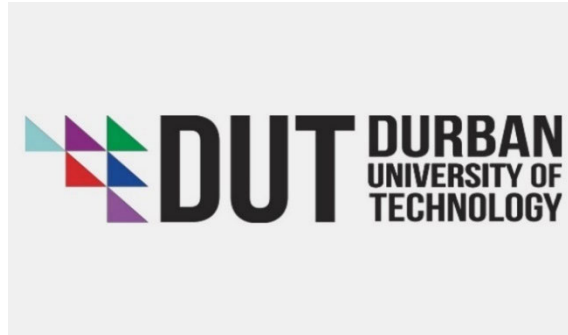


**ADDRESSING BULLYING AT A BOY'S HIGH  
SCHOOL IN DURBAN**

**MEEDHALOSHNI RAGOOBATHIE NAIDOO**

**April 2023**



# **ADDRESSING BULLYING AT A BOY'S HIGH SCHOOL IN DURBAN**

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the  
degree of Master of Management Science  
Specialising in  
Public Administration (Peacebuilding)  
in the  
Faculty of Management Sciences  
at the Durban University of Technology

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**April 2023**

**FINAL SUBMISSION**

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Date: 12 April 2023

## DECLARATION

Student Number: 21959531

I, Meedhaloshnie Ragoobathie Naidoo, hereby declare that the thesis herewith submitted for the Masters in Public Administration – Peacebuilding Studies at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) is my original work and has not been previously submitted for a degree at any other university. All work from other sources is cited as such.

Meedhaloshnie Ragoobathie Naidoo

I agree to the submission of this thesis for examination

---

Dr. Vijay Hamlall

## **ABSTRACT**

We owe our children – the most vulnerable citizens in society

– a life free from violence and fear.’ – Nelson Mandela

This study aimed to explore the current status of bullying at a boys’ high school in urban KZN and the experiences and perceptions of bullying among the learners of this single-sex, multicultural, multiracial school. The objective of the study was to investigate the nature, causes and consequences of bullying in this particular school. This study further proposed and implemented interventions that served to address bullying behaviour at the school.

The study adopted the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methods to answer the research questions. A participatory action research approach was used to conduct this study. The data collection methods were semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions. Content analysis was used to analyse the data.

The non-purposive sampling method was used to select the target population, which consisted of five learners from the boarding establishment (a hostel for learners who choose to stay at school during the school term) and five from the day’ boys. Three educators were also interviewed: two males and one female. In total, this study comprised 13 participants.

The data gathered from the interviews and focus group discussions with both the learners and educators indicated that bullying was highly prevalent at the school. Forms of both direct and indirect bullying were evident at the school. Direct bullying was both verbal and physical. Physical bullying took place more covertly in the form of boys using their body strength and size to punish and dominate the weaker boys. A considerable amount of verbal bullying took place at the school. This included acts of harassment, teasing, name-calling and ridiculing. Indirect bullying in the form of social exclusion involving ostracism, and the spread of rumours or gossip was also rife. Both forms of

bullying targeted personal characteristics and generally constituted attacks on sexuality and appearance.

The underlying themes for the causes of bullying behaviour were identified as boys subscribing to hegemonic forms of masculinity, power-seeking and peer expectation. Being in an environment in which there are predominantly male influences, the boys were expected to act like 'real men'. They wanted to feel powerful and dominate the so-called 'weaker' boys. This increased their social status in the eyes of their peers.

Data generated from the interviews indicated that the consequences of bullying behaviour resulted in the victim experiencing a poor self-image and low self-esteem. Avoidance and absence from school, seclusion and isolation and an increase in violent behaviour were identified as major outcomes of being bullied.

Participatory action was used to plan and implement an intervention programme for the whole school to tackle bullying. The aim was to create a safe, positive learning environment for the learners. The short-term outcomes of the programme were evaluated.

The study recommends that it is imperative that the seriousness of bullying be recognised by all stakeholders in the school community for appropriate and effective measures to be implemented to reduce bullying in schools. It is not uncommon for school stakeholders to trivialise bullying that takes place in their schools. Many hold the view that bullying is part of growing up (e.g., boys will be boys) and should not be made an issue. Greater awareness of the problem of school bullying is required and a focus on prevention would ensure that schools create safer and more harmonious learning environments.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to

my father, the late Roger Naidoo and my mother, the late Pushpa Naidoo,  
both of whom made huge sacrifices to ensure that I had the best possible education  
they could afford.

and

my uncles, the late Vassie Chetty, the late Bobby Royappen  
and the late Kersval Naidoo, all of whom believed in my ability to succeed.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to:

Dr Vijay Hamlall; Adjunct Senior Lecturer Department of Peace Studies, Durban University of Technology, for his endless patience with me. Without his expert guidance, supervision and meticulous work ethic, this study would not have been possible.

Ms. Sury Bisetty; editor, for the long hours spent editing and under such short notice. Much appreciation and thanks.

All students and teachers who participated in this study. Thank you for taking the time to participate in the study and for sharing your experiences.

My husband, Shervin, for his support and endless cups of coffee.

My daughter, Talisa, for her unconditional love and constant encouragement, without whom I may have never completed this study.

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## **ACRONYMS**

BE	Boarding Establishment
CD	Constitutional Development
COVID	Coronavirus disease
DOJ	Department of Justice
GSHS	Global School-based Student Health Survey
HBSC	Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children
KZN	Kwa-Zulu Natal
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SAVE	Sevilla Anti-Violencia Escolar
SPCC	Society for the Positive Care for Children
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study explored the current status of bullying at a boys' high school in urban KZN and the experiences and perceptions of bullying among the learners of this single-sex, multicultural, multiracial school. For the purposes of this study, I used the pseudonym "Greenfield High School" to refer to the school and "Apollo House" to refer to the boarding house at which the research for this study was conducted. The objective of the study was to investigate the nature, causes and consequences of bullying in this particular school. This study further proposed and implemented intervention strategies that served to address bullying behaviour at the school.

Concern has been expressed in South Africa and elsewhere in the world about the problem of violence generally, but violence and bullying in schools, in particular, have in recent years become a focal point of policy and media attention. Bullying involves aggressive behaviour intended to harm someone who is less dominant physically or psychologically (Mullis *et al.*, 2012). There now exists a vast amount of international literature on various aspects of bullying. Some of this literature will be reviewed in the next chapter. As a means of explaining/exploring school bullying, this study adopts a social practice approach, more especially that offered by Dan Olweus (Olweus, 1978), who defines bullying as direct and indirect aggression that is intentional, repeated and involves a power differential between the aggressor(s) and the target. A concise definition is the 'systematic abuse of power' (Smith and Sharp, 1994; Smith, 2016).

Bullying has become a subject of international concern over the last 30 years (Smith, 2016), and in this regard, the incidence of bullying in South African schools is not isolated. International studies like the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) have revealed increased levels of bullying in schools (Reddy *et al.*, 2012) from 16 per cent in 2003 to 28 per cent

in 2011 (Mullis *et al.*, 2012), with a slight decline by two per cent in 2015 (Zuze *et al.*, 2018).

This study goes beyond the dichotomy of victim and bully. It examines how learners and educators themselves understand and explain bullying behaviour in the context in which they have either heard about second-hand or have witnessed or experienced personally. Global and local literature which focuses on and examines the intricacies of school bullying (Mullis *et al.*, 2017, Winnaar, Arends and Beku, 2018, Richardson and Hiu, 2018) was helpful in providing insight that was relevant to this study.

According to Winnaar and Beku (2018), there are high levels of bullying, safety concerns and disorderliness in many South African schools. Some people believe that bullying is a normal aspect of growing up and some even believe that being a victim can build resilience as an adult. However, unkind words can be hurtful, and in many instances, it is not a case of “just joking around”. Both physical and relational bullying can leave serious emotional scars, not only on the victims but also on the bullies themselves, as well as the bystanders (OECD, 2017).

## **1.1 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Addressing bullying in schools is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, from a child rights perspective, all adults have a responsibility to ensure that children under their care are safe from both physical threats of violence and passive forms of aggression (UNCRC, 1989). Measures to combat bullying in schools are a key factor in achieving children’s rights globally (Richardson and Hiu, 2018).

Secondly, with regard to child well-being, bullying has been associated with many different negative consequences with respect to the well-being of a child, including poorer results at school as well as mental health problems such as anxiety and depression symptoms, suicide ideation, self-harm and violent

behaviour, which have been found to continue into adulthood (Schwartz *et al.*, 2015; Arseneault, Bowes and Shakoor, 2010; Rudolph *et al.*, 2014; Wolke *et al.*, 2013; Copeland *et al.*, 2013; Olweus, 1994; Rueger, Malecki and Demaray, 2011). These associations have been found in both developed and developing countries (Boyes *et al.*, 2014; Brown *et al.*, 2008; Richardson and Hiu, 2018).

Thirdly, research has shown that bullies themselves are also associated with poorer academic results at school and negative later-life outcomes (Copeland *et al.*, 2013). In particular, bullies seem to exhibit higher antisocial and risk-taking behaviour, as well as become criminals later in life (Ttofi *et al.*, 2011; Liang, Flisher and Lombard, 2007; Richardson and Hiu, 2018). Further, being both a bully as well as a victim increases the risk of psychological and behavioural problems (Haynie *et al.*, 2001; Copeland *et al.*, 2013; Richardson and Hiu, 2018).

School bullying has become a major problem in many countries (Sullivan, 2000). Although not much research has been carried out in South Africa, researchers (Smith-Heavenrich, 2001; Mulrine, 1999; Majcherová, Hajduová and Andrejkovič, 2014) claim that it may be the most enduring and underrated problem in schools worldwide. Research has indicated that as many as one-in-four learners are reported to be affected, and as many as eight per cent of learners miss a day of class per month for fear of being bullied. The devastating effects of bullying may lead to psychological problems, violence and suicide (MacDonald and Swart, 2014).

According to Sikhakhane (2015), most of the current literature on bullying is based on experiences from countries of the North, for example, Dracic, 2009; Olweus, 1993 and Townsend *et al.*, 2008). The current study sought to contribute to the small body of research that has emanated from South Africa (De Wet, 2005; Macdonald and Swart, 2004; Swart and Bredenkamp, 2009; Sikhakhane, 2015).



There has never been a stronger demand from the South African public to reduce school violence than at present (Beaver, 2005; Blaine, 2005; Naran, 2005; Smit, 2005). Ma, Stewin and Mah (2003) contend that the goal of creating safe schools cannot be achieved unless the issue of bullying is adequately addressed. Numerous newspaper reports published in 2021 and 2022 suggest that bullying is rife in some South African schools. The following are some recent articles from local newspapers:

*A prestigious boys' school suspended a number of prefects after allegations they urinated in a long jump pit before junior pupils crawled through it (Pillay, 2022).*

*Our schools' bullying scourge. Learner on learner violence is becoming a problem in SA schools. A month before young Lufuno Mavhunga tragically took her own life after being publicly bullied and shamed, allegedly by another learner at her school, Mbilwi Secondary School in Limpopo, another young boy in the Western Cape attempted to take his own life for the same reason (Mthethwa, 2021).*

*A Grade 8 learner at a Cape Town school was caught on camera setting alight the hair of a fellow learner. The video, which circulated on social media, showed a girl sitting in class and taunted by a boy who poured a liquid on her head and set her hair alight while laughing can be heard in the background. In the video, the teacher appears to have stepped out of the class (SAnews.gov.za, 2021).*

Research done by the 1000 Women Trust found that 57% of children have been bullied at some point during their high school careers. According to Dr Simangele Mayisela, an educational psychologist and a senior lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand, bullying has lasting psychological effects on both the victim and the bully (Gcwabe, 2021).

According to Holt *et al.* (2014) and Liu *et al.* (2014), bullying, with its negative consequences on well-being, is a major public health concern affecting the lives of many learners (Hellström and Lundberg, 2020).

Sullivan (2000) maintains that a common myth is that bullying is something that happens only in 'other' schools. According to Sullivan (2000), Sharp and Smith (1994) and Tattum (1997) bullying occurs in all schools. Bullying is pervasive and often causes harm. It is not just a childhood rite of passage but a significant public health issue.

This study was motivated by research that seems to show that there is a limited understanding of bullying in the African context, including South Africa. This is especially so in the so-called "previously advantaged" or "privileged" schools.

## **1.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

### **1.2.1 THE SUBURBS OF UMBILO AND GLENWOOD**

The school for my chosen study, Greenfield High School, is situated in the Umbilo/Glenwood area. Umbilo is a central suburb of eThekweni (Durban), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The name originates from the Umbilo River that flows through Pinetown and Queensburgh via the Umbilo Canal and eventually into Natal Bay at Bayhead. Also written as Mbilo, it is of Zulu origin, meaning "boiling". The immediate neighbourhood comprises older-type properties comprising workshops, warehousing, and commercial and retail components. The majority of buildings within the immediate vicinity are multi-level, which are purposely designed for the clothing manufacturing industry.

Glenwood and Umbilo are two adjacent former white neighbourhoods. During apartheid, racial superiority coupled with discriminatory legislation meant that the school was originally a "whites-only" school (Collins, 2011). Since the end of the Group Areas Act in 1991 in South Africa, former white areas have become progressively mixed. The White Paper on Education and Training (1995) made provision for the desegregation of schools. Soon after attaining

democracy in 1994, the South African government introduced the Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996), an instrument to eliminate all segregation from the exclusionary education system of the apartheid era.

### **1.3 THE SCHOOL CONTEXT**

I chose Greenfield High School as a research site because I am both very familiar with the school and have ready access to it. I have been teaching at this school as a level one teacher for 21 years. I teach Mathematics and I am currently the Subject Head of Mathematics. I have been in this position at the school for over 18 years.

From humble beginnings in 1910, when there were just 26 boys on the roll, Greenfield High School has grown to be one of the leading schools in KZN and South Africa. The name was changed in 1915. It was not until January 1929, that the school was able to move to its present premises. In 1934, the name was changed to its present name, "Greenfield High School". The "Government Schools Hostel" was opened in 1935 and after WWII, the name was changed to "Apollo House" in memory of one of the original boarders who had died in WWII. His legacy epitomises the typical "Apollo House" boy.

Greenfield has an excellent academic and sporting reputation and features prominently among the 94 formerly white schools in the top 100 public schools. Greenfield is a formerly white boys' high school with a multi-racial learner population comprising about 20% blacks, 30% Indians and 50% whites. It has an excellent academic and sporting reputation. The campus is extensive with trees and numerous playing fields. The building is impressive and adorned with emblems of academic and sporting success, photos of school rugby and cricket teams of the past as well as outstanding academic achievers.

There are abundant resources and the fees range from R 57 590.00 to R 61 590.00 per annum as of 2022. The boarding establishment fees are R 71 580.00 per annum. Despite it being a government-funded school, the extra

fees charged mean that the school can maintain its competitive advantage by employing more teachers than most government schools that do not charge school fees and by attracting boys from largely middle- and upper-class families. The boys considered the school to be particularly good in terms of its academic work and many preferred its single-sex status, as this allowed them to focus on and excel at their favourite sport. The demographics of the schools are changing constantly as the number of African learners enrolling at this school is steadily increasing.

The learner population in the school and the boarding house is now diverse in terms of race, class and ethnicity (Coloured, African, White and Indian). Boys of different religious affiliations, cultural groups and linguistic backgrounds live together in a boarding house environment. Most of the boys in the boarding house are from white-middle class backgrounds but there are also some boys from disadvantaged communities who are recipients of bursaries or scholarships. A considerable number of boys are Afrikaans speaking and come from various small towns around the country. There are only a few Indian and Coloured boys living in the boarding house (Barnes, 2017).

Historically, the aim of the school was to give specialised education to boys to enable them to enter an industrial or professional career after matriculating. Although it was difficult to organise sporting activities in the early years due to a lack of facilities, sport has always been part of the school's identity. These boys' only schools, such as Greenfield High School, were replicated in South Africa during the age of the British Empire (1850-1910). They continued the tradition of English public schools, with an emphasis on competitive sports and the restrictive practices of dominant masculinity. To date, Greenfield High School still prides itself on its sporting prowess, especially rugby. (Barnes, 2017).

Although boys of all ages joined the school in the late 1980s, rugby remained the sport of white middle-class, English-speaking boys. However, in the last decade, a significant number of white, Afrikaans-speaking boys have joined

the school, mainly as a result of the school's exemplary results in rugby (Barnes, 2017).

The school was committed to non-racialism, and in 1987, the school appealed to the government to admit any boy to the school, regardless of race. It became one of the first schools in the country to allow boys from all races who were academically or sportingly talented to study at the school (Barnes, 2017). In 1994, with the advent of democracy, there were 1024 learners enrolled at the school. The number of boys that enrolled in 2022 was 1071 and included learners from all races and socio-economic groups in South Africa. To date, the staff comprises 55 male and 15 female staff members (Barnes, 2017).

The majority of the boys live at home with their parents/guardians and attend school during the day. They are referred to as "day" boys. The rest of the boys live in the boarding establishment (BE), also known as "Apollo House". They are allowed to go home during the school holidays and on "free" weekends. The BE was built in 1935 and was originally open to all boys attending state schools in Durban. It was later handed over to "Greenfield High School" for the exclusive use of the boys attending the school (Barnes, 2017). This research study was conducted at both the school and the boarding house.

#### **1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY**

The main objective of this study was to investigate bullying at this single-sex, multicultural, multiracial, ex- Model-C, boys' high school in urban KZN in South Africa.

In response to the main objective, further objectives of the study addressed the following among the learners of this school:

- the current status of bullying at the school
- the experiences and perceptions of bullying at the school
- the extent and nature of bullying in this particular school.
- the causes and consequences of bullying at this school

- propose and implement interventions that will serve to address bullying behaviour in the school.

My research will hopefully raise awareness of the importance of focusing on the negative impact of bullying behaviour among the learners in schools as well as strengthen intervention strategies to prevent such behaviour

## **1.5 METHODOLOGY**

### **1.5.1 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

Action Research is a type of research methodology that works toward some sort of change (social or professional). Action research studies are usually based on everyday issues and the aim is to create practical solutions to these problems. Most action research adopts a methodical, iterative approach that focuses on problem identification, action planning, implementation, evaluation and reflection. The insights acquired from the initial cycle are considered when planning the next cycle, with the action plan being modified and the research process repeated (O'Leary, 2007).

After collecting, organising and interpreting the data, I created a plan of action, which was implemented over a ten-week period. The results of the study indicated that a considerable amount of bullying is taking place in the school, I instigated the implementation of an anti-bullying campaign at school. I included talks by professionals to make the learners aware of their rights, and increased communication between the parents, the school and the learners to make the parents and the community aware of the consequences of bullying.

### **1.5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research methodology or a research design is the specific techniques or procedures that are used to identify, select, process, and analyse information about a research topic (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003).

The methodology must explain what you did and how you did it. In this way, the reliability and validity of the research can be evaluated. It should include:

- The type of research you did
- How you collected and/or selected your data
- How you analysed your data
- Any tools or materials you used in the research
- Your rationale for choosing these methods

My research study adopted a qualitative research methodology. This qualitative aspect of the methodology employed focus group interviews and individual interviews. It accessed bullying behaviour in the school by focusing on the bullies' and victims' perspectives. It also addressed what action can be taken to minimise bullying at this school.

My research concerned itself with the prevalence and experiences of bullying in a single –sex boys high school in Durban. Since I have been an educator at the school for over twenty-two years, I was able to conduct individual interviews with the participants as well as engage in focus group discussions conduct with minimal disruption to the school and the learne'rs education. In this way, I was able to gather information (the data) which provided a rich image of the extent, nature and consequences of bullying at the school.

A qualitative research approach is useful when exploring participants' feelings, perceptions, beliefs and experiences (Soobramoney, 2016). This approach is said to be very descriptive (Christiansen *et al.*, 2010). My research design was an interpretive case study that was analysed through qualitative methods using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to elicit information about their lives at home and social relationships in school with specific reference to their experiences of bullying behaviour articulated by the bullies', victims', and bystanders'.

### **1.5.3 TARGET POPULATION**

The school in which I conducted my research had one thousand and seventy learners from grades 8 to 12. The target population consisted of a sample of four learners from the boarding establishment (a hostel for learners who choose to stay at school during the school term) and six from the “day” boys. I also interviewed three educators. The three educators who were selected included one boarder master (educator who resides in the boarding establishment) and two educators who are daily travellers. Since no female educator resides in the boarding establishment, this educator was male. All together this study consisted of 13 participants.

### **1.5.4 SAMPLING METHOD**

The study employed purposive, non-probability sampling because I was targeting a specific group, knowing that it represents itself, not the wider population (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

As a starting point, the boys were initially identified by educators and boarder masters. The school has many discipline structures in place. At school, each grade has a grade controller who is in charge of that particular grade. Since these teachers are responsible for maintaining discipline in the grade, I asked them for referrals based on their observation of bullying and conflict. At the boarding establishment, the boarder masters are in charge of the boys, and are responsible for maintaining discipline after school and during weekends. I also asked them for referrals based on bullying and conflict issues.

This was in keeping with the concept of purposive sampling. I asked the educators and boarder masters to identify boys who were violent in conflict situations, boys who defused the conflict or disagreement non-violently and boys who passively accepted their plight.

The educators were recruited according to their number of years of teaching experience at the research school. Educators who participated in this study



had been teaching for over ten years at the research school.

### **1.5.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

An interview schedule was used to collect data for the interviews. A logical structure was adopted in the interview schedule. This was done by grouping questions into sections and advancing from the general to the specific

### **1.5.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

The study made use of individual interviews and focus group discussions to collect data. I conducted one-on-one interviews with both the teachers and the boys. I used my office, where there was minimal noise, to conduct these interviews

### **1.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

During the data analysis process, I organised my data according to the research questions, through content analysis. I assigned meaning to the content (messages) and was able to draw significant conclusions through content analysis (Parveen and Showkat, 2017).

### **1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

DUT research ethics and guidelines were followed to ensure that all participants' rights were protected. Consent was obtained from all participants and parents of learner participants. Learners and their parents/guardians were asked to complete an assent form. Permission was sought from the Department of Education as well as the principal of the school, informing them of the objectives of the study.

The participant's right to privacy was valued at all times. I ensured that the findings of the study were attested to comprehensively and honestly, without distorting what the participants had done or deliberately misinforming others about the nature of my findings. All participants were advised at the outset

about the objectives of the study, and they were given a choice to participate or not to participate or withdraw at any stage without any repercussions. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics committee of the Durban University of Technology.

## **1.8 COVID-19 PROTOCOLS**

The face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with strict adherence to the standard operating procedures with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before any of the interviews were conducted, the participant's temperature was taken and recorded. The participants completed the questionnaire in terms of the COVID-19 symptoms. None of the participants had a high temperature or displayed any of the COVID-19 symptoms.

Before entering the interview venue, participants were provided with hand sanitizers. No one was allowed into the interview venue without using a mask that covers both the mouth and nose. The masks were kept on during the interviews. Social distancing was also maintained at all times during the interviews. The interviewer and participants were seated 1.5 metres apart.

## **1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

I indicate how the thesis unfolds in this final section of the Introduction.

### **CHAPTER 1 - Introduction**

The introduction provides the orientation for the research, which introduces the background to the study, context, research aim, statement of the problem and research methods.

### **CHAPTER 2 - Theoretical Framework**

This chapter focuses on the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study, derived from the emerging literature that examines the background of bullying

and violence.

### **CHAPTER 3 - Literature review**

This chapter reviews relevant literature and empirical studies on the nature, causes, prevalence and consequences of school bullying.

### **CHAPTER 4 - Research Design and Methodology**

An overview of the qualitative research design and methodology used in this study, along with a discussion of how data was collected and analysed is presented. This includes details of sampling procedures, data collection methods, research instruments, data analysis, ethical considerations, validity and reliability.

### **CHAPTER 5 - Analysis and findings**

This chapter analyses and interprets the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews using thematic analysis.

### **CHAPTER 6 - Intervention Campaign/Programme**

This chapter focuses on the planning, implementation and evaluation of the anti-bullying intervention campaign implemented at Greenfield High School. It describes the tasks and activities that the participants engaged in during the intervention campaign.

### **CHAPTER 7 - Conclusion and Recommendations**

This chapter focuses on the conclusions reached from the findings emanating from the participants' responses and offers practical and procedural recommendations based on interpretations derived from the research study.

## **1.10 CONCLUSION**

The intention of this chapter was to present a general overview of the study. The context of the study was investigated and the statement of the problem and the motivation behind the study were explored. The site of the study was

also described. This chapter focused on the principal concepts of the study, which would be emphasised and expounded on in the subsequent chapters.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

*"By being a bully, you are preparing yourself to be a murderer."*

South African Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga (Maseko, 2017).

Over the years, many theoretical perspectives have been proposed to explain bullying behaviour. However, most of the existing anti-bullying programmes have not been very successful in reducing bullying behaviour. In this chapter, I will discuss some of these theoretical frameworks and attempt to provide an integrative theoretical framework to explain the nature and extent of bullying at schools.

#### **2.1 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON BULLYING**

Rigby (2004) identified five different theoretical perspectives on bullying. This section examines the theoretical perspectives that explain the prevalence of bullying and their implications for the work of schools. Each is shown to have some empirical support and to have influenced the thinking adopted by schools and actions undertaken in addressing bullying.

##### **BULLYING AS AN OUTCOME OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STUDENTS**

In this view, bullying takes place when children with different personal powers interact. During these encounters, the more powerful child is motivated to oppress the less powerful one and he/she tends to do so repeatedly. There are both physical and/or psychological imbalances in power between children in a school. Some children just like to dominate others and they deliberately find others to bully (Rigby, 2004).

Bullies tend to be physically stronger, aggressive and manipulative with a low level of empathy (Farley, 1999; Olweus, 1993; Sutton and Keogh, 2000). Victims tend to be physically weak, introverted children with low self-esteem

(Maynard and Joseph, 1997; O' Moore and Hillery, 1991; Slee and Rigby, 1993). Some of these differences can be attributed to genetics (O'Connor *et al.*, 1980). The quality of family life is also thought to influence some children's need to engage in bullying. Oppressive parents and dysfunctional families can also contribute to the aggressive behaviour of children towards their peers (Rigby, 1994).

### **BULLYING AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL PHENOMENON**

This perspective focuses on differences have a historical and cultural basis, such as race, gender or ethnicity and social class as well as differences due to having different religious affiliations and being less 'abled' (Rigby, 2004). Some boys tend to develop certain characteristics that result in them engaging in oppressive behaviour. This is referred to as 'the construction of hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1995; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998). This can account for boys bullying girls, as well as boys bullying other boys who do not exhibit stereotypical masculine qualities (commonly referred to as 'gay'). This may include children whose sexual orientation is homosexual (Rigby, 2004).

Some researchers (Rigby, 2004; Xu, Macrynika, Waseem and Miranda, 2020), tend to associate bullying with racial or ethnic divisions. They contend that some ethnic groups are more powerful than others and that they try to dominate the less dominant groups. However, based on studies so far, there is no reliable evidence to show that bullying is associated with racial or ethnic differences in all school communities. It has also been suggested that children from families with high social status use this source of power to bully children who are less privileged than them. However, once again, based on current evidence, studies have not been able to support the theory that children from lower-class homes are more likely to be bullied than children from upper-class homes. Studies conducted in Sweden, Portugal and Spain were not able to find any relationship between social class and bullying (Rigby, 2004; Ortega and Mora-Merchan, 1999, Almeida, 1999).

## **BULLYING AS A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS**

According to this perspective, bullying begins in early childhood when children seek to establish their social dominance at the expense of others. At first, it is in a crude manner (e.g. hitting others) to intimidate them. This view is in line with the evolutionary theory, which contends that an individual's survival depends on his/her domination over others. As a result, the strongest prevail and hence ensure the existence of the species. However, as children develop, they learn to use more socially acceptable behaviour. Hence, indirect and verbal forms of bullying have become more common than physical forms (Rigby, 2004).

This perspective does not take into account that although reports of victimisation decrease over time, this pattern is temporarily reversed when children move from primary to secondary school and find themselves in a new environment that is less non-threatening (Rigby, 1996).

## **BULLYING AS A RESPONSE TO PEER PRESSURES WITHIN THE SCHOOL**

The proponents of this perspective contend that bullying is understandable in a broad social context, which consists of the behaviours and attitudes of all members of the school community. They believe that individuals can be influenced by their perceptions of the "school ethos" (Rigby, 1997a). They can be influenced by a smaller group of their close peers with whom they have common interests and purposes. These groups can provide support for their members and may also pose a threat to outsiders or ex-members whom they may bully. In certain situations, children may be members of a group that is more powerful than an individual or a smaller group that they want to bully. The reason for this can be a grievance, imagined grievance, prejudice or just to have fun at someone else's expense (Rigby, 2004).

This type of bullying behaviour continues because the bully has a connection with the group (allegiance to the group/peer pressure) rather than by individual motives such as personal malice. In early studies of bullying in Scandinavia, the term 'mobbing' was used to infer that children are bullied by mobs (Rigby, 2004). However, according to Pepler and Craig (1995), when bullying occurs in a group, the aggressor is only one person. S/he is controlled by several members of the group with the passive support of others in the group.

### **BULLYING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

This perspective proposes that some children are more likely than others to become bullies/victims as a result of the kind of character they developed. According to Morrison (2002), bullies feel little or no pride in their school and they are not well integrated. They are unable to control their emotional reactions because they do not experience appropriate feelings of shame, and they are more inclined to attribute unworthy characteristics to their victims. Victims, on the other hand, tend to experience too much inappropriate shame (Rigby, 2004). Even though this view emphasises individual differences, it also focuses on the school community as well as important people in the lives of both the victims and the bullies.

According to this perspective, appropriate feelings of shame can and should be stimulated in bullies by exposing them to censure by the victims. This can be done constructively in the presence of caring family and friends. A successful outcome depends on the support provided by significant others who care about the bullies as well as the willingness of the community to forgive and accept them (Morrison, 2002). According to Cameron and Thorsborne (2001), this approach is concerned with 'violations against people' and the restoration of positive relationships rather than applying punishment for breaking rules

In order to broaden my understanding of bullying in different contexts and settings I looked at a number of theories that inform bullying behaviour. Each approach reveals assumptions about the importance of internal and external



forces, behaviour that triggers or sustains interactions, or the impact of competing goals or interests.

In the next section, I discuss three theoretical models that have been adopted to analyse and explain the prevalence of bullying and its implications for Greenfield High School. The bio-ecological theory, the social-biological and the social-cultural framework are the three models that were used to inform this study of bullying in school. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model was developed to explain that everything in a child and his/her environment affects how the child develops and grows (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). However, there is also a need for investigating the social and contextual aspects of bullying (Thornberg, 2015). The sociocultural theoretical approach is based on work done by Vygotsky (1978) who proposed that development is shaped by the contexts in which the individuals are based as well as the social and interactional relations that exist between them (Maunder, 2017). Bullying can be defined as a social process in which a child in a less powerful position is repeatedly harassed or excluded by others (Salmivalli, 2010).

## **2.2 BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL**

In the bio-ecological model, development is defined as the phenomenon of continuity and change in the bio-psychological characteristics of human beings, both as individuals and as groups. The phenomenon extends over the life course, across successive generations, and through historical time, both past and future (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). According to this model, we should be studying development in its ecological context, that is, in the actual environments in which human beings live their lives (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, children typically find themselves enmeshed in various ecosystems, from the most intimate home ecological system to the larger school system, and then to the most expansive system, which includes society and culture. Each of these ecological systems inevitably interacts with and influences the other in all aspects of the children's lives

Two propositions define this model. According to the first proposition, human development throughout a person's life takes place progressively through more complex reciprocal interactions between an active, bio-psychological human being and the people, objects and symbols in the immediate environment. This interaction must take place on a relatively regular basis over a prolonged period to be effective. These are referred to as proximal processes. Child-child and parent-child activities, group or solitary play, studying, reading, learning new skills, performing complex tasks and athletic activities are all examples of these processes. The second proposition states that the form, power, content and direction of these proximal processes systematically affect the development of the individual. This is a result of the combination of the characteristics of the developing individual, both the immediate and remote environment as well as the nature of the development outcomes. These two propositions are theoretically interdependent (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

In my study it was the assumption learners were provided with skills and knowledge to function non-violently in school through the intervention programmes then they would begin to demonstrate behavioural changes that would spread to other learners and eventually to the entire school community. In the long-term, as learners interact with family and community member after leaving school the message of non-violence would spread.

### **MICROSYSTEM**

This layer is closest to the child and includes the structures with which the child has direct interaction (Ettekal and Mahoney, 2017). A microsystem is a small, immediate environment in which the child lives. It includes the relationships and interactions of children with their immediate surroundings (Berk, 2000). Examples include family, school, neighbourhood, childcare environments or organised sports activities (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Paquette and Ryan, 2001; Ettekal and Mahoney, 2017).

The child's growth will be affected by the interactions between these groups and the child. The more encouraging and nurturing these relationships and places are, the better the child will be able to grow. Furthermore, the child's reaction to the people in the microsystem will affect how they reciprocate (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

The family is the primary socialising unit with its own strengths and weaknesses that influences a child's early values and attitudes (Govender, 2006). A child who is bullied at home becomes a bully at school (Batsche, Knoff and Lincoln, cited in Elliot *et al.*, 1998). According to Peppler (2006), "delinquency and aggression among children are known to be related to their parents' inability to care about, supervise and punish the children's anti-social behaviour appropriately". Some children tend to exhibit bullying behaviour when they are born into a poorer environment where their parents set poor examples, do not take much interest in their well-being, or are away from home for long periods of time (Furlong, 1985; Baldry and Hargreaves, 1996). Parents who struggle financially are forced to find work away from home and their children are often neglected. Substance abuse and family conflict could also result in a lack of parental interest in the needs of their children (Govender, 2006).

In South Africa, Stats SA released a Poverty Trends in South Africa report in August 2017, which indicated that a quarter of the population lived in extreme poverty in 2015. More than half the population (56%) was considered to be living in poverty as defined by the upper-bound poverty line of R1183 per person per month (Stats SA, 2019). A world record-breaking, near two-thirds of South African children grow up in homes without fathers, and our country has the distinction of having one of the highest global rates of single motherhood (Parent 24, 2020). Apartheid damaged the very structure of family life; without the ability to own land and live close to their low-paying jobs, black men were subjected to the migrant labour system that took them away from their families for months or years at a time. Geographically disrupted families

are still the norm for many South Africans. Men believe if they cannot provide financial assistance, they have nothing to offer. As a result, they do not offer emotional and physical support or try to be good role models. Poverty disrupts familial stability anywhere in the world (Parent 24, 2020).

