place at your school at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

The purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, determine the consequences of bullying behavior on all stakeholders of the school system, and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or to clarify any points. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password



protected computer for 12 months in my locked office. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 0784112366 or by e-mail at [gdsingh@telkomsa.net](mailto:gdsingh@telkomsa.net).

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the interview assent and confidentiality form which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Gunam Dolan Singh

(Researcher: Unisa)

## APPENDIX F CONSENT FORMS

### APPENDIX F [1]: CONSENT FROM THE CIRCUIT MANAGER TO PARTICIPATE IN D.ED RESEARCH PROJECT

I hereby agree to participate in the in the D.ED research project conducted by *Gunam Dolan Singh*, a student of the university of South Africa, under the supervision of Prof G.M. Steyn, which is titled:

*Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.*

I understand that the researcher has been granted permission by the provincial Department of Education, KwaZulu-Natal to conduct research in secondary schools and has been given ethical clearance from the College of Education Ethics Review Committee, UNISA.

I understand also that the purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, to determine the consequences of bullying behaviour on all the stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand that the interview will last approximately forty five minutes and forms the final part of the study and that my name, personal details, opinions and responses shall be strictly confidential, and not divulged to anyone whatsoever. I also understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and risk-free, and that I may withdraw from the study at any stage, without penalty.

I further understand that I will not receive any cash benefits for my participation in the study but that a summary of the findings will be made available to me by the researcher at the conclusion of the study. I am also aware that the interviews will be tape-recorded and that all procedures relating to the interviews will be explained by the researcher, who may be reached on 0784112366, to answer any queries related to the study.

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CIRCUIT MANAGER

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DATE

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RESEARCHER

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DATE

**APPENDIX F [2]: CONSENT FROM SCHOOL PRINCIPAL TO PARTICIPATE IN D.ED RESEARCH PROJECT**

I hereby agree to participate in the D.ED Research project conducted by *Gunam Dolan Singh*, a student at the University of South Africa, under the supervision of Prof G.M. Steyn, which is titled:

*Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.*

I understand that the researcher has been granted permission by the provincial Department of Education, KwaZulu-Natal to conduct research in secondary schools and has been given ethical clearance from the College of Education Ethics Review Committee, UNISA.

I understand that the purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, to determine the consequences of bullying behaviour on all the stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand that the interview will last approximately thirty minutes and forms the final part of the study and that my name, personal details, opinions and responses shall be strictly confidential, and not divulged to anyone whatsoever. I also understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and risk-free, and that I may withdraw from the study at any stage, without penalty.

I understand that I will not receive any cash benefits for my participation in the study but that a summary of the findings will be made available to me by the researcher at the conclusion of the study. I am also aware that the interviews will be tape-recorded and that all procedures relating to the interviews will be explained by the researcher, who may be reached on 0784112366, to answer any queries related to the study.

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PRINCIPAL

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DATE

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RESEARCHER

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DATE

### **APPENDIX F [3]: CONSENT FROM SCHOOL PRINCIPAL GRANTING PERMISSION FOR THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT), TEACHERS AND LEARNERS TO PARTICIPATE IN D.ED RESEARCH PROJECT**

I hereby authorise *Gunam Dolan Singh*, a student of the University of South Africa, under the supervision of Prof G.M. Steyn, to interview the School Management Team (SMT) comprising of the deputy principal and two heads of department (focus group), between six to eight teachers (focus group) and eight learners of the representative council of learners (RCL-focus group) of my school as part of his D.ED research project entitled:

*Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.*

I am fully aware that the researcher has been granted permission from the provincial Department of Education, KwaZulu-Natal to conduct research in secondary schools and has been given ethical clearance from the College of Education Ethics Review Committee, UNISA.

I understand that the purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, determine the consequences of bullying behaviour on all stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu district of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand that the research is for study purposes only, and the identities of all participants, the school, as well as the information supplied will be kept in strict confidence, and not divulged to anyone. I understand also that my school management team, teachers and learners agree to participate voluntarily, and may withdraw participation from the research at any time without prejudice or penalty.

I understand further that my school management team, teachers and learners will not receive any cash benefits for involving themselves in the study, but that they will have access to the findings, upon request. My school management team, teachers and learners are fully aware that the interviews will be tape-recorded and that all procedures relating to the interviews will be explained by the researcher prior to the commencement of the interviews and they are free to contact the researcher, *Gunam Dolan Singh*, who may be reached at 0784112366 to clarify any issues that may arise from the study.

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PRINCIPAL

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DATE

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RESEARCHER

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DATE

Bestpfe.com

**APPENDIX F [4]: CONSENT FROM MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT)  
TO PARTICIPATE IN D.ED RESEARCH PROJECT**

I hereby agree to participate in the in the D.ED research project conducted by *Gunam Dolan Singh*, a student of the university of South Africa, under the supervision of Prof G.M. Steyn, which is titled:

*Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.*

I understand that the researcher has been granted permission by the provincial Department of Education, KwaZulu-Natal to conduct research in secondary schools and has been given ethical clearance from the College of Education Ethics Review Committee, UNISA.

I understand also that the purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, to determine the consequences of bullying behaviour on all the stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu district of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand that the interview will last approximately forty five minutes and forms the final part of the study and that my name, personal details, opinions and responses shall be strictly confidential, and not divulged to anyone whatsoever. I also understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and risk-free, and that I may withdraw from the study at any stage, without penalty.

I further understand that I will not receive any cash benefits for my participation in the study but that a summary of the findings will be made available to me by the researcher at the conclusion of the study. I am also aware that the interviews will be tape-recorded and that all procedures relating to the interviews will be explained by the researcher, who may be reached on 0784112366, to answer any queries related to the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
CIRCUIT MANAGER

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
RESEARCHER

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

## APPENDIX F [5]: CONSENT FROM TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN D.ED RESEARCH PROJECT

I hereby agree to participate in the D.Ed Research project conducted by *Gunam Dolan Singh*, a student at the University of South Africa, under the supervision of Prof G.M. Steyn, which is titled:

*Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.*

I am aware of the fact that the researcher has been granted permission by the provincial Department of Education, KwaZulu-Natal to conduct research in secondary schools and has been given ethical clearance from the College of Education Ethics Review Committee, UNISA.

I understand that the purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, to determine the consequences of bullying behaviour on all the stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu district of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand also that the interview will last approximately thirty minutes and forms the final part of the study and that my name, personal details, opinions and responses shall be strictly confidential, and not divulged to anyone whatsoever. I also understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and risk-free, and that I may withdraw from the study at any stage, without penalty.

I understand that I will not receive any cash benefits for my participation in the study but that a summary of the findings will be made available to me by the researcher at the conclusion of the study. I am also aware that the interviews will be tape-recorded and that all procedures relating to the interviews will be explained by the researcher, who may be reached on 0784112366, to answer any queries related to the study.

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PRINCIPAL

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DATE

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RESEARCHER

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DATE

**APPENDIX F [6]: CONSENT FROM PARENTS GRANTING PERMISSION FOR PARTICIPATION OF LEARNERS IN D.ED RESEARCH PROJECT**

I hereby authorise *Gunam Dolan Singh*, a student at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Prof G.M.Steyn, to interview my child/ ward at school as part of his D.ED research study which is titled:

*Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu district of KwaZulu-Natal.*

I understand that the researcher has been granted permission by the provincial Department of Education, KwaZulu-Natal to conduct research in secondary schools and has been given ethical clearance from the College of Education Ethics Review Committee, UNISA.

I understand also that the purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, to determine the consequences of bullying behaviour on all the stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu district of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand that the interview will last approximately forty minutes and forms the final part of the study and that my child's/ward's name, personal details, opinions and responses shall be strictly confidential, and not divulged to anyone whatsoever. I also understand that my child's/ ward's participation in the study is voluntary and risk-free, and that my child/ward may withdraw from the study at any stage, without penalty.

