

**EXPLORING MANAGERS' PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERVENTIONS
AIMED AT ERADICATING WORKPLACE BULLYING**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Azwihangwisi Alfred Singo, student number 30638542, for the degree, Master of Commerce, declare that

“Exploring managers’ perceived effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying”

is my own work, and all sources used and quoted in the dissertation have been indicated in the text and acknowledged by means of a complete reference list.

I declare that ethical clearance has been obtained from the College of Economic and Management Sciences Ethics Research Committee at UNISA (Annexure D) at the University of South Africa and that informed consent (Annexure B) was given by all participants to conduct the research.

Furthermore, this is a dissertation of limited scope (50% of the total master’s degree) for which the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology prescribes an article format. This format involves four chapters – a scientific orientation to the study, a literature review chapter, a research article chapter, and a conclusion, limitations and recommendations chapter. A page limit of approximately 80 pages is further recommended by the department (excluding front pages, references, and annexures).

This dissertation adopts the APA 7th edition technical editing and referencing style. For chapter three, the article, the publication guidelines of the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP) were adopted.

AA Singo

17 November 2022

SIGNATURE

DATE

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SUMMARY

EXPLORING MANAGERS' PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT ERADICATING WORKPLACE BULLYING

by

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Degree: Master of Commerce (Industrial and Organisational Psychology)

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The general aim of this research was to explore managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying, and to obtain recommendations as to how such interventions might be improved or be effective in eradicating workplace bullying. Workplace bullying has attracted considerable attention globally among scholars, researchers, sociologists and organisational psychologists, while locally the literature available on this phenomenon appears to focus on its negative impact on both organisations and employees. Research also explores the interventions organisations employ to eradicate workplace bullying. Most of this research has been quantitative in nature, and so this study was conducted with the aim of more closely exploring the lived experiences of participants; a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive research design and approach were therefore adopted. A purposive sample of ten line managers was selected for participation in the study, and data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews. The literature review was carried out with a view to conceptualising workplace bullying and its related constructs, and to exploring interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. This empirical study therefore explored managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. A further intention of the study was to make recommendations for the improvement of such interventions so as to benefit organisations and their employees by ensuring a conducive environment that enhances employee wellbeing and improves productivity, and in which bullying does not occur.

The research findings revealed managers to be aware of incidences of workplace bullying in their organisation, with some managers having experienced it first-hand as victim themselves, and others having been bystanders who witnessed others being bullied. Managers mentioned witnessing different forms or types of workplace bullying, and also identified a number of factors that contribute to and foster workplace bullying. Those who had experienced and witnessed bullying testified to the detrimental impact of workplace bullying in the organisation and on their fellow employees. Managers were in agreement that there were interventions in place aimed at eradicating workplace bullying in their organisation, and whereas they were in agreement that those interventions were indeed to some degree successful, they were nevertheless of the view that these could be improved, and made suggestions for improvement.

KEYWORDS

Workplace bullying, interventions, qualitative research, interpretive design, paradigm, theoretical model

OPSOMMING

DIE BESTUDERING VAN BESTUURDERS SE WAARGENOME PERSEPSIES OOR DIE DOELTREFFENDHEID VAN INGRYPING GERIG OP DIE UITROEI VAN WERKPLEKAFKNOUERY

deur

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Graad: Magister in die Handelwetenskappe (Bedryf- en Organisasiesielkunde)

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Die algemene doel van hierdie navorsing was om ondersoek in te stel na bestuurders se persepsies van die doeltreffendheid van ingrypings wat daarop gemik is om afknoery in die werkplek hok te slaan, en om aanbevelings te kry oor hoe om sulke ingrypings te verbeter of meer doeltreffend te maak om afknoery in die werkplek hok te slaan. Geleerdes, navorsers, sosioloë en organisasiesielkundiges wêreldwyd fokus op afknoery in die werkplek, terwyl die plaaslike literatuur eerder kyk na die negatiewe impak daarvan op organisasies asook werknemers. Navorsers ondersoek ook die ingrypings wat organisasies inspan om afknoery in die werkplek hok te slaan. Aangesien die meeste van hierdie navorsing kwantitatief van aard is, was die doel van hierdie studie om die geleefde ervarings van deelnemers noukeurig te ondersoek; 'n kwalitatiewe, ondersoekende en beskrywende navorsingsontwerp en -benadering is dus gevolg. 'n Doelgerigte steekproef van tien lynbestuurders is geselekteer vir deelname aan die studie, en data is deur semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude ingesamel. Die literatuuoroorsig is uitgevoer om afknoery in die werkplek en sy verwante konstrunkte te konseptualiseer, en om ingrypings te ondersoek wat daarop gemik is om afknoery in die werkplek hok te slaan. Hierdie empiriese studie het dus ondersoek ingestel na bestuurders se persepsies van die doeltreffendheid van ingrypings om afknoery in die werkplek hok te slaan. Die studie het ook ten doel gehad om aanbevelings te maak vir die verbetering van sulke ingrypings tot voordeel van organisasies en hulle werknemers deur 'n omgewing te verseker waar afknoery nie plaasvind nie en wat werknemerwelstand bevorder en produktiwiteit verbeter.

Die navorsingsbevindinge het gewys dat bestuurders bewus is van die voorkoms van afknouery in die werkplek in hulle organisasie; sommige bestuurders was self slagoffers en ander was getuies van hoe ander afgeknou is. Bestuurders was getuies van verskeie tipes afknouery in die werkplek, en het ook 'n aantal faktore geïdentifiseer wat bydra tot en afknouery in die werkplek aanmoedig. Diegene wat afknouery ervaar en aanskou het, het getuig van die nadelige impak van afknouery in die werkplek in die organisasie en op hulle medewerkers. Bestuurders was dit eens dat ingrypings in plek is wat daarop gemik is om afknouery in die werkplek in hulle organisasie hok te slaan. Alhoewel hulle saamgestem het dat daardie ingrypings wel tot 'n mate suksesvol is, was hulle nietemin van mening dat ingrypings verbeter kan word en het hulle aanbevelings vir verbetering gemaak.

SLEUTELWOORDE

Afknouery in die werkplek, ingrypings, kwalitatiewe navorsing, interpretatiewe ontwerp, paradigma, teoretiese model

MANWELEDZO

U LAVHELESA U SHUMA HO LAVHELELWAHO HA NDINGEDZO DZO SEDZAHO U FHELISA U TAMBUDZWA MUSHUMONI

Nga

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Digirii: Master of Commerce (Saikhołodzhi ya Nḡowetshumo na Zwiimiswa)

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Ndivho nyangaredzi ya tḡoḡisisi iyi ho vha hu u lavhelesa kuvhonele kwa vhalanguli kwa u shuma ha u ndingedzo dzo sedzaho kha u fhelisa u tambudzwa mushumoni, na u wana themendelo dza uri idzo ndingedzo dzi nga khwiḡiswa kana dza kona u bveledza u fhungudza u tambudzwa mushumoni. U tambudzwa mushumoni ho kunga tshenzhemo khulwane u mona na dzhango kha vhorapfunzo, vhaḡoḡisisi, vhorasaintsi dza zwa matshilisano na vhorasaikhołodzhi vha zwiimiswa; ngeno kha ḡino maḡwalwa a re hone kha tshibveleli itshi a tshi vha o sedza masiandaitwa mavhi kha zwiimiswa na vhashumi. Vhaḡoḡisisi vho dovha vha lavhelesa ndingedzo dzine zwiimiswa zwa nga dzi shumisa u fhelisa u tambudzwa mushumoni. Vhunzhi ha tḡoḡisiso idzi dzo vha dza tshivhumbeo tsha khwanthithethivi, nahone ngudo idzi dzo dovha dza itwa hu na ndivho ya u sedzulusa vhukuma tshenzhemo dzo livhanaho na vhadzheneli; nyolo ya tḡoḡisiso dza khwalithethivi, dza vhulavhelesi na tḡalutshedzo na kuitele kwa hone zwi ḡo dzhiiwa. Tsumbonanguludzwa ire na ndivho ya vhalanguli vha fumi yo khethwa u itela u dzhenelela kha ngudo, ha kuvhanganywa data nga kha inthaviwu dzo dzudzanywaho zwiḡuku. Tsedzuluso ya maḡwalwa yo itwa ho sedzwa u ḡalukanya u tambudzwa mushumoni na zwi elanaho nazwo, na u lavhelesa ndingedzo dzo sedzaho u fhelisa u tambudzwa mushumoni. Ngudo idzi dza empherikhala zwenezwo dzo lavhelesa kuvhonele kwa vhalanguli kha u shuma ha ndingedzo dzo sedzaho kha u fhelisa u tambudzwa mushumoni. Zwiḡwe zwe ngudo ya ḡiimisela zwone ho vha u bveledza themendelo dza u khwiḡiswa ha ndingedzo idzi u itela u vhuedza zwiimiswa na vhashumi vhazwo nga u khwaḡhisedza vhupo ho lugelaho hu khwaḡhisedzaho mutakalo wa vhashumi na u khwiḡisa vhubveledzi, nahone hune ha sa vhe na zwiito zwa u tambudzwa.