### **MESOSYSTEM**

This layer provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem (Berk, 2000). It links the processes that take place between two or more settings, which connect the developing child. In other words, it is a system of microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Examples include the connection between the child's teacher and his parents, between his church and his neighbourhood, among other examples (Paquette and Ryan, 2001). Initially, the most important relationships are those between the home and mother, the home and kindergarten and the home and school. It is important for the child to see if the influencing factors of socialisation are similar or different. In other words, do the different microsystems support each other or does the child perceive them as opposing entities with different expectations or obligations for different ways of behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

A child moves beyond the family to the school environment. The apartheid legacy created oppressive schools, especially for African children. Post-apartheid, many South African government schools still have poor or non-existent facilities. They are under-resourced with overcrowded conditions (Govender, 2006). Smith (2006) contends that previously disadvantaged South African schools still exhibit varying degrees of deprivation in terms of, for example, water, furniture and toilets. Since most private and ex-Model C schools have proper security, modernised computer and sporting facilities and music centres, amongst other amenities, these obvious differences may result in children from the previously disadvantaged schools behaving in an anti-social manner.

Parental control is diminishing and children are not afraid of authority figures at school since educators do not have the power to discipline children anymore

(Van Niekerk *et al.*, 2002). The lack of clear rules for behaviour and the inability to enforce school rules/policies contribute to anti-social behaviour (Ramsey, cited in Glover *et al.*, 1994). Children's loyalty towards their school affects how they behave. Hayden and Blaya (2005) contend that loyalty to the school is an important protective factor against violence. Many children from the ex-Model C schools, especially the ones that have boarding establishments, exhibit high levels of loyalty toward their school. Methods that are used to encourage bonding include war cries and team building. The school at which this study is being undertaken is one such school.

When there are different cultures and norms between the home and school, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to exhibit more bullying behaviour and are more disruptive at school (Willis, 1993).

### **EXOSYSTEM**

This layer encompasses the larger social system in which the child does not function directly. It incorporates the connections and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not usually contain the child, but in which events take place that influence the developments within the immediate settings that do contain the child (Bronfenbrenner 1989). The structures in this layer influence the child's development by interrelating with some structures in the child's microsystem (Berk, 2000). Examples include the relationship between the home and the parent's workplace or community-based family activities. Children may not be directly involved, but they can experience a positive or negative effect from this interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Paquette and Ryan, 2001).

Kasiram *et al.* (1996) conducted a study on the way in which violence is manifested in South Africa. In certain neighbourhoods, daily activities are secondary in nature to those of fighting. This type of aggressive behaviour includes physical abuse, child exploitation and domestic violence. Such neighbourhoods may be characterised by the following: proximity to industrial sites, physical deterioration, mainly rented properties and a high percentage

of immigrants (Govender, 2006). According to Shafii and Shafii (2001) and Duncan (1999), a child's coping skills are reduced by frequent exposure to violence.

Shack dwellings (informal settlements) and overcrowded townships are lower-income housing settlements. Whitney and Smith (1993) investigated 6758 school children in Sheffield and found that schools in these poorer areas showed higher rates of bullying behaviour. Children who are exposed to violence are at a greater risk of suffering from low self-esteem, nightmares, self-blame and aggression toward others (Massey, cited in Lake, 2004). Research has shown that children who normalise violence in their lives become the perpetrators or victims of some form of aggressive behaviour (Govender, 2006).

The media often promotes violence. Violence is often made to look like a glamorous and successful method of resolving disputes (Jones, 2001). Through over-exposure to violence on television, children become desensitised to violent behaviour and very young children are susceptible to mimicking what they see without understanding the consequences Simmons (cited in Lake, 2004). As a result of an abundance of adolescent music, world news and graphically upsetting print brutality and violent behaviour have become commonplace in the daily lives of children. According to Mwahombela (2004), school violence has increased in South Africa and the rest of the world and in the process, it has destroyed the fabric of the learning environment (Govender, 2006).

### **MACROSYSTEM**

This is the outermost layer of the child's environment. It consists of an all-encompassing pattern of micro-, meso- and exosystems. This layer does not have a specific structure. It incorporates cultural values, customs, and laws (Berk, 2000), with a specific focus on the developmental belief systems, lifestyles, hazards, resources, opportunity structures, life-course options, and patterns of social interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The effects of these

larger principles have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other layers (Paquette and Ryan, 2001). It is like a 'societal blueprint' for a particular culture, subculture, or other broader social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Twenty years since the dismantling of Apartheid, the legacy of Apartheid remains an integral part of South African society. The Eurocentric influence can be seen in the legal, education and religious systems. Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003) contend that unemployment, migration, cheap labour practices and brutality of their own societies have all had a severe impact on the youth of South Africa. Forced removals, inferior schooling and child labour are a few atrocities of apartheid that resulted in a lack of opportunity for African youth. Historically, schools in South Africa were created to fit children into subordinate roles in terms of the facilities and opportunities offered to them in the workplace (Govender, 2006).

The social and political ostracism of the African people cultivated aggression and frustration, which resulted in criminal and violent behaviour. The black youth and their parents have been entangled in a "culture of violence". As the youth became more actively involved in fighting the apartheid regime, parental control was weakened and traditional ties were reduced. Today, the Black youth remain frustrated since the expectations of democracy in SA have not yet been met. Many of the inequalities that stemmed from the atrocities of apartheid still prevail (Govender, 2006).

Since anti-social behaviour occurs all over the world, apartheid alone cannot be blamed for youth wrongdoings. However, its historical influence on the existing socioeconomic climate cannot be ignored. As the demographics of large cities change, their urban schools bring together an increasing number of children who are at risk of being perpetrators or recipients of bullying behaviour and violence, since numerous psycho-social elements merge (Freeman *et al.*, 1998; Naidu, 2006; McPartland and McDill, 1977).

## **CHRONOSYSTEM**

This system incorporates the dimension of time as it relates to a child's environment. It encompasses change or consistency over time in the characteristics of the individual as well as in the surrounding environment (e.g., changes in the family structure, place of residence, parent's employment, socioeconomic status or ability to cope with everyday life (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The elements within this system can be either external, such as the timing of a parent's death, or internal, such as the physiological changes that occur as the child gets older (Paquette and Ryan, 2001).

One example of this is how divorce, as a major life transition, may affect their children's behaviour. According to the majority of research, children are negatively affected during the first year after the divorce. The following years reveal that the interaction within the family becomes more stable and agreeable (Sincero, 2012). Stats SA reported that there were 25 390 divorce cases were finalised in 2017. African couples experienced the highest number of divorces in comparison to other population groups during the ten years (2008 to 2017). In 2017, 11 309 (44. 5%) of the 25 390 divorces were from black African population group, followed by white 6 048 (23. 8%), coloured 4 517 (17. 8%) and India/Asian 1 401 (5. 5%). 14 121 (55. 6%) of the 25 390 divorces had children younger than 18 years. Generally, the number of divorce cases for black Africans is on the increase (Stats SA, 2017).

## **2.3 THE SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK**

Swearer and Doll (2001) contend that bullying and victimisation are ecological phenomena that develop from the individual characteristics of the bully and the victim as well as the social, physical, institutional and community contexts. This theory assumes that as children develop in language, cognition, social competence and physical integrity, they adapt concurrently to their immediate social and physical environment, which in turn is mediated by distant forces in the wider community and society (Swearer and Doll, 2001).



According to Capra (1996), these represent ecological systems. Any skills or difficulties that the child displays are a reflection of the properties of this integrated system and not just their individual characteristics. The development or inhibition of pro-social and anti-social behaviours in each child is dependent on the complex interactions between children and their environments (Lerner, Hess and Nitz, 1991; Sameroff, 1975). Therefore, problems are not inherent within the children or within the context, but instead are the result of continuous interactions between both entities (Pianta and Walsh, 1996).

Swearer and Doll (2001) argue that there are six important implications for school policies and practices that address bullying behaviours in school.

- Bullying must be defined as a collection of behavioural interactions.
- Inherent disorders contribute to bullying and victimisation but are frequently overlooked.
- Families must be actively involved in anti-bullying interventions.
- Anti-bullying interventions must reduce the effect of peer support for bullying behaviour.
- Anti-bullying interventions must change the responses of teachers and other adults.
- Anti-bullying interventions require changes within the school administration to have a lasting impact.

Swearer and Espelage (2004) propose a socio-ecological framework within which bullying takes place. Bullying has to be understood across multiple environments--individual, family, school and community. All these environments are responsible for influencing individual behaviour because bullying behaviour does not occur in isolation. According to this perspective, the child is the centre of his/her social ecosystem (including the school and the peer group), either as a bully, bully-victim, victim, or bystander. Participation in bullying is influenced by individual factors. If the child is exposed to bullying

behaviour by caregivers or by siblings, he/she may be more susceptible to the development of bullying and/or victimisation in the child. An extension of this environment will be the community, which includes the child, family, peer group and school. Lastly, culture encompasses all these contexts in the social ecology (Swearer and Espelage, 2004).

Hence, according to this model, the reaction of teachers, school administration and adult family members toward bullying behaviour is vital in developing a healthy school (and home) environment (Swearer and Doll, 2001).

## **2.4 VYGOTSKY'S SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY**

The sociocultural perspective focuses on how individual, social, and contextual issues impact human activity, especially learning and behaviour. Hence, culture is an important concept in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. According to this perspective, human learning is a social process and the origin of human intelligence in society. The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a vital role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky believed that social learning comes before cognitive development. This perspective views school bullying as contextual and advocates that attention should be given to the relationships and multiple settings surrounding the behaviour (Maunder and Crafter, 2018).

According to Vygotsky, learning takes place on two levels. Firstly, on the social level between people (inter-psychological) and then, later, on an individual level, inside the child (intra-psychological) (Vygotsky, 1978). Secondly, the view that the potential for cognitive development is limited to a "zone of proximal development" (ZPD), which is the area of exploration for which the child is intellectually equipped but needs help and social interaction to fully develop (Briner, 1999).

The role of social mediation in the internalisation process has been strongly emphasised in socio-cultural theory. According to Shabani (2010) and

Vygotsky (1982), social interaction with cultural artefacts forms the most important part of a child's psychological development. These cultural tools or artefacts include all the things we use, from simple things such as a pen, spoon, or table, to the more complex things such as language, traditions, beliefs, arts, or science (Cole, 1997; Vygotsky, 1982). Vygotsky placed particular emphasis on language (John-Steiner and Mahn, 1996).

Maunder and Crafter (2018), contend that a sociocultural theoretical framework can be used to explain school bullying. They explain this according to three themes:

- the conceptualisation and interpretation of bullying
- the relational aspects of bullying
- bullying as part of someone's life trajectory

It has been argued that sociocultural theory provides a mechanism for understanding cognitive development in interactions as well as through social and emotional learning. This takes place in the shared spaces in cultural and school areas with peers and teachers (Morcom, 2015). Understanding is mediated through social interactions with and guidance from others (Vygotsky, 1978). Mediation was a central tenet of Vygotsky's work. He was of the opinion that individuals and social interactions mutually shape each other (Daniels, 2015).

One feature of mediation is the use of cultural artefacts, such as language or physical objects. These artefacts provided a link between the actions carried out by individuals and groups and their cultural, institutional, and historical settings (Wertsch, Rio, and Alvarez, 1995). Another important feature of mediation is that it is based on the role of psychological tools (Maunder and Crafter, 2018).

The sociocultural theoretical perspective examines bullying by focusing on how people engage in different cultural contexts. These contexts (family,

schools, and social groups) are dynamic entities with their own histories, social norms and conventions, which have been established over time and are replicated through the involvement of members (Wenger, 1998). As the individuals interact within these communities, they receive clues about cultural rules and behaviours from the more established members and slowly become integrated into the community. The accepted norms and policies of the group are communicated to them by means of observation of established members, participation in organised cultural activities and scaffolding by learning through guided participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2008).

This study explored the lived experiences of learners. The theory is based on the premise that behaviour is constantly created and recreated during social interaction. This allowed for the understanding of learner's experiences within a social context. This theory will be helpful in analysing and interpreting the gendered perceptions and behaviour of participants in this study. The social cultural theory may account for the paradoxical inequalities that exist. It is an important theory in understanding the underlying reasons for behavioural patterns such as bullying, which would allow for better preventative intervention. Socially constructed preferences occur in real-life scenarios, like schools and choices tend to occur within social life and in interdependence.

## **2.5 RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

Restorative justice is a process that can be used to resolve disputes by involving all parties concerned (victims, offenders, families and community members). They collectively identify the hurt, needs and obligations by accepting responsibilities, making restitution, and taking measures to prevent a recurrence of the incident and promoting reconciliation. Restorative Justice focuses on repairing the harm that has been committed against the victim and the community. It is based on the belief that the offender also needs help and tries to identify the change required to prevent a future re-occurrence (DOJ and CD, 2011).

According to Braithwaite (1989), “restorative justice is a participatory process that addresses wrongdoing while offering respect to the parties involved, through consideration of the story each person tells of how they were affected by the harmful incident”. It is a process where everyone affected by an injustice has an opportunity to discuss how they have been affected and to collectively make a decision as to how to repair the damage (Braithwaite, 2004). Since social relationships are important for regulating social life, the central tenet of restorative justice is “social relationships”. Theories of re-integrative shaming, procedural justice, unacknowledged shame and defiance are restorative justice processes that might be effective in reducing crime and attaining other kinds of restoration (Braithwaite, 1989).

## **2.6 BRAITHWAITE’S REINTEGRATIVE SHAMING THEORY**

Re-integrative shaming takes place when disapproval is expressed while still showing respect for the offender, by being fair, listening and unbiased as a result of age, sex or race (Morrison, 2002). Braithwaite (1989), contends that tolerance of crime and stigmatisation, or disrespectful out-casting and shaming of crime only makes it worse. On the other hand, re-integrative shaming, disapproval of the act within a range of respect for the offender and disapproval ended by ceremonies of forgiveness can prevent crime. Proponents of this theory advocate that the justice system will be more effective when it facilitates moral reasoning by families over what to do about a crime as an alternative to punishment by the state (Braithwaite, 1989).

The concept of shame is taken into consideration during the discussions on the consequences of the crime, for both the victims and the offender’s family. The support of those whom the offender loves or respects integrates reintegration into the ritual. It is the shame experienced by those whom the offender respects and trusts that affects the offender the most. The concept of re-integrative shaming is that disapproval is conveyed within a continuum of respect for the offender (Braithwaite, 1989).

Some children are more likely than others to be involved in bullying behaviour as a result of their developed character. Bullies feel little or no pride in their school and are not well integrated into the community (Morrison 2002). They are incapable of handling their emotional reactions to the pain they cause since they do not experience appropriate feelings of shame. Instead, they tend to ascribe worthless characteristics to their victims. The victims, on the other hand, tend to experience too much inappropriate shame (Rigby, 2003).

Ahmed (2001) conducted a study on bullying and concluded that bullies deal with shame by transforming it (e.g., into anger), victims acknowledge and suppress shame so that they suffer continual shame, while children who avoid both bullying and being victimised by bullies have the ability to acknowledge and release shame so that it does not become a threat to themselves. Hence, he concluded that restorative processes may reduce bullying in schools because these processes create spaces where there is sufficient time as well as tolerance for shame to be accepted. This does not necessarily take place in the formal courtroom context (Braithwaite, 1989).

## **2.7 SCHEFF'S THEORY OF UNACKNOWLEDGED SHAME**

According to this perspective, shame can be a destructive emotion. It can result in the offender attacking others or themselves. Nathanson (1992) developed a Compass of Shame Scale which can be used to assess how the offender reacts to feelings of shame. This model describes four shame coping styles represented by the poles of the compass and labelled: attack self, withdrawal, attack other, and avoidance. Each style is associated with different motivations, affects, cognitions and behaviour (Elison, 2006). From this perspective, a process is required to allow offenders to deal with the shame that usually results from the occurrence of a serious criminal offence (Elison, Lennon and Pulos, 2006).

Four categories associated with bullying behaviour in schools are nonbullies/nonvictims, victims, bullies and bully/victims. Ahmed (2001) contends that these four groups of children can be differentiated on the basis

of their shame management style. Bullies deny any wrongdoing on their part, take no responsibility for their actions and feel no rejection from others. Victims take on responsibility for wrongdoing but feel others will reject them for the offence. They are caught in a cycle of shame because they tend to have persistent feelings of disrespect and detachment from their peers (Lewis, 1987).

Children who are caught in the cycle of being both a bully and a victim often deny any wrongdoing and take no responsibility. They do, however, feel continually rejected by others. Lewis (1971) contends that these children displace and bypass their feelings of shame. They feel shame over the wrongdoing but then suppress it, not discharging it in a healthy manner by taking responsibility and making amends. Children who are neither bullies nor victims acknowledge wrongdoing and take responsibility for their actions. They feel others will not reject them over their offences. Hence, they are able to discharge their shame over their wrongdoing (Morrison, 2006).

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

Many theoretical frameworks have been used to understand bullying behaviour, including differential association theory and general strain theory (Moon, Hwang and McCluskey, 2011), an ecological systems framework (Lee, 2011), social cognitive theory (Swearer *et al.*, 2014), dominance theory (Evans and Smokowski, 2016) and a sociocultural perspective (Maunder and Crafter, 2018) among others. While these theories provide an understanding of bullying behaviour on an individual level, Juan *et al.* (2018) contend that organisational culture theory provides an understanding of how the school system is related to bullying behaviour (Juan *et al.*, 2018). According to Evans and Smokowski (2016), organisations have their own unique culture, which comprises their “shared values, beliefs, rituals, and customs”. This culture influences how the organisation functions and its success is dependent on how the organisation is able to solve problems. The organisational culture within a school is referred to as the school culture or school climate (Evans and Smokowski, 2016).

The theoretical framework that informed the analysis and findings was explored in this chapter. The theoretical perspectives on bullying were discussed. Research has shown that bullying behaviour in schools is increasing globally as well as in South Africa. A holistic, integrated approach must be implemented to investigate bullying behaviour in schools

All aspects of a child's life need to be considered (biological, ecological, cultural and social), since both individual and environmental factors interact to influence bullying behaviour.

The restorative justice model and approaches were discussed. The purpose and merits of using these theories in this study were outlined. The primary focus is on the implementation of restorative practices at schools as a way of creating a non-bullying school climate by involving peers, the community and the school authorities.

The next chapter discusses the manifestations of bullying behaviour and intervention strategies that can be used to alleviate this behaviour in schools. It investigates the extent, causes, nature and consequences of bullying.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 DEFINITION OF BULLYING**

The most widely cited (4900 times) definition of bullying comes from Dan Olweus (1993). Years later, this definition is still the main definition in bullying research with Olweus (2013) recently restating its key factors (Volk, Dane and Marini, 2014). Olweus (2013) defines bullying as: “A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students.” He then further clarifies the components of this definition:

It is a negative action when someone intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort upon another, basically what is implied in the definition of aggressive behaviour. Negative actions can be carried out by physical contact, by words, or in other ways, such as making faces or mean gestures and intentional exclusion from a group. When using the term bullying, there must also be an imbalance in strength (an asymmetric power relationship): the student who is exposed to the negative actions has difficulty defending himself or herself and is somewhat helpless against the student or students who harass. In my definition, the phenomenon of bullying is thus characterised by the following criteria: it is aggressive behaviour or intentional ‘harm doing,’ which is carried out repeatedly and over time in an interpersonal relationship characterised by an imbalance of power (Olweus, 1993).

According to Volk, Dane and Marini (2014), one challenge that researchers face is trying to reconcile emerging research with the traditional definition of bullying. The traditional definition requires bullying behaviour to be repeated frequently. However, recently, with the advances in technology, a new form of bullying, called cyber-bullying, has been identified. A single incident of cyber-bullying may be very harmful to the victim. When embarrassing or hurtful material is posted to the Internet, it may be accessed by a lot of people for a

length of time (Slonje and Smith, 2008). Hence, even though there is no frequent repetition, this does constitute a form of bullying. Olweus (2013) himself is of the opinion that this issue needs additional research and requires further clarification (Volk, Dane and Marini, 2014).

In 2014 an updated, uniform definition of bullying was published:

“Bullying is any unwanted aggressive behaviour(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm.” (Bauman, 2016).

This definition of bullying is most relevant to the context of my study.

### **3.2 NATURE OF SCHOOL BULLYING**

Bullying behaviour comprises a wide range of behaviours, from verbal insults to more aggressive behaviours and hate crimes (Ncontsa and Shumba, 2013). Bullying can be physical, verbal, psychological, or a combination of all three.

There are two basic forms of bullying, namely, direct bullying and indirect bullying. Direct bullying is expressed in a blatant and obvious way, whereas indirect bullying is subtler and often takes place without the victim's knowledge (Goddard, 2018). Direct bullying can be physical bodily attacks, such as hitting, kicking and punching someone; or face-to-face verbal threats, such as insulting, teasing in a hurtful way, name-calling and intimidation. Relational maltreatment refers to indirect forms of bullying, such as social exclusion and spreading rumours about others (Wang *et al.*, 2009; Dehue, Bolman and Völlink, 2008; Menesini and Salmivalli, 2017). Setting someone up for humiliation is also a form of bullying (Iland and Iland, 2015).

#### **DIRECT BULLYING**

Physical and verbal aggression are direct forms of bullying, consisting of an overt demonstration of power. Physical bullying includes any type of physical

assault, including forcefully taking something from the victim or damaging property. Even though physical bullying is the most visible type of bullying, it accounts for less than one-third of the bullying incidents reported by children (Coloroso, 2008). Verbal bullying, on the other hand, is one of the most common types of bullying and accounts for 70 per cent of reported cases (Lee, 2004; Coloroso, 2008). Verbal harassment includes psychological intimidation. Psychological intimidation occurs when bullies use words to harm their victims (Antiri, 2016). Words alone are very powerful. Even though the effects of physical bullying may be more observable, verbal bullying is more insidious and a child's self-image and self-esteem can be destroyed. It can exacerbate problems that a victim may already be experiencing at home or school (Cowie and Jennifer, 2008). This can lead to depression and anxiety. Victims may turn to substance abuse and, in extreme cases, teen suicide. According to Coloroso (2008), verbal bullying can have very physical consequences, even if the bully never lays a finger on the victim (Antiri, 2016).

### **INDIRECT BULLYING**

Social bullying which is also known as relational bullying involves psychological harm and manipulation of the social system. Bullies might spread rumours, backbite and/or exclude the victim from their group of peers (Coloroso, 2008). Social bullying occurs when the victim is deliberately excluded from a social group or is intimidated within the group (Lee, 2004). The goal of social bullying is to belittle and harm other individuals or groups. In high school, teasing unpopular children, ridiculing another child's clothes, making fun of the way a child speaks, and mocking his academic achievements, race or culture are behaviours that a bully might resort to in to gain power over their victims (O' Moore and Minton, 2004). The negative consequences of social bullying are just as extensive as direct bullying. Victims often suffer from depression, anxiety, social isolation, and low self-esteem. In extreme cases, some victims commit suicide or homicidal acts as a result of severe mental and social pressures. Victims who are bullied in childhood may carry emotional wounds into adulthood resulting in depression, social isolation, and the inability to react appropriately in unjust situations (Antiri, 2016).

Psychological bullying takes place when bullies, or a group of bullies, repeatedly and intentionally use words or actions that cause a victim psychological harm. The psychological bully is the one who beats his victim up emotionally to try to make the victim uncomfortable, disturbed and destabilised. Intimidation, manipulation and stalking are all examples of psychological bullying. According to Lee (2004), people who are members of popular groups or cliques often bully others whom they classify as different by excluding them or gossiping about them (Antiri, 2016).

In this century, a new form of bullying, namely, cyber bullying, has emerged. A definition of cyber bullying in line with Olweus' (1993) definition of traditional bullying is "wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (Hinduja and Justin, 2014). This is a new form of relational bullying that takes place through electronic devices such as computers and cell phones, as well as communication tools such as instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms, websites, online games, social networking sites, and text messaging (Kowalski and Limber. 2012). Cyber-bullies use technology to gang up on someone, spread rumours and lies, ruin a reputation or engage in other forms of intimidation on social media (Goddard, 2018). Basically, they use technology to harass, threaten or humiliate their peers. For example, they can send hurtful text messages to others or spread rumours using smartphones or tablets; create web pages, videos, and profiles on social media platforms making fun of others; take pictures in a bedroom, a bathroom, or another location where privacy is expected and post or distribute them online; take unauthorised videos of other children and upload them on social media to be rated, tagged and discussed, and use anonymous apps or the chat functionality on gaming networks to humiliate others (Hinduja and Justin, 2014). This form of bullying is different in nature to the traditional forms of bullying, since in traditional bullying the victims are aware of who the bullies are whereas, cyber bullies can remain anonymous (Ncontsa and Shumba, 2013).

As a result of cyber bullying, new words have been developed to give meanings to specific forms of bullying. One such word is 'punking'. This word refers to actions by male students that involve verbal insults and threats; and physical violence as well as public humiliation and shaming of other male students. The word is used most frequently among high school boys (Phillips, 2007; Maunder and Crafter, 2018). Other words like 'frape', which relates to someone's online profile being amended without their permission (Collins English Dictionary, 2015), 'flaming' (argumentative communication online), and 'slamming' (groups joining in with online harassment) have also been coined (Chisholm and Day, 2013).

Bullying is always ugly and hurtful, but cyber bullying can be particularly damaging. It can carry on at any time of the day or night and involve an almost unlimited number of people. It can also take place anonymously and hence can allow free rein to the worst side of a person's nature. The results can be horrific. The most upsetting of all is that photos and videos cannot be deleted once they have gone viral (Goddard, 2018).

The use of technology has not only provided new forms of bullying but has also blurred the boundaries of engagement across settings such as school, home and cyberspace (Whittaker and Kowalski, 2015). In previous years, a child may have been able to escape school bullying when they were at home. However, since cyberspace goes beyond these geographical boundaries, current definitions of bullying will need to be reconceptualised (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011). For example, the concept of repetition and power imbalance is an integral part of the definition of traditional bullying. However, it will be quite difficult to apply this definition to cyber bullying. It is also more challenging to determine the origins of cyber bullying as well as the perpetrators of the bullying behaviour (Slonje *et al.*, 2013).

The nature of bullying has not remained stagnant. Over time, with the changes in society, new forms of bullying have evolved. Hence, we will require alternative ways of thinking about bullying and how this impacts a child (Maunder and Crafter, 2018).

### **3.3 CAUSES OF BULLYING**

There are numerous reasons for bullying behaviour. Anyone may be a target of bullying. It can be based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation or other “differences” including mental or physical challenges (Goddard, 2018).

Girls and boys are equally likely to experience bullying. Globally, the prevalence of bullying is similar for female and male students. However, boys are more likely to experience physical bullying than girls (UNESCO, 2018). Girls are more involved in indirect bullying such as verbal or psychological bullying by being ignored or left out or subjected to nasty rumours (Jung, 2018; Morales, Grineski and Collins, 2019; UNESCO, 2018). More girls than boys felt that their reputation was affected by cyber bullying, their concentration was affected, it influenced their ability to make friends, and it induced suicidal thoughts (Cassidy, Faucher and Jackson, 2013).

Research conducted found that girls are more likely than boys to experience bullying based on physical appearance. Girls reported being made fun of because of how their faces or bodies looked more frequently than boys (UNESCO, 2018). Globally, there are no major differences in the extent to which girls and boys are made fun of with sexual jokes, comments or gestures (UNESCO, 2018).

Girls are more likely than boys to be cyber bullied by messages and the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) found that the occurrence of cyber bullying by pictures was slightly higher among boys than girls (UNESCO, 2018). Boys are more likely than girls to have been involved in a physical fight or be physically attacked. Children who are seen as gender non-conforming (such as boys viewed as ‘effeminate’ or girls viewed as ‘masculine’) are more exposed to school violence than those who fit into the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. These include students who are or are perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (UNESCO, 2018).

The gender gap might be explained by girls' tendency to engage in indirect bullying (e.g., spreading rumours) compared to boys' tendency for direct bullying (e.g., hitting). This difference makes the internet the perfect platform for females to exhibit interpersonal aggression. This pattern may also be explained by cultural stereotypes where males do not report victimisation as this might challenge their sense of masculinity. On the other hand, this difference could be because girls use the internet more than boys and are more likely to spend their online time interacting with others on social media platforms, whereas boys tend to involve themselves in online games (Alhajji, Bass and Dai, 2015).

Kowalski *et al.* (2012) reviewed many studies with divergent findings as to girls' and boys' involvement in bullying behaviour. They found that in some studies, more girls than boys were involved in cyber bullying, which would originate from the idea that girls are more involved in indirect forms of aggression. However, other studies found no gender differences. Some found no overall differences in traditional bullying but some differences in cyber bullying (Cassidy, Faucher and Jackson, 2013).

### **3.3.1 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS**

According to Jung (2018), bullying activities among children occur as a result of complex contextual factors.

#### **CONTEXTUAL FACTORS SURROUNDING AN INDIVIDUAL**

A child's behaviour is influenced by family or parental characteristics, school or teacher contexts, and peers in the classroom. According to Nansel *et al.* (2001), children who have been bullied in the past are more likely to bully others. Olweus (1993) contends that males tend to bully physically, whereas females are typically involved in verbal or psychological bullying. Global studies carried out by the GSHS and PISA corroborate this (UNESCO, 2018).

Self-efficacy or self-esteem may be factors that contribute to children bullying others (Jung, 2018).

These findings informed my analysis of some of the bullying incidents that occurred at Greenfield High School where some of the boys bullied other boys to prove themselves because of their own low self-esteem. I found that some of the boys in my study bullied other boys in a hostile manner to bolster self-esteem and other factors that I outline in Chapter five.

### **CONTEXTUAL FACTORS SURROUNDING INDIVIDUALS: PARENTS AND FAMILY**

The home environment is a major factor in creating bullies. A home in which violence is accepted and used to solve disagreements is one that helps to raise bullies. These homes are usually in neighbourhoods where violence is common. They are hostile and support aggression as a way of solving conflicts. There is no consistent adult supervision or they are run by adults who exhibit bullying behaviour themselves (Gonzales, 2011).

This theory is based on relationships between parents and children who have been involved in bullying behaviour and the characteristics their parents have. Parent-child communication, meeting children's friends, and encouraging children academically are associated with a decrease in bullying behaviour. Negative parental perceptions of children can be used to identify children at risk of becoming bullies (Shetgiri *et al.*, 2012).

A study conducted by Shetgiri *et al.* (2012) found that children living in poverty who have emotional or behavioural problems have higher odds of bullying. On the other hand, children who had parents who talked with them and met their friends had lower bullying odds (Jung, 2018).

An example in my particular study would be that some parents had negative perceptions of the boys that did not play rugby. Many of the boy's fathers were



students of Greenfield and promoted sports. Those boys that did not play sport were at risk of becoming bullies.

### **CONTEXTUAL FACTORS SURROUNDING INDIVIDUALS: SCHOOL AND PEERS**

According to Jung (2018), the school context and school climate may be vital factors that affect bullying in the classroom. Socio-economic status, percentage of ethnicity or portion of free lunch are characteristics that may be predictors of student bullying at school. Some researchers (Brown, 2003; Graham and Juvonen, 2002; Craig, Pepler and Atlas, 2000) have considered 'peer group contextual effects' to address bullying behaviour (Jung, 2018). In bully-victim peer relationships, both bullies and their victims were rejected by their peers. Some children become bystanders during bullying activities. It is possible that these children are incapable of producing appropriate response strategies in these situations (Jung, 2018).

The school environment can force learners into competitive behaviour and social interactions. This can lead to the formation of groups, which can result in feelings of acceptance or non-acceptance and hence, it can breed bullying behaviour. Schools that have no clear policy on bullying behaviour tend to contribute to the problem. Schools in which bullies reign will most likely be crowded; do not have a clear and consistent policy regarding harassment or bullying; do not have adequate adult supervision or staff trained in identifying bullies; have a management staff inundated with discipline problems; treat every student conflict as a mutual battle; do not take the time to track violent behaviour at school; do not have an intervention team who can assist with discipline; and are not aware of certain unsupervised areas on the school premises where learners can be victimised (Gonzales, 2011; Smith 2016).

The community in which a learner lives can also influence bullying behaviour. According to Gonzales (2011), much of the learned behaviour depends upon the social norms of the neighbourhood. These lower socioeconomic

neighbourhoods can be problematic as a result of overcrowding, lower educational levels, lack of adult supervision, poverty, poor communication with city officials and the formation of gangs.

An example in my particular study would be that the ethos of the school is one of excelling at sport, especially rugby. Those boys who are not involved in sport and do not play rugby are looked down upon by the boys who play sport especially the 1<sup>st</sup> Team players. These victims are insulted, verbally abused and made fun of by the bullies.

### **3.3.2 PERSONAL FACTORS**

In terms of individual factors, bullying behaviour has been associated with heartless-unemotional traits (Muñoz, Qualter, and Padgett, 2011), psychopathic tendencies (Fanti and Kimonis, 2012), validation of masculine traits (Larrañaga, and Yubero, 2011), behaviour problems (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, and Sadek, 2010), antisocial personality traits (Vaughn *et al.*, 2010), vulnerability to peer pressure (Pepler, Craig, and O'Connell, 2010), anxiety (Kaltiala-Heino, *et al.*, 2000; Tomsa *et al.* 2013), and depression (Ferguson *et al.*, 2009; Kaltiala-Heino and Fröjd, 2011). Some bullies have been found to have higher levels of social intelligence and social status than their peers (Swearer and Hymel, 2015).

According to the American SPCC (Society for the Positive Care for Children), many personal factors can motivate bullying (American SPCC, 2015):

#### **FEELING POWERLESS IN THEIR OWN LIVES**

Bullying behaviour is one way in which bullies maintain power in their own lives. They look for victims who seem vulnerable and attack some aspect of their victim's personality that makes them stand out. The victim might have old shoes, be too short, too smart, too dumb, or too feminine. The reason is irrelevant as it is an example of the classic pulling someone else down, to pull

yourself up. Unfortunately, this strategy seldom works (American SPCC, 2015).