I further understand that my child/ward will not receive any cash benefits for his/her participation in the study but that a summary of the findings will be made available to my child/ward by the researcher at the conclusion of the study. I am also aware that the interviews will be tape-recorded and that all procedures relating to the interviews will be explained to my child/ward by the researcher, who may be reached on 0784112366, to answer any queries related to the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
RESEARCHER

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE



**APPENDIX F [7]: ASSENT FROM MEMBERS OF THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL OF LEARNERS (RCL) TO PARTICIPATE IN D.ED RESEARCH PROJECT**

I hereby agree to participate in the D.Ed Research project conducted by *Gunam Dolan Singh*, a student at the University of South Africa, under the supervision of Prof G.M. Steyn, which is titled: *Developing a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.*

I understand that the researcher has been granted permission by the provincial Department of Education, KwaZulu-Natal to conduct research in secondary schools and has been given ethical clearance from the College of Education Ethics Review Committee, UNISA.

I understand that the researcher has already discussed my participation in this study with my parent/guardian and I have also agreed to participate in this study after discussing the matter with my parent/guardian. I also am aware that the researcher will send a copy of this assent form to my parent/guardian after I have signed it at the conclusion of the interview. I understand that the purpose of the study is to identify the root causes of bullying in secondary schools, to determine the consequences of bullying behaviour on all the stakeholders of the school system and on the basis of the findings, develop a model to curb bullying in secondary schools in the Uthungulu District of KwaZulu-Natal.

I understand that the focus group interview will last approximately forty minutes and forms the final part of the study and that my name, personal details, opinions and responses shall be strictly confidential, and not divulged to anyone whatsoever. I also understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and risk-free, and that I may withdraw from the study at any stage, without penalty.

I understand that I will not receive any cash benefits for my participation in the study but that a summary of the findings will be made available to me by the researcher at the conclusion of the study. I am also aware that the interviews will be tape-recorded and that all procedures relating to the interviews will be explained by the researcher, who may be reached on 0784112366, to answer any queries related to the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
LEARNER

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
RESEARCHER

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

## **APPENDIX G: TRANSCRIPT**

**SCHOOL: A**

**INTERVIEW: PRINCIPAL**

**CODES: INTERVIEWER [I]; PRINCIPAL [P]**

I: Okay, good day to you principal. I want to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to interview you today on this problem of bullying in secondary schools and I want to thank you very much for your time.

P: You're welcome.

I: Can we start with the first question. The first question is: What is your experience of bullying in your school?

P: Well bullying is everywhere and as a high school, we are no exception. We've had quite a number of cases of bullying taking place at my school as well and probably if I can just name a few which I think in one way or the other were quite major. Eh...the first one was that of a boy, without mentioning names of course, that stabbed another boy and it...it...it was a case of two boys fighting over a girlfriend and one of them, seeing that he had lost the fight in keeping this girl, brought in a knife to school and it was during break when the friends called in the other one to the toilet only to find that this one had a knife in the toilet, waiting for this other boy to come in and as he went in he was stabbed. That was really bad off course but we were there to intervene and obviously due processes took place... and one way or the other it actually affected the school in the sense that it brought down the name of the school as it was for the very first time we had seen the case of a boy stabbing another one within the premises of the school. The second one was that...well drugs is everywhere, like I said again it is no exception and it is 9 out of 10 times it is these big boys who will use the younger ones in school to sell dagga for them... eh it happened in our school not so long ago that the boy who was actually selling dagga decided not to give the money back eh...to the owner and it...it... went to such an extent that the boy started not coming into school and when we tried to find out...eh... as to what were the reasons for the boy not coming to the school, he said he was afraid... we had to dig deep into that only to find that he couldn't come to school because he had actually used the money for...for... for selling dagga of course and that money belonged to a bigger boy who was in our grade 12 class. We tried to intervene, we did not win because the next day the boy had a blue eye...because the boy still wanted his money...eh well we had to involve other stakeholders to come to our rescue for that to die down. Eh...the next incident eh...was eh..eh..eh was a relatively young boy who had just come to our school in a grade 8 class. Eh...we came to

notice that the boy was not performing well in class yet we had heard so much about him coming to our school that he was a star in the primary school and when we sat him down to find out why he was not really performing the boy said well there is a grade 11 learner... a bigger boy of course that is talking "tuck shop allowance" and when we went into that we found that he was always bringing in money for this other boy and on this day that he did not have the money the boy would slap him in full view of everyone else but to our surprise of course, this had never been reported until we saw that there was indeed something wrong with that boy. That is just the three major incidents that I would want to put forward. Obviously there are more and others would be minor than this but I just thought of these here being the major ones.

I: Okay, thank you so much for that sir. We'll go onto question two: What personality characteristics have you observed bullies displaying in your school? What kind of people are bullies?

P: Eh... well that's a difficult one. That's a very difficult one. But my experience tells me that it will be boys that are eh... well aggressive eh...in...in... in every way. These are people who wouldn't want to reason things out eh... they tend to be aggressive to the younger ones... more into their physique of course because the victims in bullying 9 out of 10 times would be those small in status as it were. You know, they tend to be very arrogant of course...they are the so-called "MR. Know-it-all", eh...they are old in the school- they know the ins and the outs of the school. They have been here long enough to be called...you know the main people of the school. They tend to use a lot of force of course and the sad part is that they always think of presenting themselves as the "untouchables" and obviously it will then lead to the younger ones having some fear even in terms of reporting them to us as management of the school. They fail to relate with others because they think everything can only be gained by force of course and they, in one way or the other, those are people that lack direction in life. They are here for the wrong reasons, if I may put it that way- 9 out 10 times the aim of coming to school would not be part of the core business- which is teaching and learning but they will come here with their own problems to create more problems for the school.

I: Thank you very much for that sir. We'll proceed to question three: What in your opinion causes bullying in your school?

P: Eh...there many reasons or factors that we can put in place that could lead to a child being bullied in school. But 9 out of 10 times, the main one would be the background the child brings to school. You will find that some will be child-headed, some will be very poor at home and the only place that they would feel power is in school of course. These are kids that are lost in society, that are actually looking for some acknowledgement- they are seeking for some recognition, that they want to be

known in...in...in school for that matter. It could also be the case of the environment that they come from- of late we have also been exposed to gangsters and they would then take the same attitude of gangsterism to school and would want to come in and ...and practice that. It could also lead to them being in a position of looking for a place a within their peers- and that would be peer pressure of course...they want to be recognised by their peers themselves and that then would mean they would bully others in...in...in.. their course for recognition of course. It could also be corporal punishment...of course... corporal punishment can lead to kids to start being bullied and start doing wrong things. It could also be lack of love from parents, lack of love from society as a whole where the kids will feel neglected, where they would feel like nobody's. They will then start bullying others to try and see if they do have any power at all. So there's a lot really of..of.. factors that could lead to doing things like that.

I: Thank you very much for that sir. We'll proceed to question four: What are the consequences of bullying behaviour on all the stakeholders of the school? How does bullying affect everyone in the school system?

P: Eh...well it...it...it will always boil down to the fact that...if there is something that is not going down well with you in school...eh...you will have fear- fear of coming to school, fear of being around people and fear of just being yourself of course. So it leads to fear, it leads to anger of course where a child will think "if I had the power" you know "if I was big enough" I could fight my own battles. So therefore, it would lead to anger on their part eh ... again they would be frustrated, experience low esteem where they would lose friends and they would feel less and less of themselves presenting themselves in a way that you would be happy as a child of course. It could lead to suicide- some would commit suicide just because they are being bullied in schools. And it could lead to them leaving school- dropping out of school because of bullying. On the side of the teachers of course, eh...eh.. if you have kids that are being bullied...it means you have a problem of discipline. And in terms of class management you will need a lot of other strategies you can put in place otherwise a lot of time is lost in terms of teaching and learning- time to sort this bullying thing out instead of doing the core business which is teaching and learning. And old as we are, it does affect us teachers in one way or the other because in some cases there are teachers who will be afraid to go to class. There are teachers who will not be in a position to present a lesson to the best of their potential because of this bullying and it therefore becomes difficult for us even to play this eh...motherly...eh...eh part of it...will be compromised because now we are now even afraid of the kids are teaching in our classes. Eh... on the management side, well we spend a lot of time dealing with these kids...we spend a lot of time dealing with them- time that could be used somewhere else

but we sit in our offices and we try and address things. It actually leads to a lot of chaos in school, it leads to a lot of kids playing truancy, it leads to a lot of kids becoming criminals, one way or the other because we go to such an extent that we involve outside people to try and assist- some cases are then referred to other places and one would say it leads to criminal activities of course.