Mawanwa a t̄hoḁisiso o bvisela khagala uri vhalanguli vha ḁivha zwiwo mushumoni zwa u tambudzwa kha zwiimiswa zwavho, hune vhañwe vhalanguli vho no ḁilivhana nazwo sa zwipondwa vhone vhañe, ngeno vhañwe vhe vhaḁaleli vhe vha vhona vhañwe vha khou tambudzwa. Vhalanguli vho bula uri vho vha dziḁhanzi nga nḁila dzo fhambanaho kana kha tshaka dzo fhambanaho dza u tambudzwa, na u topola zwivhumbi zwo vhalaho zwine zwa shela mulenzhe kha na u bveledza u tambudzwa mushumoni. Avho vho no zwi tshenzhelaho na u vha dziḁhanzi vho ḁanziela nga ha masiandaitwa mavhi a u tambudzwa mushumoni kha tshiimiswa na kha vhañwe vhashumisani navho. Vhalanguli vho tendelana uri ho vha na ndingedzo mushumoni dzo sedzaho u fhelisa u tambudzwa mushumoni kha zwiimiswa zwavho, nahone vho vha vha khou tendelana uri ndingedzo idzi dzo swika he dza vhuedza kha mañwe masia, fhedzi vho vhona u nga dzi tea u khwiḁiswa, vha dzinginya mihumbulo ya u khwiḁisa.

MAIPFI A NDEME:

U tambudzwa mushumoni, ndingedzo, t̄hoḁisiso dza khwalithethivhi, nyolo ya t̄halutshedzo, tshiedziswa, tshiedziswa tsha thyeori

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COR	Conversation of Resources
FMCG	Fast-moving consumer goods
HR	Human resources
IOP	Industrial and organisational psychology

CHAPTER 1

SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

Workplace bullying has been identified as a growing phenomenon that has a detrimental effect on individuals and organisations (Geleta, 2020). Organisations lose skilled, key talent and revenue because employees are bullied (Salin, 2018). While interventions are implemented to combat this growing and unwanted phenomenon, bullying incidents remain and do not seem to be eradicated. Chapter one will provide the background and motivation for this study, the problem statement, and the research questions. This chapter will also describe the general aims and the specific theoretical, and empirical aims, the paradigmatic perspective, a summary of the research design adopted, and conclude with an outline of the chapters.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Many scholars agree that workplace bullying is a growing phenomenon (Naseem & Ahmed, 2020; Wall et al., 2018). Studies have been conducted about interventions available to combat this challenge and the related negative consequences to both the organisation and employees (Baillien et al., 2017; Ferris et al., 2018; Salin, 2018). Workplace bullying affects the wellbeing of employees and the organisation in meeting its strategic objectives and profitability (Ngwane, 2018). Organisations incur huge cost and lose key employees, experience low productivity, see an increase of sick leave and absenteeism due to bullying incidences (Phillips, 2018). Individual employees suffers both psychological and physiological as victims of workplace bullying (Ferris et al., 2021; Reknes et al., 2021). Due to the negative impact on organisations and employees, interventions are implemented by HR practitioners and researchers to reduce the prevalence and consequences of bullying incidences as well as eradicating the incidences (Escartín, 2016). Bullying manifests in different behaviours, including undermining peoples' educational status, social exclusion, false accusations, verbal abuse, and public humiliation and criticism (Cunniff & Mostert, 2015). According to Rai and Agarwal (2017), who agree with Tye-Williams et al. (2020), previous literature on workplace bullying falls short of exploring more effective interventions. Researchers agree that workplace bullying is widespread and needs further research (Cunniff &

Mostert, 2015; Munir et al., 2020). Literature on the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying seems lacking (Escartín, 2016).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Much scientific research speaks to workplace bullying and how it is defined (Ferris et al., 2021). Literature notes the harmful and negative impact workplace bullying has on both organisational and employee level, however, eradicating the phenomenon remains elusive and continues unabated (Anjum et al., 2019). Organisations implement interventions with the aim of decreasing the prevalence of workplace bullying incidences, yet there seems to be a lack of research pertaining to the effectiveness of these interventions (Escartín, 2016).

Research has been conducted about the increase in workplace bullying with serious consequences that result in substantial financial losses through absenteeism and human capital turnover (Caponecchia et al., 2020). According to Rai and Agarwal (2017), the impact of workplace bullying, its consequences, antecedents, and outcomes are well researched, but there is a need to do more research on the process, theoretical underpinnings underlying this phenomenon and intervention mechanisms.

Given the significant negative impact of bullying and the increase in workplace bullying incidences, this study sought to explore managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions to eradicate workplace bullying. In addition, this research also aimed at obtaining recommendations from the participant managers on how current interventions can be improved or be more effective in eradicating workplace bullying. A conducive and healthy workplace is imperative to organisations and their employees. In line with the research problem identified, this research aims to answer the general research question of what is managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. This study is also keen on answering the questions of what recommendations can be made to improve the effectiveness of such interventions to ensure workplace bullying is eradicated. The study will also further aim to answer the following specific research questions.

The literature review research questions to be answered were:

Literature question 1: How is bullying conceptualised in the workplace?

Literature question 2: What current interventions are used to eradicate workplace bullying, and are they effective?

The empirical research questions were as follows:

Empirical question 1: How do managers perceive the effectiveness of measures aimed at eradicating workplace bullying?

Empirical question 2: What recommendations can managers make towards improving the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying?

1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY

Research is done in pursuit of knowledge. It is based on the work of other researchers and scientists who have searched for answers to similar questions. It is always imperative to learn from other scholars and their research, which provides the researcher with a basis from which to start and which will direct the researcher going forward (Salkind, 2014). In pursuit of knowledge, truth is produced from different angles of participants' subjective views and research assists in understanding participants' competing accounts (Terre Blanche et al., 2012).

This research explores managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. In addition, to obtain recommendations on how such interventions can be improved or be more effective in eradicating workplace bullying. The following specific aims are also important to this research and are outlined below.

The specific literature review aims for this research are to:

Research aim 1: conceptualise workplace bullying and its related constructs.

Research aim 2: explore bullying interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

The specific aims of the empirical study are to:

Research aim 1: explore managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

Research aim 2: make recommendations towards the improvement of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

1.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm is a lens through which individuals view the world around them (Rehman & Alharti, 2016). This is how we, as humans, perceive the world and what is happening around us (Kamal, 2019). Paradigms give rise to our beliefs, values and how we interact with others (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Our paradigm is the lens which influences our actions and the choices about our lives in general (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In research, a paradigm will influence our thought processes and how we approach our studies, as well as how we perceive and work with the data we gather during the research process (Grix, 2010). Therefore, the paradigm will influence how the researcher views the world, affecting how the researcher collects, interprets, and analyses data (Kamal, 2019). Subsequently, the paradigm will direct the researcher's philosophical orientation that will shape the research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It is the researcher's perspective, thinking, school of thought and shared beliefs about the world in which he lives (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Research enables the continuous development of new ways to resolve relationship challenges in all spheres of life. The workplace is one area where individuals interact daily and must deal with relational problems that might affect their wellbeing, such as workplace bullying (Cunniff & Mostert, 2015). This research is situated in the context of industrial and organisational psychology (IOP), which as a profession, aims to promote harmonious social relations and enhance employee wellness in the workplace (Koppes, 2014). Considering all the above, this study will therefore adopt the interpretivism paradigm as the psychological paradigm for both the theoretical and empirical parts of the study to explore the phenomenon of workplace bullying and, more specifically, managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. In addition, to obtain their recommendations on how

such interventions can be improved or made more effective in their quest to eradicate workplace bullying.

1.4.1 Theoretical paradigm

A theoretical paradigm is the researcher's worldview pertaining to existing knowledge and theories, as found in the research literature (Terre Blanche et al., 2012). This is where the researcher establishes and understands the relationship between constructs that describe the phenomenon and move beyond the local to relate with similar events outside (Martens, 2005). As noted above, the theoretical paradigm adopted in this study was interpretivism with its ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions.