### **SOMEONE ELSE IS BULLYING THEM**

In many cases, bullying begets bullying. A child may feel bullied by their parents, their peers or an older sibling. Being bullied by people who are in an assumed position of authority may tempt a child to claim a sort of authority for themselves through bullying behaviour. Instead of reaching out for help in dealing with these issues in a more productive way, some children may be tempted to claim a sort of authority for themselves by bullying others (American SPCC, 2015; Thornberg, Rosenqvist and Johansson, 2012).

Cyber bullying or online bullying is often a consequence of children being bullied in their offline life. Children who are perceived as weak, or perceive themselves as weak, use the internet to try and reinvent themselves into someone more powerful or intimidating. They may join open chats or forums and threaten other participants. Cyber bullying can often be an extension of real-world bullying, for example, hacking into a social media account to spread negative rumours about another person (American SPCC, 2015).

### **BULLIES ARE OFTEN JEALOUS OR FRUSTRATED WITH THE PERSON THEY ARE BULLYING**

Some victims become easy targets for bullies when they are always the first to raise their hand in class or get the best results on tests. Being smart, focused or creative often represents attributes that the bully wishes they shared with their victim. Bullies try to create a more level playing field by trying to undermine someone else's skills (American SPCC, 2015; Thornberg, Rosenqvist and Johansson, 2012).

### **LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OR EMPATHY**

Children sometimes resort to bullying others because there is an aspect of the victim's personality that they do not understand or do not agree with. They may also have prejudices against a person's race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Sometimes they may even think that targeting a person whom they see as exhibiting “wrong” behaviour is a good thing (American SPCC, 2015; Thornberg, Rosenqvist and Johansson, 2012).

### **LOOKING FOR ATTENTION**

Some bullies are actually very lonely people who do not have many, if any, true friends and want to attract whatever attention they can. They think that all they are doing is teasing and may even be trying to make friends with the person they are bullying. These social issues result in them having trouble communicating in a healthy way and instead turn to insults or even physical violence as a way of communicating (American SPCC, 2015).

### **BULLIES COME FROM DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES**

A dysfunctional family does not necessarily mean that a child will become a bully. However, many bullies come from homes where there is little affection and openness. They may frequently witness their parents being aggressive toward friends, siblings or other members of the family (American SPCC, 2015; Thornberg, Rosenqvist and Johansson, 2012).

### **BULLIES NEED TO BE IN CONTROL**

Bullies who push their victim’s around are often driven by the need for power and they enjoy being able to subdue them. These types of bullies are impulsive and hot-headed and they thrive when their victims cower in their presence (American SPCC, 2015; Thornberg, Rosenqvist and Johansson, 2012).

### **BULLYING BEHAVIOUR GETS REWARDED**

This is not done intentionally. Bullies are inadvertently rewarded whenever victims give up their lunch money or belongings. They also get rewarded by becoming more popular, attracting attention or having the power of others being afraid of them. These unintentional rewards reinforce bullying behaviour and encourage bullies to keep pushing their victims around (American SPCC, 2015).

### **BULLIES DO NOT CARE HOW OTHERS FEEL**

Some bullies either lack empathy or just enjoy seeing their victims in pain. When they hurt someone, they are unable to comprehend what their victims are feeling. Some bullies may even get pleasure from seeing a victim cry in pain when he kicks him while walking past. They experience a sense of accomplishment when they see the reactions of their victims and hence continue with their bullying behaviour (American SPCC, 2015; Thornberg, Rosenqvist and Johansson, 2012).

### **BULLIES CANNOT REGULATE THEIR EMOTIONS**

Some children are unable to control their emotions and small annoyances can aggravate them and cause them to severely overreact. For example, when a victim accidentally bumps into a bully, the bully may lose his temper and slam the victim into the wall even though the victim apologises (American SPCC, 2015).

At Greenfield High boys are expected to behave like men. They are taught to be strong and any form of vulnerability or weakness is frowned upon. Some boys need validation of their masculine traits and tend to bully others to feel powerful “like a man”.

It is important to note that the context plays an important role in influencing the extent to which these individual factors contribute to bullying behaviour.

### **3.3.3 INTERPERSONAL FACTORS**

#### **FAMILY INFLUENCES**

Numerous family characteristics have been associated with bullying behaviour, including family members' involvement in gangs, poor parental supervision, negative family environment, parental conflict, domestic violence, low parental communication, lack of parental emotional support, authoritarian parenting, inappropriate discipline, and parental abuse (Espelage and Swearer, 2010; Cook *et al.*, 2010). It is important to note that although such results are consistent with contentions that aggressive modelling and poor

parental supervision influence bullying behaviour, the causal direction has not been clearly established (Swearer and Hymel, 2015).

### **PEER INFLUENCES**

Children spend most of their day in contact with their peers in schools, neighbourhoods, communities, and through social media and most bullying behaviour takes place among their peers. This often takes place in classrooms that are characterised by peer norms that support bullying behaviour and where there is a high level of peer conflict (Pepler *et al.*, 2010). Bullies who have a close relationship with aggressive peers and who have negative relationships with classmates tend to escalate their bullying behaviour. However, once again, the correlational nature of these studies makes causal interpretation difficult (Swearer and Hymel, 2015).

### **SCHOOL INFLUENCES**

Inappropriate teacher responses, poor teacher-pupil relationships, absence of teacher support, and non-participation in school activities have been associated with higher levels of bullying and victimisation. The relationship between school climate and bullying behaviour is bidirectional; a poor school climate can contribute to bullying and bullying can contribute to a poor school climate (Swearer and Hymel, 2015).

The school environment can force learners into competitive behaviour and social interactions. This can lead to the formation of groups, which can result in feelings of acceptance or non-acceptance, and hence it can breed bullying behaviour. Schools that have no clear policy on bullying behaviour tend to contribute to the problem. Schools in which bullies reign will most likely be crowded; do not have a clear and consistent policy regarding harassment or bullying; do not have adequate adult supervision or staff trained in identifying bullies; have a management staff inundated with discipline problems treat every student conflict as a mutual battle; do not take the time to track violent behaviour at school; do not have an intervention team who can assist with

discipline and are not aware of certain unsupervised areas on the school premises where learners can be victimised (Gonzales, 2011; Smith 2016).

A large number of boys come from homes in which their parents are divorced and in many instances re-married. The boy's home-life is split between both parents and in many instances they have step-siblings. There is no stability in their lives. These boys are angry, hurt and resentful and bully others to feel better about themselves

### **3.3.4 COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Bullying behaviour can be influenced by the community and society at large (Swearer and Hymel, 2015). High levels of bullying are associated with negative or unsafe neighbourhoods (Chaux, Molano, and Podlesky, 2009), gang affiliation (White and Mason, 2012) and poverty (O' Brennan, Bradshaw and Sawyer, 2009). Exposure to violent TV (Barboza *et al.*, 2009) and video games (Boyce, and Pickett, 2012) has been linked to bullying behaviour in children. In general, an increase in bullying behaviour is found in communities in which violence is tolerated. However, once more the causal nature of these relationships remains unclear (Swearer and Hymel, 2015).

The community in which a learner lives can also influence bullying behaviour. Most of the learned behaviour depends upon the social norms of the neighbourhood. Lower socioeconomic neighbourhoods can be problematic as a result of overcrowding, lower educational levels, lack of adult supervision, poverty, poor communication with city officials and the formation of gangs Gonzales (2011).

Bullying behaviour and victimisation do not occur in isolation. Bullying originates from complex interactions between people and the environments in which they function, both proximal (i.e., family, peers, school climate) and distal (i.e., societal, cultural influences) (Swearer and Hymel, 2015).

Even though Greenfield High is an affluent school many boys who attend the school live in and around the Umbilo area. This is a high risk area for drug abuse and prostitution. Much of the surrounding community is at a low socioeconomic level. There are many single parents (predominantly mothers) who are the sole breadwinners. Hence, there tends to be a lack of adult supervision as well as a positive male influence in the lives of many boys. These boys are used to fending for themselves and hence tend to be aggressive and bully the others whom they perceive as weak and privileged,

### **3.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF BULLYING**

Bullying behaviour at school negatively affects the lives of both bullies and victims. According to research, there is a significant relationship between bullying behaviour and the psychological, physical and social well-being of children (Dake, Price and Telljohann, 2003).

#### **PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Children who are involved in bullying behaviour are more likely to suffer from depressive symptoms than those children not involved in bullying behaviour. Bullies are also more likely to have severe suicidal ideation (Espelage, 2012). Victims tend to experience more feelings of loneliness and higher levels of anxiety than non-victims. They also experienced lower levels of self-esteem. (Dake, Price and Telljohann, 2003; Tsaousis, 2016). Research conducted by Farrington and Baldry (2010) found that children who experience high levels of hyperactivity and impulsiveness are more likely to become bullies. This study also found that children who lack empathy are more likely to bully others. Children who have lower IQs, especially nonverbal one, are more likely to be bullied. These factors may contribute to bullying because children who are both impulsive and hyperactive but also low on empathy might not be able to understand that their actions hurt others (Brank, Hoetger and Hazen, 2012). Children who are high on defensive egotism and those who are under the impression that society is tolerant of antisocial behaviour are more likely to be bullies. Also, some seemingly positive factors can result in bullying behaviour.



Research conducted by Perren and Alsaker (2006) has shown that children who have strong leadership skills are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour and bullies tend to have larger social circles than non-bullies (Brank, Hoetger and Hazen, 2012).

Certain cognitive and emotional factors may result in some children becoming victims of bullying. According to Garner and Hinton (2010), children are more likely to be bullied if they struggle to comprehend the social norms associated with displaying sadness. Research has also shown that children who are more socially anxious (Kärnä *et al.*, 2010) or submissive and withdrawn (Perren and Alsaker, 2006) are more likely to be victims of bullying behaviour. Cook *et al.* (2010) found that children who are low in social competence are at greater risk of becoming victims. Children who suppress their behaviours more than they express them and children who have fewer good friendships are also more likely to be victimised (Bollmer *et al.*, 2005). Hodges *et al.* (1999) argue that having a best friend is linked to decreases in victimisation (Brank, Hoetger and Hazen, 2012). Most victims of bullying are passive or submissive. They may be physically smaller, less assertive, more anxious, insecure, or sensitive than bullies. Victims may have difficulty making friends and they may also have lower self-esteem. Victims report high levels of loneliness and anxiety, whereas bullies report very low levels. Victims have the lowest social status among their peers whereas bullies have the highest (Shetgiri, 2014). Reijntjes *et al.* (2010) argue that internalising symptoms are both antecedents and consequences of becoming a victim. The findings regarding externalising symptoms are mixed (Kelley, 2015).

### **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Physical bullies tend to be bigger, stronger, and more aggressive than their peers (Gordon, 2019). There is some conflicting research regarding the physical characteristics of children involved in bullying behaviours. It was previously found that physical disabilities (problems with hearing, sight or speech), personal hygiene, obesity, posture, facial expression and dress were not related to victimisation. The only physical characteristic related to victimisation was size and victims were smaller

and weaker than those children who were not bullied (Olweus, 1978). However, recent research has found that half of the children with visible physical disabilities were bullied at school at least once during the school term and boys were more likely to be bullied than girls. They found that name-calling was the most common form of bullying (Gil and Costa, 2010). Some characteristics exhibited by victims are risk factors for bullying behaviour. Having a physical or mental handicap or being highly gifted in a regular school setting, being a member of an ethnic or linguistic minority group, suffering from obesity, or being gay or lesbian are often seen to be different from the norms of the larger peer group (Graham, 2016). The US Commission on Civil Rights published a report on school bullying that confirmed these characteristics as risk factors. The Commission concluded that "bullying based on students' identities—such as their sex, race, ethnicity or national origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, or religion—can be particularly harmful" (Graham, 2016).

Researchers have also found evidence that children who are perceived as being 'different' in any way are at greater risk of victimisation (Armitage, 2021). When teenage children are asked why their peers are bullied, many respond by saying that it is because of the deviant appearance of the victim. Overweight and obesity have been found to be related to an increased risk of being bullied. Also, children who are underweight or short are at a greater risk of being bullied. It is apparent that any nonconformity to the physical norm may increase the risk of being bullied. Being a smoker has also been found to increase the risk of being bullied. However, the results of studies on the connection between smoking and bullying are inconsistent (Anderson, 2015).

### **BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Certain behavioural tendencies are associated with children who are bullies. Those children who act out or exhibit higher levels of externalising behaviours are more likely to bully others (Bollmer *et al.*, 2005; Kelly *et al.*, 2015). According to Farrington and Baldry (2010), children who cause more trouble in school and are more dishonest are also more likely to bully other children. Similarly, children who are bullies are more likely to have poor emotional self-regulation (Garner and Hinton 2010).

Behavioural misconduct usually consists of problem behaviours such as physical fighting, carrying of weapons, damage to property, theft, cheating, breaking the law and substance abuse. Research has shown that bullies are more likely to become involved in self-destructive behaviours than children who are not involved in bullying behaviour. Gaete (2017) found that children involved in bullying behaviour were more likely to consume different kinds of substances.

A number of individual, family, school, peer, and community factors have been linked to substance use among teenagers (Tyas and Pederson, 1998; Monasterio, 2014). It has been found that children with behavioural problems are at a higher risk for alcohol consumption and cannabis use. Peer smoking and drinking have also been linked with the use of multiple drugs (Harakeh *et al.*, 2012; Tomczyk *et al.*, 2015). Children whose parents are supportive and who set clear boundaries and rules are less likely to drink (Berge *et al.*, 2016). However, poor parental supervision is linked to the use of tobacco, alcohol and cannabis (Gaete and Araya, 2017). At school, poor school bonding increases the probability of substance use (Gaete and Araya, 2017).

Research has found that there is a strong relationship between tobacco use and bullying behaviour (Morris *et al.*, 2006; Vieno *et al.*, 2011), or victimisation (Tharp-Taylor *et al.*, 2009). Similarly, alcohol use is strongly linked with those students exhibiting aggressive bullying behaviour (Kaltiala-Heino *et al.*, 2000; Vieno *et al.*, 2011). Other studies have found that being a victim is an important risk factor for alcohol consumption (Sullivan *et al.*, 2006; Tharp-Taylor *et al.*, 2009; Luk *et al.*, 2010; Vieno *et al.*, 2011; Radliff *et al.*, 2012). Radliff *et al.* (2012) and Gaete and Araya (2017) contend that cannabis use is strongly linked with bullying behaviour

## **VICTIMS**

Children who act submissively and anxiously are more likely to be bullied than children who do not have those tendencies. Children who are victims of bullying also tend to be insecure and cry often, even before the bullying begins. Some researchers contend that a child's lack of assertiveness and security may serve as a cue to bullies that this child is a "perfect victim". Researchers have also found evidence that children who experience depression and bodily symptoms of stress (such as headaches or stomach aches) may be more likely to be bullied. This is a vicious cycle since these problems also seem to be caused or worsened by bullying (Fraser-Thill, 2019).

### **3.5 EXTENT OF BULLYING**

In recent years, school bullying has become the focus of attention, especially in the United States. The reason for this is the increased media attention on suicide and homicide cases where bullying was a precipitating factor. Globally, bullying and physical violence affect around one in three children. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) found that almost 32% of students have been bullied by their peers at school on one or more days (UNESCO, 2018). The World Health Organisation Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) and the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) found that the proportion of students reporting that they have been bullied is highest in the Middle East, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa and the lowest in Central America, the Caribbean and Europe (GSHS, HBSC). The proportion of students reporting that they had been physically attacked was highest in the Pacific and lowest in Central America. Students in North Africa, the Pacific, and sub-Saharan Africa reported the highest frequency of physical attacks (UNESCO, 2018).

Abdulsalam *et.al* (2017) conducted a cross-sectional study aimed at estimating the size of the bullying problem in Kuwait and to investigate the factors associated with it. This study showed that bullying represented a serious and common problem among Kuwaiti children that warranted specific measures to be taken. The school teachers were found to be lenient to the bullying phenomenon, classmates tended not to react to the phenomenon and bullying involved a group process.

A study conducted by Ahmed, et.al provided an overall view of the prevalence rate of bullying experienced by Bangladeshi school students. Findings suggested that nearly half of the school students (44.4%) had experienced bullying victimization. This is comparable to one study, according to a survey report by UNICEF, which included a sample from 122 countries, where 35% of children aged between 13 and 15 years old in Bangladesh said they experience bullying at school (bdnews24.com, 2018).

Bullying is not just an international phenomenon (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2017). The occurrence of bullying in South African schools has become increasingly evident (Isdale *et al.*, 2017; Zuze *et al.*, 2018). These incidents have been highlighted in the media (newspapers, radio, television) as well as on social media, for example WhatsApp and Facebook. (Ncontsa and Shumba, 2013). As a result, there is growing public concern about the issue of safety in South African schools, namely, sexual harassment, physical violence, bullying, homophobic bullying and cyber bullying. When children are exposed to unsafe conditions from a young age this can have implications for their immediate and long-term well-being (Zuze *et al.*, 2016).

School bullying is a serious problem in South Africa. However, these statistics have often been overlooked by the public as well as by schools. In 2018, a TALIS (Teaching and Learning International) study was conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This survey of teachers and principals from schools in 48 different countries found that South Africa has the highest rate of bullying and intimidation among pupils (Mitchley, 2019). Research conducted by Adewoye and Du Plessis (2021) and Tustin *et al.*, (2014) found that many learners reported the prevalence of bullying in schools. Some researchers contend that the increasing rate of bullying in South African schools could be ascribed as being in response to the many violent acts in South African communities with which the learners are familiar and that are mimicked in school contexts (Timm & Eskill-Blokland, 2011)

In recent years, local media coverage has highlighted the alarming rate at which school violence is escalating. Many stories have made national headlines: David Hlongwane from Soshanguve, 16, committed suicide after he was bullied by four

classmates; a grade 11 learner in KwaZulu-Natal attempted suicide after she was allegedly bullied (Kotlolo 2012).

The Gauteng Department of Education expelled five Lethabong Secondary School learners, four of them had been charged with bullying; Khanyisani Mngayi, 15, from Wentworth High School in Durban, was fatally stabbed by a fellow learner; a grade 11 learner was arrested in Gauteng for killing a fellow learner he accused of bullying him. He is currently facing murder charges. There are many more reported incidences of bullying and even more unreported ones (Kruger, 2013). As a result, there has been an increasing body of research conducted on adolescent bullying in the South African school context. A number of studies have been conducted on secondary school children (Grades 8 to 12). In urban areas, the occurrence of secondary school student bullying has been quite high in certain cities. It was found to be 61% in Tshwane (Neser et al., 2003), 52% in Cape Town (Townsend, *et al.*, 2008) and 36% in Durban (Liang, Flisher and Lombard, 2007). In rural secondary schools, it was found to be 16% in the Eastern Cape (Mlisa *et al.*, 2008) and 12% in Mpumalanga (Taiwo and Goldstein, 2006). At a national level, the 2012 National School Violence Study in South Africa found that approximately 13% of children reported being bullied and one in five children had experienced cyber bullying in the previous year (Burton and Leoschut, 2013; Juan *et al.*, 2018).

Studies have found that the occurrence of bullying tends to decrease in higher grades (Pečjak and Pirc, 2017). Some researchers ascribe this decrease in bullying to an increase in the social maturity of adolescents. Burton and Leoschut, 2013; Juan *et al.*, 2018). However, Borg (1998) contends that bullying only appears to decline over time. Instead, it changes to passive, verbal forms of bullying. Studies also found that as the child grows older the greater the probability of the child being a bully (Atik and Güneri, 2013; Solberg *et al.*, 2007). On the other hand, younger children were more likely to become victims of bullying (Liang *et al.*, 2007; Olweus, 1994; Pečjak and Pirc, 2017).

Research has shown that bullying behaviour is more common among boys, as both perpetrators and victims (Pečjak and Pirc, 2017; Veland, Midthassel and

Idsoe, 2009; Silva *et al.*, 2013). A study carried out by Liang *et al.* (2007) in South Africa also found that boys were at a greater risk of becoming both a bullies and victims (Juan *et al.*, 2018). The HBSC Violence and Injuries Prevention Focus Group and the HBSC Bullying Writing Group (2009) and Olweus (1994) contend that boys are more prone to being exposed to direct physical aggression and bullying, while girls are subjected to other subtler forms of bullying (Juan *et al.*, 2018). Pečjak and Pirc (2017) have proposed that the reason for this difference is that parents in the home environment and society in the wider social environment impart different guidance to boys and girls in terms of social behaviour and communicating their distress. Boys are expected to find “independent and active ways of making themselves recognised (Pečjak and Pirc, 2017), to express their power and hide their distress (Juan *et al.*, 2018).

Zuze *et al.* (2016) found that in South Africa, socio-economic status had an impact on bullying as the likelihood of being bullied regularly was higher for children from poor families. They also found that children from a lower socio-economic status were more likely to be bullied than children from a higher socio-economic status, regardless of the socio-economic status of the school. It seems as if the most vulnerable children are those who have fewer personal resources than their peers (Juan *et al.*, 2018).

According to Meyer-Adams and Conner (2008), children’s perceptions (or psychosocial factors) of the school environment can have an effect on bullying behaviour. The desire to do well at school, being happy at school and feeling as though you belong at school are all contributing factors. Natvig, Albrektsen and Qvarnstrøm (2001) found that children implicated in school bullying were considerably more likely to have a negative perception of the school. This relationship was strongest for bully-victims, bullies and victims, respectively. When children felt alienated from school, they were more likely to become bullies (Juan *et al.*, 2018).

These findings informed my analysis of the extent of bullying that takes place at Greenfield High School. Even though the school had adopted a no-nonsense

policy on bullying, many boys were still being bullied. The extent of the bullying was far-reaching. The community and other organisations linked to the school also vented more vehemently their concerns about the bullying at Greenfield. This reifies (Zuze *et al.*, 2016) arguments there is growing public concern about the issue of safety in South African schools.

### **3.6 EFFECTS OF BULLYING**

The effects of bullying behaviour on the bully as well as on the victim can be far-reaching. It can impact their schoolwork, family and peer relationships, psychological well-being, and physical health (Brank, Hoetger and Hazen, 2012).

The literature on bullying is quite rich when investigations involve the effects of school, families, teacher characteristics, parental schooling, student gender, cognitive ability in various social dimensions. However, according to Ponzo (2013) the amount of work that has addressed the effect of bullying on academic performance is limited. By using the information from the research of a Longitudinal Follow-up on the Student Performance of the Public-School Network of Recife. Oliviera *et al.* (2017), sought to measure the effect of bullying in math scores of students in the 6th grade of public school in the city of Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil. (Nansel *et al.*, 2001). The results suggest that bullying has a negative impact on performance in mathematics and that social emotional skills can help students deal with bullying

According to Reid, Mansen and Rivers (2004), “a bully enjoys more physical or psychological power than the victim”. Bassett (2007) is of the opinion that bullies gain satisfaction from causing pain to others. On the other hand, Olweus and Limber (2010) contend that bullies are cowards who have psychological and family problems. Bullying can affect both the bully and the victim and can be wide-reaching. It can impact their schoolwork, family and peer relationships as well as their psychological well-being and physical health (Brank *et al.*, 2012).



Bullying behaviour can have long-term and short-term effects on both the bully and the victim. Some short-term effects experienced by the victim include sleep disturbance, changes in eating habits, bedwetting, feelings of shame, symptoms of anxiety and depression, social avoidance, poor performance and absenteeism from school. Short-term effects on the bully include poor school performance. The risk of this happening is increased because of the missed school days as a result of the suspension. There is also an increased risk of truancy, substance abuse and difficulty in maintaining social relationships.

### **PHYSICAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES**

Bullying is a significant public health problem because it is widespread and destructive (Hertz and Donato, 2013). Physical or psychological bullying by peers (De Los Reyes and Prinstein, 2004) is potentially traumatising to the victim (Storch and Esposito, 2003; Biebl, 2011), and can adversely affect their mental and physical health. Victims' experiences have been associated with internalising symptoms, such as depression and social anxiety (La Greca and Harrison, 2005; Reijntjes et al., 2010). Peer victimisation has also been linked to physical childhood health problems. Victims experience physical or somatic symptoms, such as headaches, stomach aches, dizziness, and increased symptoms of pain (Rigby, 2001, 2003; Herge *et al.*, 2011). Children who experience abuse from peers are at greater risk of developing a range of health problems later in life and as adults (Grills and Ollendick, 2002; Rigby, 2003; Biebl *et al.*, 2011). Early victimisation by their peers has been linked to depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, low self-esteem, and psychosomatic conditions (Reijntjes et al., 2010; Biebl *et al.* 2011). Herge *et al.* (2011) contend that victimisation by malicious attacks via social media, such as having an embarrassing photo sent via WhatsApp or a nasty message posted on Facebook, may contribute directly to adolescents' somatic complaints and sleep difficulties. Other research has shown that when victims internalise their symptoms, it could lead to physical health problems by influencing biological mechanisms (autonomic nervous system) that affect the victim's immune system and physical health (Sareen *et al.*, 2006). Internalising problems may also cause the victim to engage in behaviours that will negatively affect their physical health, for example, substance use, lack of exercise and overeating (Biebl *et al.*, 2011).

The consequences of bullying also include low psychological well-being, which is a state of mind that is unpleasant and results in feelings of shame, unhappiness and low self-esteem, as well as feelings of anger and sadness. Another consequence is poor social adjustment, which includes feelings of aversion toward one's social environment and is evident through a dislike for school, poor academic performance, high drop-out rate, loneliness, isolation and absenteeism. Bullying can also cause psychological distress, which is a serious consequence and includes high levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thinking. These problems can carry into adulthood. Physical ailments can also be experienced by victims of bullying. These illnesses are medically diagnosed and there are distinct signs of a physical disorder. According to Rigby (2003) and Herge *et al.* (2011), some victims also experience psychosomatic symptoms (stomach aches, headaches, muscle aches and other physical complaints with no known medical cause). Other consequences of bullying which are experienced by the victim include sleep disturbance, changes in eating habits and bedwetting. Without the proper intervention, it is likely that bullying behaviour can continue into adulthood. The perpetrators of bullying behaviour are at risk for substance abuse, spousal or child abuse and antisocial behaviour. They are less likely to be educated or employed (Hurley, 2018).

### **ACADEMIC AND SCHOOL ISSUES**

School bullying can affect academic and school-related issues. Results from research conducted by Van der Werf (2014) indicate that higher levels of bullying at schools decrease academic performance in both the short and long term. It was also found that in the short term, the effect of bullying is greater for younger children, but there are no differences by gender. In the long term, these existing differences seem to disappear. Furthermore, it was found that there are differences in the relationship between the level of bullying and academic performance depending on the students' academic achievement. In the short term, the effect of bullying is higher for children whose academic achievement lies between the 30<sup>th</sup> and the 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles of the achievement distribution curve, whereas in the long term the effect is greater for those

whose levels lie below the median. This is an indication of changes in the behaviour of victims and perpetrators over time (Van der Werf, 2014). As to the specific ways in which bullying can affect academic performance, Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor and Chauhan (2004) studied the profile of the bullying victims and found that school attendance is negatively dependent on the level of bullying to which each child is exposed. Children who have never been bullied by their peers have the highest rate of school attendance, while those who have been victims of bullying spend less time in school (Van der Werf, 2014).

Another way in which bullying can have a negative effect on academic performance is through lower peer influences. Brown and Taylor (2008) contend that victims have fewer friends and worse relationships with their peers. As a result, they have fewer opportunities to learn from them (Van der Werf, 2014). The victims displayed a greater probability of low achievement and a lesser sense of belonging and security than non-victims (Roman, 2011).

Studies conducted by PISA found that children who are frequently bullied are almost three times more likely to report feeling like an outsider at school than those who are not bullied and are more than twice as likely to skip school frequently. They are also more likely to want to leave school after finishing secondary education than students who are not bullied. They also found that children who are bullied score lower on tests than their non-bullied peers. The more often a student is bullied, the worse their score. In addition, students who are bullied frequently are more likely to feel anxious before a test than other students, even when they are well prepared (UNESCO, 2018).

Without proper intervention, it is likely that bullying behaviour can continue into adulthood. The perpetrators of bullying behaviour are at risk for substance abuse, spousal or child abuse and antisocial behaviour. They are less likely to be educated or employed. Long-term effects of bullying for the victims include chronic depression; increased risk of suicidal thoughts, suicide plans, and suicide attempts; anxiety disorders; post-traumatic stress disorder; poor

general health; self-destructive behaviour, including self-harm; substance abuse and difficulty establishing trusting, mutual friendships and relationships (Hurley, 2018).

These findings informed my analysis of the effects of bullying on the victims at Greenfield High School. Bullying affected the academic achievement of the victims since many struggled to concentrate in the class room. Some also felt afraid of being bullied and attempted to avoid being in school which negatively affected their academic achievement. Several were afraid to play sport for fear of being ridiculed by those boys who were more proficient at that particular sport.

### **3.7 INTERVENTIONS TO COMBAT BULLYING**

A comprehensive intervention plan is necessary to ensure that all students can learn in a safe, secure environment. One of the earliest anti-bullying methods and bullying prevention programmes was designed in 1980 by Olweus. This programme focused on the individual as well as the school environment (Eleni, 2014). It is called the Olweus Bully/victim questionnaire.

In China a study conducted by Xue *et.al* (2022) provided insights into understanding the school bullying perpetration among children and adolescents. More specifically, findings show that parental involvement and stronger self-control are critical to reducing traditional and cyberbullying perpetration. Further it was found that participants who have conflicts with parents, witness inter-parental conflict and experience risk behaviours positively predict increased traditional and bullying perpetration.

The No-Blame approach and the Shared Concern Method are two other support group approaches that are used (Rigby, 2013). Internationally, the “Steps to Respect” and the KiVa programme are two bullying intervention programmes that have shown some positive results (Wise, 2017).

Bullying intervention programmes can be either school-based or large-scale. Some school-based programmes include the following:

- Whole School Policy - a written document that sets out the school's aims in relation to bullying behaviour, together with a set of strategies to be followed;
- Peer-Support Systems - ways of involving pupils themselves in tackling bullying;
- School Tribunals - a "bully court," where pupils are elected to hear evidence and decide on punishment for those involved in bullying;
- Playground Improvement - improved supervision and improved playground design;
- Curriculum Work - class discussions to raise awareness and develop rules to manage bullying, and
- Working with specific pupils - assertiveness training as a way to help victims of bullying cope in non-passive, non-aggressive ways.

Community Conferencing as Transformative Justice is a strategy that was developed in Australia to bring together a community of people in conflict, such as the bully, the victim, family and friends. The bully make reparation, and the incident is regarded as finished.

A few large-scale international projects that were undertaken were the Sheffield Anti-Bullying project in England, the Sevilla Anti-Violencia Escolar (SAVE) project in Spain, and the Bergen and Rogaland projects in Norway, which were part of a nationwide campaign; and the Schleswig-Holstein campaign in Germany which was part of a large area campaign (Smith, Ananiadou and Cowie, 2003).

In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education introduced a workbook titled "Addressing Bullying in Schools" to make learners aware of bullying in schools (DOE, 2012). Some schools have introduced their own bullying

prevention programmes. Bryanston High School has implemented a new app called FaceUp to help children anonymously report bullying at school (Pisanello, 2019). Veldenvlei Primary School in Richards Bay came up with an idea to potentially reduce bullying. They call it the “Bully-Box” where learners can drop in anonymous complaints about bullies and the school management then takes over and investigates these allegations (Linley-Thomas 2018). Zuan *et al.* (2018) contend that “failure to intervene may result in a perpetuation of cycles of bullying in the education system”.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

Bullying is a major issue affecting the health and well-being of children worldwide, with global rates of bullying between 10% and 50% (Currie *et al.*, 2012). Bullying has also been linked to concurrent and long-term consequences, such as emotional and behavioural problems, physical health problems, and academic difficulties (Kelly, 2015). Since bullying behaviour during adolescence is of particular importance because of the significant role of peer relationships in this developmental stage in their lives (Perren *et al.*, 2010; Steinberg and Morris, 2001), there is a need to study the nature and extent of bullying behaviour among youth. Adolescence is also the phase of onset for substance use and other mental disorders, and hence is a crucial time to focus on prevention strategies (Kaltiala-Heino *et al.*, 1999; Kelly, 2011).

It is important to recognise that bullying behaviour is a major public health problem that demands concerted effort and coordinated time and attention from parents, educators and school administrators, health care providers, policy makers, families, and others concerned with the care of children.

This chapter provided a review of literature dealing with bullying in schools. Although the study is aimed at understanding learners' experiences of bullying within a school context, the literature review was not confined to schools only, since there is a relationship between the broader social context and where learners grow up and spend most of their time. The review provided evidence

that bullying has negative consequences in the lives of learners. If it is not addressed, it seriously affects the future of learners in schools as well as in society.

The next chapter discusses the research methodology and design which were used to collect data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the approach that I used to collect and analyse the data. It justifies the use of the qualitative approach that I chose to answer the critical research question. The research methods, research tools and choice of the sample are discussed. Lastly, the ethical concerns relating to this particular framework of investigation as well as its possible limitations are discussed.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research methodology or a research design is the specific techniques or procedures that are used to identify, select, process, and analyse information about a research topic (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003; Jamshed, 2014).

The methodology must explain what you did and how you did it. In this way, the reliability and validity of the research can be evaluated. It should include:

- the type of research you did
- how you collected and/or selected your data
- how you analysed your data
- any tools or materials you used in the research
- your rationale for choosing these methods

The three types of research methodology include qualitative methodology, quantitative methodology and mixed methodology. (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003; Jamshed, 2014).

My research study adopted a qualitative research methodology. This qualitative aspect of the methodology employed the use of focus group



interviews and individual interviews. It accessed bullying behaviour in the school by focusing on the bullies' and victims' perspectives. It also addressed the action that can be taken to minimise bullying at this school.