I: Okay, thank you so much for that sir. Let us proceed to question five: Please give an example in which you were involved in addressing bullying in your school?

P: Eh...well if possible I just want to take you back to an incident of a boy had been bullied for three months. Eh... obviously as a school we have our procedures, we have the code of conduct for learners that is followed should an incident of this nature occur. So as a school we have to follow such procedures where we call in a child to write a statement. We then call in the parent to come in to school, and the parent was of course duly informed. Eh... the other learner also had to write a statement and the case was then addressed by the disciplinary team of the school but because it was again beyond them we had to refer the case to the school governing body and sanctions were then put in place for this boy and if I may add, the school governing body recommended that the boy is referred to a psychologist as a victim of course. Eh... he had also developed some symptoms that he did not even want to come to the school. So he was referred to the psychology part while we dealt with the other boy giving him of course the sanctions we developed for that.

I: Alright, thank you for that. In terms of your school policy on bullying or on discipline, do you think perhaps that your school policy is effective...working for you?

P: Eh...I don't really think it is working to the way that it is able to attest, you know this bullying in particular. Eh...it actually has a lot of gaps and shortcomings coming from the fact that...with the rights in particular being given to these kids, it really becomes difficult for us as a school eh... to work in such a way that we are able to set examples eh... in cases where we handle these for the next person not to do this. So it actually fails to address this bullying head-on because we are being restricted a lot obviously by the South African Law, the Constitution, The Bill of Rights and so on. So it is silent to tackle this bullying if I may put it that way.

I: Thank you for that sir. We will go on to the final question then. Can you explain the extent of parental involvement in curbing bullying and other incidences at school?

P: Eh...we had problems which we had put in place of course...and they would go to such an extent that they will involve parents. Now in our programmes for the year of course we do put aside days where parents are invited to school to present to kids the consequences of bullying- the negatives if I may put it that way, in terms of this bullying but I must say that again this is one fight as a school

alone we are not winning because we are not getting much support from the parents. Yes, we have the systems in place, but if you take a school like ours with an enrolment of 750 kids, only to find that on the day when parents call into school to tackle issues like bullying, you will get less than 15 parents coming to do that. You will see that even if you do have systems in place, if you do have programmes, I mean programmes that can curb bullying in your school, that we are not in a position where we can say we are fighting this collectively because bullying does not start in school- bullying is a social ill, which means it has to be taken outside eh...to the community, it has to be taken into our homes, and if we can collectively come together, we can come up with ideas and solutions as to how we can work this out but are not winning as a school, we are not getting much support here from the parents.

I: Eh ... I noticed the maximum sanction in most schools, and obviously within the constitution and the laws of the country, is suspension. Do you think that that's enough? Is the suspension working?

P: No it is not working- it is not working because often these kids will do that knowing that they'll only be suspended and in a few days time, we are back in school. Now, that then will boil down to the fact that in whatever we try and put in place to try and curb bullying, we will not win because law is on their side. So suspension as the ceiling, doesn't work. Recommending to the HOD (Head of Department) by the tribunal, by the school governing body for the expulsion of the child in a school- that too does not work because (1.it takes too long) and by the time it reaches the HOD's office, the child would have long forgotten and as a school again, we would have long forgotten...so even that too is not working. I will therefore, recommend if I had it my way to make a recommendation, that we are given powers as a school, that we don't stop at suspending kids but if there is a need, kids that are bullying others, should be expelled from school.

I: Your views on maybe the review of policies with regard to discipline in schools...what do you think? Maybe Department needs to consider that?

P: Absolutely, the department should consider reviewing some of the policies of course...eh... mainly the discipline part of it because as a school we sometimes feel a bit left out in one way or the other. We don't get much assistance from the department of education. They may have rules that they might put forward, they may have regulations that they might put forward, they might have policies that are there in place but those policies are restricting us as schools because the bottom line is bullying is taking place in schools, it is not taking place at the head-office. So if the department will bring in policies, that are too lenient to these kids, then it definitely will mean that we will never win this battle against kids that are bullying others in school and we will and we will always have

eh...eh...eh... incidents when kids will bully others knowing for sure that they will still remain in schools until they finish their schooling career.

I: Mr. Principal, I want to thank you very much for all the information you have given me on this particular topic at your school- I'm sure it's going to help me tremendously in the research and thank you very much for your time.

P: You most welcome.

**SCHOOL: A**

**INTERVIEW: SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT)**

**FOCUS GROUP**

**CODES: INTERVIEWER (I); SMT (SMT 1-3)**

I: Okay SMT, I want to welcome you to this interview and we are going to be talking about the incidence of bullying at your school and I would like all of you to give as much information as possible for each of the questions I have set for you. So welcome and we will move onto the first question. Our first question is: How serious is the problem of bullying in your school? Explain by relating a few incidences that took place.

SMT 1: Bullying seems to be a huge problem in our school. I remember an incident whereby came to school with a screwdriver. Then they were in class, they were eh...eh...talking. Then suddenly this boy who was very, very angry because there were some rumours that were spread about him. Then he took out his screwdriver and he stabbed this other boy and then after that he ran away and the teachers they followed him. They caught him, they brought him back to school and we phoned the police. The police came and they took him and then this other boy who was stabbed, we took him to the clinic. He nearly lost his life. It was something very, very serious. We had to call the parents of the boy who was stabbed, but eh...honestly the problem of bullying is very, very high in the seniors in our school.

I: Thank you. Maam can you relate an incident?

SMT 2: Eh... I will talk about emotional bullying...the one that I experienced in my class whereby one boy...I think he has an underlying problem emanating from home. So I think he wants to let other learners feel he is more superior than them...so he bullied them... at one instance he threatened a young boy and told him to buy lunch during break time Then when I discovered that, I interviewed

and spoke about that and I told him that if he continues, I will relay the matter to the parents but anyway I just tried as an educator to try and sort that problem out.

I: Thank you for that. Yes maam.

SMT 3: We do have a very serious problem of bullying in our school as I will relate an incident. I remember this incident of this boy who is as serious bully...he looks like he's on drugs. And he was bullying this other boy because of the girl because this other boy told this girl that he was on drugs...outside the school. But then this became a serious problem in such a way that this boy was being bullied (the victim)...they had to fight along the way to their homes...there were always fights. The way to his home, he had to pass through this boy's house and then it became a serious problem. We had to involve the parents, parents had to go to this boy's house to discuss this issue. Now this boy had to always be escorted or be with his friends because he was always afraid to be attacked by this boy. So it was like an incident that was very serious but then we involved the principal and the parents who came to the interview and somehow... and the girl came in too because of that and then somehow it was better. But it was very bad and the boy came forward too.

I: Is there any other incident that anyone would want to relate?

SMT 1: Oh...there was one incident whereby this boy... he is doing grade 11. He is a bully and then there was this small boy who was in grade 8. When they go home, they travel by bus and this boy who was older in grade 11 will always tease this small boy and this small boy got so frustrated that one day, he took out his scissors and he stabbed this bully...and all the learners were so happy about that, that this bully was stabbed by this small boy. And the parent came to school to report this. The we advised the parent to go to the police because according to our code of conduct, we are supposed to involve the police...so then we advised the parent to go to the police to open the case. But the police did not help a lot because that boy who was in grade 8 was still a minor. So then we ended up eh...eh... talking to both parents and we did give this boy a punishment.

I: Thank you very much for that. You've done well in the first question. We'll move on to the second question: What in your opinion are the underlying causes of bullying in your school?