The ontological assumptions of the interpretivist paradigm as the theoretical paradigm which guided this study postulates there are different meanings people attached to and how they view literature, that which is already known and what needs to be studied based on researcher assumptions of the reality (Rehman & Alharti, 2016).

The epistemological assumptions are focused on the relationship between the research and what is to be known by finding knowledge through an exploration of literature, how knowledge can be acquired, and how it can be communicated to the world (Scotland, 2012).

The methodological assumptions within the interpretivist paradigm will guide the research design, research methodology and procedural steps applied by the researcher to explore and describe the phenomenon being studied by this research, workplace bullying, and the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating it (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2012). The methodological assumptions adopted for this study are outlined in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.4.2 Disciplinary relationship

The research was conducted in the field of IOP and fell within its sub-field of wellbeing. IOP is the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes in the workplace. It applies psychological research findings to enhance, among others, the performance and wellbeing of employees to increase workplace effectiveness and ensure the organisational strategy is met (Vermeulen et al., 2019). The IOP discipline also aims to understand how individuals maintain and relate to others within the workplace environment (Zyberaj et al., 2022). This study explored the manager's perceived effectiveness of interventions to eradicate workplace bullying. Managers' perceptions of the effectiveness will promote a healthy working environment for the benefit of employees and their organisation (Maidaniuc-Chirilă, 2020).

Employee wellbeing is paramount for any organisation to remain competitive and profitable, hence the need to create a conducive and healthy working environment (Gorgenyi-Hegyes et al., 2021). Workplace wellbeing relates to all aspects of work life, from the quality and safety of the physical environment, to how workers feel about their work, their working environment, the climate at work and organisational culture (Rasool et al., 2021). Employee wellbeing is defined as the employees' overall mental, physical, emotional, and economic health. It is influenced by various factors such as their relationships with co-workers, their decisions, and the tools and resources they have access to (Sakka & Ahmad, 2020).

1.4.3 Meta-theoretical concepts

The following theoretical constructs form the basis of this research and are defined as follows in this study:

- Bullying is a repetitive and intentional social behaviour that negatively affects the wellbeing of the person being targeted (Anjum et al., 2019)
- Wall et al. (2018) view workplace bullying as a repeated series of negative behaviours intentionally aimed at someone within the work setting and is characterised by negatively impacting the individual being bullied. According to Lee et al. (2018), workplace bullying includes verbal and non-verbal actions that

are intended to harm another person, emotionally and physically, in the workplace, and I agree with Wall et al. (2018) that these actions happen persistently over some time. Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2009) simply put it as abuse of power by those in certain positions of privilege. Chirilă and Constantin (2013) say that for behaviour to be regarded as bullying, it should be frequent over a certain period, intentional and have negative effects on the victims.

- A manager is a person responsible for controlling and administering an organisation or a group of staff (Kaehler & Grundei, 2019).
- Interventions are strategies that organisations develop to manage bullying incidences in the workplace (Blackwood et al., 2018). Interventions are a combination of programme elements or strategies designed to produce behaviour change or improve health status among individuals (Paciello, 2019). Interventions may include educational programmes, new or stronger policies, improvements in the environment, or a health promotion campaign (Cardona-Cardona et al., 2017). Organisations come with strategies that are aimed at countering the harmful effects of workplace bullying (Munir et al., 2020).

1.4.4 Empirical paradigm

As noted, this study adopted the interpretivist paradigm, with its ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, as its empirical paradigm. Humans work with certain assumptions about how the world functions and how it should operate. Ontologically are the assumptions made about a person's subjective reality of how such a person experiences their world (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). This is influenced by many factors, experiences and exposures (Ormston et al., 2014). It may be our surroundings, beliefs, upbringing, and cultural and ideological positions. How a phenomenon is viewed may have different meanings depending on everyone's perception, values, and experiences (Cohen, Hoshino-Browne & Leung, 2007). The study explored managers' lived experiences and perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. This study also aimed at obtaining recommendations from these managers on how current interventions can be improved to be more effective.

Within the interpretivist paradigm, the epistemological assumption refers to empathy and observer intersubjectivity, that is, how the researcher will learn and interact with the knowledge held by the knower, the managers (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Thus, epistemology refers to how we as individuals perceive the world around us, and this perception of “our” world is what makes sense to us. So, what makes sense to us is that what we know becomes our knowledge of the world (Al-Saadi, 2014). Interpretive research indicates that our knowledge depends on the relationship between the researcher and the participants and how freely the participants share their unique lived experiences with the researcher (Dean, 2018). Therefore, it refers to how the researcher establishes a trust relationship and influences the research process and the collection and analysis of the data to gain insight into the participants' lived experiences (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2007).

The methodology describes the research design process applied to attain the required knowledge from participants (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). In line with the interpretivist paradigm, this study's methodological assumptions are situated in using semi-structured interviews to collect data and content analysis to analyse and interpret that data to gain insight into managers' perceived effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. In addition, to obtaining recommendations from these managers towards how such interventions can be improved or effectively eradicate workplace bullying.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design plans and details how the study will be conducted. This entails plans from broad assumptions to specifics on how data will be collected in the process and how it will be analysed (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The research topic informs the decision on which design should be adopted to conduct the research, which will largely also be informed by the worldview assumptions of the researcher (Creswell, 2009). The study will follow a qualitative research design.

1.5.1 Research approach

The study followed a qualitative research approach. This approach allows the researcher to better understand humans and their lived experiences (Terre Blanche et al., 2012). The basis of a qualitative research approach is that it captures human subjective experiences of the world according to how they perceive and frame it within their own minds and in their own words (Cropley, 2022). This approach allows the researcher to focus on human experiences and reflections (Jackson & Drammond, 2007). Social and human issues can easily be understood using a qualitative approach as it assists in understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to problems that affect them (Creswell, 2013). The interpretivism paradigm helped the researcher to explore managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying (Creswell, 2013).

The study approach employed was phenomenology. The phenomenological approach is deemed to be best suited when studying intense human experiences, such as workplace bullying which is very emotional and sensitive in nature (Worthington, 2013). Phenomenology explores what occurs in the consciousness of a participant and how such a participant locates unique meaning to such a phenomenon (Manen, 2017).

The approach was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Exploratory research assists the researcher in better understanding a phenomenon both empirically and theoretically (Hunter et al., 2019). According to Sehularo et al. (2016), the exploratory approach examines the phenomenon being studied instead of only recording and observing it. Descriptive research attempts to describe the phenomenon and ask questions as to what, how and not why (Nassaji, 2015). When one describes a phenomenon, it provides a detailed account of its importance and draws a picture of the world from the participant's point of view (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). This is relevant when trying to understand managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying and to obtain their insights into possible recommendations that can be made towards how such interventions can be improved or be more effective in eradicating workplace bullying.

1.5.2 Research strategy

The research strategy was interpretive in nature. The interpretive strategy assumes that social reality is not singular or objective. Hence, it cannot be viewed from one angle but lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2009). This can be done by reconciling various lived experiences within the social context (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). To understand managers' lived experiences and their perceptions about interventions aimed at eradicating bullying, this strategy gives the researcher many opportunities to get necessary information subjectively. The study followed an inductive approach. The inductive approach involves the search for patterns from the participant's narrative and the construction of an analysis and interpretation. Here data was collected through interviews, analysed, and interpreted and conclusions and recommendations were made after that (Creswell, 2009). The researcher aimed to gain a deeper understanding of managers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying and to obtain recommendations from these managers on how such interventions can be improved or be more effective in eradicating workplace bullying.

1.5.3 Research method

The research method describes the systematic procedure for answering the research questions (Creswell, 2009). The questions explored in this study were answered by adopting a research methodology guided by qualitative interpretative principles. It was believed to be the most effective way to gain insight into managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. In addition, to obtain recommendations on how such interventions can be improved or more effective in eradicating workplace bullying. The next section will describe the research setting, the entry and establishing researcher role, sampling, data collection, recording of data, data analysis, strategies employed to ensure quality data, and how the data will be reported.

1.5.3.1 Researching setting

The research setting was the location or specific environment in which the research will be conducted (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the research setting is situated within an organisation in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, within the fast-moving consumer goods sector (FMCG). Like most organisations, this organisation is also faced with daily instances of workplace bullying. Senior managers are often challenged with instances of workplace bullying, which they need to attend to, subsequently making this organisation an ideal setting to research this topic and explore the effectiveness of current interventions to eradicate workplace bullying.