A qualitative research approach is useful when exploring participants' feelings, perceptions, beliefs and experiences (Soobramoney, 2019). This approach is said to be very descriptive (Christiansen *et al.*, 2010). My research design is an interpretive study that is analysed through qualitative methods using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to elicit information about their lives at home and social relationships in school with specific reference to their experiences of bullying behaviour by focusing on the bullies', victims' and bystanders' perspectives.

According to Maree (2007), the qualitative approach is based on the interpretive paradigm and focuses on understanding how people make sense of the phenomena in their environment. In qualitative research, there is an interactive relationship between the researcher and the participants as well as between the participants and their experiences and how they have constructed reality based on those experiences. Henning, Gravett and Van Rensburg (2005) contend that a qualitative approach is used for an in-depth inquiry and Bertram (2003) confirms that qualitative methods involve a detailed and in-depth analysis.

Qualitative researchers generally apply an inductive approach to analysing data; that is, they deduce general principles from data that emerge during the study as opposed to explaining observed data in light of pre-determined principles or theories. The beauty of qualitative research lies in what it promises to do well: build an understanding of how the participants "make sense" of things; value the context rather than control it; utilize human potential to analyse and interpret; and provide accurate, comprehensive and descriptive foundations (Hanson, Balmer and Giardino, 2011).

Most often, qualitative methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective from the viewpoint of the participant. Qualitative research techniques include 'small-group discussions' for investigating beliefs, attitudes and concepts of normative behaviour; "semi-structured interviews", to seek views on a focused topic or, with key informants, for background information or an institutional perspective; and 'in-depth interviews' to understand a condition, experience, or event from a personal perspective (Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey, 2015). When conducting my research, I used both "semi-structured interviews' as well as small "focus group" discussions.

When data is gathered to answer questions of personal or social meaning, it is necessary to capture real-life experiences, which cannot be identical from one person to the next. Also, meaning is culturally determined and subject to evolutionary change. Culture may apply to a country, a community, or other actual or virtual groups. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument, and 'subjects' become 'participants' who may contribute to data interpretation and analysis (Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey, 2015). During my interviews and group sessions, the participants were given the opportunity to elaborate on their answers and afford explanations for various aspects that they thought were important for my understanding.

### **4.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

Action research is a type of research methodology that works toward some sort of change (social or professional). Action research studies are usually based on everyday issues and the aim is to create practical solutions to these problems. O'Leary (2007) defines action research as "research strategies that to produce both knowledge and action". Most action research studies adopt a methodical, iterative approach that focuses on problem identification, action planning, implementation, evaluation and reflection. The insights acquired from the initial cycle are considered when planning the next cycle, with the action plan being modified and the research process repeated (O'Leary, 2007).

According to Johnson (2012), these ten steps describe the action research process:

- Identify a problem or research topic – decide what to study;
- Set the problem or research topic in a theoretical context – review the literature and relate the research topic to current theories to provide a theoretical context for the findings;
- Make a plan for data collection – data collection must be focused on and the elements of data collection must be determined before the research begins;
- Begin to collect and analyse data – analyse data by looking for themes, categories, or patterns that emerge and influence further data collection;
- If necessary, allow the question or problem to change as you collect data – action research is a dynamic, ever-changing process and it is possible to change the sources of data, or the focus of the study as you are collecting data provided that you include it in your report;
- Analyse and organise the data – this should be an on-going process to establish the number of total things that were recorded, the number of categories or kinds of things there are, and the number of things that are in each category;
- Report the data – present the findings by providing an overview with detailed descriptions and illustrative samples of important events, activities, and responses as well as the number and types of themes, categories, or patterns present in the data;
- Make your conclusions and recommendations – interpret the data and draw conclusions and recommendations to answer the research question and provide answers to the problem;
- Create a plan of action – create a plan of action based on the conclusions and recommendations, implement the plan of action and assess the effectiveness of the plan, and
- Put your plan into action and evaluate – determine if the plan works or if it needs to be changed or tweaked.

Evaluating the plan could become the beginning of another action research project, and so the circle of action research life continues (Johnson, 2012).

After collecting, organising and interpreting the data, I created a plan of action which I implemented. I then re-evaluated the plan and changed/tweaked it to make it more effective. The plan was then re-implemented. In this way, the cycle continued.

The results of the study indicated that there is a considerable amount of bullying taking place in the school. Although the school had a very strict policy on fighting or any form of physical violence, bullying among the boys was quite rampant. However, there seemed to be a fine line between verbal bullying and “banter”. Most of the boys seemed to think that name-calling and verbal teasing, which they termed “banter”, was not bullying. I instigated the implementation of an anti-bullying campaign at school. I had originally planned to organise talks by professionals to make the learners aware of their rights, increase communication between the parents, the school and the learner, and make the parents and the community aware of the consequences of bullying. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not possible. Hence, I had to use other forms of intervention, which I discuss in chapter six of this thesis.

#### **4.4 POPULATION/TARGET POPULATION**

In statistics, a population is an entire group from which some information is required to enable researchers to generalise the conclusions from the study (Lavrakas, 2008; Banerjee and Chaudhury, 2010). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), a population is generally a homogenous mass of individual units. It refers to the group of people to whom we want our research results to apply. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) also contend that the results of a study are no more trustworthy than the quality of the population or the representatives of the sample.

When choosing a population for study, the research question will determine a suitable definition of the population to be studied, in terms of the location, age group, sex or occupation. The population must be fully defined, clearly indicating the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Hence, a population can be defined as a complete set of people with a specialised set of characteristics. A sample is a subset of the population and any extrapolations from a sample refer only to the defined population from which the sample was appropriately selected. This is referred to as the target population (Banerjee and Chaudhury, 2010).

The school in which I conducted my research is an all-boys', ex-Model C school with 1026 learners. The majority of the learners are "day" boys and there is also a boarding establishment (a hostel for learners who choose to stay at school during the school term). Currently, 146 boys from all grades reside in the boarding establishment. This number would have been higher; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 47 local boys went to live at home. This was done in accordance with COVID-19 protocols. There are 20 boarder masters, 15 live in and five are teachers from the school. The school comprises five grades, from grade 8 to grade 12 and a total of 38 classes. Grades 8, 9 and 10 have ten classes each and grades 11 and 12 have seven classes each. The number of learners per class is between 25 and 30. Historically, there were only White learners enrolled at the school. However, after the abolishment of apartheid in 1994, it is now a multicultural and multiracial school. There are African, Coloured and Indian learners, as well as learners from other countries like China, India and the other African states. There are also learners from the other provinces in South Africa and the majority of them live in the boarding establishment. Sport is a major extra-curricular activity at the school and all boys are encouraged to participate in a sport. Cricket and rugby are the two major sports offered at the school. Cultural activities, including chess, drama and music, are also offered at the school. The school encourages a holistic approach to learning.

There are 126 staff members including academic, support, administrative and sports staff members. There are 66 academic members of staff, including the principal, two deputy principals and four heads of departments. The school also has five grade heads, a guidance counsellor and a discipline officer. To date, the academic staff is comprised of mainly male members. There are currently 47 male and 19 female staff members. Historically, there were only White members of staff. but this has also changed and now there are also Black South African, Coloured and Indian members.

My research concerned itself with the prevalence and experiences of bullying in a single –sex boys high school in Durban. Since, I have been an educator at the school for over twenty-two years I was able to conduct this investigation with minimal disruption. By conducting individual interviews with the participants as well as engaging in focus group discussions, I was able to gather information (the data) which provided a rich image of the extent, nature and consequences of bullying at the school.

I used the snow-ball and referral sampling methods to identify and recruit learners to participate in the study. The discipline officer and the individual grade controllers of the 5 grades provided names of learners whom they were able to identify as victims and bullies. Some of the learners also provided me with names of their peers whom they felt would be beneficial to my study.

The initial participants of the study were planned as follows:

The target population:

- a sample of ten learners from the boarding establishment
- a sample of ten learners from the “day” boys
- ten educators

The ten educators:

- three BE (boarding establishment) educators
- seven daily traveller educators - five males and two females

Since we have no female educators residing in the boarding establishment, the three educators had to be male.

There are approximately three times more male educators on the staff than female educators, hence five male educators and two female educators who are daily travellers were to be interviewed.

The three staff members from the BE were to be made up as follows:

- an ex-pupil of the school,
- a newly appointed member of staff, and
- an educator who has been on the staff for over 20 years and who is a member of management.

The seven staff members from the day travellers were to be made up as follows:

- the discipline officer,
- the school counsellor,
- the 1<sup>st</sup> team rugby coach,
- two level-one female educators (the drama teacher and the biology teacher), and
- two level-one male teachers (both ex-pupils).

Since sports and extra-mural activities play an important role in the ethos of the school, it was necessary to interview a sports coach. However, it must be noted that most male educators are also sports coaches. A member of management, the school counsellor, the discipline officer, a sports coach and the level one teachers are all essential members of staff at the school; hence they were to be included in the study.

I had planned to interview a total of 30 participants.

Unfortunately, due to the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to interview as many participants as originally planned. The school was closed and I had to restrict the number of participants to those that were available to complete the study in the time allocated to a Master's student.

The revised participants of the study were chosen as follows:

The target population:

- a sample of four learners from the boarding establishment,
- a sample of six learners from the “day” boys, and
- three educators.

The three educators:

- one BE (boarding establishment) educator
- two daily traveller educators - one male and one female

Since we have no female educators residing in the boarding establishment, this educator was male.

The staff-member from the BE was an educator who has been on the staff for over 20 years and who is a member of management.

The two staff members from the day travellers were made up as follows:

- one level-one female educator who is the Master-in-Charge(MIC) of the Environmental Club and E-Sport Club
- one level-one male teacher (an ex-pupil, sports coach (cricket) and MIC of Debating)

I interviewed a total of 13 participants



## **PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS**

### **PROFILE OF LEARNERS WHO LIVE IN THE BE**

#### **PARTICIPANT 1**

Petros is a 17-year-old African boy whose home is in Thaba, Tshwane, Pretoria. He lives with his mom and two brothers, who are 20 and 21 years old. His mum is in the military and his dad is a business manager. Petros plays rugby for the 1<sup>st</sup> team.

#### **PARTICIPANT 2**

Sizwe is a 17-year-old African boy whose home is in the Brooklands Lifestyle Estate 3 in Kosmosdal, Centurion. He lives with his parents and an older brother who is 19 years old. His dad is a product manager and his mom is an auditor. Sizwe plays rugby and he participates in athletics.

#### **PARTICIPANT 3**

Uys is a 17-year-old Afrikaans-speaking White boy whose home is in Vanderbijlpark. He lives with his parents and two brothers, aged 19 and 13 years old. His older brother is currently in matric at the school and his younger brother will be attending the school next year. He will be in grade 8. All three boys are rugby players. Uys' mother is a business consultant and his dad is a tube maker. Uys is in the 1<sup>st</sup> team rugby squad.

#### **PARTICIPANT 4**

S'tembiso is a 17-year-old African boy whose home is in Centurion, Gauteng. He lives with his parents and 14-year-old younger brother. His dad is the Head of the Information Technology Department at the University of Pretoria and his mum is the Director at the City of Tshwane. S'tembiso plays rugby and basketball.

## **PROFILE OF LEARNER PARTICIPANTS LIVING AT HOME**

### **PARTICIPANT 1**

Warren is an 18-year-old English-speaking White boy who lives with his mom and two older half-sisters in Musgrave, Berea, Durban. His parents are divorced. His mom is a regional sales manager of business development for Outsurance and his dad is a regional risk manager for Makro. Warren is a member of the senior debating team.

### **PARTICIPANT 2**

Mohammed is a 16-year-old Coloured boy who lives in Glenwood with his parents and his 21-year-old sister, who is studying away from home. His father is a legal advisor and his mother is an executive assistant at a car component manufacturing company. Mohammed is a potential Dux recipient at the school. He is a member of the senior debating team.

### **PARTICIPANT 3**

Javesh is a 16-year-old Indian boy who lives in Woodlands, Durban with his parents and 21-year-old brother. His parents are self-employed and they work together in their business. Javesh is a member of the Senior Target Shooting Team.

### **PARTICIPANT 4**

Don is a 17-year-old White boy who lives in Glenwood, Durban with his mother and stepfather. He has two siblings – an older sister who is 20 years old and a 14-year-old younger brother. His mother is a software support consultant and his stepfather is a sales representative. Don is a member of the senior “A” swimming team.

### **PARTICIPANT 5**

Viktor is a 17-year-old Portuguese boy who lives with his 20-year-old brother in Glenwood, Durban. His family emigrated to South Africa from Puerto Rico 12 years ago. His brother is currently in grade 12 at this school. Viktor and his

brother initially lived in the BE. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the school had to reduce the number of learners in the BE and they were asked to leave. Viktor's parents and 8-year-old sister live in Mozambique, where his dad is a general manager at a food production factory and his mom is a designer/advertiser. Viktor plays rugby, basketball and 7's rugby.

## **PARTICIPANT 6**

Raven is a 16-year-old Indian boy who lives with his parents and 12-year-old sister on the beachfront in Durban. His mother is a legal advisor at Momentum and his father is a lecturer at UKZN Nelson Mandela School of Medicine. Raven is a member of the school's debating team.

*Table 4. 1 Details of learners interviewed*

<b>LEARNER</b>	<b>PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>AGE</b>
PETROS	Apollo House	11	17
SIZWE	Apollo House	11	17
UYS	Apollo House	11	17
S'THEMBISO	Apollo House	11	17
WARREN	Home with mum and sisters	11	17
MOHAMMED	Home with parents	11	16
JAVESH	Home with parents	11	16
DON	Home with mum and stepdad	11	17
VIKTOR	Home with brother	11	17
RAVEN	Home with parents	10	16

## **PROFILE OF EDUCATOR PARTICIPANTS LIVING AT HOME**

### **PARTICIPANT 1**

Mr Soni is of Indian descent. He is an alumnus of the school and he was also a prefect. He is one of the younger members of the staff. He teaches natural science and mathematics and is extensively involved in the extramural activities of the school. He coaches debating, cricket and rugby. Mr Soni is a teacher representative on the school governing body. He is a daily traveller.

### **PARTICIPANT 2**

Ms Drake is a White English-speaking teacher who teaches Life Science. She is the Master-in-Charge of the Environmental Club and the E-Sports Club. She is quite open about her sexual orientation. Since she is bi-sexual, many boys who are struggling with their sexuality are able to confide in her. Ms Drake is a daily traveller.

## **PROFILE OF EDUCATOR PARTICIPANT LIVING IN THE BE**

### **PARTICIPANT 1**

Mr Mtolo is an African, Zulu-speaking teacher. He teaches business studies. His hometown is in Northern Kwa-Zulu Natal. He resides in Apollo House where he is one of the boarder masters. He also coaches cricket and rugby.

*Table 4. 2 Details of educators interviewed*

EDUCATOR	GENDER	PLACE OF RESIDENCE	SUBJECTS TAUGHT	YEARS OF SERVICE
Miss Drake	Female/Bisexual	Miss Drake resides in the suburb of Glenwood.	Life Science	11 years
Mr Mtolo	Male	Mr Mtolo resides in Apollo House	Business Studies	20 years
Mr Singh	Male	Mr Singh resides in the suburb of Sherwood.	Mathematics, Natural Science	12 years

#### **4.5 SAMPLING METHOD**

Sampling refers to taking a subset from a chosen sampling frame or an entire population. It can be used to make inferences about a population or a generalisation in relation to existing theory. The method depends on the choice of sampling technique (Taherdoost, 2016).

Sampling methods are classified into two broad... categories: probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

##### **PROBABILITY SAMPLING**

Probability sampling takes place when each individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected for the study. This is the gold standard in sampling methodology and it also ensures that the results of the study can be generalised to the target population. Probability sampling can be classified into the following categories, all of which use a random process (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena and Nigam, 2013).

- Simple random sampling
- Systematic random sampling
- Stratified random sampling
- Cluster sampling
- Multiphase sampling
- Multistage sampling

### **NON - PROBABILITY SAMPLING**

Non-probability samples are samples in which the probability that a subject is selected is unknown and hence this results in selection bias in the study. This includes the most commonly used sampling techniques, namely convenience/purposive sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling (Acharya *et al.*, 2013).

### **CONVENIENCE SAMPLING**

Convenience sampling (also known as haphazard sampling or accidental sampling) is a type of non-probability or non-random sampling where the target population meets certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study. This is the most commonly used sampling method. When using this technique, the investigator chooses the sample on the basis of convenience. The respondents are selected because they are at the right place at the right time. The advantages of using this technique are that it is most commonly used, less expensive and there is no need to list all the elements of the population.

However, convenience sampling has limitations. The primary reason is that variability and bias cannot be measured or controlled. Another reason is that the results from the data cannot be generalised beyond the sample (Acharya *et al.*, 2013).

### **PURPOSIVE SAMPLING**

The purposive sampling technique is also called judgment sampling. It is a non-random technique where the researcher deliberately chooses participants based on the qualities that he/she possesses by virtue of knowledge or experience (Barnard, 2002). It is usually used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases for the best use of available resources (Patton, 2002). The objective behind purposive sampling is to focus on people with specific traits who will be able to assist with the relevant research (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016).

### **QUOTA SAMPLING**

This sampling technique ensures that a certain characteristic of a population sample will be represented to the exact extent that the investigator requires (Acharya et al., 2013).

### **SNOWBALL SAMPLING**

When using this sampling technique, the initial participants are chosen by probability or non-probability methods. Thereafter, more participants are added by using the information provided by the initial participants (Acharya et al., 2013).

It is important to choose a sound and scientific sampling methodology to ensure valid results from any research study. Ideally, probability sampling methods should be used to ensure that the sample is represented; hence the results can be generalised to the target population. If this does not happen, then researchers must exercise caution when interpreting the study results (Acharya et al., 2013).

This study employed purposive, non-probability sampling because a specific group was targeted, knowing that it represents itself, not the wider population. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) contend that purposive sampling is a tool that allows participants to be selected on the basis that they can contribute to and expand the researcher's database. I chose purposive sampling because

it allowed me to choose only those boys who had been involved in bullying behaviour at the selected school. This research is qualitative and used semi-structured interviews to get the boys to divulge information about their social relationships in school as well as their lives at home.

Convenient sampling methods were also used in this study. According to Christiansen *et al.* (2010), convenient sampling occurs when the researcher selects a sample that is convenient for them to research. I chose this method of sampling because I had easy access to the participants. Selecting this school was also convenient because I did not have to spend any money on transport or waste time going to the research venue. Further, the level one educators, education officer, school counsellor and coach were easily accessible and available. I adopted referral and snowballing sampling techniques under convenient sampling in this study.

According to Heckathorn (2002), referral sampling generally involves identifying potential participants who meet the inclusion criteria, acquiring their cooperation, and then asking them to recruit additional participants who meet the same criteria (Hogan *et al.*, 2009).

Snowball sampling or chain-referral-sampling begins with a convenience sample of the initial subject (Heckathorn, 2011). The researcher is involved in developing and managing the origin and progress of the sample and strives to ensure at all times that the chain of referrals remains within limitations that are relevant to the study. One of the risks with snowball sampling is that participants frequently suggest others who share similar characteristics or the same outlook. Hence, the onus is on the researcher to ensure that the initial group of participants is sufficiently diverse so that the sample is not skewed disproportionately in any one specific direction (Etikan, Alkassim and Abubaker, 2015).



The school has many discipline structures in place. Each grade has a grade controller who is in charge of that particular grade. Since these teachers are responsible for maintaining discipline in the grade, I asked them for referrals based on bullying issues. At the boarding establishment, the boarder masters are in charge of the boys and they are responsible for maintaining discipline after school and during weekends. I also asked them for referrals based on bullying issues. The sports coaches are also very involved in the boys' lives since they spend a lot of time with them both at school and away from the school environment when they play matches at other schools or when they travel together on sports tours. Hence, referrals from the coaches provided valuable input. The school also keeps a file on each boy. This includes his personal details as well as all disciplinary issues. I accessed these files to identify learners who had been involved in bullying. After speaking to a few boys, they mentioned other boys whom I could approach who had similar experiences. In this way, the participants grew through snowballing.

Snowball sampling is a useful way to conduct research about people with specific traits who might otherwise be difficult to identify. Bullying is a very sensitive subject since it involves a learner's emotions. Hence, I used this sampling method because the subjects were not easily identifiable. Since all the participants were male and the school was traditionally an all-boys school, they were not encouraged to share their feelings.

This sampling method involved a primary data source (viz. the heads of grade and the discipline officer) who nominated the learners with whom they had disciplinary issues. Since, the snowball sampling method is purely based on referrals I was able to generate a sample by requesting the names of additional participants from the initial participants

#### **4.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

Research instruments are fact-finding strategies that are the tools for data collection. In educational research, data collection is an essential component of the research process. It allows the researcher to obtain relevant information

to enrich his/her report. As a result, it is necessary for the researcher to make use of different techniques and data collection tools. Questionnaires, interviews, observations, reading and transcription are some of the more important data collection tools. Data collection, specifically in qualitative research, helps in answering research questions. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to carefully select the participants to be interviewed or administered the questionnaire (Annum, 2019). Researchers have a variety of alternative research instruments from which to choose.

An interview schedule is a prepared list containing a set of structured questions that serves as a guide for interviewers, researchers and investigators to collect information or data about a specific topic or issue. According to Luenendonk (2019), it is necessary for the interviewer to ensure that he/she has an interview schedule.

There are many advantages to having an interview schedule:

- It facilitates the interview process. Since the questions are prepared beforehand, it is easier to conduct and complete the interview.
- It increases the likelihood of collecting accurate information or data. Since the questions are prepared in advance, they are generally well-thought out and have focus, so they target the “heart of the matter” thereby ensuring that the answers obtained are correct or accurate. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011), interview schedules can increase the reliability and credibility of data gathered.
- It allows interviewers and researchers to gather more information since they can ask follow-up questions or get clarification on the questions they have prepared. Thus, the information gathered is more relevant and useful.
- The frequency and extent of responses are higher. Often, interviews have a time restriction. Since the interviewer has a limited amount of

time to ask all his/her questions and obtain the answers, being prepared will allow him/her to utilize that time appropriately.

- It offers flexibility and high customisation and will assist when interviewing different types of people.

An interview schedule was used to collect data for the interviews. A logical structure was adopted in the interview schedule. This was done by grouping questions into sections and advancing from the general to the specific. The questions were worded concisely to ensure that the interviewees had a clear understanding of the questions. This enabled me to gather as much information as possible in a limited amount of time.

## **4.7 DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

Data collection is the systematic process of gathering observations or measurements. It allows you to gain first-hand knowledge and original insights into your research problems (Bhandari, 2020). I used the qualitative data method to collect my data. Qualitative data are mostly non-numerical and usually descriptive in nature. This means the data collected is in the form of words and sentences. Often, such data captures feelings, emotions, or subjective perceptions of something. Qualitative methods of data collection tend to use unstructured methods of data collection to fully explore the topic. Qualitative questions are open-ended. Qualitative methods include focus groups, group discussions and interviews (Muhammad and Kabir, 2018).

### **4.7.1 INTERVIEWS**

Interviews are likened to a conversation between two people. They are more resource-intensive and can last for over an hour. The researcher can gather information on a one-to-one basis. Interviews become necessary when researchers need to meet face-to-face with the participants. This is an interaction in which verbal questions are posed by the interviewer to elicit a verbal response from the interviewee. During these research interviews, the researcher has to structure the interaction in a way that will draw out the

relevant information from the participant. It is crucial for the researcher to create a cordial atmosphere during the interview to ensure the success of such an interaction (Annum, 2019).

Interviews can be conducted face-to-face, telephonically or by using a computer or cellular phone via video conferencing technology like ZOOM, Microsoft Teams or Discord. Interviews can range from formal to less formal and to completely informal (Annum, 2019).

There are four basic types of interviews, namely the structured interview, the unstructured interview, the non-directive interview and the focus interview.

#### ***4.7.1.1 STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS***

The structured interviews are formal because a set pattern of questions from the interview questionnaire is posed to each interviewee and the responses are recorded on a standardised schedule. Hence, it is characterised as being a closed interview. In a structured interview, the interviewer usually follows the order of questions on the interview questionnaire as much as possible. The questions are posed in a formal manner and the interviewer must always ensure that the atmosphere of an interview is congenial to establish interviewer-interviewee rapport (Annum, 2019).

#### ***4.7.1.2 UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS***

The unstructured interview is less formal and even though the interviewer may use set questions, he/she may freely adapt the sequence of questions, change the wording and explain them or add to them during the interview. The researcher must be careful not to deviate from the focus of the interview. The atmosphere is often casual and is characterised as an open session because there is more flexibility and freedom in the interaction (Annum, 2019).

#### **4.7.1.3 NON-DIRECTIVE INTERVIEWS**

Non-directive interviews are unguided and allow the participants extreme freedom to express their ideas subjectively and spontaneously. There are no set questions in this style and it is the most appropriate type of interview to use when researching topics where the participant has to be given the freedom to speak uninterruptedly on a very extensive topic. As a result, the participants may unconsciously divulge personal motives, feelings or attitudes (Annum, 2019).

#### **4.7.1.4 FOCUS INTERVIEWS**

Focus interviews concentrate on the participant's personal responses to elicit more information and the interviewer uses this non-directive interview method to have more control of the interview by using verbal cues that serve as stimuli to encourage participants to offer more information on the subject. For example, the interviewer can hum his/her approval of the interviewee's responses to a question or intervene by asking a stimulating question. This is one way in which the interviewer can encourage the flow of the conversation and encourage the interviewee to volunteer more information on the subject.

In my study, I used a combination of semi-structured individual interviews as well as focus group interviews to collect data. I conducted ten individual interviews with the boys and three individual interviews with the educators. I also conducted two focus group interviews with the boys: one with the boys from the boarding establishment and the other with the day boys.

Interviews play an important role in impact evaluation by providing information useful to understand the processes behind the observed results. Furthermore, these methods can help generate evaluation hypotheses and strengthen the design of survey questionnaires (Muhammad and Kabir, 2018).

I chose these methods because they are characterised by the following attributes:

- they tend to be open-ended and have less structured protocols. This allows researchers to change the data collection strategy by adding, refining, or dropping techniques or informants;
- they rely more heavily on interactive interviews. Hence, the respondents may be interviewed several times to follow up on a particular issue, clarify concepts or check the reliability of data, and
- use triangulation to increase the credibility of their findings. Researchers rely on multiple data collection methods to check the authenticity of their results (Kabir, 2016).

One of the greatest advantages of the interviews is the depth of detail provided by the interviewee. Social cues, such as the voice, intonation and body language of the interviewee can give the interviewer a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee to a question. This level of detailed description, whether it is verbal or nonverbal, can show an otherwise concealed inter-relatedness between emotions, people and objects. Additionally, interviews have a unique advantage because it allows the researchers to tailor the questions to get rich, comprehensive stories. Hence, they are able to get the required information as well as further examples or explanations. They are able to learn about specific events and gain insight into people's internal experiences and how events affect their thoughts and feelings. In this way, researchers can understand the process of an event instead of what just happened and how they reacted to it (Kabir, 2016).

Focus groups and group discussions are advantageous as they can be useful when exploring cultural values and health beliefs, examining how and why people think in a particular way and how it influences their beliefs and values, exploring complex issues and developing hypotheses for further research. These groups do not require participants to be literate.

The data was collected in two phases.

## **PHASE ONE**

In Phase One, semi-structured interviews (Appendix X) were the primary form of data collection. I designed an interview schedule as one of the data collection instruments for this study. I used semi-structured interviews to gather data.

On average, the interviews lasted for approximately 50 minutes (one lesson) in duration. I conducted one-on-one interviews with both the teachers and the boys. The interviews took place in my office. I had initially planned to use a quiet room in the library but this was not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions. Since my office is situated in my classroom at the far end of the school, it was the most suitable venue as it was quiet and there were minimal interruptions. During the time that the interviews were being conducted there were very few boys at school as the final examinations were over and the boys were only attending school to check their marks.

All interviews were recorded for a full transcription at a later stage. Field notes were also taken following each interview, and analytic memos were made during transcription.

## **PHASE TWO**

In Phase Two, the focus group discussions, the questions were administered in a different format (Appendix XI). Focus group interviews are carefully planned informal discussions, which can be used to understand the participants' experiences, attitudes, opinions and feelings. Successful focus groups rely on how groups of people engage in conversations. There is no restriction on who may speak or how often and for how long they are allowed to speak. Hence, Wilkinson (2007) contends that these interviews will be more honest and incisive than a one-on-one interview and they are an effective and economical instrument of data collection.

I conducted focus-group interviews with the boys. An interview schedule was used to set up these focus group interviews. I had initially planned to divide the

boys into four focus groups of five learners each - two groups from the day boys and two groups from the boys in the boarding establishment. However, once again, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to change my original plan. The boys from the boarding establishment were sent home early and the day boys were asked to attend school on alternate days. Eventually, all the boys were sent home. Hence, under a time constraint, I was only able to have two focus group discussions with the boys who were present at school: one with the boys from the boarding establishment and one with the day boys. My classroom is larger than the standard size, so I was able to do this and still follow all COVID-19 protocols. The boys and I used our masks at all times. The groups were interviewed for approximately 60 minutes each. The discussion was recorded using a voice recorder. These were later transcribed.

Focus groups allowed the participants to come together to address issues affecting more than just themselves. In this sense, they encouraged collaborative and critical thinking.

While the study had two sets of data, no new participants were introduced into the study between the two phases, thereby ensuring coherence and consistency within the study.

#### **4.7.2 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS**

The interview is not an unchanging research tool (Fontana and Frey, 2008). From this perspective, interviews are an active process of a contextualised and co-constructed story and are not intended for neutral data collection. Instead, it is invested with a purpose, namely, to address bullying behaviour at a boys' high school.

The major elements of the semi-structured interviews were:

- the boys' experiences, perceptions and responses to bullying,
- the frequency with which bullying occurred,
- the willingness of boys to disclose bullying to teachers/boarder masters.



- the sense of vulnerability of students, and
- the degree to which they felt alternate means to address bullying and violence were needed at school.

#### **4.7.2.1 INTERVIEWING THE BOYS**

I tried to create a very relaxed and friendly atmosphere for the interviews by arranging the chairs in a circle formation for group interviews and a very casual face-to-face setting for individual interviews. From the outset, the interview process became a process of co-construction. I was ever mindful of myself as the interviewer, who could never, at any stage, be a neutral entity in this process. My own idiosyncrasies, as an Indian female, are entwined in the production of the accounts presented. Schram (2003) states that the representation or interpretation you construct of people's lives and behaviour is neither 'theirs' nor 'yours'. Instead, it is built upon the points of understanding and misunderstanding that occur between you and them. Whilst offering my assistance and advising a little, I was cautious not to impose my values and beliefs on the boys for fear of being seen as judgemental and self-righteous. If I was to develop and maintain a good relationship with these boys, then I had to be very careful in the way I handled things.

The interview method afforded me the opportunity to collect all types of data to be collected: that is, behavioural data; opinions; feelings; knowledge; sensory data; and background information. I asked different kinds of questions, which were sequenced on the basis of the boys' past and present experiences.

I conducted both focus group interviews and individual interviews. In this way, the boys who felt uncomfortable speaking openly during group sessions were afforded the opportunity to talk about their experiences on a one-on-one basis. Similarly, group interviews were very useful in that they afforded me the opportunity to observe and document these boys' collective behaviours and to draw a comparison with their individual encounters. Group interviews also helped to establish some type of rapport amongst us and helped to make the boys feel more comfortable when talking to me. What I found extremely useful

about group interviews was that the accounts given by one person in the group were able to jog others' memories of similar or contrasting experiences, perceptions and events. I was also able to observe the group dynamics, contradictions, and collective behaviours as opposed to individual behaviours.

During the focus group interview, I initially asked non-threatening and non-intimidating questions like what sport they played at school, which team they played for, their likes and dislikes, and so forth, in the interest of developing some kind of rapport with them (Hollway and Jefferson, 2005). Contrary to the many perceptions, I found all of the boys to be sincere about their views.

Interviews were structured in a way that encouraged and facilitated boys' talking about and relating incidents, experiences and perceptions of bullying behaviour at the school. Essentially, this method of data collection "acknowledges that there is a crucial interactive relationship between individuals' lives, their perceptions and experiences, and historical and social contexts and events" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). I tried my best not to allow the interviews to develop into interrogation sessions because I had to repeatedly ask them to 'tell me more', 'go on' and 'explain'. In order to elicit the often personal and in-depth responses I required for this study, I had to remain mindful of not appearing judgemental by avoiding expressions that displayed disapproval. However, at the outset, I did inform the boys that I would be compelled to intervene in certain situations if the need arose.

At the end of the interviews, I asked them how they felt about participating in the study and if the interviews were as they expected. Almost all the participants said that they enjoyed the interviews and felt that the planned interventions could make a difference if implemented. Most were of the opinion that while the school did take a very stern view of physical bullying, in most cases, verbal bullying was "swept under the carpet" as boys were expected to be "men". Some were pleased that they were able to talk about their lives and the issues that affected them, especially at school.

#### **4.7.2.2 TEACHER INTERVIEWS**

These interviews were my biggest challenge. I had initially planned to interview ten teachers: eight males and two females— five from the boarding establishment and five daily travellers. These interviews were approximately one-hour sessions. While I was determined to get teacher input, I was always mindful that the focus of my study was the boys. Trying to set up and conduct interviews with the ten teachers during this COVID-19 pandemic was impossible. The boarding establishment had a COVID-19 case because one of the boys came into contact with someone who had tested positive after attending the Rage Festival, a super-spreader event. As a result, the boarding establishment was closed for the rest of the year. The school was also open for only a limited number of hours (four hours a day) for a few more days and then it was also closed until the new year. At any given time, most of the teachers were completing their administrative work (reports, cumulative reports etc.), attending meetings, or preparing for the new year. I guarded against being a nuisance and tried very hard not to impose on them. I knew that I had to accommodate them whenever they were available. I only managed to interview three teachers, one female and two males. One teacher was a boarder master and the other two teachers were daily travellers (one was an old boy). The teachers were interviewed to gain another perspective on the behaviour of the boys. The teacher interviews added to the richness of the data.