SMT 1: I think the causes for bullying...you know...sometimes it's the learners... they got the problem at home. Some learners they are brought up by single parents, so they always angry because they don't know their father. So when they come to school, they see these other learners coming from good families. So they feel like it's...eh... they want to be somebody because they are coming from those so-called broken families. And you know..because they not happy at all, so whatever these other children...whatever they doing they would interpret it sometimes in their own ways...they



are...as if they saying that to them whatever they doing...so now they would always want to protect themselves because they've got nobody...they don't have a father figure who they look up to. So when they come here, they look at these children...so they envy them. And then even little things will become huge problems because they've got this problem, they come from broken homes, they need ...they really need help because children need to grow up in a family situation whereby there is a father and a mother...so there's no love sometimes in other children's homes and that's why they always have problems.

I: Thank you for that maam.

SMT 2: In my opinion I want to say...maybe it is caused by wanting to conform because of the factors that maam has mentioned. The problem emanates from home...finding that they don't have steady homes and some of them you find that they are having a problem like they...they...they could see that some learners are coming from better homes, then they just want to conform, appearing in other people's eyes as if they are better than the others...so it's one of the problems. Sometimes we find that they are having problems of being ah...what can I say...they are being ill-treated so because they are ill-treated they are applying what's being done to them to other people. So it's what is ingrained in their hearts that the way to be is to ill-treat somebody in order to appear as being superior. So they get pleasure in doing that. I think that's about it.

I: Thank you for that maam.

SMT 3: I agree with the member. Then there's also the issue of peer pressure which can also have a big role because normally these...these boys there will be not just one- there will be a group of boys who always ill-treat others, take their stuff. You will find that this is a social issue, peer pressure. And then there is the issue of drugs which can cause aggression especially to these learners...there is the issue of drugs which is there. There's a lot of them there taking those drugs and coming to school and then they will show this aggression because of what they have taken. I think that that too contributes to in them bullying because they harass other learners, shouting at them... you doing all these stuff to other learners which I think...drugs is a social issue coming into schools.

I: Most definitely, maam do have another cause that you maybe want to explain?

SMT 2: I think that another thing is that maybe they are getting corporal punishment and they are taking this anger out on others.

I: Are you talking about corporal punishment at home and school?



SMT 2: No we do not practice corporal punishment in school at all. So we strictly follow the ways of punishing them in a correct way that is in line with what the present education wants...what the law of South Africa wants. Ya, sometimes you find that the parents are fighting at home, so they always witness those things. You find that maybe the mother and the father or maybe... most of them are being born outside marriage. Their mothers...they don't even know who their fathers are as maam Khuzwayo has mentioned there...so you find that the home is dysfunctional and they are used to all sorts of bad behaviour. The mothers drink, they have boyfriends with them and they change boyfriends and they look up to them... so I mean the children look up to their elders that are bringing them up. So you find that when they come to school that brings frustration and they become aggressive... and that causes them to become bullies.

SMT 3: And there's also an issue of sexual harassment at school. Sometimes sexual harassment is not only experienced by the girls, it is also experienced by the boys...and you know, boys don't talk. They will just sit and get so angry every day towards the boys who they think are not experiencing this thing. So he is angry at everyone... at every person who is a male because there's someone who holds unity who is sexually abusing him at home and he is afraid to speak out. And then he lets his emotion run through being aggressive.

I: Okay, thank you very much because I think that's very insightful. We'll go on to item three: From your observation of bullying in your school, what are some of the consequences of bullying behaviour on victims? What happens to the victims when they are bullied?

SMT 1: It actually changes them because you will find out that sometimes this learner was so good in his schoolwork but once this learner has been bullied, he changes. He will not want to come to school, he will not want to do his work, he will always be afraid because he doesn't know when are they going to bully him again. His behaviour changes in totality...changes everything. If you...if as educators you are very observant you will notice that the learner is changing. Sometimes even in schoolwork will drop and you won't get good result...so you will know there is something wrong. Maybe you will find out that other learners are busy playing together but he'll be standing there in the corner because he is so afraid to associate with the other learners because of these bullies...because sometime they will also maybe take his food...they will come to school and they will take his lunch...he will not be able to eat. So then he will not want to come to school at all...he will end up hiding somewhere and the parent will...will think their child is going to school and all of a sudden they 'll find that their child is not coming to school because of this behaviour...because of what happens to him because he was so bullied and he couldn't fight back. And the children, they don't report these incidents of bullying...they don't because they are afraid of the bully because they

will say “ If you report me, I’m coming for you...after school, I will get you”. So they’ll end up saying “Oh, it’s okay. He will forget about me. He will get somebody else to bully so I must just be patient because it’s just gona pass.”

I: Maam, your thoughts on that?

SMT 2: I think that the victim...their attitude towards life changes because they become serious...they think they cannot flourish in life. They live in a nutshell because of the frustration they are experiencing...they are scared...angry towards everything that is happening and always blame people even though they do not report those matters. But they will blame the people that are around them for not supporting them, for not eh...protecting them towards the bullying. And you find that they...they... they will not be able to behave properly especially their performance in terms of schoolwork deteriorates and you find that you cannot be able to voice out your feelings no matter how bad the person feels...will always accept whatever is coming towards him or her because he or she believes that I’m am destined to be a failure in life. And you find that they cannot be able to live freely...they cannot be able to take the right decisions in life- they just give up in life...they think they are useless because of this frustration and they are always angry and sometimes that brings about the rudeness in them...they become rude towards other people because they always think that other people care less about them.

SMT 3: I think that the victims of bullying, they change...I think it changes their characters, their personalities. The person or child who was jolly and active and always assertive and want to participate...and then all of a sudden they change completely...become shy and always frustrated, they feel intimidated all the time and they just change-just a complete change of character because of being bullied by other learners. And again...the younger ones do not want to go to school because they know what is going to happen. They are afraid, as maam has said, they do not talk. They keep this thing of bullying within themselves...and sometimes if you are observant you will notice this child has changed and when you try to find out what happened you will find “okay, there is someone who is bullying this child” and they are afraid to talk because they are always intimidated and they feel intimidated all the time. Sometimes they even become bullies themselves, they bully those who are weaker than them because of those learners who bullied them.

SMT 2: And also they can become very sick because of these other learners who are bullying them and hitting them and causing the problems. And due to this sickness, they feel this anxiety inside them. And sometimes they even become suicidal –they consider committing suicide because they feel worthless and they look at life as worthless -like kill themselves. You find that they try drinking,

overdosing medication or like scratching their neck with a sharp object so that they bleed to death if the problem is not identified earlier.

I: Okay, thank you very much for that. We'll go to question four: Can you describe a typical bully? What personality characteristics does a bully display?

SMT 1: I would say that a bully...sometimes he is very rude. He's very disrespectful and somebody who is not committed in anything, who doesn't care. Even his schoolwork, he's not organised, he doesn't worry himself about his future. He doesn't care because what excites him is to inflict pain on others. So he doesn't care about what is happening, what he makes sure about is that he is there to bully other children. He doesn't worry about himself, he doesn't care...to him it's all about where he drives his pleasure- bullying other children.

SMT 2: I also think...just to add to what maam is saying...I also think that bullying is very disruptive in class...always an instigator for all the bad behaviour- engages learners in all the bad things that they may cause...disruption of teaching and learning and bully is rude (as maam has said) and doesn't care, has a negative attitude towards schoolwork and teachers- wants to cause chaos at all times.

SMT 3: A bully is someone who performs poorly in class- always fail and they derive pleasure from hurting others...that is where their pleasure comes from. They don't care about others because as long as they do what they want to do...they are very aggressive and they are dominating and all those bad things-that's a bully.

I: Thank you very much for that. We'll go on to the next question, question 5: What role should the SMT play in addressing bullying in schools?

SMT 1: I think each and every school, there is eh...we have a system in place, that when it is followed when disciplining the learners. Whether it is a bully or not a bully...but there is a system in place. So we need to make sure that we follow that because once you don't follow, you don't have anything written down, like in a school code of conduct. So it won't be easy to discipline the learners. So the SMT, their role is to make sure that learners do have the code of conduct, they are aware of the do's and the don'ts and also we as a school we have the RCL's, the prefects, who are working with the educators. So if there is a problem in class, then the RCL will know which channel to follow so as to report any incident that is taking place in school. So by following that, and addressing the learners about all the things that they are not supposed to be doing, and reminding them about values (ubhuntu) that is so important that we are all equal before the law because we are guided by the law- we all have equal rights. So, by so doing I believe the SMT will stress that, will teach that and I believe we will not have these incidence happening at school- will eventually decrease.