1.5.3.2 Entrée and establishing researcher role

The researcher gained entry to the organisation in his capacity as an employee of the organisation. The researcher first obtained gatekeeper permission from the organisation to conduct the study, where ethical clearance was obtained from the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology's Research Ethics Review Committee (see Annexure C). The researcher then identified and approached managers who met the inclusion criteria and shared background information on the study with them (see Annexure B), where they were invited to contact the researcher should they be interested in participating.

The researcher fulfilled an empathetic and subjective role, so respondents feel comfortable sharing their related experiences in depth (Terre Blanche et al., 2012). Throughout the research process, the researcher acknowledges his own biases because of a shared working environment with the participants and being a colleague to managers when he was hired as an intern psychologist in this organisation. Strong bonds develop among colleagues. Therefore, the researcher anticipated that his credibility would encourage participants to share openly as they would know that the researcher has personal insight into the challenges at hand yet can be trusted with what they wish to share. The researcher intended to eliminate some of the biases by having respondents comment on the results to ensure that the data were captured truthfully and the analysis is a true reflection of their experiences, reporting on their narratives accurately (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

1.5.3.3 Sampling

The population of this study consisted of 250 managers within an organisation in the FMCG sector. This research used purposive sampling to select participants with experience of perceptions of and views about the phenomenon being studied (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling was an appropriate sampling method as it gave the researcher a group of homogenous participants, that is all participants of this study were managers (Rai & Thapa, 2015). The study explored managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. The inclusion criteria were that participants be a manager on any management level irrespective of age, race, or gender with two or more years' experience. Managers who had bullying incidences in the area office and used available interventions to eradicate bullying were invited to the study. Managers with less than two years' experience or who had not previously had exposure to bullying and the interventions aimed at eradicating bullying were excluded.

Individual experiences do not come solely as stories from individuals but how human beings relate to others within the broader society. Hence the question of who should participate in research should not be the focus. However, the main element should be which stories are emerging and recognise that everyone has a story to tell (Creswell, 2013). It is not necessarily about the number of participants but about how thick and rich the information is that the researcher has gathered, and it is possible to reach data saturation with as few as six participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015). This study included a sample of ten managers that were interviewed, where after the researcher stopped recruiting more participants as a point of data saturation was reached. A one-size-fits-all approach is not applicable with data saturation because studies are designed differently (Guest et al., 2006). However, Burmeister and Aitken (2012) posit that enough information is collected when additional participants do not provide any new information. No new themes or sub-themes emerged from the data, leading to additional insight into a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

1.5.3.4 Data collection

According to Creswell and Poth (2016), interviews are effective ways of collecting data to gain insight into people's natural settings. Interviews allow the participants to elaborate on their knowledge and feelings about the investigated phenomenon (Schmidt, 2004). It is important when conducting interviews to look at the approach that a researcher employs, the purpose and goal of the research, and the questions asked in the interviews (Flick, 2004).

Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain insight into the lived experiences of managers and their experience of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. Semi-structured interviews were suitable as it allowed the researcher to gather and ascertain the subjective views and responses from participants of the phenomenon in question (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The semi-structured interview guide assisted the researcher to answer the research questions during the data collection process. These interviews were conducted in English using an interview guide (see Annexure A), which used open-ended questions to keep the interactions focused while allowing for free probing (Krefting, 1991). Participants were asked questions about their bullying experiences and whether they were aware of the interventions to eradicate workplace bullying. They were asked about the effectiveness of those interventions and to make recommendations towards enhancing the effectiveness of such interventions. Due to COVID-19 regulations, interviews were conducted online through Microsoft Teams.

1.5.3.5 Data recording

Data was recorded using Microsoft Teams, and the researcher recorded the interviews using the recording application on Microsoft Teams. Data collection was in line with the provisions of the Health Professions Council of South Africa. These regulations provide guidance on confidentiality and ethical conduct. The researcher addressed ethical considerations by obtaining informed consent (see Annexure B) from participants willing to participate in the interviews before data collection. The researcher made sure that the identities of all participants were protected. Additionally, the researcher obtained permission from the participants to take notes during the

interviews and permission to have the interviews audio recorded (Terre Blanche et al., 2012). The researcher transcribed the interview recordings himself.

1.5.3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is one of the most important parts of the research process and is aligned with the research design (Ganaphathy, 2016). Data analysis is a seamless process, and data were analysed at the same time it was collected (Terre Blanche et al., 2012). Content analysis was used, and as Preveen and Showkat (2017) put it, content analysis tries to reveal the content, or the message contained. The researcher used the different stages of content analysis as suggested by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), in which, in this case, data were transcribed into the text from the audio recording. Then data were read repeatedly to get a sense of the whole. The researcher read each transcript word for word to derive codes, and this was done by highlighting exact words from the text that seems to emphasise context, thoughts and experiences. As this seamless process continued, the researcher made notes of the impression of the text. This process was followed by writing down emerging codes flowing from data that shared the same thoughts. Codes were then sorted into different categories depending on how they were interlinked and related to one another. These categories were then grouped into sub-themes and themes.

1.5.3.7 Strategies employed to ensure quality data.

Establishing trustworthiness is important in a qualitative study as it ensures rigour and integrity and increases the credibility of the research project (Connelly, 2016). The elements of trustworthiness include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Credibility is the extent to which the study's findings truthfully portray the participants' voices, supported with verbatim quotes, instilling confidence and trust (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Therefore, in addition to ensuring the research design and methodology are clearly outlined, the researcher ensured building relationships of trust with the participants and confirmed the analysis and interpretation of the results with the participants to ensure it is a truthful reflection of their experiences.

Dependability answers the question of how stable the data is collected over time and in a different setting and whether the results will remain stable (Janis, 2022). This study's detailed account of the whole research process was presented, including how data was collected, analysed, interpreted, and reported findings.

Confirmability refers to whether other researchers can confirm the findings of a study and whether it can be proofed that researcher bias was eliminated. Therefore, the researcher's supervisor verified the audio recordings and interview transcripts to ensure quality data collection and analysis. Furthermore, the analysis of the findings was supported by verbatim quotes to substantiate the researcher's interpretation thereof (Creswell, 2009).

Transferability in research means that when a researcher conducts a study, they need to look at the research beyond their study's setting, meaning that the results of their study yield similar results in a similar setting (Rodon & Sesé, 2008). Therefore, in this study, the researcher presented a comprehensive outline of the research design and methodology followed to allow other researchers to replicate the study in other contexts.

1.5.3.8 Reporting

The research findings were reported by using a qualitative, narrative writing style. Narratives in qualitative research is defined as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for an intended audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it (Elliot, 2005). The findings of this research were done through the themes that emerge and their sub-themes. Therefore, the findings of this research will be reported through the themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data analysis and interpretation thereof and supported with verbatim quotations (Creswell, 2013).

1.5.4 Ethical considerations

It is important to ensure that all ethical principles are adhered to. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology's Research Ethics Review Committee to conduct the research (see Annexure C). This standard has been set out for each student at the university to adhere to before any research process starts. Furthermore, gatekeeper permission was obtained from the organisation to conduct the research.

It is important to note that workplace bullying is a very sensitive topic. Researchers may pose a reputational risk to the company, and employees may perceive participating in such research as a personal and professional risk as it can become career-limiting if perpetrators, such as line managers, become aware of their participation. Therefore, great emphasis was placed on ensuring confidentiality and anonymity by conducting the interviews in a private setting and replacing participant identifiers with pseudonyms. Furthermore, as the interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, the researcher could ensure the identity of participants remained confidential. Participants signed a consent form, which included a description of the purpose of the research and how confidentiality will be ensured, amongst other points (See Annexure B).

The only other person who had access to the data was the researcher and his supervisor, who were both guided by the Board of Psychology's ethical code of conduct. The researcher ensured that copies of the data were securely stored on his laptop using passwords and that all hard copies were locked away in a secure location. The data will be permanently destroyed after five years. Electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive, and hard copies will be shredded.

1.6 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The chapters for this study are outlined as follows:

Chapter One: Scientific orientation to the research

In the first chapter, the researcher introduced the research topic and provided a conceptual framework guiding this research. Therefore, this chapter provided a scientific overview of the study, outlined the background and motivation, the research problem, the research questions, aims, paradigm perspective and the research design adopted.

Chapter Two: Literature review

Chapter two focused on providing a review of the literature related to workplace bullying and exploring bullying interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

Chapter Three: Article

This chapter is presented in the form of an article and follows the guidelines provided by the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology. This chapter discusses the study's theoretical background, the research design and methodology applied and presents the findings. The chapter concludes with the main contributions of the study and its limitations and presents recommendations to IOP, HR professionals, wellbeing champions and managers towards improving interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. The chapter will also present recommendations for further research.