#### **4.8 TRANSCRIBING**

Audio-visual recordings on mediums like CDs, DVDs and more recently, flash drives and hard drives are major sources of soft data that researchers rely on during data collection. Other sources include online platforms like Google and YouTube. Soft data and data recorded from verbal interactions with participants during the interviews have to be transcribed (conversion of speech into words as accurately as possible). This is an essential tool in linguistics where recorded speech is systematically converted into a written language. Translation also takes place when a message in written text from a specific

language is transcribed into another language. Transcriptions must always be made from the original recordings of any speech or interview. During an interview, there is always some form of non-verbal communication such as hand, face and body gestures. However, these gestures must not influence the transcription in any way. It is also not appropriate to 'put words in the respondent's mouth' as one transcribes (Annum, 2019).

With the permission of each participant, I recorded the individual interviews and focus group discussions using a voice recorder. According to Kvale (1994), recording an interview gives the interviewer the opportunity to focus on the subject matter as well as the dynamics of the interview. Furthermore, their words and their tones, pauses, emphases, and so forth, are saved permanently thus enabling the interviewer to re-listen to the recording whenever he/she feels the need. Additionally, it helps the interviewer to concentrate on establishing a rapport with the participants and identifying non-verbal cues like facial expressions and gestures. Recording the interviews also gives the interviewer the opportunity to transcribe the interview for a closer inspection at a later date.

I collected a large amount of data in the form of transcripts generated through recorded group and individual interviews. Transcriptions of all of the interviews and focus group discussions were the primary source of data collection for analysis. The participants' own words and phrases were used to "respect and retain the interviewee's meaning-frames" (Hollway and Jefferson, 2005). Altogether, I engaged in about two hours of focus group discussions and approximately twenty-one hours of individual interviews. I personally transcribed all of the interviews so that I could become familiar with the data. Also, there was some noise and interference, especially during group interviews. This would have been problematic and it would have proved extremely difficult for anyone not familiar with the interview procedure to decipher the transcripts. I chose not to follow the traditional approach in refining the speech of participants, for example, omitting repetition and translating slang into standard English, so that it reads more smoothly. Instead,

I chose to retain the words of the participants, leaving them unaltered so that their meanings were not distorted.

#### **4.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

The analysis and interpretation of the results are covered in this section. In an attempt to establish a sense of continuity, the results were presented and discussed jointly. Different data collection strategies were used and while there are unique perspectives, there is also a reasonable degree of overlap. The interconnectedness of the data is expected as all participants' function within the same environment. Most of the analysis and discussion revolves around the interviews with the focus groups serving as an additional source of information. The feedback is essentially presented in a descriptive manner.

Qualitative research aims to help us understand the social world in which we live and why things are the way they are. Qualitative content analysis is generally used for analysing qualitative data and interpreting its meaning (Schreier, 2012). The collected data will need to be sorted, organised and indexed. Thereafter, the researcher will have to analytically construct explanations and arguments to work out how to present these findings to others in a convincing way (Mason, 2002).

Qualitative content analysis can be used in either an inductive or a deductive way. Inductive and deductive content analysis processes involve three main phases: preparation, organisation, and reporting of results. The preparation phase consists of collecting suitable data for content analysis, making sense of the data, and selecting the unit of analysis (Elo *et. al.*, 2014).

In inductive content analysis, coding categories are derived directly and inductively from the raw data. Researchers do not use preconceived categories; they allow the categories and names for categories to 'flow from the data' instead. They tend to immerse themselves in the data to allow new insights to emerge (Moretti, 2011; Polit and Beck, 2012).

Deductive content analysis is guided by a more structured process than an inductive approach. This approach is based on previously formulated, theoretically derived categories and the initial coding starts with a theory or relevant research findings. By using existing theory or previous research, researchers begin by identifying key concepts or variables as initial coding categories of analysis (Moretti, 2011; Polit and Beck, 2012).

During the data analysis process, I organised my data according to the research questions, namely through inductive content analysis. Each item in the content was reduced to small units that will be measured and analysed separately. This small discretely defined unit became the basic unit of measurement. Through content analysis, I was able to assign meaning to the content (messages) and draw significant conclusions (Parveen and Showkat, 2017).

#### **4.10 DELIMITATIONS/SCOPE**

This study is limited to a boys' school in urban KZN. Nine learners from the boarding establishment and nine learners from the day boys were involved. Three educators from the school participated in this study.

#### **4.11 LIMITATIONS**

When a study seeks to maximise its reliability and validity, then the strengths and weaknesses of measures used in obtaining data must be addressed.

This study was limited to 13 participants from only one school. The findings from this study cannot be generalised to other school settings and communities. Generally, qualitative findings are not generalisable to any specific population, rather each case study produces a single piece of evidence that can be used to seek general patterns among different studies of the same issue (Kabir, 2016).

#### **4.11.1 POSSIBLE RESEARCHER BIAS**

Rubin and Babbie (1993) warn against the researcher developing or structuring the research in a manner that would gravitate toward desired results, making the effort look worthwhile. Objectivity was injected into the data collection by using the same interview schedules and not leading participant responses. This is evidenced by some feedback, which contradicted one hypothesis of this study and sometimes contradicted information that was contained in the literature.

As an individual who identifies with the frustrations of educators, I may have accorded lesser regard to some of the group members' complaints in respect of:

- the traditional hierarchy of boys from the grade 12s down to the grade 8s.
- educators' expectations that boys must be tough because they are "men".

#### **4.11.2 COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on my data collection. I managed to complete the individual interviews with the boys from the boarding establishment. However, the day before the focus discussions, one of the boys tested positive. He had come into contact with a matric pupil who had attended the Rage festival over the weekend. The boys from the boarding establishment were immediately sent home for the summer holidays. As a result, I was unable to proceed with my focus discussions with these boys. A minimal number of the day boys attended school the following day. Fortunately, six of the boys who were involved in the study attended school with the sole purpose of being available for the focus group discussions.

#### **4.12 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

It is crucial that in selecting a research design, the results exhibit maximum reliability and validity. Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure (Joppe, 2000; Bajpai and Bajpai, 2014). It is also essential for the researcher to report how the results were created. Readers should be able to clearly follow the analysis and resultant conclusions (Schreier, 2012). Reliability is defined as the extent to which results are consistent over time. The reliability of a measurement device or procedure indicates the extent to which it is without bias and therefore ensures consistent measurement over time and across the various items in the instruments (Bajpai and Bajpai, 2014). The most important test of any qualitative study is its quality. The integrity of qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher (Golafshani, 2003).

The researcher must ensure that the instrument chosen is valid and reliable. It is important to identify which data collection instrument or tool will help the study acquire the correct information to answer the research questions. The validity and reliability of any research project depend mainly on the suitability of such instruments. The procedure which is used to collect data must be critically examined to check the extent to which it is likely to give you the expected results.

Qualitative research methodology may involve multiple methods of data collection, such as interviews and observations, to further understand the problem (Polit and Beck, 2012). This type of research is flexible and adapts to new information based on the data collected. It also provides a holistic perspective on the topic and allows the researcher to become involved in the investigation. The researcher is the research tool, and the data is continuously being analysed to identify the beginning of the study (Rutberg and Bouikidis, 2018).



The use of interviews and focus groups comprised the qualitative aspect of the work. I used focus-group interviews and one-on-one interviews to ensure validity. This rich data ensured that the consistency of responses was checked to increase validity.

In addition to the strategies outlined above, attempts were made to ensure that the most accurate responses were elicited. These included the use of probes to elicit detailed data and iterative questioning. I was able to return to matters previously raised by a participant to extract related data through rephrased questions.

The reliability of this study was increased by drawing up two sets of standard questions: one for the boys and one for the teachers. This is a standardised instrument that will allow for consistent administration from one group to the next. I made every attempt to recognise and avoid bias when setting the questions by excluding any leading or unanswerable questions. I did strive for objectivity when analysing the data obtained from the participant's responses. I had constant access to the participants and gave them the transcripts to verify what they had said in interviews.

I interviewed the different educators, ensuring that each was given the same information, in an attempt to minimise influencing or confusing the participants. The same procedure was followed for the learners. According to Guba and Lincoln (1990), the use of triangulation subjects the results gathered to an objective standard. I was only able to conduct two focus group interviews with the boys, 10 individual interviews with the boys and three individual interviews with the educators. The numbers from the original plan had to be revised due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this way, qualitative, in-depth, subjective data was gathered, and information was consolidated. This enhances the reliability of the study.

Data collected from first-hand experience is known as primary data. Primary data has not been published yet and is more reliable, authentic and objective.

Since it has not been changed or altered by human beings, its validity is greater than secondary data. I used two data collection methods: individual interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect the primary data, while books, newspapers, journals, dissertations and the internet were used to collect the required secondary data. Secondary sources were examined to determine the degree to which information in the sources intersected with the focus discussions and ideas developed after the interviews were conducted. Hence, information from secondary data sources contributed to contextual clarification of the primary data sources.

According to Leininger (1994), qualitative researchers defend the integrity of their work by different means: trustworthiness, credibility and applicability (Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey, 2015).

#### **4.12.1 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

A report of a qualitative study should contain the same strong procedural description as any other study (Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey, 2015). In this study, I have included a detailed description of the purpose of the research, how it was conducted, procedural decisions, and details of data collection and analysis.

#### **4.12.2 CREDIBILITY**

Credibility is the criterion for evaluating the truth value or internal validity of qualitative research. A qualitative study is credible when its results, presented with adequate descriptions of context, are recognisable to people who share the experience (Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey, 2015). As the instrument in qualitative research, I practised reflexivity (reflection on the influence of the researcher on the research) and triangulation (where appropriate, answering the research question in several ways, such as through interviews and focus group discussions). I also provided an extensive description of the interpretation process, which included verbatim quotations

from the data that the participants used to illustrate and support their interpretations to enhance credibility.

#### **4.12.3 APPLICABILITY**

Applicability, or transferability of the research findings, is the criterion for evaluating external validity. A study is considered to meet the criterion of applicability when its findings can fit into contexts outside the study situation and when researchers view the findings as meaningful and applicable to their own experiences. Larger sample sizes do not produce greater applicability (Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey, 2015). The size of the sample in this study was typically small, as is required for qualitative research. The sampling strategy was purposive, convenient and snowball. As a qualitative study, the samples were dependent on the nature of the data, and the availability of participants as well as me, as the researcher.

#### **4.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

##### **ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Anonymity is one way of addressing privacy and protecting against harm. All the data collected was confidential. The names of the participants and the school were not mentioned in the dissertation. No information about their participation or the interviews was disclosed to the school principal or staff members. All physical data was stored in a locked cabinet and electronic files were password protected.

Researchers must take cognisance of the importance of participant confidentiality as an ethical requirement of research (Coolican, 1990; Creswell, 2013; Roberts, 2015). This includes, but is not limited to, using pseudonyms or false names to preserve anonymity (Thomas and Hodges, 2010). They need to balance the ethical prohibitions on the disclosure of “confidential, personally identifiable information” within psychological research (APA Ethics Code Standard 4.07, the use of Confidential Information for Didactic or Other Purposes) and disguising characteristics to such an extent that potentially

important variables like gender or occupation are obscured (APA 2010). Researchers' use of honorifics, first or last names in pseudonyms varies widely, producing aliases like Herr Beyer and Frau Helm (Fechner, 2011) or Lourdes and Sofia (Gulbas and Zayas, 2015).

Assumptions can be made about the age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status of the person each name represents. According to John Creswell (2013), a qualitative research methods specialist, 'the responsibility for participant anonymity is firmly in the hands of the researchers. A researcher must protect the anonymity of the informants, for example, by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals'. Creswell contends that participant identity needs protection at all stages of the research, from site selection and recruitment through data collection, analysis, and publishing. In analysing data, the "privacy of participants" must be respected by "assigning fictitious names or aliases"; in reporting findings, the researcher should "avoid disclosing information that would harm participants by using "composite stories so that individuals cannot be identified".

All participants as well as the name of the institution were given pseudonyms/aliases. Confidentiality was ensured by conducting interviews in my office, which is situated in my classroom. Since I had a matric registration class my classroom was not used as a teaching venue. I have quite a good rapport with the boys and I was able to make them feel at ease to share their views and experiences openly in a familiar environment.

Ethics are considered to be the moral principles that govern a person's behaviour. Research ethics refer to "doing what is morally and legally right in research". These are norms for conduct that distinguish between right and wrong, and acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Research is a multi-stage process and ethics are central to the research process. Hence, researchers must take care of the various ethical issues at different levels of this process. Researchers have to take sole responsibility for the ethical conduct of their own research. The foremost responsibility of a researcher is to take care of the

safety, dignity, rights and well-being of the participants (Parveen and Showkat, 2017).

DUT research ethics and guidelines were followed to ensure that all participants' rights are protected. Consent was obtained from all participants and parents of learner participants. The educators, learners and their parents/guardians were asked to complete an assent form. Permission was sought from the Department of Education as well as the principal of the school informing them of the objectives of the study.

The participant's right to privacy was valued at all times. I ensured that the findings of the study were attested in a comprehensive and honest manner without distorting what the participants did or deliberately misinforming others about the nature of my findings. All participants were advised at the outset about the objectives of the study and that they had a choice to participate or not to participate. They were also informed that they could withdraw at any stage without any repercussions.

The research was conducted with honesty, objectivity and integrity. Among other factors, the cultures, values, religious beliefs, language and economic status of the participants were respected at all times. The research did not result in any emotional or physical trauma to the participants or to me, the researcher. I acknowledge that I have an obligation to society, my colleagues and the institute at which the research is being conducted.

#### **4.14 CONCLUSION**

The information-rich data provided by the boys and educators yielded sufficient data needed for this study. All of the relevant details regarding data collection, research design and methodology have been furnished in this chapter. This chapter provided an in-depth discussion of the process employed in this research project. The methods used include individual interviews with the learners and the educators and focus group discussions with the learners. The researcher acknowledges that in this small-scale effort, all prescriptions of data

collection may not have been adhered to, which is in keeping with Knight's (2002) sentiment that researchers should not claim to have prepared for all facets of the process.

The next chapter details a discussion of the results obtained using this qualitative research design and offers an analysis of the data.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study was aimed at investigating bullying among the boys at an ex-model C boys' high school in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal. This chapter analyses and interprets the findings of the study from the data collected through semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions.

I start my discussion in this chapter by describing and analysing the boy's perceptions and understanding of bullying as a precursor to exploring the nature and causes of bullying. I then examine the effects of bullying at school. Lastly, I analyse the school's responses to incidents of bullying, how it deals with victims and perpetrators of bullying and the measures it adopts to manage bullying among the boys.

#### 5.2 BOYS' PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING

Overall, the boys described bullying behaviour at the school as a form of consistent abuse against someone whom they consider to be weaker than them or different from them. They felt that this type of aggressive behaviour gave the bullies a sense of power. Since the school had a very effective discipline policy, bullying amongst the learners was predominately covert in nature.

The following are some responses I received from the boys when they attempted to explain bullying:

S'thembiso (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*Bullying is a form of abuse. Bullies make jokes on other boys and it makes them feel good when their friends laugh.*

Petros (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*Bullying is when one person is ridiculed or made fun of because they see things differently or aren't the same as the other people.*

Uys (17-year-old -boy living in the BE):

*A certain behaviour towards someone who is less powerful and forcing them to do something they don't want to do.*

Sizwe (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*Bullying is a certain behaviour against someone who is less powerful and taking advantage of them. It is directed at one specific person constantly.*

Viktor (17-year-old boy living at the Home):

*Bullying is someone making you feel less than yourself - hurting you physically and emotionally, putting you down. Bullying does not only occur when you are alone. It also occurs when there are a lot of people.*

Javesh (16-year old boy living at home):

*Bullying is when someone who isn't confident in themselves or might have been bullied at home and then they try and take out their frustration or anger on someone else.*

Raven (16-year old boy living at home):

*Bullying is constantly verbally, physically or cyber abusing someone- someone who comes from a dysfunctional home and needs power.*

Don (17-year-old boy living at home):

*Bullying is when someone sees what they think is a flaw in you and use it to break you down - your self-esteem, emotionally, mentally, sometimes even physically.*



Warren (17-year-old boy living at home):

*Bullying is anything to bring a person down whether through mental means, physical means or emotional means.*

Mohammed (16-year old boy living at home):

*Bullying is any sort of treatment that makes someone feel lesser.*

The participants' general understanding of the definition of bullying was that it was abuse against another person, either verbally, physically or psychologically with the intention of "bringing that person down". The participants, all male, felt that when the bullies perform these acts of abuse, it makes them feel superior and gives them a sense of power so that they feel good about themselves. The way that the boys think about bullying resonates with Volk's, et al. (2014) theory of bullying, which encompasses both ecological and evolutionary contexts in that bullying is aggressive, goal-directed behaviour that harms another individual within the context of a power imbalance. The various definitions given by the boys suggest that power is an important factor in determining bullying behaviour and that bullying is driven by a desire to gain and maintain power over other boys. We see that the power context challenged and effectively silenced victims which resonates with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory.

### **5.3 NATURE OF BULLYING**

There are two basic types of bullying: overt (direct) bullying, for example, verbal attacks like name-calling, threats and physical aggression like hitting, kicking, and damaging the victim's property: and covert (indirect) bullying, for example. relational/social aggression like social exclusion and spreading rumours.

### 5.3.1 DIRECT BULLYING

#### 5.3.1.1 PHYSICAL AGGRESSION

At this particular school, some boys stay in the boarding establishment (boarder boys) and some travel to school daily (day boys). It became evident from the interviews and focus group discussions that minimal physical bullying took place at the school during the school day. The physical bullying took place mainly in the boarding establishment (BE) when the boarder prefects or the masters on duty are not around. The boys who stay in the BE come from various provinces in South Africa as well as from other countries. This includes neighbouring countries in Africa as well as countries such as China, India and Venezuela. It is a multi-cultural and multi-racial environment. The boys differ in race, religion, language, physical appearance and status. There is an informal “pecking order” at the school where some boys (mainly the boys who play sports) enjoy a sense of superiority and often bully the other boys.

The BE houses a multi-cultural group of boys. In recent years, there has been an influx of Afrikaans-speaking boys, notably from Gauteng and Pretoria, the so-called “Dutchies”. These boys are typically very physical in nature and tend to be very physical in their interactions with their peers. In many instances, this has become a repeated problem between individual “Dutchies” and mild-mannered English-speaking boys called “Souties”. The Dutchies usually use their physicality to bully the Souties.

These are responses from the participants regarding physical bullying:

S'thembiso (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*A boy would be sitting down working and one of the Dutchies would jump on him. At first, he may respond by pretending to fight and then when it gets too rough and he wants to stop, the Dutchie would get angry and say something like “You Souties are weaklings”. They will do this again and again to these boys, even if they don’t want to wrestle.*

Petros (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*Boys sometimes lie on their beds to relax for a few minutes after prep or before supper and some of the rugby boys, especially the Dutchies, would rugby tackle them and want to play rugby on the bed. Some boys, especially the clever boys, are not sporty and they don't like to be physical but the Dutchies carry on doing this to them.*

Uys (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*The Dutchies also like to play a game called "Touchies" which is a form of Tag. It's a rough game and not everyone likes to play but the Dutchies always force the others into the game. If they don't play, they would insult them and say "You Souties are weak like girls".*

Viktor (17-year-old boy living at home):

*The smaller boys (grade eight boys) are bullied by the older boys, especially the rugby players – the Dutchies. All the boys have to carry their school bags and sports bags up from the BE and it is quite a distance to walk. Some of the prefects force the boys to carry their bags every day from the BE up to the school. This is very hard for them as all the bags are very heavy.*

Sizwe (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*The rugby boys especially the Under 16A team "shoulder push" the younger boys as they walk past them. This can be very painful as these boys are strong with lots of muscle. They mostly look for and target the Souties.*

It was very clear from the boys' testimonies that physical forms of bullying were very rife at the boarding establishment. The physical bullying mostly took the form of boys using their body strength and size to punish and dominate the weaker boys. All of the boys mentioned that the Dutchies, who were bigger and stronger, used their bodily power to inflict harm on the Souties, who were much more diminutive in size. The Dutchies bullied the Souties by forcing them

into rough forms of play that the Souties did not approve of or enjoy – “*he wants to stop*”, “*they don’t like to be physical*”, and “*always force the others into the game*”. The Dutchies, however, were persistent and continued to force the Souties into physical encounters.

Bullying was not as prevalent among the day boys as among the boarder boys. However, the boys did mention incidents of bullying that took place during the school day. Here again, it seemed that the rugby-playing boys mostly bullied the other boys.

Sizwe (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*It was during a change of period. I went into the change rooms to see what was happening because there was a lot of noise. When I got there, I saw two boys holding down the head of another boy. They had his head pinned to the bench in the change room. They wanted money from him. This type of physical bullying happens in the change rooms because there is no teacher supervision. A couple of boys get together and bully another boy for money. They target certain boys whom they feel are rich and repeatedly try to get money from them.*

Don: (17-year-old boy living at home):

*When I walk through the corridors during change of periods or to go to break, certain boys always try to trip me as I walk past them. They usually stick out a foot in front of me to try and make me fall. Sometimes they would body check me as I walk past. All their mates find it funny and laugh. Most of them are “A” team rugby players. They do this to me because they think that I am gay. Everywhere I go in this school it is the same.*

Javesh (16-year old boy living at home):

*The rugby boys like to “shoulder push” the boys whom they think are weaker than them. This usually happens during the breaks and in the corridors when there are lots of boys around. Since, the “weaker”*

*boys, do not play rugby and are more academically inclined, they are targeted. Most of the rugby players are not strong academics, this physical aggression makes them feel good about themselves.*

It is evident from the boy's responses that even though no violent physical aggression takes place at the school, a furtive form of physical bullying does take place. The school has a strict policy on fighting. If a punch is thrown by any boy, he is immediately suspended until an official hearing is scheduled. The boys resort to physical bullying in a more covert way. However, this does not mean that it is any less painful, both physically and emotionally, for the victim. Not all the boys are physically aggressive. It is mainly the bigger-built boys who play full-contact sports, such as rugby that perpetuate physical bullying. Furthermore, research has shown that men who participate in organised sports exhibit more aggressive behaviours, in both athletic and non-athletic contexts than those who do not. These behaviours include bullying, sexual violence, and physical aggression (Forbes *et al.*, 2006). The physical aggression in the form of bullying can be explained to a certain extent through Bronfenbrenner's (1989) first proposition that human development takes place through processes and interactions between an active, bio-psychological human being and the people, objects and symbols in the immediate environment.

The boy-boy activities in this school, group or solitary play, and athletic activities are all examples of these processes. The boys are operating in an ecological mesosystem of the school and are learning and displaying behaviour that they think relates to their loyalty to their rugby-playing fraternity.

According to Menesini and Salmivalli (2017), an imbalance of power can be derived from physical strength, social status in the group, or group size, for example. a group targeting a single person. Power may also be achieved through knowing a person's vulnerabilities, such as appearance, learning problems, family situation and personal characteristics, and using this

knowledge to harm him or her. The imbalance of power is very evident in this school through physical strength when it comes to physical bullying.

#### **5.3.1.2 VERBAL BULLYING**

According to James (2010), verbal abuse is the most commonly reported form of bullying. This study resonates with the findings of the study conducted by James (2010) since this was the most frequent type of bullying reported by the participants. The boys referred to bullying acts as harassment, teasing, spreading rumours and name-calling.

Don: (17-year-old boy living at home):

*When I walk past some of the boys, the so-called “manne” (Afrikaans word for men), they call me “faggot” and “queer” because of the way I walk and talk.*

Warren (17-year-old boy living at home):

*Some boys “fat-shame” me because I am plump. They call me “jumbo” and laugh whenever I walk past them.*

Mohammed ((16-year old boy living at home):

*I have not been bullied but I have seen it happen to others. A boy from our grade was forced to leave the school at the beginning of grade 11 because two boys from our grade constantly made fun of him. They teased him and called him “gay”. Whenever he joined our group during breaks some of the other boys would laugh at him and tell him to stop “acting like a girl”. They would also make snide comments about his sexuality whenever he was around.*

S'thembiso (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*I am one of the senior boys in the BE and it is my duty to mentor the Juniors. A grade 8 learner who lived in the BE was a chubby and happy boy when he arrived at the school. However, he was fat-shamed by the other boys who felt he ate too much. During supper,*

*they would laugh at him and call him fatty". After going home for an extended holiday due to the COVID-19 pandemic he came back skinny. He hardly ate because he was afraid to get fat again. However, now he was skinny-shamed. He was shoved and pushed in the face. He became miserable and unhappy and wanted to leave.*

Mr Soni (a teacher who is a daily traveller)

*Verbal bullying is perpetuated at the school. One of the Indian boys was given the nickname "The Dark Knight" because he was dark-skinned and he played chess". Even though it may have been witty, the boy felt humiliated whenever someone used the nickname-especially in the presence of others.*

The findings from both the individual interviews and focus group discussions indicated that a considerable amount of verbal bullying took place at the school. Verbal bullying among the boys targeted personal characteristics and generally constituted attacks on sexuality and appearance. This involved ridiculing and teasing.

Hurtful teasing at Greenfield normally included verbally aggressive messages that targeted any characteristic at the core of the learners' sense of identity. For example, boys who displayed feminine characteristics were teased. Boys who were targeted were often those who were physically weak, those that spoke in a soft tone of voice and those that did not display machismo in body movements like walking, sitting or running. The boys that were teased and bullied did not react or retaliate. Boys used derogatory terms such as "faggot" and "queer" to refer to homosexuals when teasing, demonstrating the importance the provocateurs place on homosexuality.

Appearance and behaviour also came to be associated with particular boys who were bullied. An example of the enactment of this relationship was evident in the use of words like "jumbo" and "dark knight" (boys that were fat and did not play macho sports).

The bullies used verbal taunts as an effective strategy for control. The 'hard' boys who ridiculed and humiliated the 'softer' boys by taunting and teasing them usually did not expect them to retaliate. The boys who were targeted were reluctant to draw more attention to themselves and very discreetly accepted the abuse, thereby allowing themselves to be controlled.

Most people are under the impression that physical bullying is the most damaging type of bullying. However, this is not necessarily true because verbal bullying can be just as harmful as physical bullying, if not worse (Longwood, 2012). According to Fraser-Thrill (2005), verbal bullying occurs when a person uses language to gain power over his or her peers. The bully may use insults or teasing to get his or her point across. Although the effects of verbal bullying are not manifested physically, psychological and emotional damage can be extremely dangerous.

It can be confusing for someone to try and determine whether the name-calling is banter or bullying. When youth experience this type of bullying, they might feel intimidated or under pressure not to make a fuss because their peers feel that it is just a joke. If it is a once-off occurrence, then it may just be banter. However, if the name-calling is repeated and is recurring, then this constitutes bullying. It also depends on how the person feels. If the person feels uncomfortable or embarrassed and has asked the perpetrator to stop but the name-calling persists, then this can be construed as verbal bullying. Verbal bullying can be about anything. It can refer to someone's weight, appearance, race, sexual orientation, or homophobia. Even though name-calling has been around for what may seem like forever, for someone who is on the receiving end of this, it can often have devastating consequences (Fekkes *et al.*, 2006). In this study name-calling was the primary form of verbal bullying. Longwood (2012) contends that verbal bullying is not to be taken lightly and it can be extremely devastating to people being affected by this nonsense, especially the victims.



### 5.3.2 INDIRECT BULLYING

#### 5.3.2.1 SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Indirect bullying may consist of actions designed to inflict psychological harm on the targeted victim by damaging his or her reputation with peers, relationships with peers and self-esteem.

My discussions with the boys revealed that bullying in the form of social exclusion involved ostracising boys and spreading rumours or gossip. According to Gladden *et al.* (2014), social/relational bullying behaviours are exhibited to harm the victim's social status by attacking her/his relationships with other students.

Below are some responses from the discussions with the boys indicating social exclusion

Javesh (16-year old boy living at home)

*You see this boy. They called him stinky. I don't really know why. Whenever he came near me, I would turn my back to him so that he was excluded from the conversation. The other boys did that too because he was uncool. After a while, he stopped joining us.*

Don (17-year-old boy living at home):

*Some boys walk away when I join their group. They don't want to be near me because they say I am gay.*

Warren (17-year-old boy living at home):

*We had a boy in our class who was very quiet. Some of the boys in our grade thought that he was effeminate. Whenever he joined our group during breaks, they would exchange looks or make gestures behind his back. They would roll their eyes, pretend to vomit or pretend to hold back their laughter. After a while, he stopped joining us. He eventually left the school.*

Viktor (17-year-old boy living at home):

*During breaks, the boys form their own groups. There is an Indian group, a white Afrikaans group, a white English group, a black group and a coloured group. They eat and socialise together. There are other groups like the gay group, BE group, the rugby group and the Prefect group. The BE group sit together during first break because they don't get food to eat at this time. There are some boys who have no group. They are excluded from whichever group they want to join. Mostly because of something that someone said about them.*

Methods of social exclusion include ignoring someone or deliberately leaving someone out of plans. There are definitely some forms of social exclusion taking place at the school, as intimated by Don and Javesh's responses. Certain boys were targeted and strategies were used by the other boys to exclude them from their social groups. In most cases, the exclusion was because of spreading rumours and saying things about the boys that were regarded as being "uncool". In their attempts to seek and maintain approval from their peers, the other boys ostracised the unpopular boys. According to the Social-Ecological Systems Framework, the child is the centre of his/her social ecosystem (including the school and the peer group), either as a bully, bully-victim, victim, or bystander. Participation in bullying is influenced by individual and social factors. Boys indulge in social exclusion to belong or relate to their peer group and the school community environment in which they find themselves.

#### **5.3.2.2 GOSSIPING**

It is generally believed that gossip is the forte of girls and that boys rarely gossip. One would not expect that gossiping would feature in the lives of the boys at an all-boys school like Greenfield High. However, a study of school bullying (Koo, 2007) showed that boys gossip every bit as much as girls. I found that at Greenfield High School indirect bullying also took the form of gossiping.

Uys (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*There was a group of boys in the BE who did not play any sport. They usually sat together during prep (time allocated for study and homework) and supper. Some of the rugby boys didn't like them because they were clever. They would make up stories to get them into trouble. They would gossip to others that these boys were in romantic relationships.*

Raven (16-year old boy living at home)

*A boy in our class who was gay and he had come out so it was not a secret. He had a best friend at school and they spent a lot of time together, both at school and out of school. One of the boys saw them together at a movie and he told everyone that the friend was also gay even though it was not true.*

Warren (17-year-old boy living at home)

*This boy in our class does very well. He gets high marks and awards. The boys talk about him behind his back. They say that "He cheated on the test, that's why he did well" or "He always copies from someone during a test" or "He is always sucking up to the teacher". These rumours get around and the other boys start to believe it. They start to call him "cheater", "sucker" and things like that.*

Javesh (16-year old boy living at home):

*There is a boy in our grade who is heavily involved with his new girlfriend. He is a bit of a "nerd" and she is very pretty. He spends all his time with her and doesn't seem to have time for the guys anymore. Whenever the guys want to go out to the movies or play soccer, he always has plans with her. The boys talk about him behind his back. and say things like "He is whipped", "She is cheating on him", "He is not her type" and "What does she see in him, he is a nerd?", "He is doing all her homework"*

Uys and Warren's comments about certain boys spreading rumours about the victim without his knowledge when he did well in a test or when someone studies more than they did suggest that this made the bullies feel better about themselves. Warren related an incident about a rumour completely fabricated by someone to make the other boy look bad and to make himself look good. This rumour spread throughout the grade and aside from denigrating the victim by continuing to spread this rumour, it also made the other boys feel good about themselves. If the bullies did badly in the test, spreading rumours about the other boy cheating or "sucking up" to the teacher justified their poor results.

It is evident from Javesh's response that friends can also gossip and say hurtful things about each other. The boys made nasty comments about their friend's relationship in his absence. Jealousy and envy could have prompted them to try to denigrate him by gossiping and saying negative things about him. Gossiping and spreading rumours and attempts to slander and defame this boy is a form of indirect bullying. This type of indirect bullying can take many forms, one of which is verbal bullying in the form of reproach, slander, cruel criticism, and personal or racial insults (Young and Nelson, 2010).

Relational or "indirect" bullying refers to social exclusion by spreading gossip or withdrawal of friendships (Wolke *et al.*, 2000; Woods and Wolke, 2004). When bullying takes an indirect form, the bully targets the victim's reputation or social standing when the victim is not around, such as by spreading distressing rumours and malicious gossip (Wright, 2004). The sociocultural perspective tells us how individual, social, and contextual issues impact human activity, especially learning and behaviour. Hence, culture is an important concept in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. According to this perspective, human learning is a social process. The bullies who spread rumours are familiar with what is socially accepted and celebrated at this school and use rumours as a tool to water down the victim's social acceptance. According to Gordon (2021), a variety of other factors motivate this behaviour, including everything from envy and a need for attention to a fear of competition.

She contends that boredom, peer pressure, low self-esteem, competition and learned behaviour are all reasons for bullies engaging in gossip. Bullies often target someone to make them seem less desirable to others. Some kids bully others simply out of jealousy. Perhaps they feel the other person is better looking, smarter, or more popular. Often, they will use tactics like rumours and gossip to make the other person look bad. This type of bullying is an insidious type of bullying that often goes unnoticed by adults (Gordon, 2021).

Gossip fits well into the bully's plan. The bully can stretch or bend the truth or make up a lie about a target and not confront the target directly. Gossiping is indirect, passive behaviour in which the target is not usually included directly. It is a form of interpersonal communication involving a conversation between two people about an absent third party. The spread of this information may come at a reputational cost for the victim if the gossip is negative. According to Altman and Taylor (1973), gossiping is often reserved for friends and people we are close enough to with whom we can comfortably voice our opinions. The victims include those around whom we are frequently surrounded (Wargo Aikins *et al.*, 2017), and this creates the potential for gossip not only involving peers but also within a friendship group (Caivano and Talwar, 2021).

The bullies use gossip as a form of control to discredit an individual. If the target is discredited, then the bully gains power over the victim. This type of bullying is an insidious type of bullying that often goes unnoticed by adults (Gordon, 2021).

#### **5.4 CAUSES OF BULLYING**

The causes of bullying are varied and broad. There are a number of contextual reasons why school children bully. According to Benbenishty and Astor (2008), there are multiple causes of bullying.