SMT 2: Just to add on that again- when we as an SMT, when we are calling a meeting with the staff, we always...we usually put it on the agenda just to remind educators that pastoral care is very important because caring is like very important for the smooth running of the organisation. This is one part of..eh...in the system that enables teaching and learning to be effective because when you are communicating with learners in class, you don't only teach issues pertaining with teaching and learning only- also extend it further to their personal issues that can hinder the curriculum. So we always make sure that we practice it at school. We are so fortunate in this school that everyone- the SMT and the educators we practice this-we make that bond between learners and teachers so that our teaching and learning is balanced. We engage all the stakeholders, the parents, anyone who is involved in the teaching of a learner. So practising pastoral care helps a lot because that is when we are able to identify the problems in each and every learner...and that is why it's easier for us to identify when there's a bully earlier before the problem becomes very huge. So I think this is one of those things that helps us a lot.

SMT 3: I think again what the SMT should do is to ensure that the implementation of the code of conduct in schools because schools that have a code of conduct, they have something in place if this problem of bullying is there, what is it that must be done that can be followed. Our code of conduct of course is in line with our constitution and also to identify these bullies early before they cause any trouble. In this way we will ensure the safety of our learners.

I: Okay, thank you for that. We will now go on to the final question. What is the school policy on bullying in your school? Is the policy working? What else do you think needs to be done to address the problem?

SMT 1: Okay, um...bullying is not allowed and we've got the code of conduct and we give the code of conduct to the learners at the beginning of the year and they are aware because we read the code of conduct, we explain to them and honestly it is working for us but we haven't reached the stage whereby we can say that now that our learners are so disciplined. I would say that if all the stakeholders are involved and take part...they play a more active role in our school, that will also help a lot. When you discipline those learners, so then if we work together as parents then the learners will know that at home and at school they have the same policy...that is what is happening. So then we will end up not having this problem of bullying-if all stakeholders work together because learners, they have this tendency- if the parents- if the learner goes home and report...they come to school with the attitude of "I will fix them!" so the learner will continue misbehaving because he knows that he has the support from the parent. But if more of the parents come to school more often and help the school...so then the learners if we work together will be able to build a better

future for our children. We all need each other because these children they are our future...because we cannot just throw them away. So we need to mould them shape them, build them because they are our future leaders. Without our youth we don't have a society at all because they are our future.

SMT 2: Maam has said it all. But just to add to what she has said. Another thing that really assists us is we invite the pastors. We invite maybe the ex-convicts to speak with our learners just to tell them that all the bad behaviour leads to them ending up in jail if they continue because bullying can also be fatal- it can lead to learners stabbing one another and one can die in the process. So we talk to them...like each and every day. At the beginning of the year we call parents from grade 8-12 where we speak about all these things and as the year goes we remind them and during assembly- we meet in the assembly area once a week. Then we speak about all those things trying to motivate them.

SMT 3: The school has a code of conduct that my colleagues have mentioned. It stipulates the measures of discipline- if the learner does this...this is how he's disciplined. Up to so far, that is what we are doing if the learner has done...has performed any bullying to another learner. Maybe if the department can have a policy which it makes to include bullying then the schools will know how to act upon cases of bullying. And also identifying the bullies and finding out the problem...what makes them bullies which can call for the intervention of professionals- if a child is 15 or 16, he is still a child. He still needs to grow and learn to become a better person and if again they are bullies and if they can be assisted somehow and some way they can become better people and better South African citizens.

I: Some final comments on that?

SMT 1: In our code of conduct we do have a policy whereby it speaks about the cases that are very serious and every...like for instance a learner stabbed another learner... so as a school we will just call the police to come and take that child. And sometimes we do call the social workers when learners got different problems. We also call sometimes the psychologist...I remember this incident whereby it wasn't bullying...this girl was in love with this boy and then the other day it was after half past two on our way home...this girl was busy kissing this boy outside the school gate and what eventually happened... the boy eventually committed suicide and when the boy committed suicide, this girl couldn't take it...she was ...she was out of control and she was miserable. And as a school we had to intervene. We called the parents, we called the social workers, we called the psychologist to work with this child and today this child is okay because of the help she got from the school. in our code of conduct we have different solutions to different problems that we encounter. But at the end

of the day, as my colleague has mentioned, there may be learners, there may be bullies but at the end of the day they are children. They need to be assisted...so for us to minimise those people who will go to jail we need to do something now to help them...we cannot just throw-in the towel like that and say "Oh, we done...we tired!" Like my colleague she also did mentioned that sometimes we invite the pastors- we used to have sessions whereby they will talk to the girls and then we will get a pastor who will come and talk to the boys. So when we...I remember that year when we did that most of the girls...because we had a problem of pregnancy...high rate of pregnancy. When we did that it decreased the rate of pregnancy because we sat with them and asked them why they are doing this and that and we were able to achieve our goals.

I: SMT, I just want to say that I'm very thankful to you for the contributions you have made and I'm sure that whatever you have said here will contribute to reducing this problem of bullying in our schools. Thank you for an excellent job.

SMT: Thank you so much.

**SCHOOL: A**

**INTERVIEW: TEACHERS (FOCUS GROUP)**

**CODES: INTERVIEWER (I); TEACHERS (T1-T8)**

I: Welcome teachers and thank you for attending. The first question is: Can you please relate an incident of your experience of bullying in your school?

T1: Thank you. In this case...I met a small girl in front of my classroom crying. Upon finding out I realised that one of the boys was taking her money to buy food. So the girl was without her money for lunch. Upon finding out I learnt that the boy (that took the girl's money) was from a home that was poor. He always comes to school without eating so he takes money from the weaker ones to buy food to eat.

T2: The incident was of a grade 9 boy who was beaten by a grade 10 boy in my form class. The case was that this grade 10 boy had a girlfriend in the grade 9 class. When this boy came to the class he saw another boy, the classmate of the girl was leaning towards and sitting next to his girlfriend and he asked "Why are you sitting next to my girlfriend?" And when this other boy tried to explain then this grade 10 boy slapped the boy. So it was just because he was sitting next to his girlfriend.

T3: There was this grade 8 child who was bullied for his lunch by grade 11 boys. So what the bigger boys would do is before he takes the bus in the morning, what they would do is they would take his lunch. So every day he would not bring lunch otherwise they would take it from him.

T4: There was this boy one boy in my class grade 11 who took the airtime from the other boy in class and this boy was bullied every time. I asked the boy whether he took the airtime but he denied it. So I told him go out of the class so I can check to see if the story is true. So I asked the learners in class and they told that he did take his stuff. Then I called the grade 11 boy and I sat down and spoke. And they no longer bully him.

T5: This is a case of bullying that I noticed that is taking the form that hasn't been mentioned so long. It normally happens in every grade 8 class and obviously I expect their books in school. There was this one learner who was repeating the grade...so he is the bigger kid in the class and he never bring his book to school. So what he did was he got one of the students to lie and say that he took his book to copy at home and he couldn't bring the book. And one of the other learners came and told me and I obviously went to check the situation out and the smaller kid did say "you know what, he didn't take the book home. He just told me to say that in class so he doesn't get into trouble in class." So the truth was he didn't take the book...and obviously this guy...he was bigger in size and all of these things...made him say that.

T6: My case is about a group of grade 9 boys who were bullying this smaller girl. They were telling her to bring money for them to buy lunch in school. And when I looked at the matter further I found that she was a bringing a large sum of money to school for herself and they somehow found out about it. The girl was too scared and she didn't report the bullying to anyone. They took all of her money and they were telling her that she needs to do that every day and eh...she was too scared to come and report it. I reported the matter to the office and from then there were no further problems.

T7: The case I'm going to relate just took place yesterday. There is a grade 8 learner who I think had repeated the grade and is therefore much older than the other learners. He is always not in his place and feels he can do anything he pleases. He is constantly found pushing learners and hitting them. Yesterday he actually took a stone and he threw it at another grade 8 girl who is very timid... and he tends to push around small children and makes himself look like some sort of hero. So he's been suspended.