Chapter Four: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

In chapter four, the research linked the theoretical and empirical findings of the study by means of conclusions. It also discussed the study's limitations and made recommendations to IOPs, HR professionals, employee wellness specialists and managers in general. It will also present recommendations for future research.

1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The contents of this chapter briefly outline the scientific orientation of this study's research, followed by a presentation of the background, motivation, and problem statement for the research. The theoretical and empirical aims were conceptualised, and a brief discussion of the paradigm perspective, which served as the basis for this research, was outlined. The chapter concluded with the research design, adopted, limitations and recommendations, and a layout of this dissertation's chapters.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews literature in which workplace bullying and its related constructs are conceptualised. Finally, it presents an exploration of the literature on bullying interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

2.2 WORKPLACE BULLYING

Most organisations face serious challenges and find it hard to remain competitive (Bernotaite & Malinauskiene, 2017). These challenges are brought about by globalisation and technological changes (Eidizadeh et al., 2017). These changes result in downsizing, retrenchment, reskilling employees, acquiring new knowledge, pressure to perform, and new ways of working (Naseem & Ahmed, 2020). These changes give rise to ideological competitiveness which serves as a fertile ground for workplace bullying (Kalliath & Kalliath, 2012). A perfect example is that of Estonia which, as a post-transitional country has experienced reorganisation as a society but these changes induced high levels of uncertainty around employee wellness with the rise of workplace bullying incidences (Kalliath & Kalliath, 2015). Freud suggests civilisation is meant to protect human from forces of nature and to protect frailty, but ironically, it falls short of protecting people due to a lack of concomitant legislation (Hollis, 2017). The workplace is one area where social relations are important for employees' wellbeing and performance (Naseem & Ahmed, 2020) and these pressures strain relations between employees. There is a perception that even though organisations try to address this challenge, they are not doing enough to break the cycle of bullying (Hodgins et al., 2020).

So, what is workplace bullying? Workplace bullying is when an individual is subjected and exposed to repeated negative actions over time, resulting in the targeted or the victims being unable to defend themselves (Maidaniuc-Chirilă, 2020). According to Matsson & Jordan (2021), for it to be labelled as workplace bullying, these negative

behaviours aimed at an individual should have happened repeatedly, for example, weekly over a period of time (not less than 6 months). The basis for this definition is the frequency with which this incivility happens, the duration and lastly, the position of inferiority of the victim because of such actions (Rosander & Blomberg, 2019).

To explain the workplace bullying phenomenon further, Matsson & Jordan (2021) use two perspectives: the victim-perpetrator perspective and the Leymann perspective. The victim-perpetrator perspective has contributed immensely to the study of workplace bullying and has derived its foundation from studying bullying at school. According to Matsson and Jordan (2021), this perspective looks at workplace bullying from individuals and the notion that bullying results from social interactions between individuals, where one is the powerless victim and the other a powerful individual who is the perpetrator and the bully. This perspective goes further to say the difference between workplace bullying cannot be defined from only the action between the two participants but the duration and the frequency within which the victim endured the abuse. One of the outstanding shortcomings of this perspective is that it ignores the organisational factors that contribute to workplace bullying.

The Leymann perspective is derived from an early pioneer in workplace bullying called Heinz Leymann (Leymann, 1990). Leymann propagates that workplace bullying can be defined as ethical and unbecoming behaviour in which individuals at work communicate with one another. He called this type of bullying “mobbing”. Like the victim-perpetrator perspective, Leymann's studies were based on observations from bullying within the school setup. The hostility and unethical way that those in the position of power communicate with others can assist in better understanding the workplace bullying phenomenon (Leymann, 2009). Defining what workplace bullying is, Walker et al. (2022), more recently than Leymann (2009), alluded to the fact that there are certain behaviours that, when you observe or you are at the receiving end, one may deduce that this is typical workplace bullying. Anjum et al. (2019) add that these behaviours include insulting, verbal aggression, name-calling, unjustified criticism and humiliation and are planned, systematic and deliberate.

Matsson and Jordan (2021) describe workplace bullying as a situation where an individual is exposed to and has to endure repeated acts of intimidation and

harassment, both physical and emotional, by co-workers or senior employees at work over a period. Furthermore, Anjum et al. (2019) add that undesirable behaviour is repetitive and persistent for an action to be labelled as bullying. According to Reknes et al. (2021), workplace bullying is not an event but a process that includes different phases. In the initial phase, the exposure to bullying is mainly characterised by subtle negative actions aimed at the victims. At first, these negative actions are so subtle and not easily recognisable as workplace bullying. The second phase is characterised by more confrontational behaviour aimed at the victims. The victim is humiliated, isolated, and, in some cases, physically abused. The third phase is when the bullying becomes so severe that the victim realises they are defenceless against the onslaught. This phase is where the psychological part of the victims gets affected and serious mental issues set in (Reknes et al., 2021).

In a South African study conducted by Momberg (2011), the prevalence of workplace bullying was investigated and identified a need for codes of conduct to address the challenges of workplace bullying. This was brought about by the fact that South Africa has no legislation that specifically speaks to workplace bullying as compared to Western countries which have legislated preventative measures to counter workplace bullying. Instead, legislation speaks to harassment in the workplace, as indicated in Section 54 of the Employment Equity Act (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019). Therefore, to support legislation, the Code of Good Practice Conduct for workplace bullying was promulgated on the 18th of March 2022 (DEL, 2022). The Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment in the Workplace has placed a huge responsibility on employers to prevent workplace bullying.

2.2.1. Types of bullying

Bullying can be associated with certain behaviours at work (Liang, 2020). As illustrated in Table 2.1 below, Nel (2019) proposes six types of bullying. This includes physical aggression, verbal aggression; social manipulation; property attack; social rebuff; and cyber-attack.

Table 2.1

Forms of bullying (Nel, 2019)

Forms of bullying	Main pointers
Physical aggression	Hitting and kicking, intimidating behaviour
Verbal aggression	Shouting and insults
Social manipulation	Criticism, gossiping, talking behind one's back, spreading rumours
Property attack	Destroying, stealing one's property
Social rebuff	Ignoring or excluding someone
Cyber attack	Using electronic means, online

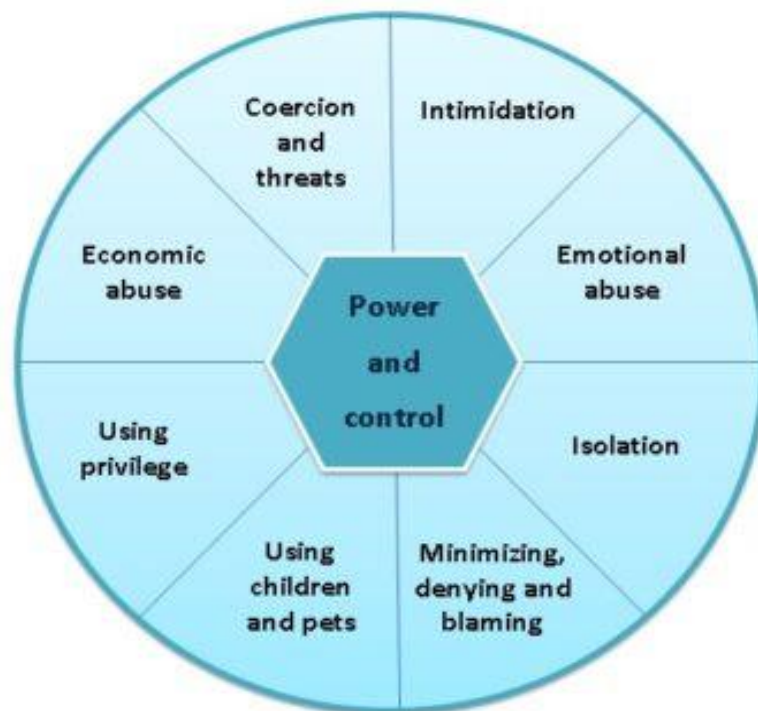
Physical aggression is the bodily attack where one is attacked physically and may include slapping, beating someone or kicking or shoving. As Nel (2019) continues, verbal aggression includes when someone shouts at the victims and how the perpetrator addresses or how the victims are talked to. Social manipulations include gossiping and talking behind the victims' backs. Property attacks are cases where the victims get sabotaged by destroying and stealing their property so they cannot perform their work tasks. Social rebuff is when victims are isolated and ignored. And lastly, cyberbullying is when perpetrators use online communication and emails to bully the victims. These types of bullying are associated with repeated aggression and negative behaviour towards the victim, based on the balance of power between the victim and the perpetrator, the harmful effects of the behaviour and its duration (Nel, 2019).