Researchers (Mischel and Kitsantas, 2018) suggest that bullying does not occur in isolation but is the product of the interconnections between the individual, their family, peer group, school, community and culture. Individual characteristics associated with

bullying include gender, sexual orientation, internalization or externalization of feelings, ability to empathize, types of aggression, depression, anxiety, and social skills (Espelage et al. 2004). Family constructs can also influence bullying behaviour including parents as role models, exposure to violence, parenting styles, family cohesion, and socio-economic status (Espelage et al. 2000). The interplay of peer ecologies can be influenced by the desire of social status attainment and social affiliations (Rodkin 2004). Perceptions of teachers and other school adults, classroom ecologies, and school climate can also have a positive or negative effect on this phenomenon (Doll et al. 2004; Kasen et al. 2004).

According to Mugave (2017), the causes of bullying in boarding schools can be a result of a variety of factors. However, it is difficult to ascertain which particular factor is responsible for a particular form of bullying. These factors include genetic predisposition, early socialization, modelling, operant conditioning, disorder in functioning of the superego, environmental factors and peer pressure.

My research was conducted in a day school as well as a boarding school. According to [www.bullyingstatistics.org](http://www.bullyingstatistics.org), environmental factors are significant in contributing to bullying behaviours in institutions like boarding schools. If the institution in which bullying takes place does not have high standards for the way people should treat each other, then bullying may be more likely and or prevalent. In cases where the rules are lax or are not strictly enforced there is room that bullying will occur. Institutions that have strict rules and close supervision of activities that children will be doing are likely to have fewer cases of bullying than where children are left unattended for long periods of time. Thus, the institution would have an influence on why children bully each other the institutions like boarding schools (Mugove, 2017).

From my interviews and group discussions, I found that the boys provided a number of reasons why bullying takes place at this particular school. However, I was able to identify three main causes of bullying at Greenfield High School.

#### **5.4.1 SUBSCRIBING TO HEGEMONIC FORMS OF MASCULINITY**

Connell (1995) coined the term “hegemonic masculinity”. Hegemonic masculinity was understood by Connell (1987, 1995) as a specific form of masculinity in a given historical and society-wide social setting that legitimates unequal gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities (Messerschmidt, 2019). Connell contends that most men are unable to attain, embody, or live hegemonic masculinity, but most aspire to achieve this. She asserts that the norms of hegemonic masculinity play a significant role in the regulation of the behaviour of boys and men.

Given the omnipresence of stereotypical gender norms throughout society, it is often socially accepted that boys will be aggressive, assertive, and violent just because they are boys. Several authors suggest that hegemonic masculinity is associated with the masculine ideals of heterosexuality, toughness, authority, competitiveness, valour and sporting prowess (Gerdin, 2012; Lindegger and Maxwell, 2005; Lesko, 2000; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Wetherell and Edley, 1999).

Boys’ masculine behaviour is excused and accepted as something biological and out of their control (Rosen and Nofziger, 2018). Homophobia and heterosexuality are fundamental elements of hegemonic masculinity (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985). Homosexual males and gender nonconformists are considered subordinate to cisgender (gender identity aligned with the sex the person had or had at birth) heterosexual men. As a result, boys who do not embody heteronormativity are at risk of being victimised by their peers (Rosen and Nofziger, 2018).

By examining the boys’ responses, I attempted to understand how hegemonic masculinity is being reinforced within this school:

Sizwe (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*One reason for bullying behaviour is proving masculinity. Some boys want to be the “alphas”. They want to earn that respect by hitting someone else. They want to be “skif”.*

Raven (16-year old boy living at home):

*A bully wants to show the other boy that the boy is inferior to him. He wants to prove to him that he is more powerful than him.*

Uys (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*Bullies like to bully other boys who are different from them. If the boys are not tough like them and play rugby, they look down upon them. They call them “sissies”.*

Petros (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*Bullies want to dominate others who they think are weaker than them. Some of the boys in our grade always make fun of my friend because his voice squeaks and they think he is homosexual.*

Warren (17-year-old boy living at home):

*Bullies feel a need to place themselves above other people even though they are not necessarily top sportsmen or academics. They bully the boys who do not “gym” and are not muscular like them.*

The responses above indicated that most of the participants felt that the reason for bullying behaviour at the school is that the bullies wanted to stamp their dominance over their victims to show them that they are superior to them. They also want respect from them.

Uys and Petros reported that boys were being teased based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, sexual behaviour, or gender presentation. Warren revealed that boys bullied their victims by making fun of their appearance. Physical attractiveness and strength are key attributes in aspiring



to achieve hegemonic masculinity. Boys who do not 'measure up' were often teased and taunted by their classmates. Boys who were short or not physically attractive (as defined by their peers) were targeted by bullies. Furthermore, Sizwe mentioned that bullying took place because boys wanted to prove their masculinity.

It is evident from the boys' responses during the interviews, that Greenfield High School emphasises the concept of masculinity and what it means to be a "man". Boys are not encouraged to be emotional or weak. They are expected to be both physically and mentally strong and not outwardly exhibit female characteristics. As a result, any boy who does not conform is open to ridicule. Boys and men are often raised, socialised, and encouraged to use violence in some form. The sociocultural theoretical approach proposes that development is shaped by the contexts in which individuals are based as well as the social and interactional relations that exist between them (Maunder, 2017). In this particular school, the context of a macho type of masculinity is celebrated, which is often underlined by the use of violence or the threat of violence.

Masculinities are often at the root of men's perpetration of bullying. Research suggests that bullying behaviours often share common root causes: the bullies' desire to demonstrate power and control over the victim, and the use of bullying to enforce gender conformity. Many researchers conclude that gender identity and violent gender norms contribute to bullying. Bullying can provide a pathway to achieving or maintaining social status within group settings such as schools (Promundo, 2019). Physical location, social context, and age intersect with and normalise boys' and men's perpetration of bullying.

The picture illustrated is a representation of the school mascot. Certain features of the mascot's physique are emphasised. The mascot's facial expression is that of aggression. He is carrying sporting equipment, which suggests that he subscribes to having sporting prowess. He is also holding a trophy depicting a competitive and winning nature. He has bulging muscles is

an indicator of physical strength and power. The boys are expected to aspire to a similar type of masculinity and those that fail are often targets of bullying.



Figure 5. 1 School Mascot

#### **5.4.2 SEEKING POWER**

Literature reveals that bullying is closely linked to the notion of power and aggression (Maharaj, 2011). In their respective studies, de Wet (2006), Crozier (1997), Kassiem (2007) and Burton (2008) all found that physical and emotional abuse, aggressive behaviour, the use of power, and teasing, were all aspects of bullying.

Walter (2008) contends that bullying is a result of power plays in the school environment. The strong and empowered were favoured by teachers and learners alike, while the weak and disempowered were taken advantage of (Houndoumadi, 2001). Roberts (2006) agrees with this view by stating that

"Society often supports the creation and maintenance of the power bully, particularly if the individual is one of the sanctified" in-groups officially sanctioned by adults within the school setting" (Roberts, 2006).

Bullies value dominance (Olthof *et al.*, 2011; Sijtsema, *et al.*, 2009) and they often acquire it (Olthof *et al.*, 2011; Pellegrini and Long, 2002). Even if they are not necessarily personally liked by many classmates, bullies may be perceived as popular powerful, and 'cool' among their peers (Caravita, DiBlasio and Salmivalli, 2009; Reijntjes *et al.*, 2016). I found that one of the causes of bullying at Greenfield was that the bully sought to exercise power over the victim.

Sifiso (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*Sometimes a boy bullies another boy just because he wants to dominate that boy and feel good about himself, especially when the other boys laugh.*

Petros (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*When someone is different to someone else, one person can use that as a reason to bully the other. The bully thinks that he is better than the other person. Maybe the other boy is not as strong as him and does not play any sport or he is in a lower team than him. The strong, sporty boy will bully the weaker one to show his power.*

Javesh (16-year old boy living at home):

*Bullies may have been bullied at home and then they try and take out their frustration or anger on another person who they think is weaker than them. Maybe he is no one at home and wants to be someone in school.*

Raven (16-year old boy living at home):

*A bully is someone who comes from a dysfunctional home and needs to control the other boys. They use their strength at school to frighten the boys whom they consider to be weaker than them.*

Sizwe (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*Some prefects want the boys to show them respect as if they were teachers. If the boy doesn't do this, they punish them by giving them a "basket" (to pick up papers by carrying a basket around) or reflection (standing up facing a wall) during breaks. They do this to prove to the boys that they are superior to them and that they have power at school.*

Social power and status were found to be the reasons behind many incidents of bullying. The abuse of power was found to be the main catalyst triggering many bullying incidents at the school. Most incidents of bullying were sheer malicious abuse of power mainly for the bullies' own amusement. It was solely a wielding of power against other boys for no other reason than traditional and egoistic selfishness, aimed at belittling their victims.

The boys who were perceived to be dominant and powerful were found to use their power to intimidate their victims, who usually were the junior boys with low social power, thus relegated as helpless against the bullies. Some boys at the school, however, seemed to have legitimate power vested in them; these included school prefects who took advantage of their status as prefects. This was mainly seen as an acceptable use of authority when understood within the context of their roles and responsibilities in the school. According to Hymel and Swearer (2015), this is difficult to stop, especially with respect to the prefects, as it affirms their social status. The social-cultural theory proposes that social status is encompassed in the contexts of the social ecology. In this school, prefects enjoy legitimate power, which is sometimes used to take advantage of the boys with less social status that results in bullying.

In general, the boys described bullying as always involving the use or misuse of power against those who are perceived as powerless (Hymel and Swearer, 2015). Therefore, the inequitable power imbalances (Olweus, 1994) caused by how dominant social identities were praised and rewarded with power and social status at the expense of minority social identities who were relegated and devalued were responsible for many incidents of bullying in this school.

### **5.4.3 PEER EXPECTATION**

Researchers have identified factors that appear to correlate with bullying: children who are high in leadership skills and who have larger social circles are also more likely to engage in bullying (Perren and Alsaker, 2006). Other measures of social position, such as perceived popularity (i.e., nominations for being popular) and social network centrality (i.e., connections with peers in the social system), indicate that there is considerable variability in the social status of aggressive youth (Farmer and Rodkin, 1996; Vaillancourt and Hymel, 2006; Thomas, 2022).

Reliance on peers for social support is coupled with increasing pressures to attain social status (Corsaro and Eder, 1990; Eder, 1985). It is during adolescence that peer groups become stratified and issues of acceptance and popularity become increasingly important. Research indicates, for example, that toughness and aggressiveness are important status considerations for boys (Eder, 1995). Some researchers believe that the pressure to gain peer acceptance and status may be related to an increase in teasing and bullying. This behaviour may be intended to demonstrate superiority over other students, either through name-calling or ridiculing (Espelage 2002).

This study found evidence that peer expectation was a major cause of bullying.

S'thembiso (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*Bullies make jokes on other boys and it makes them feel good when their friends laugh. The boys that are good at rugby sit together and they make fun of the boys who are not so good. They make*

*comments like” You play like a girl” or “You are useless at rugby; you should play Chess instead.*

Viktor (17-year-old boy living at home):

*Bullying does not only occur when you are alone. It also occurs when there are a lot of people. There is always one boy who starts insulting or picking on another boy whom he doesn’t like. All the boys around him also laugh at the other boy. This makes him feel good and he carries on bullying the other boy.*

Warren (17-year-old boy living at home):

*I was one of the boys from a large group of boys who were considered to be quite “cool. One day someone in the group started to make fun of my friend. He said that my friend “batted for the other side”. The others joined in and started to call him mean names, like “Fag” and “Faggot”. I didn’t like what they were saying, but I did not want to risk being left out of the group so I laughed with them. They made fun of him whenever he joined our group and he eventually left the school.*

The concept of peer pressure refers to the influence that others in a social group apply to learners. It occurs when a group of people coerce each other to go along with certain beliefs or behaviours. It can take many different forms and can result in the boys engaging in behaviours that they would not normally consider, such as Warren joining in and making fun of his friend. By joining in the bullying behaviour like his peers, Warren made a poor decision due to the influence of the others. He gave in to negative peer pressure because he wanted to be part of the group and fit in. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory advocates that social learning comes before cognitive development. This perspective views school bullying as contextual and advocates that attention should be given to the relationships and multiple settings surrounding the behaviour. We see how the contextual factors of peer pressure affect the way that the boys behave when enacting bullying behaviour.

Peer pressure has a powerful influence on whether or not someone chooses to engage in bullying behaviour. In Warren's case, although the boy was Warren's friend, and Warren would not normally consider making fun of his sexual orientation, his need to belong to a group was stronger than his willingness to stand up for his friend. If one person in a peer group laughs at someone, others might follow suit because they think that is what they are 'supposed' to do. Even if other people know it is wrong, they often fear speaking out because they do not want to turn become victim themselves.

Some aggressive children are viewed by teachers and peers as being popular even though they may not be well-liked (Farmer *et al.*, 2003; Lease, Musgrove, and Axelrod, 2002) and some are highly central members and prominent leaders of peer groups and Estell, Farmer and Cairns, 2007; Thomas, 2022). According to the responses from the boys, a lot of the bullying that takes place at the school does so in the presence of their peers. S'thembiso related incidents in which a group of boys identified with those boys that were "*good at rugby*" and also joined in the bullying because those boys were popular and prominent among the boys. It is easy to give into peer pressure and engage in bullying simply because of the desire to fit in. For this reason, boys who belong to peer groups that engage in bullying are more likely to become bullies themselves.

## **5.5 EFFECTS OF BULLYING**

Research demonstrates that the effects of bullying are behavioural, emotional (mental) and physical. It also affects the victim's health as well as their academic performance (Rivara and Le Menestrel, 2014).

Poor self-image is one effect that verbal bullying can have on a victim. This type of bullying can lead to low self-esteem, as well as depression and other problems. In some cases, victims of verbal bullying can result to substance abuse to help cope with the problems.

It must be noted that the long-term physical effects can be challenging to identify or even link with past bullying experiences, as they may have been caused by anxiety or bad childhood events (Hager and Leadbeater, 2016; Bakar, 2021). This is a modest study that was conducted over a short period of time. It is for this reason that I was able to identify only the immediate and short-term consequences of bullying from the boys and educators' narratives.

### **5.5.1 AVOIDANCE AND ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**

Mr Soni (Male teacher who is a daily traveller):

*Boys who are bullied are timid and generally very quiet in class. They are often absent from school and struggle with their schoolwork. They make lame excuses like “I had a headache when I woke up this morning”, or “My stomach was sore”. Most of them don’t tell us they are being bullied. They are taught to “take it like a man” and to “fight your own battles”. A very senior teacher in the school tells them “to eat cement” or “to build a bridge and get over it”.*

Warren (17-year-old boy living at home):

*My friend was constantly bullied at school because some of the boys in our grade felt that he was too feminine. They called him a “sissy” and said that he “walked like a girl”. He was very clever and was in the 1<sup>st</sup> set for all his subjects. However, he was being bullied in class as well as during breaks and he began to stay away from school for no good reason. As a result, he missed a lot of schoolwork. Even though I helped him to try and catch up, his marks continued to go down. This gave the boys further ammunition to make fun of him.*

Mr Soni, who was an ex-student of this school and who had been a victim of bullying himself, stated that boys who were bullied were often absent from school. They were intimidated by the bullies and did not feel confident enough to stand up to them since they had low self-esteem. Hence, they found it easier to avoid them by staying away from school. Their high absenteeism, however, often affected their academic performance. Warren’s response about his friend



fabricating excuses to stay at home is testimony to this since his friend's academic performance seemed to have declined due to his frequent absenteeism. Mr Soni also stated that many of them did not report the bullying to the teachers. Since Greenfield is an all-boys school, the boys are taught to be tough and they are not encouraged to "whine". Informing the teachers about the bullying would have drawn unwanted attention to the victims. This would further exacerbate the situation and increase their feelings of hopelessness and depression.

Bakar (2021) also argues along similar lines that a bullied victim's emotional and mental well-being is affected when he/she feels isolated, unaccepted, withdrawn, and angry. The victim is always thinking about how he/she can escape from the bully, resulting in a constant state of anxiety and nervousness. Hence, they may miss out on being in important environments (viz., playgrounds during breaks, sporting practices after school, etc.) that are exposed to bullying. These victims fear the environment in which they are bullied as they consider it unsafe and unhappy. Some even go to extreme levels of absence, or may even drop out of school (Omoteso, 2010). Those who choose to remain may have low self-esteem and anxiety, and even experience depression. Due to fear, some victims make up excuses (both physical and emotional ailments) to their parents to miss school and avoid being bullied (Omoteso, 2010). We see this very clearly in Warren's case, where he stayed away from school for "no good reason".

Victims of bullying suffer academically because they are unable to focus on their schoolwork. Students' grades begin to slip when they are bullied, as in Warren's friend's case. Dresler-Hawke and Whitehead (2013) argue that learners preoccupied with bullying struggle to focus on their academics, including completing their homework and assignments. This in turn affects their grades, further increasing their stress (Bakar, 2021). For some of the boys at Greenfield, this stress became too much for them to handle and resulted in them getting absent from school and missing out on work, which further exacerbated their distress and suffering.

### 5.5.2 SECLUSION AND ISOLATION

Ms Drake (Female teacher who is a daily traveller):

*The boys know that I am sympathetic toward the LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender queer and intersex) community. Some boys who are being bullied because of their sexual orientation, come to my classroom during their breaks. They sit alone and eat their lunch and don't say much.*

Don (17-year-old boy living at home):

*I am openly gay and all the boys in my grade know this. My friends are okay with it, but some of the other boys in the grade, especially the "macho" boys who play 1<sup>st</sup> team sport, always make fun of me. During breaks, when I am with my group of friends, these boys walk past us and insult me. They also ask the others questions like: "Why are you joining this fag?" or "Are you a "faggot" like him? All the boys around us find it funny and laugh. At first, I ignored their comments but after a while, I could not take it anymore and decided to remain in one of the empty classrooms during breaks to eat my lunch.*

Ms Drake was of the opinion that some boys were bullied because of their sexual orientation. These boys isolated themselves from the rest of their grade to avoid the inevitable bullying. This resulted in them not interacting with their peers in a social environment during the breaks. Don's response supported this view. He chose to sit alone so that he would not be verbally bullied. Boys who do not join their friends during their free time miss out on vital experiences with their peers, which are necessary to enhance their emotional and psychological well-being. Boys who do not socialise with their peers run the risk of experiencing poor social adjustment and feelings of loneliness and isolation.

### 5.5.3 INCREASE IN VIOLENCE

Mr Mtolo (Male Teacher who lives in the BE):

*Since I live in the BE, I sometimes see a different side to the boys. The discipline structures at the BE are quite rigid, so most of the bullying is verbal and it is not easy for the Masters to identify and punish the bullies. The boys that are bullied are usually the quiet and timid ones. However, sometimes these boys retaliate physically by getting into a sudden rage and uncharacteristically hitting or punching the bullies.*

S'thembiso (17-year-old boy living in the BE):

*One of the grade 8 boys was a bit chubby when he came to Greenfield High School. Since the grade 8 boys come from various schools around the country, the boys did not know each other very well and some boys 'fat-shamed' him because of his weight. When he came back after the 1<sup>st</sup> term, he had lost a lot of weight and he was quite skinny. Now the boys skinny-shamed him. Since I was the Head-Boy of the BE, I tried to talk to him but he refused to talk to me. His brother told me that he was confused and scared because he didn't know if he should eat or diet. He was miserable and he cried all the time. One day when the boys began to tease him, he lost his temper and punched one of the boys in his face. Since the school policy on violence is very clear, both boys were suspended from school until the official hearing.*

Mr Mtolo is a boarder master and spends a lot of time with the boys. He felt that some boys who were always bullied were forced to resort to physical violence against their bully. Even though the victims were not violent in nature, the constant abuse drove them to retaliate violently to alleviate their pain and anger against the bully. S'thembiso related an incident where a boy acted out of character by punching his taunter in the face. The persistent bullying drove him to retaliate uncharacteristically. He probably felt helpless and resorted to

physical violence to try and stop the abuse. However, physical aggression has negative consequences (viz., suspension or expulsion in severe cases) for the bully and the victim. This could increase the victim's resentment and unhappiness and hence lead to dire consequences for both the victims and the bullies in the future.

It is evident from the teachers' responses that being bullied had a detrimental effect on the victim's emotional well-being as well as their academic performance.

According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, children typically find themselves enmeshed in various ecosystems, from the most intimate home ecological system to the larger school system, and then to the most expansive system that includes society and culture (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). According to this model, we should be studying development in its ecological context; that is, in the actual environments in which human beings live their lives. In this particular study, I was able to analyse the effects of bullying on the lives of boys within the schooling system, which Bronfenbrenner would refer to as the mesosystem. Other longitudinal studies of school bullying and violence have analysed how the macrosystem affects children's behaviour and the effects of this behaviour on their lives and the lives of their parents, siblings and peers (Paquette and Ryan, 2001; Mwahombela, 2004; Govender, 2006). In this modest study, I only investigated the effects of bullying within the school setting to inform the intervention programmes, although each of these ecological systems inevitably interacts with and influences each other in all aspects of the children's lives.

## **5.6 HOW THE SCHOOL HANDLES BULLYING**

It is imperative that schools put stringent policies in place to control behaviour and maintain discipline. According to Chaplain (2016), the school's values and expectations should be communicated through the school's behaviour policy. Hence, a well-designed bullying policy, implemented throughout the school day, provides the framework for behaviour both inside and outside the

classroom. Chaplain (2016) contends that the behaviour policy should provide the fundamental principles for day-to-day classroom management

Greenfield High School has implemented many strategies to maintain discipline and control the behaviour of the learners. The school is fenced all around the boundary and each of the three gates through which the boys enter has a security guard. The gates are locked during school hours and the learners are only allowed to leave or enter through the main gate. There are surveillance cameras around the premises, monitoring the “hot spots”. The school has a discipline officer who is in charge of discipline for the whole school. Additionally, there are five grade heads who are the grade controllers responsible for maintaining the discipline of each individual grade. Each grade also has a teacher responsible for pastoral care. A chaplain is also available.

The school has a discipline policy that is incorporated into the school’s code of conduct. At the beginning of the year, each boy is given a copy of this code of conduct. This policy applies to the whole school community in their relationship with the boys, their parents, teachers, management, the school's governing body, the residence (viz., the BE) and the support staff.

The definition of bullying as specified in the anti-bullying policy:

Bullying consists of repeated inappropriate behaviour whether by word, by physical action or otherwise, directly or indirectly applied, by one or more persons against another person or persons, which undermines the individual person’s right to personal dignity. *Note: This is not to be confused with the good-natured banter that goes on as part of the normal social interchange between boys, or the normal professional classroom management by teachers or by coaches on the sports field.*

The following types of behaviour are deemed inappropriate:

- Humiliation, including name-calling, referring to academic ability, sporting ability and/or other related issues;
- Intimidation, including aggressive use of body language;

- Verbal abuse, anonymous and/or otherwise. This includes cyberbullying of any sort;
- Physical abuse or threatened abuse;
- Aggressive or obscene language;
- Offensive jokes, whether spoken, by email, text; etcetera;
- Victimisation, including very personal remarks’;
- Exclusion and isolation;
- Intrusion through interfering with personal possessions or locker;
- Threats, including demands for money/lunch etcetera, and
- An attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo or ridicule.

Sanctions, as per the school’s code of conduct and the contract of good behaviour, may include one or more of the following:

- Withdrawal of privileges,
- Suspension,
- Detention,
- Peer mediation,
- Expulsion, and
- Community Service.

The procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying are as follows:

- Boys should discuss any incident of bullying with a teacher or another trusted adult within the school system. This is responsible behaviour rather than “telling tales”.
- Parents/guardians should contact the form head regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents.
- The school counsellor is available for private consultation and reporting.

In individual interviews, the educators revealed the following in terms of how the school handled bullying:

Mr Mtolo (Male teacher who lives in the BE):

*The school has a detention system. Defaulters are given detention and the boys have to remain after school from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. The prefects keep them in a classroom where they are expected to do some form of written academic punishment. If the offence is severe and not academically related then detention, as a form of punishment, is too mild. These boys are then given some sort of light manual labour, for example, sanding desks. I have not seen boys being punished for bullying.*

Mr Soni (Male teacher who is a daily traveller):

*The school has a counsellor who is available to speak to the boys who need emotional support. Each grade also has a teacher who is responsible for the pastoral care of the boys in that specific grade. This is mostly for boys who get into trouble often. Nothing specific about bullying behaviour.*

Ms. Drake (Female teacher who is a daily traveller):

*The prefect system is very effective in terms of pupil discipline. Prefects have the authority to discipline boys who violate the code of conduct. They can give the perpetrators detention, basket or reflection.*

*The boys responded with the following comments:*

Viktor (17-year-old boy living at home):

*Prefects are very good at controlling the boys. Most of the boys are quite scared of the prefects. Some are more afraid of them than the teachers. However, there are not enough prefects to be vigilant at all times and in all places around the school. Hence, boys can be bullied when there is a lack of supervision.*

Mohammed (16-year old boy living at home):

*The school has a good discipline system but it often fails because some ... many teachers (mostly the male teachers) believe that verbal bullying is just banter and is not a serious offence so they do not take it any further and the bully is not punished.*

Greenfield High School has a very comprehensive discipline policy, and the responses from the teachers indicated that stringent disciplinary structures are put in place. Detention and other forms of punishment, such as basket, reflection and community service are meted out to the offenders. Nevertheless, this does not seem to deter all the bullies and they somehow manage to find a way to bully their victims. It is evident from Viktor's comments that bullying incidents still occur at the school despite the strict Code of Conduct. However, the school places very little to no emphasis on bullying behaviour. No distinction is made in the code of conduct between bullying and other forms of negative behaviour. In most cases, educators and learners do not distinguish between bullying behaviour and general misbehaviour.

It is important for us to consider the difference between banter and verbal bullying. Therefore, since the difference between banter and verbal bullying is a subjective distinction, it is open to different interpretations based on the other person's (viz., teacher's, prefect's, and form head's) point of view. Mohammed's response reveals that verbal bullying is often ignored when brought to the attention of the teachers. He also mentioned that this reaction is frequently received from the male teachers. Since the school is an all-boys school, the teachers are predominantly male. As a result, bullying behaviour is allowed to continue and the bullies are not punished. The teachers mentioned that they did not know of boys being punished or being given pastoral care and counselling for issues of bullying. Hence, the bullying behaviour continues. This is justified by Canlas *et al.* (no date), who found that studies indicated that two out of three learners are convinced that they cannot get any kind of help in relation to bullying from their own teachers.



## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the findings from the participants through interviews and focus group discussions were presented and discussed in terms of the interview questions. This chapter discussed the nature, causes and effects of bullying on students at Greenfield High School.

The responses revealed that bullying definitely occurred at the school. However, bullying behaviour was covertly carried out and it was predominantly verbal and psychological. Other forms of bullying did take place but to a much lesser extent.

The results of the study showed that bullying behaviour at the school occurred for the following reasons: subscribing to hegemonic forms of masculinity; bullies wanting to feel powerful over their peers and peer expectation since bullies want to prove to their peers that they are tough.

Bullying primarily takes place among boys and Mills (2001) argues that violence (such as bullying) has become synonymous with normalised definitions of masculinity. As a result, bullying as a form of violence is seen as normal behaviour for males. It is a collective mechanism used to ensure that boys conform to hegemonic masculinity (Mills 2001, Richardson 2001) where power over women and other males becomes vital. Tharinger (2008) argues that in this construction of masculinity, males are allowed to act aggressively as it is considered “normal”. This contributes to the perception that bullying is normal and acceptable (Penning, Bhagwanjee and Govender, 2010). If allowed to continue, this can be devastating for both bullies and victims alike.

Important information also emerged in the discussion of the manner in which the school managed the incidences of bullying. This served to inform my campaign aimed to address bullying among the boys attending Greenfield High. The next chapter provides a detailed discussion of how I planned and implemented my intervention campaign to combat bullying at this school.

## CHAPTER SIX

### INTERVENTION CAMPAIGN/PROGRAMME

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Foody *et al.* (2018) maintain that bullying poisons the educational environment and affects the learning of every child. Bullying is a universal problem, affecting the emotional, social, and physical well-being of school-age children worldwide. While bullying can happen almost anywhere, the most extensively studied setting is in schools. It is therefore understandable that the responsibility for dealing with bullying has usually been placed on principals and educational staff (Foody *et al.*, 2018).

According to education expert, Dr Gillian Mooney, Teaching and Learning Manager at the Independent Institute of Education, South Africa, “Bullying in SA schools calls for urgent intervention” (SHARE AUTHOR, 2018).

A systematic review of the effectiveness of anti-bullying programmes in schools was conducted by Farrington and Ttofi (2011). A meta-analysis of 44 evaluations showed that, overall, school-based anti-bullying programmes are quite effective. On average, victimisation decreased by 17–20% and bullying decreased by 20–23%. They concluded that the more intensive programmes were more effective. Programmes which included parent meetings, firm disciplinary methods, and improved playground supervision were also found to be effective (Farrington and Ttofi, 2011).

This chapter focuses on the planning, implementation and evaluation of the anti-bullying intervention campaign implemented at Greenfield High School. It describes the tasks and activities that the participants engaged in during the intervention campaign.

Given the complex nature of bullying among young adolescents, interventions must be multi-focused and customised to meet their strengths and needs

(Farrington and Ttofi, 2009; Ttofi and Farrington, 2011). It is necessary to recognise the importance of certain role players in dealing with the problem of bullying, these being the school, parents, bystanders and teachers. This intervention campaign focuses specifically on bullying within the school environment. Therefore, it highlights the role players within this educational environment. According to Rigby, Smith and Pepler, (2004), this approach is defined as a “whole-school approach” where elements and initiatives of programmes are carefully selected and coordinated at different levels of the school environment, such as the school, the classroom and the individual student.

Two general approaches are often differentiated in bullying intervention programmes, namely, confronting approaches and non-confronting approaches. The emphasis is on students who perpetrate bullying. Confronting approaches involve disciplinary measures condemning the behaviour of students who bully others and holding them responsible for their actions (i.e., Farsta Method). Non-confronting approaches are characterised by a lack of accusation and an increase in empathy for the students who have been victimised by the students who are bullies (i.e., No Blame Approach, the Shared Concern Method) (Wachs *et al.*, 2016).

In one evaluation study, the intervention programme No Blame Approach (Maines and Robinson, 1992) was found to stop bullying in approximately 90% of situations within one to two weeks (Galun, 2016). In yet another evaluation study, the shared concern method (Pikas, 2002), was found to be successful in handling bullying within two weeks in 75% to 95% of cases (Griffith and Weatherilt, 2011). Hoechner and Mahler-Kraus (2011) found the Farsta Method to be effective in tackling bullying in schools (Wachs, *et al.*, 2018).

The intervention campaign at Greenfield High School took place over a period of 10 weeks. A non-confrontational “whole-school” approach was implemented. During this period, some of the activities included creating anti-bullying posters, anti-bullying pamphlets, group discussions, mentorship

training, workshops, Facebook campaigns and speeches in assembly. The intervention campaign that I present below was informed by the restorative justice approach. Braithwaite's (1989) re-integrative shaming approach was used where disapproval of bullying was expressed while still showing respect for the offender, namely, by being fair, by listening and by being unbiased. The theory of acknowledging shame was also applied where it was hoped that bullies would discharge their shame over their wrongdoing (Morrison, 2006).

This action research intervention project commenced in January 2021 and culminated in May 2021.

## **6.2 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

### **6.2.1 INTERVENTION CAMPAIGN PARTICIPANTS**

Ten boys from the sample participated in the intervention campaign. They all volunteered to participate in this campaign and they were all committed to trying to eradicate bullying at the school. Some of the boys were school prefects, mentors and boarding establishment prefects. The Head-Boy, Deputy Head Boys of both the school and the BE as well as the Head of the RCL (Representative Council of Learners) were all included in this study. This seemed to be an appropriate selection of participants. Since quite a few of them were leaders in the school, their participation was crucial to the success of the programme. When the interviews were conducted the boys were in grade 11. The intervention took place in the new year by which time most of the boys had moved on from grade 11 to grade 12.

The educators were of different genders (male, female/ bisexual) and races (African, White and Indian). One of the male educators was a boarder master and hence he was in contact with the boys during the formal school hours and when they were away from the school environment. The other male educator was extensively involved in the extra-mural activities of the school and he spent a considerable amount of time with the boys after school hours during their training sessions, when they were going to other schools to play their

matches away from school and on school tours. This teacher was also one of the educator representatives on the School Governing Body. The female teacher was someone with whom many of the boys felt safe, especially the boys who were not regarded as being “masculine” enough. In total, the intervention team comprised thirteen participants.

## 6.2.2 PARTICIPANT’S BACKGROUND

### 6.2.2.1 LEARNER PARTICIPANTS

*Table 6. 1 Details of learner participants:*

LEARNER	PLACE OF RESIDENCE	GRADE	AGE	LEADERSHIP POSITION
PETROS	Apollo House	12	17	
SIZWE	Apollo House	12	17	Head Prefect (Be)
UYS	Apollo House	12	17	Head Prefect (School)
S'THEMBISO	Apollo House	12	17	Prefect
WARREN	Home with mum and sisters	12	17	
MOHAMMED	Home with parents	12	16	RCL Chairperson
JAVESH	Home with parents	12	16	
DON	Home with mum and stepdad	12	17	
VIKTOR	Home with brother	12	17	Deputy Head Prefect (School)
RAVEN	Home with parents	11	16	

### 6.2.2.2 TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

*Table 6. 2 Details of educator participants*

EDUCATOR	GENDER	PLACE OF RESIDENCE	SUBJECTS TAUGHT	YEARS OF SERVICE	LEADERSHIP POSITION
Miss Drake	Female/ Bisexual	Miss Drake resides in the suburb of Glenwood.	Life Science	11 years	Subject Head- Life Science Mic (Environmental Club and E-Sports Club)
Mr Mtolo	Male	Mr Mtolo resides in Apollo House	Business Studies	20 years	Head of Department
Mr Singh	Male	Mr Singh resides in the suburb of Sherwood.	Mathematics, Natural Science	12 years	Subject Head - Natural Science Mic (Debating) Teacher Representative the on the SGB

### 6.2.3 PARTICIPANT DROP OUT

There were no dropouts. All thirteen participants from the study also took part in the intervention campaign. Even though the Covid-19 pandemic was still ongoing and despite the National Corona Virus Command Council regulations and the Disaster Management Act, all the participants were available to participate in the Intervention Programme. Almost all the boys were now in grade 12. Since the senior learners were expected to be at school every day, it was possible to interact with them on a regular basis. All the participants, including the bullies, victims, bystanders and educators were very keen on

participating in this programme and they felt that they could make a difference in trying to address bullying at Greenfield High School.