T8: In my case as well the incident took place after school but came into school. One boy who goes home in the bus...there was this elder boy who forced him to move out of his place- he refused. And



so they had some sort of conflict in the bus and the boy who tried to bully him went outside...he waited till he could get a group of friends together and they actually beat him quite badly...about 4 or 5 boys. He didn't have the ability to do it alone so he decided to do that.

I: The next question I'm going to ask you won't necessarily come in this order. So you may put your finger up when you want to answer. Question two then is: What personality characteristics do bullies generally display at your school?

T5: I think they lack skill and because they lack skill they find other ways to strive.

T1: I think that most of them come from broken homes. So at times...maybe there is nobody to take care of them...they lack love...parental love...that's what I've realised.

T2: I think its anger. Most cases we've addressed it comes from internal...anger from home, anger from the community and in school...I don't know but its anger.

T8: Most of the time they want to show some sort of superiority. They want to dominate the other learners and they feel that's their way of doing it so that they superior to anyone.

T7: They want to be dominant among the learners and the educators.

T5: When a bully is confronted by a teacher or any adult, the attitude of the child changes from being a bully to now being a child. It's like they only a bully when they are in their spirits but once the teacher is there that same bully can get into tears and stuff...just dramatising to say he wasn't involved.

T8: Lot of the children lot of the times, they're quite poor. So I don't know if they see it as their last resort. A lot of times the bullying takes place because of food or money. And they actually force learners to give them their lunch and they force learners to give them money.

I: Thank you so much for that. I think we're running along quite nicely so far. We go on to question three: What characteristics do victims of bullying display?

T5: Firstly a sense of low self-esteem. Well being afraid...and if it's a quiet child obviously it's just worse. I think it affects their schoolwork. It affects the way they socialise. It isolates them even further. Ya, basically these are the things.

T1: What I want to say is that they experience low self-esteem in the sense that...even if the children are playing, they are not getting involved...they are caught in a shell.

T6: Most of the time they are afraid to report the bully so they keep quiet about it.

T2: The learners don't concentrate in the class and end up failing.

I: Thanks so much for that. Let's now proceed to the fourth question: What would you say are the underlying causes of bullying in your school?

T7: A lot of the times it stems from the fact that we have children coming from very different backgrounds and it's very difficult to meet social needs, status and acceptance from other learners. And most of the time they differ in some way or the other from what the norm is...and themselves becoming a victim of bullying. And I think because they don't want to be ridiculed they therefore bully other children to try and protect themselves from revealing everything.

T2: They do that because of what is happening at home where someone is beaten. They grew up knowing that is the only way to solve problems...so that's why they themselves beat up the kids.

T1: At times they want to get famous...hero. By trying to extort money from the young ones and take their food...others just praise them by applauding them. So they want attention...that's it...they want attention.

T5: It comes down from learners at home...the way they are at home...their upbringing, their lifestyle. Obviously some of them don't live with their parents...living with their grannies. And society itself...the area which they are coming from eh...obviously that plays a big role. And again stressing this point...it's the learners who are repeating the grade...learners that are not doing well academically. It's these learners that are finding another area to shine...I'm saying that they see a learner that is getting 2 out of 50 for example and the other learner is getting 50 and obviously this 2 is going to be laughed at but if you are a bully, will someone laugh at you then...they find another place to shine and this is their way of shining.

T2: Sometimes the learner takes drugs and this can cause the learner to be aggressive and to bully other learners. Ya..drugs..mostly drugs.

T4: I guess sometimes it can be because parents do not give them enough attention to their kids. So then the child can be seen but in a wrong manner...yes.

T3: I actually think...what I've noticed sometimes is that the child ...there is something very different and noticeable about the child...like a child who is slightly overweight or has a physical disability. And someone makes a remark and maybe it will affect them a lot.

I: Thank you for that. We will proceed to the next question: What are the consequences of bullying behaviour on all the stakeholders of the school? We are talking about the victim, the teachers, the management.

T5: Obviously it eh...the reputation of the school drops, the standard of how people see the school drops and also the standard of quality results. Also now that time I given to one thing, obviously time has to be taken from something else and I'm saying that time is given away that could have been more valuably used. And obviously parents don't see the school as they should see it and that gives a bad reputation.

T4: The parents will say don't take your child to that school because the teachers are not looking after...so it affects the whole school. At the end of the day, even the community will be affected.

T2: This can go as far as the victims parents deciding to take the child out from the school.

T8: Within the school as well....first it affects the academic performance of the learner...I mean they going to struggle because they always have things at the back of their mind. Then it affects the teachers as well because our view on that bully will change. We may not see the person in the same light...we may not see the person in the same way as we normally would. And it also takes a lot of time dealing with these cases...getting the parents involved...takes away a lot of teaching time dealing with the problem and the rest of the class suffers.

T7: It is going to create very passive and reserved adults. It could lead to these learners eventually not being able to exert their thoughts and feelings in their adult life. And also...even a child with potential will be limited because of the fear...because the moment you draw attention to classroom...put yourself out there to be victimised and to limit their potential.

T2: Maybe the child is being bullied in terms of the weight...this can result in the child starving herself trying to shape-up then the child gets different diseases like anorexia and all those things.

T4: They can lose trust...they cannot trust others...yes.

I: Thank you for that. We'll now proceed to question six: What role can teachers play in curbing bullying in schools?

T7: I think what is important is for the educator to use positive re-enforcement not on the victim of bullying but on the child who is displaying bullying behaviour as well because that behaviour is usually linked to some sort of insecurity so by highlighting the child's academic work or the child's personality or things of that sort ...you can build some sort of awareness that they do not have to do

these negative things for attention. And in terms of educators paying more attention to the child that is, who is an introvert, to build the child's confidence...give praise where the child does something good and boost the child where needed...building confidence and building trust. This way the educator will make the victim of bullying feel some sort of security.

T5: Also we should make it known in classes...obviously sometimes kids are being bullied and they don't know it. It's like they feel probably like it's normal, they feel like it should happen, like it's just like one of those things and obviously it's not as small as they seem. So explain to them exactly what bullying is and why it's not accepted in school. Make it known to both the victim and the perpetrator that this type of behaviour is not acceptable...be it in school, be it outside, be it anywhere.

T4: As teachers we know our learners...and if we see any behaviour changes, that is where we need to intervene because there is something that is taking place in the child.

T6: I think that learners should report...we should encourage these learners to report anything they feel should not be happening.

T2: These are attention seekers, give them exercises, ask them to read for the class...ask them to do something so they will feel important...and praise them even for a small thing they did because they need to feel recognised...to feel loved so we need to support them also...keep them busy...praise them all the time.

I: Okay, ladies and gentlemen we now come to the final question: What role should the school management play in addressing school bullying in schools?

T7: The most important thing is that management need to have an open communication with parents, community and...if all parties agree that this thing about children...what's going on at home, and what is going on in school... and children become very aware of their actions when they know that they are being monitored by their parents and their educators. So that type of communication is very important.

T8: Ensure that there certain strategies and structures in place to deal with learners who are the victims of bullying. Where we may be possibly getting councillors or someone professional to come in and deal with bullies and victims.

T1: I think that one should explain to the whole school about what bullying is and all forms of bullying should be reported immediately. Secondly, the school code of conduct should have something enshrined on how to deal with bullying so that all learners will be aware of bullying and how seriously bullying will be dealt with according to the school code of conduct.

T2: As my colleagues have mentioned, all stakeholders needs to work hand -in-hand on this issue. They need to establish what measures the school will take if the child bully's. They need to sit down and explain what the sanctions would be...the SGB, teachers, learners...they all must be clear of the consequences of bullying.

T5: I think in general...just the awareness of bullying –as Mr. Naidoo mentioned eh...you know prevention is better than cure...before anything happens we should get a professional coming in... have talks, workshops, posters creating awareness that this is a serious thing. And obviously professionals understand the child much better than we do... at a much higher level.

I: In terms of the code of conduct, do you think that the sanctions are effective enough...is it working?