Behaviour that constitutes bullying includes but is not limited to employee isolation, being given less work than others, given overwhelming workloads, gossiping about and talking behind the back of the victim (Nel, 2019).

Scott (2018) uses the Workplace Power Control Wheel pertaining to workplace bullying to illustrate how workplace bullying plays out in the workplace. Like the work of Nel (2019), the Duluth Model Power Control Wheel indicates that bullies use different types of tactics in the workplace. This includes intimidation, where the bully may use looks and gestures to intimidate their targets or destroy their properties. They also use emotional abuse, where one is made to feel useless and unworthy of anything. Isolation is also one of the weapons used by the bullies where they control one's movement, whom to talk to and what information an employee can access or not. Bullies also joke about their behaviour as nothing serious but something small. Perpetrators also comment about victims pets and children as part of belittling them. Using privileges to deny others access is another means bullies use. Perpetrators also threaten victims by withholding their salaries or have their contracts terminated.

Figure 2.1

The Workplace Power Control Wheel Pertaining to Workplace Bullying. Source (adapted from the Power-Control Wheel used in the Duluth Model (Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs) [DAIP] (Scott, 2018)



2.2.2. Causes of workplace bullying

When one explores literature, there seem to be several causes for workplace bullying. These causes, factors, subsequent frameworks and theories will now be discussed in more detail below. According to Nel (2019), there are several reasons workplace bullying occurs, some of which seem to be at the heart of leadership where there is a perceived power imbalance between perpetrator and victim. Woodrow and Guest (2017) say leadership may prevent bullying or instil an environment which enhances bullying or be bullies themselves. Leadership may be viewed in two typologies, those who are destructive, who are the bullies themselves and allow workplace bullying to thrive and the weak leadership who are helpless and who allow workplace bullying to happen without doing anything to prevent it (Woodrow & Guest, 2017). Then there is also constructive leadership associated with preventing workplace bullying (Woodrow & Guest, 2017). There are cases where the victim is powerless, and those in leadership positions use their power to bully others (Park et al., 2020). On the other hand, Agotnes et al. (2018) explain that it could also be due to a lack of leadership which leads to workplace bullying.

Individuals placed in positions of leadership need to behave according to the responsibilities assigned to their roles (Park et al., 2020). Passive leaders and laissez-faire type of leadership create and aid an environment where bullying thrives (Rainey & Melzer, 2021). Motsei and Nkomo (2016) add that in South Africa, bullying can be attributed to organisational changes and work design. According to Motsei and Nkomo (2016), competition for a resource among employees, how the benefit structure is designed and the bureaucratic processes within an organisation may exacerbate the culture of bullying. Also, how management is structured, organisational change and restructuring may precipitate workplace bullying, resulting in employees feeling devalued, dissatisfied, and frustrated. This is fertile ground for bullying (Motsei & Nkomo, 2016).

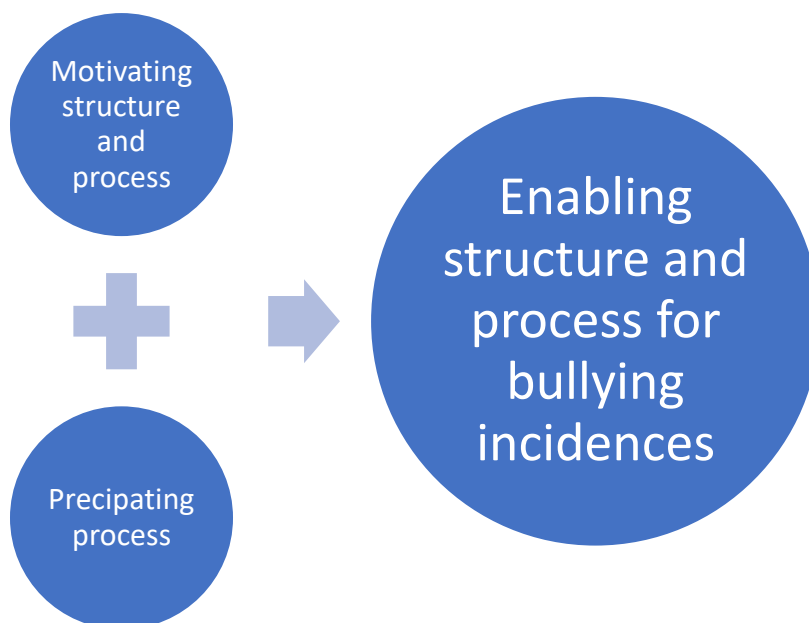
Salin's framework of antecedent to workplace bullying (see figure 2.2) outlines factors that contribute to bullying. Precipitating factors are those that trigger the onset of workplace bullying, like restructuring that happens within organisations. It also looks at the dissatisfaction of an individual with the structure of the organisation and how

tasks to be performed are designed. When tasks are designed ambiguously and an organisation is going through changes, it may lead to anxiety and frustration, which is conducive for workplace bullying incidences to emerge and even thrive.

Motivating factors are those factors that influence workplace bullying. One of the factors is where an organisation bases its reward to employees on their performance. This system encourages employees to perceive one another as competitors rather than team-mates or colleagues who are supposed to support one another. This competition among colleagues is a fertile breeding ground for workplace bullying. Enabling structure and process are those factors that enable as and provide the fertile ground for workplace bullying to thrive. When these motivating factors are complemented by precipitating factors, dissatisfaction sets in as enabling factor and bullying will thrive under those conditions. Therefore, workplace bullying can be attributed to individual behaviour and may also be caused by organisational factors (Motsi & Nkomo, 2016).

Figure 2.2

Salin's framework of organisational antecedents to workplace bullying (2003) as quoted by (Motsei & Nkomo, 2016).



When addressing factors contributing to workplace incidences, Maidaniuc-Chirilă (2020) mentions two important theoretical models based on social psychology theories. They are environmental and personality models; in simple terms, these are the organisational environment and individual disposition. Organisational environment says the job design and the environment within which an individual finds himself contributes to workplace bullying. How the job is designed and structured may create fertile ground for workplace bullying to thrive. A practical example would be role ambiguity, where the tasks to be performed are not clearly defined or the workload that the task demands from an individual employee. Individual disposition has to do with one personality traits and attributes. Finally, according to Maidaniuc-Chirilă (2020), an individual characteristic may contribute to one being bullied or being a bully.

Reknes et al. (2021) add the Victim Precipitation Theory, where some individuals may exhibit certain behavioural characteristics that make them vulnerable and contribute to them being at the receiving end of workplace bullying incidences. Neuroticism in Five-Factor Model as a trait has been found to contribute to workplace bullying. Individuals who are high in two sub facets of Neuroticism, which are anxiousness and angry hostility, are more prone to be the victims of workplace bullying than others (Reknes et al., 2021).

Notelaers et al. (2018) have a different view when it comes to workplace contributing factors and work with the Effort-Reward Imbalance Model. The base for this model is distributive justice, where employees feel they are putting a lot of effort into their tasks but are rewarded less than their effort. When employees feel they are worth more than what they are rewarded, this stresses them. That perception of imbalance between their self-worth and reward may, in the long run, be unbearable and lead to an individual behaving in a manner that may be contrary to organisational norms, which in turn may lead to workplace bullying incidences (Notelaers et al., 2018).

Goodboy et al. (2017) again have a different view when working with factors that contribute to workplace bullying and propose the Job Demand Control-Support model as the base of their argument. Individual employees who are subjected to high demanding jobs and tasks are prone to be bullied by perpetrators. This model speaks to the perceived lack of leadership by those in senior positions within the organisation.

Employees who perceive a lack of support from leaders and their supervisors may become victims of workplace bullying as they are unprotected.

In the context of this study, all the above-discussed theories and models are deemed relevant and should be considered in exploring managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. They can also further enhance the comprehensive nature of recommendations to be made towards how interventions can be improved or be more effective in eradicating workplace bullying.

2.2.3. Impact of bullying on the organisation

It has been documented that bullying does not only affect the physical and mental health of the victim but also significantly affects the organisation (Robert, 2018). The cost of workplace bullying to organisations can be observed in various forms. Financially, organisations incur additional expenses to implement employee assistance programmes and suffer low productivity, which might impact their bottom-line and profit (Liang, 2020). Organisations might also suffer reputational damage due to poor quality service or products (Naseem & Ahmed, 2020). Finally, from an employee behaviour point of view, organisations might experience high incidences of employee turnover and low productivity due to absenteeism, presenteeism and employee disengagement (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019). Low morale, motivation, lack of trust and poor relationships among colleagues and within teams are but a few other factors which result from workplace bullying and negatively impact the overall success of an organisation (Ferreira, 2019; John et al., 2021).