### **6.3 THE INTERVENTION CAMPAIGN**

Reviews conducted on the effectiveness of anti-bullying programmes established that school-based interventions are effective in reducing bullying behaviour (Gaffney et. al., 2019). According to Evans, Fraser and Cotter (2014), interventions implemented with homogeneous samples (same age, gender, etc.) are more successful than programmes implemented where samples tend to be more heterogeneous.

Since Greenfield High School is an all-boys school, it has a homogeneous component. Hence, there is quite a good likelihood of implementing a successful anti-bullying campaign.

Research has shown that in secondary schools, student well-being can be enhanced by activities that promote healthy living. Aggressive behaviours among youth can be reduced by fostering positive and healthy school climates. Systematic reviews indicate that multifaceted, whole-school interventions are effective in reducing bullying in high-income settings (Vreeman and Carroll, 2003; Ttofi and Farrington, 2011; Bonell et. al., 2013).

Whole-school multi-method approaches include combinations of school rules and regulations, teacher training, classroom rules, conflict resolution training and individual counselling. These approaches have been shown to be most successful at reducing bullying when compared to interventions targeting only one level of the problem, for example. interventions that target only classroom-level rules against bullying, or individual-level training such as social skills groups (Vreeman and Carroll, 2003). Whole-school interventions take a socio-ecological approach to bullying since it involves many components, namely, bullies, victims, peers, adults and parents as well as making substantial changes to the broader school environment (Bowes et al. 2019).

The Intervention Committee at Greenfield High School comprised 10 learner participants that participated in the study. Viktor, Warren and Mohammed were chosen as the 3 boys to head the committee. Viktor and Mohammed were both student leaders at the school. Viktor was one of the Deputy Head Boys and Mohammed was the President of the RCL. Both learners were very committed to combatting any form of bullying at the school. Mr Soni volunteered to be the teacher liaison. This was good because he was also a teacher representative on the SGB. These 4 members formed the steering committee of the Anti-Bullying Campaign.

It was decided that to effectively reduce bullying at the school, it was necessary to target many aspects of bullying behaviour. Hence, a Whole School Policy was adopted. Interventions using a multi-disciplinary whole-school approach included some combination of school rules and regulations, teacher training, classroom curriculum, conflict resolution training and individual counselling. The initial plan was to involve the parents as well, but with the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not possible.

The intervention programme was based loosely on the principles proposed by Dan Olweus (1984), which was based on research into behaviour modification techniques for aggressive or violent children. This program restructures the learning environment to create a social climate characterised by supportive adult involvement, positive adult role models, firm limits, and consistent, non-corporal punishments for bullying behaviour.

With the assistance of the school management, the existing school environment was restructured to reduce opportunities for bullying behaviour. Prefects were more prominently positioned during breaks to ensure that they were always on duty and always visible. Since Greenfield High School focuses on providing a holistic education for boys, I used the concept of whole-school intervention in my campaign to prevent bullying behaviour at the school. The school code of conduct was amended to include specific steps to identify and discipline bullying behaviour. A Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee was formed and the staff were trained by a professional



psychologist to identify and prevent bullying behaviour. A coordinated system of supervision during breaks was also implemented.

## 6.4 THE ACTION PLAN

The anti-bullying intervention campaign was conducted over a 10- week period. Although much of the campaign took place on weekdays and during normal school hours from 7.30 am to 2.30 pm. Since Greenfield High School has a boarding establishment (generally referred to as the BE), the anti-bullying campaign was also conducted after school hours in the BE. The school timetable is drawn up to include two 55-minute assembly periods a week, one mentorship lesson per week and daily 20-minute registration periods. With the permission of the Principal, the Senior Management Team and the SGB, the anti-bullying campaign was carried out during the Mentorship lessons and registration periods.

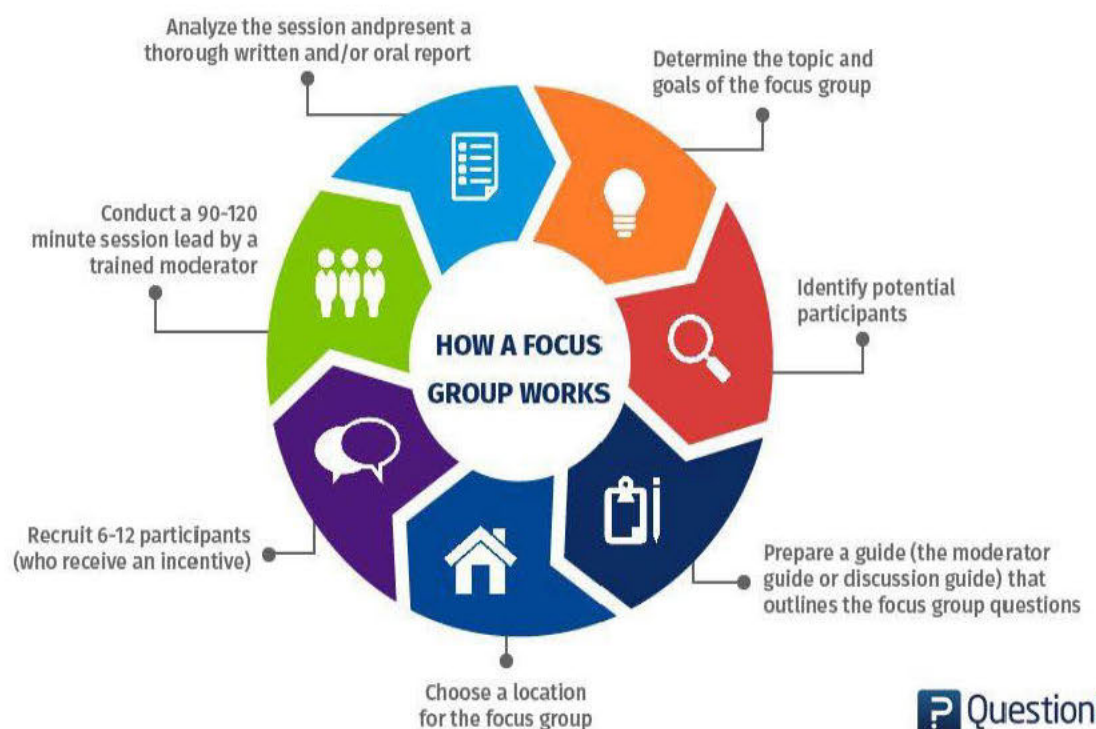
*Table 6. 3 Details of the action plan*

DATE	EVENT	DESCRIPTION
11 January 2022	General Focus Group Discussion	A general discussion on the nature of bullying at Greenfield High School. Discussion of boys' experiences of bullying Discussion on the school's Code of Conduct and the school's role in preventing/reducing bullying behaviour

DATE	EVENT	DESCRIPTION
16 - 2 January 2022	Planning the action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• permission to invite people to speak during assembly</li> <li>• using mentorship lessons to engage with the boys regarding their bullying experiences, viz. storytelling, anecdotes etc.</li> <li>• Head of English to arrange an Anti-Bullying Speech/Essay Competition</li> <li>• Head of Arts and Culture to arrange</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Anti-Bullying Poster Competition</li> <li>• Drama teacher to help prepare a sketch on bullying.</li> <li>• Registration teachers to motivate the boys to create slogans, graphics and pictures to post on Social media.</li> </ul>
21 January 2022 to 18 March 2022	Implementing the action	The anti-bullying planning was implemented during a ten-week period.
19-24 March 2022	Evaluating the campaign	The success of the intervention was evaluated by assessing

DATE	EVENT	DESCRIPTION
		the strengths and weaknesses of the programme.

#### 6.4.1 GENERAL FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION



*Figure 6. 1 How A Focus Group Works*

A focus group interview is one of the valuable tools for collecting qualitative data. (Dilshad and Latif, 2013). According to Anderson (1990), a focus group is “a group comprised of individuals with certain characteristics who focus discussions on a given issue or topic”. A focus group interview provides a setting for the relatively homogeneous group to reflect on the questions asked

by the interviewer (Dilshad and Latif, 2013). Casey and Krueger (2000), contend that a focus group provides “a more natural environment than that of an individual interview because participants are influencing and influenced by others- just as they are in real life” (Dilshad and Latif, 2013).

Focus group interviews are used to explore children’s experiences. It is an appropriate method for exploring experiences, opinions, wishes and concerns, as it allows participants to put forward their experiences in their own words. This method makes it possible to grasp the relationships between participants and hence obtain a deeper understanding of how people feel and think about a specific issue. The participants share their experiences and views with each other in the discussion. (Barber, 1999; 2014; Wilkinson, 2004; Kvarme, *et al.* 2010). Focus group interviews are often used to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. (Nyumba *et al.*, 2017). Since bullying behaviour is a societal problem, this qualitative technique made it an appropriate form of data collection for this study.

### **SESSION ONE – FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION**

Before commencement of the focus group interviews, I designed an interview schedule.

The focus group interview followed the stages listed below:

- the welcome
- an overview of the topic
- obtainment of background information (gender, age etc.)
- statement of the ground rules of the focus group, and assurance of confidentiality
- the questions (beginning with general experiences and progressing to specific problems)

I opened the focus group session by welcoming all the participants. I then gave them a brief orientation by informing them about the purpose and rules of the

discussion and an explanation of how the anonymity of the participants would be respected.

The following procedures were followed:

### **INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)**

I introduced myself and thanked the participants for agreeing to be part of the intervention campaign. I explained the objectives of the campaign to the participants. I reminded them that the aim of the study was to explore the current status of bullying at the school as well as the experiences and perceptions of bullying among the boys. I highlighted the benefits of putting a campaign of this nature in place and stressed the importance of their input in the discussions.

I reassured the participants of confidentiality and anonymity. I discussed the ground rules and duration of the discussions. I further highlighted the need to respect each other's opinions and allow each speaker the opportunity to talk about their experiences and say what they are feeling without inhibitions. Participants were reminded to keep to the topic and to be concise as possible because of time constraints. Participants were also given the opportunity to provide some of their own ground rules which we documented on a flip chart for ease of reference and easy access. The participants mentioned in particular that there should be no shouting, no blaming anyone (finger pointing) and no intimidation or threats.

I handed out assent forms to the learners for them to sign. They were informed that they could refuse to sign and hence not participate in the programme. All learners signed the form.

### **ICEBREAKER (5 MINUTES)**

I informed the participants that we were going to do a little icebreaker to help them remember each other's names. I handed out blank cards and pens and I explained that they must write down whatever name or character (e.g., Mickey Mouse, Ironman) they would like to be called during this session. [Having

pseudo names tend to give participants the anonymity they need to disclose information that they may not have otherwise disclosed]. I then asked them to introduce themselves and tell us something about themselves so that we can find out a little more about each other.

Bullying at this school is predominantly verbal since the punishment for fighting is an immediate suspension. Name-calling, teasing, inappropriate sexual comments, gossip, slander, put-downs and mimicking others are the types of bullying behaviour that are quite common. Bullying usually takes place on the grounds during breaks, in the corridors between lessons, in the classroom when the teacher is either not present or otherwise occupied, on the sports ground during sports practice and in the boarding establishment (BE). The prefects who are on duty are responsible for ensuring that bullying does not take place during breaks, on the sports field and in the BE.

This particular boys' high school is very sports orientated and being considered as "een van die manne" (one of the men) is important to boost the boy's popularity at school. If a boy is more academically inclined and does not play a sport such as rugby, he is looked down upon by the other boys. The so-called "rugby" boys tend to make snide comments and jokes. as these boys walk past them during breaks or in the classroom. Many of the bullies do not see this as a problem and their status in their peer group is elevated. The victims, on the other hand, feel humiliated and embarrassed. These incidents, however, are seldom reported because the school encourages masculinity, and the victims feel as if this may be deemed as "girlish" or "wimpish" behaviour. Hence, the cycle of bullying continues.

## **SESSION TWO – SPEAKING ABOUT EXPERIENCES**

Most of the bullying that takes place at Greenfield High School is very subtle. There is a lot of verbal bullying which most boys consider to be "banter". However, since there is a fine line between verbal bullying and "banter" much of the so-called banter is actually bullying.

One of the boys mentioned that the other boys always call him "fat" and make jokes about his weight. Even though he tries to laugh it off as a joke, it does make him feel embarrassed. This happens often, even among his own circle of friends. It generally takes place during breaks when the boys are having their lunch together, so it is a form of group bullying. Since this boy is a Type 1 diabetic and is unable to control his weight, as it is a side-effect of his medication, he feels frustrated and helpless.

Another boy said that he is called a "faggot" because he is gay. This happens frequently in the corridors or on the school grounds. As he walks past them, they call him derogatory names. Once again this happens when there are many other boys around. He ignores the abuse because it would be considered "unmanly" if he complained to the teachers. He often feels unhappy and depressed. The myth that men must always hide their feelings and not show any sign of weakness is still very prevalent at the school.

### **SESSION THREE – DISCUSSION ON THE SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT**

All the participants agreed that the school has a very comprehensive and well-structured code of conduct for learners. The code of conduct details the school rules and regulations, what is regarded as appropriate behaviour and the consequences of breaking the school rules and regulations.

The boys were familiar with the school's code of conduct, its various categories and levels and actions that will be taken against offenders that breach the school code of conduct. For example, the boys mentioned that the school's code of conduct has Levels from 1 to 6 with 6 being the most serious offence. There are various forms of punishment that are metered out to boys according to the levels in the code of conduct.

The discussion centred around the levels of breach of the code of conduct and the processes that take place thereafter. In the event that an incident does occur, the teacher conducts a preliminary investigation. A level 4 offence such

as bullying is a serious offence and is reported to the School Management Team. The boy(s) that are responsible are then punished according to the Code of Conduct. This can lead to a “Letter of Suspension”. In the event that this issue is not resolved and continues to present a problem, this will be escalated further and reported to the school governing body/school tribunal. The parents of the guilty party/parties are contacted, and the offender will have to face a disciplinary hearing. This could lead to the expulsion of the learner.

The participants mentioned that bullying was regarded as a level 4 breach, but the code of conduct did not detail what happens after a bullying incident was reported and the procedure and processes that must be followed. The boys felt that the school regarded bullying as “one of those things that happen at school” and that was part of the growing-up process for all boys. Some boys mentioned that the school regarded bullying behaviour as “boys will be boys’ behaviour”.

### **WRAP UP (5 MINUTES)**

I wrapped up the session by giving them the opportunity to add or ask anything that they felt was important to the discussion. I thanked them for sharing their experiences of bullying with us and gave them each a chocolate for their time.

## **6.4.2 PLANNING THE ACTION**

I asked the participants how the intervention should be structured and what shape the intervention should take. After some discussion and debate, the participants decided that the whole school climate and ethos have an influence on bullying and that intervention strategies should target three levels: School level, classroom level and individual level.

### ***6.4.2.1 THE SCHOOL LEVEL***

#### **SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT**

A school code of conduct is a written document that sets out the school’s policy on how the learners should behave on a day-to-day basis. It is a set of rules



outlining the norms, rules, and proper practices of the learners. It reflects the school's culture and core values and as a result, every *code of conduct* is unique to the school it represents.

As was discussed in the focus groups, Greenfield High School has a comprehensive school code of conduct which does include a section on bullying behaviour. However, it was decided that all aims in relation to bullying behaviour must be included in the School Policy together with a set of strategies to be followed. The document must be supported by systems and procedures within the school to ensure that its aims and strategies are effectively implemented, monitored, maintained and reviewed.

The school code of conduct outlines a school tribunal system to hear evidence and decide on sanctions or punishments for those involved in breaching school rules. It was decided that there should also be a bully court set up to address issues of bullying at school. The panel would consist of the Chairman of the RCL and the members of the RCL

The following whole school interventions were suggested:

- Invite people to speak during assembly
- The principal was asked if she would allow the Heads of Grades, prefects and/or a guest speaker(s) to address the boys on bullying behaviour during assemblies. The principal agreed. However, as a result of restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to have the entire school at the assembly at the same time. Hence, assemblies were conducted per grade by the Grade Heads on a Tuesday morning.
- Arrange an Anti-Bullying Speech/Essay Competition
- The Subject Head of English was asked if he would arrange an Anti-Bullying Speech/Essay Competition. He agreed to assign the topic of "Bullying" as one of their writing tasks. The top three essays would be read out during assembly.

- Arrange an Anti-Bullying Poster Competition
- The Art teacher also agreed to assign the topic “Bullying Awareness-Prevention and Intervention” to the grade 8 and grade 9 boys. The best posters would be displayed around the school.
- Prepare a sketch on bullying
- Even though the Drama teacher agreed to allow the boys to create sketches on “Types of Bullying Behaviour”, once again due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, these sketches could not be performed for the entire school body. They could only be performed in the Drama Studio for a limited number of boys at a time.

### **PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENT**

The participants also agreed to approach the management of the school to increase the number of prefects to increase visibility during breaks. This would make it possible for them to witness any bullying that takes place during the breaks. They advocated both improved supervision and improved design in the quads during breaks. The deputy head prefect would be approached to re-organise the duty points to make them more visible.

#### ***6.4.2.2 THE CLASSROOM LEVEL***

### **CURRICULUM WORK**

The participants decided to meet with the deputy principal to look at the possibility of a revised timetable which included a mentorship lesson every week on a Wednesday morning. This lesson would be used to discuss bullying behaviour at the school. Teachers will be provided with literature, videos and links to various websites to help them prepare for these discussions.

#### ***6.4.2.3 THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL***

The participants decided that they would work with specific learners at an individual level in the form of assertiveness training as a way to help victims or potential victims of bullying cope in non-passive, but also nonaggressive, ways.

A counselling-based approach was recommended. This approach will focus on both bullying perpetrators and bullied learners. It will encourage the bullies to acknowledge the suffering of the victim and take steps to help the situation

The participants also decided to create a support group for the bullied learners, comprising both those directly involved in the bullying episode as well as the bystanders. This support group is responsible for solving the problem and for reporting on progress

## **6.5 IMPLEMENTATION**

Intervention programmes were introduced to equip the boys with the skills needed to identify and prevent bullying behaviour. Various strategies were implemented at different levels.

### **THE SCHOOL LEVEL**

The first intervention strategy was aimed at the entire school. As mentioned before, it was not possible to have the entire school at an assembly in the hall. However, with the decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases, it was possible to have an occasional assembly with the whole school present. This had to take place outside on the stands. The Discipline Officer addressed the school on the issue of bullying behaviour. The focus of his speech was to inform the boys about the consequences of bullying at school and about the procedure that would be followed if anyone is found guilty of this type of behaviour. He also spoke about the punishment that will be meted out as specified in the school code of conduct.

This type of assembly was not ideal since it was held outside and there were too many distractions for the boys to fully grasp the seriousness of the topic. Hence, it was also necessary to address the boys in smaller, more intimate groups. Grade assemblies are held once a week on a Tuesday morning. These assemblies are conducted by the Head of Grade, who is in charge of discipline. Each week there is a specific theme to be discussed. During one of these

Tuesday morning assemblies, the grade heads spoke to the boys about bullying. We provided each of them with information which they used in their talks. They spoke about the different forms of bullying as well as the effects of bullying.

To further enhance the seriousness of this topic, it was necessary for the boys to hear this from their peers. The prefects, most of whom had been mentors when they were in grade 11, were very keen to get involved in this anti-bullying campaign. Five prefects volunteered to speak to the respective grades. Since they all graduated from Toastmasters (Public Speaking) and were members of the senior debating team they were eloquent speakers. They were pupil leaders whom the boys respected and admired. Once again, these talks were conducted during the assembly period on a Tuesday morning. The prefects spoke to the boys about the most common ways they can be bullied at school including being called derogatory names (e.g., faggot, moffie, dutchie, day-dog), making things up to get them into trouble, hitting, pinching, biting, pushing and shoving, taking things away from them, damaging their belongings, stealing their money, taking their friends away from them, spreading rumours, threats and intimidation. They also explained to them how to go about dealing with the issue of being bullied at school, for example, by telling someone- a teacher, grade controller, prefect, mentor, or even a friend- so that the issue could be dealt with.

The next anti-bullying intervention strategy involved getting the boys to share their thoughts, experiences and opinions on bullying. I arranged with the subject head of English to set bullying as a for grades 8 and 9. The boys were given a choice of the following topics:

- My experiences of being bullied
- What can be done to prevent/stop bullying?
- Peer pressure and bullying
- Write an essay on the picture below



<https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/bullying-aggression-and-violence-scene-between-two-young-adult-males>

*Figure 6. 2 Bullying Scene – Two Adult Males*

After the essays were marked and moderated, the three best essays were chosen from each grade. The boys were given the option of reading out their own essays during assembly or allowing someone else to read them. This ensured their anonymity. The six essays were read out during a Tuesday morning assembly. Since the boys always relate better to their peers, these speeches highlighted the seriousness of the issue of bullying at school.

The third strategy was implemented with the assistance of the Arts and Culture department. I had arranged with the art teacher to include the topic of bullying into their curriculum. The grade 8 and grade 9 classes had to create posters for an anti-bullying campaign. The best posters were entered into the Provincial Art Competition. These posters were displayed around the school premises to raise awareness among the boys.

The final whole-school-level intervention strategy involved the Greenfield Drama Department. The drama teacher wrote a play that examined social and emotional issues faced by contemporary teenagers and consisted of a selection of short scenes and monologues. Issues explored include bullying, body image, peer group pressure, jealousy, love, anxiety, friendship struggles, sexuality, relationships with parents, sexting and the loss of a parent. The grades 10, 11 and 12 Dramatic Arts learners played all the characters in these 26 scenes based on real-life accounts and events: some funny, some challenging, some heart-breaking, but all real. Since it was not possible to

perform the play to a live audience due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was filmed. Copies were placed in the library for teachers and boys to access.

### **PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENT**

The prefects were assigned duties at the most strategic points, where bullying behaviour was known to take place, to manage the breaks more effectively. There were 34 day prefects and 15 boarder prefects. They were assigned the following duties:

- Tuck-shop
- Toilets
- Change-rooms
- Corridors
- Playgrounds
- Boarding establishment (lunch/after-school)
- Sports field

The increased number of prefects made it possible for them to be more vigilant. Their presence also served as a deterrent for bullying incidents.

### **THE CLASSROOM LEVEL**

#### **CURRICULUM WORK**

The next intervention strategy involved raising awareness in the classroom. This took place during the morning registration lesson and the weekly mentorship lesson. During these lessons, the pupil mentors and the prefects facilitated the discussion in the presence of the registration/mentor teacher. Some lessons were based on the book “The ABCs of Bullying Prevention: A Comprehensive School-wide Approach” written by Dr Kenneth Shore (2011) a school psychologist for various schools for over 25 years. Teachers were provided with the following theme and list of topics:

### Understanding School Bullying:

- what is bullying?
- forms of bullying
- understanding the bully, the victim, and the bystander
- effects of bullying
- preventing bullying
- intervention strategies

Since most of the classrooms had access to the internet, the teachers were able to use technology to show the boys just how important it is to help prevent bullying at school. They were able to watch videos on YouTube. The following videos were recommended:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/bullyingresearch/fastfact.html>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCPKMWyF1Lo>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmV4IzJZEVs>

They were also able to listen to talks on bullying. The following TED Talks were suggested:

- <https://www.ted.com/topics/bullying>
- [https://www.ted.com/playlists/578/ted\\_talks\\_for\\_national\\_bully\\_prevention\\_month](https://www.ted.com/playlists/578/ted_talks_for_national_bully_prevention_month)

### **THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL**

The final level of the intervention included strategies to help individual boys with specific problems. The participants, who were all senior boys in the school, volunteered to work with boys who were either bullies or victims.

After a thorough investigation by the grade controller/discipline officer, any boy who was identified as a bully was counselled by one of the participants. Instead

of the bullies being given detention or “basket” (picking up litter during breaks), they spent time with the participants during breaks and/or after school in the BE. By chatting with them informally, the participants were able to counsel them individually. They tried to understand the reason for their bullying behaviour and they used this opportunity to impress upon them how wrong their actions were and how they affected both the victims and the bystanders.

Some of the participants also worked with the victims. With the help of the Deputy Head Prefects in charge of pastoral care both at school and in the BE, they were able to use this new platform that was created at school to encourage the boys to stand up for themselves and to expose the bullies by reporting any bullying behaviour to them. Since the Deputy Head Prefect (pastoral care) is a designated leadership position that was assigned to the prefect body, it served as an official channel of communication from the learners to the management.

## **6.6 EVALUATING THE CAMPAIGN**

Even though reflection took place throughout the research process, the reflective stage is important because it promotes new learning. These reflections are then built into the next cycle of the process (Kaye and Harris, 2017). Immediately after the completion of the intervention programme, I engaged the participants in an evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the study.

I initiated the following to determine the effectiveness of the programme:

- a mini survey, and
- a small focus group discussion



## **MINI-SURVEY**

The participants completed a short questionnaire based on their honest opinions regarding the effectiveness of the intervention programme. The following questions were posed:

### **Question 1**

Which method of intervention do you think was the most effective? Can you explain why? How can we improve on this method?

### **Question 2**

Which method of intervention do you think was the least effective? Can you explain why? Should we retain this method? If so, explain how we make it more effective.

### **Question 3**

Were any of the other methods effective? Explain why you think so.

### **Question 4**

Do you think this intervention programme should continue at the school? Why?

### **Question 5**

Do you have any suggestions to improve this intervention programme?

## **FOCUS-GROUP DISCUSSION**

In addition to the questionnaires, a small focus group discussion was held with five of the participants. The following questions were posed:

### **Question 1**

Which method of intervention do you think is the most effective? Can you give a reason for your answer? Suggest ways in which we can improve on this method.

### **Question 2**

Which method of intervention do you think is the least effective? Can you give a reason for your answer? Suggest ways in which we can improve on this method.

### **Question 3**

Were any of the other methods effective? Can you give a reason for your answer?

### **Question 4**

Do you think this intervention programme should continue at the school? Why?

### **Question 5**

Do you have any suggestions to improve this intervention programme?

### **FEEDBACK – MINI-SURVEY AND FOCUS-GROUP DISCUSSION**

The consensus from both the mini-survey and focus-group discussion was that there was not any single method of intervention that was more effective than the others. The respondents felt that the holistic approach was the best. They felt that school-level intervention was necessary to conscientise the teachers and boys alike. This was effective because everyone received the same information regarding the issues of bullying behaviour at the school.

Intervention at the classroom level was necessary to re-enforce the concept of bullying and allow the boys to express their views. Here, teachers were able to include a more detailed explanation of bullying behaviour.

The respondents felt that intervention at the individual level was absolutely necessary, especially for any serious issues of bullying. At this level, the bullies and victims were afforded special attention and they were punished/helped accordingly. They also felt that it was necessary to inform the parents and the Department of Education of the outcomes of the interventions.

The suggestion for improvement was that the issue of bullying behaviour must be addressed on a regular basis, at least every fortnight, to remind the boys that this was an ongoing problem at the school and to maintain the impetus that was started. This must be done by the principal, the grade heads and the prefects, especially the head prefect. The respondents also felt that it was important for every learner at the school to be given a copy of the school code of conduct, which they must have in their possession at all times. Prefects who are not vigilant and do not perform their duties properly must be reprimanded. Prefects must not be allowed to bully the rest of the school. It was strongly suggested that there should be a “Bully-Box” placed on the school premises to allow boys, who are too afraid to speak up about being bullied, to be given the opportunity to tell someone in authority without fear of any repercussions.

The respondents felt that there were definitely many positives that emerged from the intervention programme. The strategic placement of the prefects during breaks and after school was quite an effective deterrent against bullying, especially the name-calling, extortion of money and coercion to gain food from the day boys by the BE boys. Before this intervention programme, many of the boys had gaps in their understanding of bullying and they tended to accept many of the features pertaining to bullying as part of life. Name-calling, pushing, shoving, etc. were all accepted as “boys will be boys”. However, once the boys were conscientised about bullying behaviour, they realised that this type of behaviour was unacceptable and must not be allowed to continue. Many of them, especially the juniors, began to report these incidents to their teachers or prefects.

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the intervention strategies that were implemented were not optimal. The advent of COVID-19 with all its restrictions definitely affected the outcome of the intervention programme.

## **6.7 REFLECTION**

In this section, I reflect on the methodology of action research, which I used in the study to develop an intervention programme to help prevent bullying

behaviour at a boys' high school. From the beginning, the research was based on a proactive approach to initiate an intervention programme to educate and prevent bullying behaviour. The participants the fight against bullying behaviour at their school was made possible by the action research methodology because it allowed participants to actively engage in finding solutions to bullying issues at their *school*. The participants the fight against bullying behaviour at their school was made possible by the action research methodology because it allowed participants to actively engage in finding solutions to bullying issues at their school. This research was used to create an intervention programme that allowed the participants to plan, reflect and act.

I conducted a qualitative case study of one school using an interpretative paradigmatic approach. This qualitative approach supported my study as I was able to explore a sensitive topic concerning bullying behaviour at a boys' high school. This approach also allowed the boys to give a full account of their experiences using their own language and their own terms.

On reflection, I realised that one of the most significant limitations of this type of study was the inability to plan for unforeseen circumstances. However, due to the flexibility of the paradigm that I chose and the approach that was adopted by this study, it was possible to carry out the interviews at the school of study and to accommodate the unforeseen circumstances that came up, such as extra-mural activities, meetings, absenteeism and other commitments.

I also realised that it was possible that some of the boys were reluctant to admit to bullying for fear of being punished, as I was, for all intents and purposes in their eyes, still a teacher and grade head, who had the power to punish. They could have experienced some conflict over whether to be totally honest or to safeguard themselves. Their need for self-preservation could have affected their responses.

Even though there were some unforeseen and unavoidable obstacles to this study, I think that the overall impact of the intervention programme definitely enlightened boys, teachers and the management regarding the issue of bullying at the school. By making them aware of the difference between bullying behaviour and “banter” or “horse-play”, boys were encouraged to come forward and report these incidences, instead of remaining silent and taking this continuous abuse by their peers.

Finally, in reflecting on the findings of my study, I agree with many international researchers who contend that, in any form, bullying can lead to the risk of poor mental and physical health and social and emotional problems and can have a negative effect on the well-being of learners. The experience and involvement in bullying can have a long-term impact on learners. The study has implications for future research. International research has helped us to understand the complexity of the problem of bullying and the challenges schools face in trying to address it. We need extensive, contextual research on effective intervention strategies to deal with bullying in diverse school contexts, especially those originating from the South African context. We need research to focus on the vital components of effective bullying prevention programmes, and the gaps in such programmes. It is also necessary to conduct more research on different forms of new-age bullying, such as cyberbullying, bullying related to disability and sexual orientation, and group bullying.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The main focus of this study was to explore the current status of bullying at a boys' high school in urban KZN and to investigate the experiences and perceptions of bullying among the learners at this single-sex, multicultural, multiracial school. The study identified the nature, causes and consequences of bullying at this particular school by means of semi-structured and focus group interviews with a chosen sample of learners as well as educators. The study further planned a programme of action using participatory action research. These intervention strategies, aimed at preventing and reducing the prevalence of bullying behaviour through a change in mindset, were implemented at the school.

The rationale of the study was influenced by the widespread covert bullying present at the school where I, the researcher, am employed in. This led to the particular research topic being selected.

The following were the objectives of the study:

- To investigate the current status of bullying at this particular boys' high school
- To examine the nature, causes and effects of bullying behaviour among the learners
- To explore the consequences of bullying behaviour at the school
- To plan and implement a programme of action aimed at preventing and reducing the prevalence of bullying among boys using participatory action research and restorative justice.
- To analyse the effectiveness of the intervention programme which was designed to combat bullying at the school

## **7.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

Chapter One presented the research statement and the rationale of the study. The context of the study as well as the objectives and methodology were also discussed. A brief outline of the thesis was presented.

Chapter Two focused on the theoretical perspectives of bullying. This theory explicitly guided the study on the belief that behaviour is related to social and ecological influences. A discussion of restorative justice was presented in this chapter.

Chapter Three reviewed the relevant literature and empirical studies on the nature, causes, extent, prevalence and consequences of bullying behaviour. The relevant literature on the following topics was reviewed: the nature of bullying, the causes of bullying, the characteristics of bullying, the extent of bullying, the effects of bullying, the consequences of bullying, and intervention programmes to combat bullying.

Chapter Four discussed the qualitative research design and methodology employed to conduct this study. It outlined how the data was collected and analysed. This included details of the research design, research strategy, target population, sampling procedures, research instrument, data collection methods, data analysis, delimitations/scope, limitations, validity and reliability, anonymity and confidentiality and ethical considerations.

Chapter Five analysed and interpreted the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews using thematic analysis. Five topics were presented and defined. Boys' perceptions of bullying; the nature of bullying, which included direct and indirect bullying as well as physical, verbal and psychological bullying; the causes of bullying, focusing on subscribing to hegemonic forms of masculinity, seeking power and peer expectations; the effects of bullying, which resulted in avoidance and absence from school, seclusion and isolation and an increase in violent behaviour; and

how the school handles bullying including a comprehensive discussion of the school code of conduct.

Chapter Six presented a detailed plan and implementation of the intervention process aimed at reducing bullying behaviour in the context of the research, followed by an evaluation of the study by reflecting on the outcomes.

Chapter Seven focused on the conclusions reached from the results emanating from the participants' responses and suggests practical and procedural recommendations based on interpretations obtained from the research study.

### **7.3 MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY**

The conclusions drawn from this study were addressed by analysing the responses from the participants' experiences and perceptions of the research questions, which were shared during the focus group discussions and the individual semi-structured interviews. The research questions and objectives outlined in chapter one were clearly defined.