T5: On the one hand there is a code of conduct that's there, on the one hand we are said to enforce it, on the one hand we are said to be strict, on the one hand to be the teacher in class. And then there's the department of education, whatever the case may be against us, there are certain procedures. Now what I'm saying is that the kids will not understand the seriousness of the matter if you do it as they ask. Personally, I feel that words is not enough; I am saying action needs to be taken...not necessarily violence but action needs to be taken. On the one hand they want action to be taken, but once this action takes place, they're on your case and next thing you are in trouble.

I: The maximum sanction of suspension, do you think that's enough?

T2: I think that when a learner is suspended for three days or seven days...it is not enough. It must be for longer period so that when the learner comes back after a long time , for example, three months ago, four months ago, he must know that he lost out on a lot of work because of his bullying... it will give the trouble-makers notice.

T4: If some learners are suspended, they don't see it as a correctional measure. It's just fun...go to town...they do all these things...it is ineffective.

T6: It is worse now when they get a suspension. When they come back, they joke about to their friends in the class...so they don't really take suspension seriously. For them it's more like a holiday that is given to them by the school. They don't see it as a punishment or corrective measure. They just see it as a piece of paper given to them telling them they can stay home. Most of them look at it that way.

I: What do you recommend the Department do to really hone-in on the problem?

T4: Eh...I think that the department expects us to deal with it but they are not the ones who are teaching these kids, they are not the ones who are spending seven hours a day with these kids. So I think as teachers, the school I think the government is not giving support and I think they should give the school an allowance of writing...or coming up with our own punishment measures, you know. So somehow the kids, you know, will take it seriously.

I: Let me again thank you for your time. Your contributions are absolutely invaluable in that it will help towards creating some kind of recommendation after I do the analysis and present it to the Department and the University as well. Thank you again for your time.

#### **SCHOOL: A**

#### **INTERVIEW: REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL OF LEARNERS (RCL)**

#### **CODES: INTERVIEWER (I); LEARNER (L1-L9)**

I: Okay learners, it is my pleasure to invite you to this interview at your school and I want to thank you very much for the time you have given me today to interview you. So welcome to the interview. The first question I'm going to ask you is: What is your experience of bullying at your school?

L1: Thank you sir. In my experience, the cause of bullying ...mostly guys... guys bullying because of the attention they want from girls. I remember the time when I was still in grade 8, I used to be close to this one girl and there was this guy who apparently had a crush on her...you know guys they just want to have that bad-boy image, and girls be my witness...girls love bad-boys...you see it in the movies and the girl will like...wow...so the guys will just do anything to peak the girls attention and when you bullying that poor guy you will see the whole crowd following you and the poor guy is just feeling terrible about himself...so it may be caused by girls' attention. Thank you.

L2: Yes I did have an incident of bullying from the first day I entered this school which is in grade 8. They actually used to call me...used to say I'm gay which I took it as folly because I'm not gay, wasn't gay, won't be gay but they will be like "I'm gay"...some cheesy kind of bullying. That is my experience.

L3: I have my own self-experience of bullying. I was in one of the boarding schools in Newcastle, you know when you come there as a boarder, they like teach you...welcome you. You know actually in one room there are 5 or 6 girls. So I was the newcomer in grade 9. So the matric girls in our dormitory like came to me and like..."Whose your name...what's your name?" so I told them, then they said that I have to come to the dining hall to do something and I'm like I didn't come here to do that... to eat the "good food" that they had there...you know...left-overs. And I said that I cannot do

that. And the things they did when I was sleeping...and the matron didn't care. And I couldn't do anything because I didn't have the powers to do anything. And then the other day I remember I was walking down the stairs...they took this thing...they took a plastic...they put some bones of chicken and when I'm walking down the stairs...there's like a balcony there...I was walking down going to study at about half past ten.

L4: The first year in this school, the very first few months I was hassled by some guys and with me being quiet they said that I'm too full of myself. I remember this one day when I went to the toilet and there were these group of guys who smoke cornered me in the toilet and were like "You..you so full of yourself...you don't talk to other guys but half the time we see you around our girlfriends...so you want their attention." I was like "nothing" and then after that they promised to beat me up if I don't refrain from that. So I was forced to refrain from any sort of communication with them.

L5: Sir, I haven't had an experience of being bullied but I have seen someone being bullied and I think the cause of that is the background of where person is coming from like, family, friends and community.

L6: Well for me I haven't experienced bullying but I've seen the RCL in class actually being bullied. I don't know whether it is because of discrimination or race. But the RCL was an Indian actually. I don't know whether they underestimate her or what but then you see her like a person who is actually wants to get love from teachers or something...she just want to get the attention of the principal or something. And she used to follow the rules and stuff do all of the work herself and help everyone in the class but the one problem was they couldn't like listen to her. So when she used to write the names down they keep on saying they are paying her to do the stuff...hitting her and say she thinks she is too clever. And so people underestimate and discriminate for some reason.

L7: I also not have an experience of bullying but I've seen one of our RCL's being bullied by her classmates because she is new at school. And the learner was taken to the office and that was taken care of.

L8: Eh...what I can say is...as learner1 has said is that most people bully because they want the attention of girls. I remember when I came to this school, I think it was June...the middle of the year...I used to walk with a group of boys and when we walk we are just fine but maybe a group of girls just come to us...like my brother and they will start calling me funny names and that I want attention from the girls.

L9: I also have an experience of bullying...when I was in grade 8, my first day there were like three guys from matric...they made me pay R2 for walking in the corridor. So I reported the matter..it was

attended by my father, the principal and the HOD and I was given the letter that they will not harass me again.

I: Guys, tell me did you'll have any experiences in school where there was fighting, physical fighting taking place?

L6: We did have an incident whereby a guy stabbed a guy. They were playing cards and maybe the fight started from there. And the guy who stabbed the other guy was expelled from the school.

I: And how bad was it?

L6: It was very bad 'cos he was stabbed near the eye.

I: Okay thank you for that. Thank you RCL, you've all done very well with the first question. We will now go to question two: What do you think causes bullying behaviour? Why do learners bully?

L3: I think bullying...let's say I come from a family... we are coming to school from different backgrounds. Then I find myself in a wrong group... they doing wrong things. Then because of peer pressure they are forcing me to do things...that can cause bullying...peer pressure.

L2: Eh...I think what causes bullying is that we go out to get attention- we want to belong, like I have to hit somebody for me to be known in school. So I maybe have to make people scared of me to get the attention.

L3: Eh...other causes of bullying...let us say a learner has passed and some of the learners are very jealous of that learner...that particular learner...he is a clever learner. He or she is top of the class, top of the grade... all of the grades even to matric. If you looking at the results, you can see the learner in grade 10 or 11 is top. So learners they can be jealous...they can bully that child.

I: Any other causes?

L6: According to my understanding...actually people who bully other people because maybe they are inferior to the other person and maybe they take advantage because they see he has more power than other persons. So, ya i think bulling is bad. And also most people actually bully people because...because they find that other people actually don't have the effort to defend themselves. So that is the problem of bullying.

L4: As I mentioned in my encounter that guys who are into drugs. I think it's because of intimidation...because we realise okay...here's this guy who is kinda like serious about his life and he's being responsible...and as he uses drugs he probably can't get hold of the girls...and I come with



my curiosity about life. Slowly those girls will drift away from him towards the serious guy. And because he feels like right now I'm losing the girl, the only way to take care of it is to beat him up...take him out of the way. Probably, after beating him up, he will go back to where he came from. Then he knows that he's got the girl back for himself.

L: Tell me, what about the home background? Maybe there's something happening there that influences the child? Anybody want to make a comment about that?

L4: It does have an impact. Maybe you are experiencing something at home. Maybe uncle's, father's and stuff. You can't actually talk to anyone because ...maybe your step-father... and you can't say your mother anything because it's not like she can say anything...she is like blinded by love...so she's like "oh you over-reacting"...so the only way to get rid of that anger is by taking it out on someone else. And he won't take it out on someone he's age, he'll go to someone younger than him...even if they are of the same age...one is weaker so he knows "okay I could do anything to him."

I: Any other contributions on this side?