Geleta (2020) speaks of the two important impact factors of workplace bullying on the organisation. That is, the effects of bullying on the organisational level and the financial impact of workplace bullying. Pertaining to impact on an organisational level, organisations, teams within the organisation, and employees suffer because of deviant and unbecoming behaviour resulting in ineffective teams, low work performance and work engagement, and high turnover, to name but a few (Walker & Stones, 2020). Organisational financial impact factors may include ineffective performance and productivity, poor financial performance, having to defend lawsuits, wasted

compensation and high levels of absenteeism, expenses due to increased staff turnover, and increased EAP-related expenses. Another factor is compensation to be paid to bullying victims. As the impact of workplace bullying affects individual employees, most experience mental and physical consequences, which results in them taking a leave of absence most of the time. This means that organisations incur costs in compensating those employees during their time off work (Geleta, 2020).

Geleta (2020) speaks to individual-level impact and mentions two important aspects. That is the psychological impact and physiological impact of workplace bullying on organisations. Psychological impact relates to low morale, disengagement, anxiety other stress-related problems (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). Physiological impact is where continuous exposure to bullying leads illness which results in prolonged absence that affect the organisation (Walker & Stones, 2020).

2.2.4. Impact of bullying on individuals

Workplace bullying is harmful to both the individual and the organisation, and as a result, individuals may suffer serious physical and mental health issues (Annor & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020), such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, sleeping and eating disorders (Robert, 2018). The effects of bullying may be so severe that some individuals may develop cardiovascular disease due to high-stress levels (Caponecchia et al., 2020). Some resort to unavailability, withdrawal, and mood swings and may even terminate their employment (Wech et al., 2020). Employees may also show low morale, lack of motivation, low job satisfaction job engagement. Field and Ferris (2021) mention the social aspect of workplace bullying, where individuals at the receiving end of bullying feel they do not belong. Humans are social beings, and the emotional pain of being bullied, isolated or excluded is as severe as the emotions accompanying physical bullying as every human has the basic need of belonging (Filed & Ferris, 2021).

In addition, Geleta (2020) speaks to individual-level impact and mentions two important aspects. That is the psychological and physiological impact of workplace bullying on individuals. Psychological impact relates to anxiety, fear, uneasiness and other stress-related challenges (Bernstein & Trimm, 2016). Physiological impact mean

that exposure to bullying leads to physical illness like high blood pressure, diabetes, chest pains, cannot sleep well, headaches, muscle tension, memory loss and other physical-related ailments (Walker & Stones, 2020).

In another study conducted by Ferris et al. (2021), five different types of impact are noted that workplace bullying has on individuals. They include physical, psychological, cognitive and work-related, social symptoms and personality changes. Like Geleta (2020), the physical impact is when an individual suffers physiological symptoms such as heart-related diseases, high blood pressure and stress-related disease. Psychologically, some individuals suffer from emotional trauma, anxiety and feelings of hopelessness, to name but a few. Cognitive intelligence is impacted when some employees experience a deterioration in their reasoning ability. On a social level, some suffer from poor self-belief and withdraw from society. And lastly, some employees experience personality changes that resonate with lower levels of self-worth, affect their confidence, and thus behave totally different from their normal selves.

Paull et al. (2020) argue that it is not only victims who suffer at the hands of bullies but also those witnessing these incidences. Employees who witness negative behaviour inflicted on others tend to be emotionally affected, too (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2021; Sims & Sun, 2012). The results of witnessing bullying may equal that of the victims in reduced productivity and low performance (Ng et al., 2020). Even though the bystanders may be affected negatively by witnessing bullying incidences, they may also be perpetrators (D'Cruz & Noronha 2015). The actions of bystanders and their inaction play a significant role in the organisation (Standen et al., 2014). They can act in reporting these unfortunate incidences, or they can be active participants who assist perpetrators in tormenting others (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2021).

Hayat and Afshari (2020) use the conservation of resources (COR) theory as a framework to understand the impact of workplace bullying on individuals. COR theory says it is innate for individuals to have certain resources they treasure about themselves. These resources can be grouped into four broad categories and include objects, which are tools of work; secondly, conditions, which are the length of time spent in an organisation and the support that one receives within; thirdly, personal, which are those personal attributes and characteristic that one possesses; and lastly

energy resources which are the skills, knowledge, physical and mental strength. COR propagates that individuals will strive to protect these resources but when threatened with loss or an individual is on the verge of losing a key resource. They will try to acquire new resources to ensure survival. The COR framework acknowledges employees' professional life gets affected. Therefore the question then needs to be answered, what happens when employees lose a key resource and there is very little hope of acquiring a new set of resources? According to COR, possibilities include employees becoming less efficient, and as a result, burnout sets in and could result in a decrease in the level of productivity and professional mistakes setting in, all of which result in work dissatisfactions and employee disengagement (Hayat & Afshari, 2020).

According to Liang (2020) and Yoo and Lee (2018), bullying incidences not only impact the victim, but the negative impact is also felt beyond the workplace and affects people within the victim's social and family environment. The victim's work-life balance gets effected emotional distress is often transferred over to their immediate family members (Raja et al., 2018). Sarwar et al. (2021) concur and add that employees who suffer workplace bullying may emulate this behaviour and transfer it to their families. This aggression and frustration meted out to them spill over to the victims' homes, either in the form of emotional disengagement or where the bullied becomes the bully (Restubog et al., 2011).

2.3 BULLYING INTERVENTIONS

Organisations are forced to find a solution to the bullying scourge (Richardson et al., 2016), and numerous interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying have been developed over time (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018; Osler, 2021). It is important to consider all types of interventions available to eradicate workplace bullying (Caponecchia et al., 2020), which may curb bullying before it rears its head (proactive) and others which are envisaged to respond (reactionary) to it (Caponecchia et al., 2020).

Coponecchia et al. (2020) proposed a taxonomy aimed at organisation-based interventions in addressing workplace bullying interventions. The taxonomy consists of five elements: specificity, mode; agent; focus; and time course. The first task is that

the specificity of the intervention should be established to ensure it addresses the objective, which is what it is intended for. This is followed by the mode, which determines whether the interventions are informal or need to be formalised. Then what follows is who are the employees tasked with taking responsibility to design, implement and drive this intervention. In essence, the organisation has a responsibility, but employees will become the agents. Thus, the organisation is responsible for appointing agents tasked with designing, implementing, and driving the intervention.

The next element is the focus, which indicates who the interventions will be aimed at. Will the interventions focus on the victims of bullying, the perpetrator, the leadership role, or perhaps all three? Lastly, the time course which considers the timing of the workplace bullying interventions. Will the intervention be pro-active and work towards preventing it completely, or will it be reactionary and only respond once bullying has been established, or perhaps both (Coponecchia et al., 2020)?

Numerous intervention programs and models have been developed over the years. These include detailing whether the interventions are primary, secondary, or tertiary. Another way of intervention is whether these interventions are happening prior to bullying incidences happen when they are happening or after the fact. Other interventions consider the Transactional Model or Stages of Change Model. Other interventions consider the Inpatient Therapy model, the role of the HR practitioner and the psychosocial Safety Climate Model. These are detailed below.

Typically, when considering the type of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying, it is imperative to look at the reasons behind the interventions, which will be preceded by the conditions that led and contributed to workplace bullying (Escartín, 2016). According to Eirnasen and Eirnasen (2021), workplace bullying interventions typically address bullying before (pre), when it happens (during), and after (post) the incidences have happened. There is a primary intervention where the aim is to be proactive and put measures in place to prevent workplace bullying from happening. The second interventions, a more reactive intervention, are secondary, where workplace bullying cases are addressed when they happen (Notelaers et al., 2019). Finally, tertiary interventions, where the aftereffects of workplace bullying incidences

are addressed. This is the after effect of the bullying is addressed using continuous counselling and support to the victims, as well as considering the impact of the bullying on the organisation and implementing measures to deal with the damage caused and prevent future negative impacts (Schwickerath & Zapf, 2020).