In this chapter, the main findings of this study will be discussed and particular attention will be paid to how the research questions have been addressed. The interpretive paradigm was used in this study to understand the nature and extent of bullying at this particular school. The study also explored the experiences of children involved in bullying. The interpretive paradigm is described as not aiming to predict but rather to describe how people make sense and meaning of a particular situation (Christensen *et al.*, 2010). Interpretivists seek to understand. Furthermore, interpretivists construct truth according to the values that people portray. (Christensen *et al.*, 2010). The thirteen participants who participated had their own personal views and experiences related to bullying.



The findings of this study are outlined below:

### **7.3.1 BOYS' PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING**

The boys' agreed that bullying was an act of consistent abuse against someone weaker or different from them. All of the boys mentioned that they felt that the bully's intention was to inflict harm on another person with the bully getting a sense of power over their victims. The boys' general understanding of bullying was that it was abuse against another person either verbally, physically or psychologically with the intention of "bringing that person down".

### **7.3.2 NATURE OF BULLYING**

Two basic types of bullying: direct (overt) bullying and indirect (covert) bullying, were identified by the participants. Even though some direct physical bullying did take place at the school, this was minimal since there is a strict code of conduct regarding fighting on the school premises. More physical bullying did, however, take place at Apollo House, the BE. Direct verbal bullying was rife at the school and since, in most cases, this type of bullying was considered to be "banter", the bullies were not reprimanded or punished, so it continued. Indirect (covert) bullying was quite prevalent at Greenfield High School and Apollo House. Relational bullying, for example, social exclusion and gossiping occurred frequently among the boys. Since this was not obvious and it was difficult for the teachers to identify, it was often overlooked and the bullies got away with this type of bullying behaviour.

### **7.3.3 CAUSES OF BULLYING**

Three main causes of bullying behaviour at the school were identified:

- Subscribing to hegemonic forms of masculinity

The boys indicated that many bullies feel the need to dominate their victims. By subscribing to this form of hegemonic masculinity, they were able to exert their dominance over their peers. Greenfield High School embraced a macho

type of masculinity that promoted toughness, sporting prowess and bodily strength. Since boys are not encouraged to be emotional or weak, bullies are allowed to get away with this type of bullying behaviour.

- Seeking power

It was found that some bullies displayed the need to feel powerful. They intimidate their victims by wielding their power as prefects, matriculants or first-team players. This inequitable power imbalance, which in many instances forms part of the school culture, was responsible for many incidents of bullying in this school.

- Peer expectation

Many boys wanted to look “cool” and “chilled” in the eyes of their peers. They wanted to be a part of the “popular” group. At Greenfield High School, these were generally the prefect groups or the groups consisting of first-team players. Since these learners already had a high status at the school, it was difficult for other members of the group to go against them and appear to be “uncool”. Even though they did not agree with the bullying behaviour of some of the group members, they went along with it because of peer pressure.

#### **7.3.4 EFFECTS OF BULLYING**

Bullying can affect both the victims and the bullies. The effects are behavioural, emotional (mental) and physical. The consequences of bullying can be short-term or long-term. However, since this was a limited short-term study, it was only possible to identify the short-term effects of bullying with the focus being on the victims of bullying.

##### ***7.3.4.1 AVOIDANCE AND ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL***

The responses from both the teachers and the boys indicated that victims of bullying were often absent from school. They fabricated excuses to stay away from school and hence avoided being bullied. Their frequent absenteeism

adversely affected their academic performance in the classroom, hence a decline in their results.

#### **7.3.4.2 SECLUSION AND ISOLATION**

Some boys who attended the school were not regarded as typical “Greenfield” boys. This was because they were “different”. Their appearance, sexual orientation and mannerisms made them victims of bullying. These boys avoided their peers by not socialising with them during breaks. They isolated themselves by remaining behind in the classroom on the pretext of doing extra work or feeling ill. Since socialising is an important life skill to enhance their psychological and emotional well-being, this form of seclusion can increase their feelings of loneliness and isolation and hence the possibility of depression later in life.

#### **7.3.4.3 INCREASE IN VIOLENCE**

Both the teachers and the boys related incidents where the victims of bullying resorted to physical violence as a means of retaliation. Their frustration at being constantly picked on by the bullies forced them to react uncharacteristically. Physical aggression, however, was not the answer because the consequences for fighting at the school are severe—an immediate suspension followed by a disciplinary hearing for both parties concerned is the standard form of punishment. This could increase the antipathy between the victim and the bully and further exacerbate the situation.

#### **7.3.5 HOW THE SCHOOL HANDLES BULLYING**

It is vitally important for all schools, irrespective of the dynamics of the school, to have a code of conduct that includes a bullying policy. By implementing this policy, bullying behaviour can be reduced if not eradicated. All parties involved must be made aware of this policy—parents/guardians, educators, learners, administration staff and support staff.

Greenfield High School has a well-structured discipline policy that includes a comprehensive bullying policy. This is communicated to the parents/guardians and the learner when he is accepted into the school. The discipline officer, five grade heads and all the educators are responsible for implementing this policy.

The following types of behaviour are deemed inappropriate: humiliation, including name-calling, referring to academic ability, sporting ability and/or other related issues; intimidation, including aggressive use of body language; verbal abuse, anonymous and/or otherwise - physical abuse or threatened abuse; aggressive or obscene language; offensive jokes, whether spoken, by email, or text; victimisation, including very personal remarks; exclusion and isolation; intrusion through interfering with personal possessions or locker; threats, including demands for money/lunch; an attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo or ridicule.

Even though Greenfield High School has a strict discipline policy, it is evident from the boys' responses that bullying still takes place at the school. The most severe form of bullying that is perpetrated at the school is verbal bullying. Since banter is acceptable and mentioned in the code of conduct, it is open to interpretation, which makes it difficult for most teachers to know when to draw the line and distinguish between what is acceptable and what is not. Hence, this form of bullying frequently goes unpunished and is allowed to continue to the detriment of the victim.

I found that a failure to monitor and properly implement the discipline policies has resulted in the neglect of bullying practices at this school to a certain extent. Thus, the construction and design of an excellent discipline policy highlight the fact that the school acknowledges the existence of violence and bullying and symbolically encourages non-violence and peaceful behaviour. However, only superficial resolutions are proffered instead of hard-core action to address bullying at this school.

I, therefore, deduce that if there is to be any real change in bullying practices at this school it is important to include a greater emphasis on bullying and measures to address bullying in the school code of conduct. Yet, good policy and legislation do not necessarily translate into good practice. Life on paper is extremely different from the reality that boys face daily. The policy must be used to address and combat bullying in a more genuine and serious manner.

#### **7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were proposed:

- i. There is a need for strategies to be implemented so that the incidence of all types of bullying can be reduced. Appropriate and effective measures can only be implemented if the extent and impact of bullying are recognised by all stakeholders of the school community.
- ii. This study is not comprehensive as it was a small-scale study that was conducted over a short period of time. The study was conducted at a single boys-only, ex-Model C high school in urban KwaZulu-Natal. Since these results were specific to a particular context, they do not allow for the generalisation of the results of this study. However, the findings of the present study contribute to the limited literature on bullying that is available in South Africa. Further research on bullying in different contexts needs to be undertaken to give a more authentic perspective on bullying in South Africa as a whole. It must be noted that bullying is a serious problem in most schools and one of the worst forms of violence among children. This becomes evident wherever children are together.
- iii. Adults need to learn how to respond appropriately, to show learners that they care, and to build trust. Many principals and educators do not acknowledge that bullying takes place in their schools. The majority of them believe that it is part of growing up (e.g., boys will be boys) and should not be made an issue.

Schools have the responsibility to create safe places for learners where they can grow and learn without fear. Greater awareness of the problem of bullying is required and a focus on prevention would ensure that schools are safe learning environments.

## **7.5 REFLECTION**

On reflection, I realised that one of the most significant constraints of this project was the inability to plan for unforeseen circumstances. The various time delays due to timetable changes, sporting commitments and extra-mural activities led to me not engaging in the study as comprehensively as I had initially envisaged.

However, the biggest challenge I faced was the result of the sudden outbreak of COVID-19. The school was closed for the better part of the year and the learners attended school on a rotational basis. Strict COVID-19 protocols had to be followed. These restrictions made it nearly impossible for me to complete the study; as planned, within the allotted time. I also believe that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to do justice to the generative themes in the course of this study. I had hoped to be able to take the themes that emerged back to the learners for further dialogue, reflection and analysis so that they would be able to achieve a better understanding of bullying, but I realised that I did not have the time to do so.

## **7.6 CONCLUSION**

The last chapter provided an overview of the research process and the main conclusions drawn from the study.

The main focus of this study was to investigate the nature and extent of bullying at this single-sex, multicultural, multiracial, boys' high school in urban KZN. Although the sample was small, this research study succeeded in gaining insights into the experiences and views of both learners and teachers regarding bullying behaviour at the school. This, in turn, informed my

intervention campaign, which it is hoped will continue and alleviate if not eradicate, bullying at the school.

I would like to conclude this study with the following quote:

*"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent".*

Eleanor Roosevelt

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



10 January 2020

Executive Support Service: Office of HOD KZN Department of Education

247 Burger Street

Anton Lembede Building

Pietermaritzburg

3201

Office No. 316

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH**

Dear Sir

I am currently completing a master's degree in Management Sciences (Public Administration) at Durban University of Technology (DUT). My field of research is Peace Studies and my research topic is "Addressing bullying in a boy's high school in Durban": A case study of an urban high school in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. To conclude my research findings, I request permission to use the high school that I have chosen to conduct interviews and observations. The participating school is the school where I am currently teaching and permission will also be attained from the principal of the school before commencement of any research is undertaken.

I intend to conduct interviews with a sample of ten educators and twenty learners, and therefore have clear and meaningful information regarding the discipline structures and the causes of bullying behavior, within the institution. The learners and educators who participate in this study will do this on a voluntary basis. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured. I also hereby undertake that the name of the participating school, the educators and the learners will not be mentioned in the subsequent thesis. Interviews will not exceed 50 minutes with each participant and will also not interfere with the normal tuition time.

The information acquired from this research study, will be accessible to the Department of Education, as well as school managers. A copy of the completed thesis will be made available to the Department of Education, as well as school managers.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/ or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

For further information regarding this study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor. The reply could be sent to me by email.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours in Education

Ms. Meedha Naidoo (Researcher)

Cell: 0845877867 email address: meedhanaidoo@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Vijay Hamlall

Cell: 083 419 0441 email-address: vijayham1@gmail.com

Durban University of Technology

## APPENDIX II: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL



10 January 2020 The Principal

Glenwood High School 1 ZK Matthews Road Glenwood

4001

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH**

Dear Madam/Sir

My name is Meedha Naidoo, a master's student in Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my master's thesis involves "Addressing bullying in a boy's high school in Durban": A case study of an urban high school in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct interviews and observations with ten educators and twenty learners at your institution. The study I proposed is qualitative in nature, and I will be interviewing ten educators and twenty learners to discuss their experiences of bullying at school. The data collection methods will be formal individual interviews and focus group interviews.

The main focus would be to explore the nature and causes of bullying at this school as well as to determine the effects and consequences of bullying. It also aims to provide suitable intervention strategies to reduce/prevent bullying between and amongst learners. There has been a steep increase in the number of reported cases of school bullying. The Department of Education has also issued statements regarding this escalation in school bullying. Bullying does not only take place in the previously disadvantaged schools but also in the ex-model schools. Recently there has been an increase in bullying incidents at these schools. Hence, there is a growing need to investigate the reasons for bullying at these schools. This school has been chosen as focus of study for practical reasons because I am currently employed as an educator at the school.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/ or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours in Education

Ms. Meedha Naidoo (Researcher)

Cell: 0845877867 email address: meedhanaidoo@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Vijay Hamlall

Cell: 083 419 0441 email-address: vijayham1@gmail.com

Durban University of Technology

## APPENDIX III: LETTER TO THE EDUCATOR



### LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: Addressing bullying in a boy's high school in Durban

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Ms Meedhaloshnie Ragoobathie Naidoo

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor: Dr V. Hamlall (PhD)

#### Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study

Dear Educator

I am a Master's candidate from Durban University of Technology (DUT) in Durban. This study aims to tackle bullying in a multiracial, multicultural single-sex boys' high school in urban KZN. The main focus would be to explore the nature and causes of bullying at this school as well as to determine the effects and consequences of bullying. It also aims to provide suitable intervention strategies to reduce/prevent bullying between and amongst learners.

#### Outline of the Procedures:

The data collection method will be formal interviews and focus group interviews. Ten educators and twenty learners will be the respondents in this study. There has been a steep increase in the number of reported cases of school bullying. The Department of Education has also issued statements regarding this escalation in school bullying. Bullying does not only take place in the previously disadvantaged schools but also in the ex-model schools. Recently there has been an increase in bullying incidents at these schools. Hence, there is a growing need to investigate the reasons for bullying at these schools. You will answer interview questions from the researcher. Interviews will be done privately in an unused office or classroom that you will be comfortable with. The interview will last for approximately 50 minutes. You will also be asked to participate in a focus group discussion with fellow educators.

You may be asked to voluntarily form part of a group to help in developing and implementing a bullying and violence prevention programmed.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: There will be no risks or discomfort to you if you agree to take part in this study. Data will be stored in a secure storage and be destroyed after five years.

Reason/s why you May Withdraw from the Study: You have a choice to participate or not to participate or withdraw at any stage without any penalties. You should participate voluntarily.

Benefits: Your involvement is purely for academic purpose only, and there is no financial benefit involved. The findings of the study will be published locally and internationally. The main focus would be to explore the nature and causes of bullying at this school as well as to determine the effects and consequences of bullying. It also aims to provide suitable intervention strategies to reduce/prevent bullying between and amongst learners.

The findings from this study will be presented at different conferences, workshops and written into manuscripts to be published for the voices of the research study participants to be heard.

Remuneration: No remuneration will be received by you for participation in this study.

Costs of the Study: You are not allowed to cover any costs of my study. The researcher will travel to meet you at the agreed comfortable venue.

Confidentiality: Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms. You will be told about the concepts of anonymity and confidentiality which will be applied to this study.

Results: The findings of the study will be published locally and internationally. This study attempts to understand the males and females who experience gender based violence and addressing it and analyse the effectiveness of intervention programmes. The findings from this study will be presented at different conferences, workshops and written into manuscripts to be published for the voices of the research study participants to be heard.

Research-related Injury: Since the research will be conducted using interviews that will be audio recorded, no research-related injury is envisaged.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings: The audio recordings on the dicta-phone and the transcripts will be retained for the period of five years after which the transcripts will be disposed of through a shredding process and the recordings on the dicta-phone will be deleted.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: Please contact the researcher 0711083677 or my supervisor, 083 419 0441 or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director, Research and Postgraduate Support. Dr L Liganiso on 031 373 2577 or [researchdirector@dut.ac.za](mailto:researchdirector@dut.ac.za).

## APPENDIX IV: LETTER TO THE LEARNER



### LETTER OF INFORMATION

**Title of the Research Study:** Addressing bullying in a boy's high school in Durban

**Principal Investigator/s/researcher:** Ms Meedhaloshnie Ragoobathie Naidoo

**Co-Investigator/s/supervisor:** Dr V. Hamlall (PhD)

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

**Dear learner**

I am a Master's candidate from Durban University of Technology (DUT) in Durban. This study aims to tackle bullying in a multiracial, multicultural single-sex boys' high school in urban KZN. The main focus would be to explore the nature and causes of bullying at this school as well as to determine the effects and consequences of bullying. It also aims to provide suitable intervention strategies to reduce/prevent bullying between and amongst learners.

Outline of the Procedures:

The data collection method will be formal interviews and focus group interviews. Ten educators and twenty learners will be the respondents in this study. There has been a steep increase in the number of reported cases of school bullying. The Department of Education has also issued statements regarding this escalation in school bullying. Bullying does not only take place in the previously disadvantaged schools but also in the ex-model schools. Recently there has been an increase in bullying incidents at these schools. Hence, there is a growing need to investigate the reasons for bullying at these schools. You will answer interview questions from the researcher. Interviews will be done privately in an unused office or classroom that you will be comfortable with. The interview will last for approximately 50 minutes. You will also be asked to participate in a focus group discussion with fellow educators.

You may be asked to voluntarily form part of a group to help in developing and implementing a bullying and violence prevention programme.

**Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:** There will be no risks or discomfort to you if you agree to take part in this study. Data will be stored in a secure storage and be destroyed after five years.

**Reason/s why you May Withdraw from the Study:** You have a choice to participate or not to participate or withdraw at any stage without any penalties. You should participate voluntarily

**Benefits:** Your involvement is purely for academic purpose only, and there is no financial benefit involved. The findings of the study will be published locally and internationally. This study attempts to understand the coping mechanisms that black female managers practice in executing their duties and securing their positions and analyse the effectiveness of intervention programmes to counter gender discrimination in the school. The findings from this study will be presented at different conferences, workshops and written into manuscripts to be published for the voices of the research study participants to be heard.

**Remuneration:** No remuneration will be received by you for participation in this study.

**Costs of the Study:** You are not allowed to cover any costs of my study. The researcher will travel to meet you at the agreed comfortable venue.

**Confidentiality:** Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms. You will be told about the concepts of anonymity and confidentiality which will be applied to this study. Data will be stored in a secure storage and be destroyed after five years.

**Results:** The findings of the study will be published locally and internationally. This study attempts to understand the males and females who experience gender-based violence and addressing it and analyse the effectiveness of intervention programmes. The findings from this study will be presented at different conferences, workshops and written into manuscripts to be published for the voices of the research study participants to be heard.

**Research-related Injury:** Since the research will be conducted using interviews that will be audio recorded, no research-related injury is envisaged.

**Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings:** The audio recordings on the dicta-phone and the transcripts will be retained for the period of five years after which the transcripts will be disposed of through a shredding process and the recordings on the dicta-phone will be deleted.

**Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:** Please contact the researcher 0711083677 or my supervisor, 083 419 0441 or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director, Research and Postgraduate Support. Dr L Langaniso on 031 373 2577 or [researchdirector@dut.ac.za](mailto:researchdirector@dut.ac.za).

## APPENDIX V: LETTER TO THE PARENT



### LETTER OF INFORMATION

#### **Title of the Research Study: Addressing bullying in a boy's high school in Durban**

**Principal Investigator/s/researcher:** Mrs Meedhaloshni Ragoobathie Naidoo

**Co-Investigator/s/supervisor:** Dr V. Hamlall (PhD)

#### Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study

#### **Dear parent**

I am a Master's candidate from Durban University of Technology (DUT) in Durban. This study aims to tackle bullying in a multiracial, multicultural single-sex boys' high school in urban KZN. The main focus would be to explore the nature and causes of bullying at this school as well as to determine the effects and consequences of bullying. It also aims to provide suitable intervention strategies to reduce/prevent bullying between and amongst learners.

#### Outline of the Procedures:

The data collection method will be formal interviews and focus group interviews. Ten educators and twenty learners will be the respondents in this study. There has been a steep increase in the number of reported cases of school bullying. The Department of Education has also issued statements regarding this escalation in school bullying. Bullying does not only take place in the previously disadvantaged schools but also in the ex-model schools. Recently there has been an increase in bullying incidents at these schools. Hence, there is a growing need to investigate the reasons for bullying at these schools. You will answer interview questions from the researcher. Interviews will be done privately in an unused office or classroom that you will be comfortable with. The interview will last for approximately 50 minutes. You will also be asked to participate in a focus group discussion with fellow educators.

**Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:** There will be no risks or discomfort to your child if you agree to take part in this study. Data will be stored in a secure storage and be destroyed after five years.

**Reason/s why you May Withdraw from the Study:** Your child has a choice to participate or not to participate or withdraw at any stage without any penalties. You should participate voluntarily.

**Benefits:** Your child's involvement is purely for academic purpose only, and there is no financial benefit involved. The findings of the study will be published locally and internationally. This study attempts to understand the coping mechanisms that black female managers practice in executing their duties and securing their positions and analyse the effectiveness of intervention programmes to counter gender discrimination in the school. The findings from this study will be presented at different conferences, workshops and written into manuscripts to be published for the voices of the research study participants to be heard.

**Remuneration:** No remuneration will be received by your child for participation in this study.

**Costs of the Study:** Your child is not allowed to cover any costs of my study. The researcher will travel to meet you at the agreed comfortable venue.

**Confidentiality:** Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms. Your child will be told about the concepts of anonymity and confidentiality which will be applied to this study. Data will be stored in a secure storage and be destroyed after five years.

**Results:** The findings of the study will be published locally and internationally. This study attempts to understand the males and females who experience gender-based violence and addressing it and analyse the effectiveness of intervention programmes. The findings from this study will be presented at different conferences, workshops and written into manuscripts to be published for the voices of the research study participants to be heard.

**Research-related Injury:** Since the research will be conducted using interviews that will be audio recorded, no research-related injury is envisaged.

**Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings:** The audio recordings on the dicta-phone and the transcripts will be retained for the period of five years after which the transcripts will be disposed of through a shredding process and the recordings on the dicta-phone will be deleted.

**Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:** Please contact the researcher 0711083677 or my supervisor, 083 419 0441 or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director, Research and Postgraduate Support. Dr L Langaniso on 031 373 2577 or [researchdirector@dut.ac.za](mailto:researchdirector@dut.ac.za).

## APPENDIX VI: PARENTAL CONSENT



### Statement of Agreement for your child to participate in the Research Study

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number:\_\_\_\_,

I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.

I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.

In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.

I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent of my child's participation in the study.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to allow my child to participate in the study.

I understand that significant new findings developed during this research which may relate to my child's participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant	Date	Time	Signature / Right Thumbprint



I, Meedha Naidoo, herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

<u>Meedha Naidoo</u>	_____	_____
<b>Full Name of Researcher</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>
_____	_____	_____
<b>Full Name of Witness (If applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>
_____	_____	_____
<b>Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>

## APPENDIX VII: LEARNER ASSENT



### Statement of Agreement to take part in the Research Study

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: \_\_\_\_\_,

I understand what the study is about and that my parents have given consent for me to be included.

I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be kept a secret.

In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.

I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my assent to take part in the study.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature / Right Thumbprint

I, herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

<u>Meedha Naidoo</u>	_____	_____
<b>Full Name of Researcher</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>
_____	_____	_____
<b>Full Name of Witness (If applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>
_____	_____	_____
<b>Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>

## APPENDIX VIII: EDUCATOR CONSENT



### Statement of Agreement for your participation in the Research Study

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Meedha Naidoo about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: \_\_\_\_\_

I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.

I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.

In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.

I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent of participation in the study.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to take part in the study.

I understand that significant new findings developed during this research which may relate to participation will be made available to me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature / Right Thumbprint

I, herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Meedha Naidoo

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Witness (If applicable)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

## APPENDIX IX: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – FOR EDUCATORS

FIELD OF RESEARCH: PEACE STUDIES ADDRESSING BULLYING IN A BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL IN DURBAN

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EDUCATORS

Respondent No \_\_\_\_

December 2020 to February 2021

#### INTRODUCTION

My name is Meedha Naidoo, a Masters student at the Durban University of Technology. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project in a boys' high school in an urban area. My topic is "Addressing bullying in a boys' high school in Durban. The purpose of this study is to examine the circumstances, the nature and causes of bullying among learners and to propose and implement interventions that will serve to address and eradicate bullying among learners. Focus will also be placed on determining the impact that bullying has on both victims and perpetrators of bullying.

I would like to make use of a Dictaphone as a back-up to ensure that your views are correctly interpreted and to capture our discussions accurately during transcription of data. Do you have a problem with the use of the Dictaphone? You have a right to ask for a transcription to review it before any use is made of it or to totally cancel it. Please be assured that whatever you say or do, or show will be treated with complete confidentiality. Do you understand the Research question? Do you have any concerns that you want to raise about the purpose and use of the interview, confidentiality and anonymity or any other concern?

#### SECTION A: Biographical characteristics of Respondent

Male      Female      ☐      ☐

What is your age?

.....

Where do you live?

Boarding establishment      ☐  
Home      ☐

What is your role at the school?

Teacher      ☐  
Coach      ☐  
Both      ☐  
Other (Specify)      ☐

How long have you been at this school?

.....

Which grade(s) are you currently teaching?

.....

Which team are you currently coaching?

.....

#### SECTION B: Perceptions and experiences of bullying

Do you see much evidence of bullying?

.....

What is your perception about the occurrence of bullying at the school? How severe is this problem?

.....

How often is bullying reported to you?

Probe: What do you think is the reason for the boys not reporting bullying?

.....

Is there a specific group(s) of boys that are more vulnerable than others? Please explain

.....

What type of bullying is most prevalent in the school? Physical, verbal, cyberbullying, other?

Probe: Is there any specific reason for this?

.....

Do the boys bring any weapons to school? What type of weapons do they bring?

Probe: Do you know if any of them have used their weapons to bully others?

.....

Do you think that any of the boys belong to gangs? Are there gangs in school? Is there any group bullying? Please explain.

.....

Do you think that the school premises is absolutely safe for learners? How good is the security at the school? Do you need additional assistance, viz. SAPS, private security company?

Probe: If this is the case can you explain the incident(s) that required outside help.

.....

Does race play a role in bullying? What other factors play a role in bullying? Class, age, religion, culture, other?

.....

Have you witnessed any incidence of bullying at this school? Please elaborate.

.....

When bullying takes place, do you have the support of the parents?

.....

Does the school have structures in place to deal with the problem of bullying?

Probe: Is it an effective way of dealing with the issue? Please explain the procedure

.....

What challenges do you as educators have in dealing with bullying?

.....

How informed are the learners about bullying? Does the school have an anti-bullying policy? Is it effective?

.....

If not, do you think there is a need for an anti-bullying programme? Please explain.

.....

When bullying occurs how well are teachers able to resolve it in such a way that it the outcome is satisfactory to everyone?

.....

How did you go about resolving bullying? Do you think that you were successful?

.....

Do you have any recommendations on how the school may effectively address the problem of bullying? Please explain

.....

Do you have ideas of how the Department of Education can support schools regarding bullying?

.....

Do you have any additional comments you would like to make about bullying in schools that I have not asked? (I would really like to hear your opinion(s) on this issue).

.....

What are your suggestions for change?

Probe: With regards to the learners, educators, management, community.

.....

Thank you very much for your time.



## APPENDIX X: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

FIELD OF RESEARCH: PEACE STUDIES ADDRESSING BULLYING IN A BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL IN DURBAN

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

Respondent No \_\_\_\_\_

December 2020 to February 2021

#### INTRODUCTION:

My name is Meedha Naidoo, a Master's student at the Durban University of Technology. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project in a boys' high school in an urban area. My topic is "Addressing bullying in a boys' high school in Durban". A case study of an urban high school in KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa. The purpose of this study is to examine the circumstances, the nature and causes of bullying among learners and to propose and implement interventions that will serve to address and eradicate bullying among learners. Focus will also be placed on determining the impact that bullying

I would like to make use of a Dictaphone as a back-up to ensure that your views are correctly interpreted and to capture our discussions accurately during transcription of data. Do you have a problem with the use of the Dictaphone? You have a right to ask for a transcription to review it before any use is made of it or to totally cancel it. Please be assured that whatever you say or do, or show will be treated with complete confidentiality. Do you understand the Research question? Do you have any concerns that you want to raise about the purpose and use of the interview, confidentiality and anonymity or any other concern?

#### SECTION A: Biographical characteristics of Respondent

How old are you?

.....

What grade are you in?

.....

Where do you live?

Boarding establishment

☐

Home

☐

Do you play any sport? What team are you in?

.....

How long have you been at this school?

.....

## SECTION B: Perceptions and experiences

What is your understanding of bullying?

.....

Why do you think bullying takes place?

.....

Where does bullying take place? Toilet, sports-field, tuck-shop?

.....

How does bullying take place? Physical, verbal, cyber-bullying?

**Probe:** Please explain.

.....

Have you ever seen anyone being bullied at school?

**Probe:** Can you explain what happened?

.....

Have you ever been bullied at school?

**Probe:** Can you tell me about it? How did it make you feel? How did you react?

.....

Have you ever bullied anyone at school?

**Probe:** How? Why? How did you feel?

.....

Are there any gangs/groups in the school? Does bullying take place in gangs/groups?

.....

Are you a member of a gang/group? Has your gang bullied anyone?

**Probe:** Can you explain what happened? Why?

.....

Do friends bully each other? Why?

**Probe:** Have you ever been bullied by a friend? Can you tell me about it?

.....

Are you friends with bullies? Why?

.....

Would you report a bullying incident? Who would you report it to? Why?

**Probe:** Have you reported an incident of bullying or know of someone who reported bullying?

Please tell me what happened from there.

.....

Does the school have an anti-bullying policy? If not, do you think there should be one?

.....

What can the school do to prevent bullying?

.....

What can you/learners do to prevent bullying?

.....

What can the Department of education do to prevent bullying?

.....

What can the community do to prevent bullying?

.....

Do you have any additional comments you would like to make about bullying in schools that I have not asked? (I would really like to hear your opinion(s) on this issue).

.....

What are your suggestions for change?

With regards to the learners, educators, management, community.

.....

**Thank you very much for your time.**

## APPENDIX XI: FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

### ADDRESSING BULLYING IN A BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL IN DURBAN

#### FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

Respondent No \_\_\_\_\_

December 2020 to February 2021

1. What is your understanding of bullying?

.....

2. Why do you think bullying takes place?

.....

3. Where does bullying take place? Toilet, sports-field, tuck-shop?

.....

4. How does bullying take place? Physical, verbal, cyber-bullying?

**Probe:**

Please explain.....

5. Have you ever seen anyone being bullied at school?

**Probe:** Can you explain what happened?

.....

6. Have you ever been bullied at school?

**Probe:** Can you tell me about it? How did it make you feel? How did you react?

.....

7. Have you ever bullied anyone at school?

**Probe:** How? Why? How did you feel?

.....

8. Are there any gangs/groups in the school? Does bullying take place in gangs/groups?

.....

9. Are you a member of a gang/group? Has your gang bullied anyone?

**Probe:** Can you explain what happened? Why?

.....

10. Do friends bully each other? Why?

**Probe:** Have you ever been bullied by a friend? Can you tell me about it?

.....

11. Are you friends with bullies? Why?

.....

12. Would you report a bullying incident? Who would you report it to? Why?

**Probe:** Have you reported an incident of bullying or know of someone who reported bullying? Please tell me what happened from there.

.....

13. Does the school have an anti-bullying policy? If not, do you think there should be one?

.....

14. What can the school do to prevent bullying?

.....

15. What can you/learners do to prevent bullying?

.....

16. What can the Department of education do to prevent bullying?

.....

17. What can the community do to prevent bullying?

.....

18. Do you have any additional comments you would like to make about bullying in schools that I have not asked? (I would really like to hear your opinion(s) on this issue).

.....

20. What are your suggestions for change? With regards to the learners, educators, management, community.

.....

**Thank you very much for your time**

## APPENDIX XII: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**

EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200  
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201  
Tel: 033 392 1083

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Ref.:2/4/8/1782

Ms MR Naidoo  
91 Roslyn Avenue  
Asherville  
**DURBAN**  
4091

Dear Ms Naidoo

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"ADDRESSING BULLYING IN A BOY'S HIGH SCHOOL IN DURBAN"**, 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 30 July 2021 to 31 August 2023.
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 Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
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.

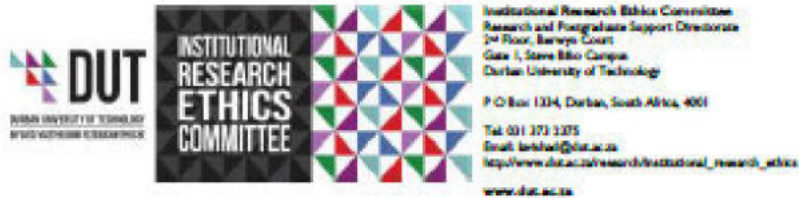
UMLAZI DISTRICT

*/* Dr. EY Nzama  
Head of Department: Education  
Date: 02 August 2021

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

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## APPENDIX XIII: IREC APPROVAL



2 September 2021

Ms M R Naidoo  
91 Roslyn Avenue  
Asherville  
Durban  
4091

Dear Ms Naidoo

Addressing bullying in a boy's high school in Durban  
**Ethical Clearance number IREC 005/21**

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your notification regarding the piloting of your data collection tool.

Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam  
Chairperson: IREC



## APPENDIX XIV: TURNITIN REPORT

# Addressing bullying at a boys high school

by Meedhaloshnie Ragoobathie Naidoo

Submission date: 23-Aug-2022 08:31AM (UTC+0200)  
Submission ID: 1885841817  
File name: FOR\_TURNITIN\_ADDRESSING\_BULLYING\_AT\_A\_BOYS\_SCHOOL.docx (819.57K)  
Word count: 48571  
Character count: 261902

Feedback Studio - Google Chrome  
ev.turnitin.com/app/carta/en\_us/?student\_user=1&o=1885841817&s=1&u=1133429226&lang=en\_us

feedback studio Meedhaloshnie Ragoobathie Naidoo Addressing bullying at a boys high school

13

“ADDRESSING BULLYING AT A BOY’S HIGH SCHOOL IN DURBAN”

“MEEDHALOSHNIIE RAGOOBATHIE NAIDOO”

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## APPENDIX XV: EDITOR'S REPORT

### Sury Bisetty Academic Editing Services



*The pen is mightier than the sword*

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#### To whom it may concern

I edited a Master's thesis entitled: **ADDRESSING BULLYING AT A BOY'S HIGH SCHOOL IN DURBAN** by Meedhaloshnie R. Naidoo submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of Master of Management Science specialising in Public Administration in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology

*Sury Bisetty*

*Professional Language and Technical Editor*

*7 September 2022*

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#### MEMBER OF:

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PEGSA: Critical Reading

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Disclaimer: Please note, I provided language and technical editing as per discussion with the client. The **content and structure** of the paper were not amended in any way. The edited work described here may not be identical to that submitted. The author, at his/her sole discretion, has the prerogative to accept, delete, or change amendments/suggestions made by the editor before submission.

**NB – in keeping with POPIA regulations all work related to this thesis will be deleted 3 months after completion.**

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