L3: I have a friend...she was raped by one of her families. So like actually...I don't know how to explain this...this girl like every time she would come to school and she wants to overdose herself. When you try to stop her she'll like hit you...and when the teacher tries to stop her, she like tells the teacher "you mustn't barge into my problems because you don't know where I come from." And I even tried to reduce her anger but because of the rape she doubted the other children...she can see that nobody can feel her pain.

L2: I also think that discipline...we get from home. If I don't get discipline at home...if my parents don't discipline me at home, I take that to school...I'm the only child and my mum... what I want I get...so when I go to school, I'll want anything. If I tell you to go and buy one vetkoek for me, you have to do that.

I: Thank you guys for question two. We'll now proceed to question three: What are the consequences of bullying behaviour? What happens when somebody bullies another person?

L4: My encounter...I actually attempted getting away from school...I tried ways of getting transferred and I wouldn't tell my mum what's actually wrong...I've got a single parent...not much my mum could do with regard to druggies and getting involved in druggies would actually result in bloodshed so best thing I can do is find a way of getting out of this school. And up until the very end, my mum actually sat me down and asked me what's wrong...why the sudden pressure to leave the school?

Then that's when I actually spoke...and said it's because of such things I'm facing at school. So that was some of the things that happened.

I: What are the other consequences of bullying?

L1: Eh... it happens that a person talking about a giddy guy... a very funny person who is easily bullied by a person who call out for girls' attention. Most of the times...it always happens that the girl goes for the bad boy. Then small guys who actually like talking to the girl...because he has fear for the bully will not be able to communicate...and then he sees the bully and the girl coming together, he is heartbroken...very heartbroken and there is nothing more painful than a broken heart. So it happens that the self-esteem is very much lower down, it happens that most of the things you just...in school you are just down all the time.

L2: One of the consequences of bullying is that we also change who we are. We fear a lot of being bullied. I remember in my experience when I was accused of being gay, I did change who I was...I used to have two girlfriends...three girlfriends just to prove people wrong...that I'm not gay. So we also change the real us for the sake of...to show them we are not who they think we are.

L9: Some learners might be afraid of coming to school and some other consequences...learners may become quiet because they are scared that they can't sort their problems out.

I: Okay, we'll move on to question four then: What role should the principal and teachers play to address bullying in schools?

L5: I think they should settle down and talk to those who are being bullied and those who are bullying. And I think they must be open to the learners and speak about what they are doing is wrong.

L9: I think people like social workers should also be involved because the problem doesn't start from here, it starts from way back. So people from high places (management) should also see to that.

L4: I think something else needs to be taken into consideration with regards to the physical bullying where some maybe beaten up by the druggies. They should have more raids in the school just to make sure that there aren't any drugs being taken into the school premises because that's when they actually go high on drugs.

I: So you think the SAPS should be more involved in this?

L4: Yes they should be more involved.

I: Okay, we'll go onto question five then: What role should parent play in addressing bullying in schools?

L1: When you speak of parents in my mind I'm thinking of big brothers, sisters people that think that they should just maintain the friendship status, just be friends with the child...just communicating asking about the day...because if you have that relationship with the person, you can notice that something has happened...you are looking bad, you are heartbroken. When that happens, you happen to be the old person...and if you have that much love for your child, take care of your child, then you will just act upon it as you don't want to see your child wounded. So this is what needs to be done by parents...they should have this friendship with their children. Then they will be able to communicate with each other... and you should not leave the school just because of that guy.

L2: I think parents have a big role to play here especially with education. They should try to come to school...check out what is happening ...are their children behaving and also as a parent you should know your child's privacy... I mean like check whether the child is going to school. They should communicate the home background with the school.

L4: When the teachers and the parents come closer, you find that the parent may be just a mother and once a boy gets to this stage, he's no longer controllable.

L3: some of the parents, they cannot come and discuss with the principal because some of the parents, they find the issue of we as children we can bully our own parents because we know that as a mother she is weak...so I can bully her any how I like. But when it comes to my father I know that my father is very strict. Even though some of the children they do this because they know their fathers' live long distance away. For instance, as I am here in KZN, my father is there in Cape Town. The father cannot know what is happening at home. Some of the parents do not come because they know that there is nothing they can do.

I: Okay, thank you very much for that. We will go to the next question: What can the RCL do to reduce bullying in your school?

L1: To be chosen as an RCL I believe it is a great responsibility. The RCL should neither be hard nor cold...he should be able to communicate with the low people...that are the so-called low life's in the school. They should be able to communicate with the people higher up as well- he is like the middle man in class between the teacher and the class. As a RCL you must have that much love for the people you are leading. And if the case is bad you can start introducing the teacher to the situation, the principal to the situation...maybe the person is being threatened...the bully is saying he is going

to catch them after school. So as an RCL you should have good communication, be friends with everybody and communicate sympathetically.

L3: What I have noticed in my class in grade 10...there was bullying in my class but ever since I was RCL this year I talked to my class. I told them we are one family, we come from different backgrounds, we are all the same. We spend a lot of time together in school, more than our parents. We spend more time together that means we are sisters and brothers. It's the same with an Indian girl, she is my sister...Indian boy, he is my brother. So we mustn't treat one another in a bad way, treat one another in a good way because we are one nation, we are united together. So that thing has stopped. Nobody is bullying one another in class- we love one another. If somebody has a problem they just come to me and I try to help solve the problem but if the problem is over my power, then I refer it to a teacher.

I: When you'll experience problems, do you meet as an RCL to solve it?

L1: We communicate with the child and that's very important because we had even a case with a grade eight guy, he had a situation where he was just overwhelmed, he did a wrong thing though. It helps that we as RCL we communicate with each other to solve a problem because it may be too hard as one...but us as a team ...we need to be connected. I would also like to highlight that teachers should have a hand in choosing the RCL because it may happen that the very person who becomes the bully is the RCL. So the RCL is a very respected position, you cannot just choose anyone.

L2: Communicate with your class...As much as I'm young as you are also my age...sometimes you are younger than me, or maybe older than me you should be fair to me...playing nice doesn't help all the time.

L7: As RCL we should also report problems to the SMT members. We meet as RCL and we highlight the problem to the management of the school. We also need to work together with the school governing body to solve problems.

I: Okay, we go on to the last question: What is your school policy on bullying? Is it effective? What else do you think should be done?

L6: So what I think is that we must have a school safety team, that will help the school in safety so that each and every learner that is bullied can be called to the safety team and attended to. Actually what I noticed is that there must be an RCL in the team building so we can accommodate whatever problem we may have so that maybe, it might happen that, as the guy there said, there might be some bullying happening in the class. They report it to the RCL chairperson, the chairperson then

goes to the teacher in charge of the RCL. Then after that they find a solution to it...if there's no solution, then that problem goes to the SMT members and if the bullying problem is over the powers of the SMT members that's when the school governing body comes in. So ya...actually bullying can be taken care of like that.

I: The code of conduct. Let's talk about that a little bit. You want to comment on the school code of conduct, is it strict enough?

L4: Yes, bullying is actually a part of it. The basic action taken upon bullying is suspension which when the learner returns to school, he actually has to come with his or her parents. But that is something that has just become immune to those learners. They know that "okay I'll be suspended. I'll come back with my mother" which I really won't do and after the seven days along the way to school I can find someone who I pay R100 to come to school who will represent me and my family won't find out about that. So it's actually not effective and I believe that something that can actually be done is maybe when a learner is actually suspended, maybe the principal or maybe the HOD or as she mentioned you can actually have a school safety team, maybe a member of the team can actually accompany that specific learner home to report such an issue 'cos that way the communication can actually be effective between the school and the parents.

L2: Bullying is part of the school code of conduct but I don't think it works. And also the suspension thing...'cos one day one boy in my class actually wanted to slap me...and he was like "I don't mind slapping you and then go home for three days and come back" so there should be punishment for those who bully others-punishment similar to what they do...fair enough for everyone.

I: RCL, I want to thank you very much for attending this interview and for the comprehensive information you have given me; I'm sure it's going to help me a lot in my research, my study and I want to thank you very much for your time and your contributions.