As indicated by Eirnasen and Eirnasen (2021), when addressing workplace bullying, tertiary interventions happen after the fact. According to Munir (2020), The Transtheoretical Model or “Stages of Change Model” is an effective model that has been used as a successful measure to eradicate workplace bullying. This post or tertiary intervention model is specifically aimed at the bullies, not the victims. The base for this model assesses the readiness of a bully to stop and quit the wayward and unhealthy behaviour and, in the process, acknowledge what they’ve done is wrong and display the willingness to change and transform their behaviour towards others. The Transtheoretical Model holds that the bully must go through six adjacent stages as part of the transformation process to be regarded as complete. The first stage is the pre-contemplation stage which is characterised by the bully not being willing to change in the next six months. Secondly, this is followed by contemplation, where the bully realises the need to change in the next six months. The third stage is preparation, where the bully prepares to change in the next thirty days. Fourthly, there is the action stage where the bully manages to change and instils good behaviour during the next six months. Fifth is the maintenance stage, where the bully sustains this newly found and adopted behaviour for the next six months. Finally, the sixth stage is the termination stage, where the bully has repented, no longer displays bullying behaviour and becomes a role model to others.

Schwickerath and Zapf (2020) adopted an Inpatient Therapy Programme as a tertiary intervention they deem effective as an after-effect model. This programme applies Cognitive Based Therapy and focuses on the victims after the bullying incidences occurred. The Inpatient Therapy Programme follows different steps during therapy. This includes establishing a distance between the bully and the victim or the workplace where such incidences were happening, followed by understanding the severity of the incidences, then deciding about seeking help, and lastly, taking action. As indicated before, victims of workplace bullying end up experiencing psychological and mental challenges (Annor & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). However, these victims often tend to

search for the causes of their psychological and mental health issues elsewhere and do not consider the bullying they experience in the workplace as a potential main contributor to these challenges (Schwickerath & Zapf, 2020).

Typically, the HR practitioner, which includes HR personnel and employee wellness officers, have become strategic partners in the organisation and are the “architects” of workplace bullying programs (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019). For any organisation to remain competitive, HR practitioners are at the centre of relations between employees and the organisation (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019). Therefore, HR practitioners have a responsibility to ensure a workplace free of bullying and, if bullying occurs, to investigate the occurrence thereof and develop strategies to not only assist victims of this phenomenon but also to implement measures to prevent it from happening (Orr & Seter, 2020). As indicated previously, failure to do so may have numerous negative economic and reputational risk consequences for the organisation, ultimately affecting its success (Orr & Seter, 2020). Subsequently, anti-bullying policies need to be developed, outlining the organisation's stance on workplace bullying and processes and procedures put in place to deal with bullying incidences. These policies should include, among others, clear guidelines on what constitutes bullying, who the custodians are, who will be taking responsibility to deal with bullying instances, how employees will be protected against bullies, and finally, how the organisation will deal with bullies and support victims of bullies.

Finally, another model relevant to eradicating and dealing with workplace bullying is the Psychosocial Safety Climate Model, which is regarded as one of the most effective workplace bullying interventions model available. According to Dollard et al. (2017), this model aims to institute interventions on the organisational level led by organisational management. This model has four main pillars: senior management support and commitment to psychological health through involvement and commitment. Those tasked with managing employees take proactive actions and swiftly intervene when bullying happens. The second pillar is the priority managers give to employees' health-related problems as opposed to managers focusing only on the productivity of the employees. Employee health-related matters like workplace bullying are prioritised ahead of their performance. The third pillar is how management and the organisation communicate with its employees about health-related issues that

affect them and how these issues are communicated. The last pillar is the management participation and its commitment to stress prevention, integration of all stakeholders within the organisation from labour movement, health and safety personnel, and occupational safety officers responsible for the wellbeing of employees. The psychosocial Safety Climate Model is the most suitable model that would form the basis of the study.

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented a review of the literature to explore how workplace bullying and its related constructs are conceptualised. This discussion outlined definitions of workplace bullying and theories on what constitutes workplace bullying were outlined. Lastly, this chapter also explored bullying interventions implemented by organisations to eradicate this workplace phenomenon.

CHAPTER 3

ARTICLE

EXPLORING MANAGERS' PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT ERADICATING WORKPLACE BULLYING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Orientation: Workplace bullying has been identified as a growing phenomenon with detrimental effects on both individuals and the organisation. Organisations lose key talent and revenue because of bullying. Interventions are implemented to combat this growing and unwanted trend, yet it does not seem to show signs of abating. Numerous studies have been conducted on this topic and interventions designed, yet as workplace bullying seems to remain a problem, it necessitates further research to explore the factors that could result in effectiveness of these interventions.

Research purpose: The study aimed to explore managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. Also, to make recommendations towards improving interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

Motivation for the study: Any organisation needs to make sure their employees are healthy and happy for them to perform optimally and to ensure a healthy, thriving, and competitive organisation. Since workplace bullying seems to remain a problem, the question remains why interventions aimed to eradicate workplace bullying are not as

effective as one would hope. Therefore, this study aims to create recommendations for improving such interventions to ensure a conducive working environment.

Research design, approach, and method: A qualitative, interpretive research design, approach and methodology were adopted. Purposive sampling yielded a sample size of ten participants with whom semi-structured interviews were conducted. The collected data were analysed using content analysis.

Main findings: The findings provide insight into managers' perceived effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. Five main themes emerged: forms of bullying, factors enabling a bullying environment, disabling impact of bullying, effectiveness of current interventions and recommendations for improved interventions.

Practical implications: The findings of this study suggest that individual employees' awareness of bullying should be raised, and tools and techniques that increase the competency of individuals to respond effectively in situations where bullying occurs should be developed and implemented. Facilitating the ability of individuals to act by helping them understand core institutional values and resources available to support, create and maintain a positive work climate should be facilitated and leaders should be engaged at every level to understand their role and responsibility in addressing bullying and taking action to prevent it.

Contribution/value-add: It is anticipated that the study will add knowledge to the industrial and organisational psychology (IOP) field. It will also help human resource (HR) professionals improve employee relations and increase productivity and employee performance, which will benefit the organisations and their employees. Managers will gain immensely from this study by promoting and leading an organizational culture free of workplace bullying. It will assist EAP practitioners in improving on the current interventions that are in place to eradicate workplace bullying and create a healthy and conducive working environment within organisations.

Keywords: Qualitative study; workplace bullying; workplace bullying interventions; interpretivist paradigm; content analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Key focus of the study

Progress has been made and much effort undertaken to study workplace bullying (Murray et al., 2019). The consequences of workplace bullying, the types of bullying; what causes bullying; and the prevalence of workplace bullying has been widely researched (Branch et al., 2019; Murray et al., 2019). In pursuit of reducing the impact that workplace bullying has on individuals and the organisation in general, organisations strive to intervene through several mechanisms, such as awareness, educational opportunities, and encouraging the employee to report bullying incidences (Munir et al., 2020). Organisations should consider available yet effective interventions that can assist in eradicating workplace bullying. This includes being aware of which interventions are effective in specific scenarios and how best to implement and monitor these interventions to ensure their continued effectiveness (Murray et al., 2019). This study explored managers' perceived effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

Background to the study

It is undisputed that workplace bullying has a negative and detrimental effect on both the individual and the organisation (Suggala et al., 2020). Despite many efforts to address these inhumane acts, workplace bullying persists (Tye-Williams et al., 2020). The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 requires employers to bring about and maintain, as far as reasonably practicable, a safe work environment without risk to workers' physical and mental health (Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993). This Act further states that both parties must proactively identify potential areas of risk and implement control measures to ensure a safe workplace. Tye-William et al. (2020) add that an employer has a fundamental responsibility to ensure that employee dignity and human rights are recognised and respected in the workplace. Employers must ensure that employees work in a healthy environment if they desire optimal performance from these employees (Munir et al., 2021). Workplace bullying directly threatens employees' mental and physical wellness and violates their right to work in a safe environment where they can thrive (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2021). In a study conducted

by Khan et al. (2021), it was noted that 68% of executives in South Africa agree that the prevalence of workplace bullying has reached unacceptable proportions. As per the Workplace Bullying Institute (2013), this phenomenon requires serious and urgent attention to be eradicated.

Research purpose

Considering the far-reaching and serious consequences of workplace bullying for both the employee and the organisation due to the unhealthy work environment it creates, it is a topic which requires serious attention (Hodgins et al., 2020). According to Murray et al. (2019), organisations tend to implement interventions aimed at educating, coaching and assisting employees in dealing with bullying, but the question remains whether these interventions yield the intended outcomes on an individual, team and organisational level. Furthermore, many studies seem to be available reporting on the phenomenon of workplace bullying in the Western world of business, but it seems few have been undertaken focusing on the African continent, thus resulting in us perhaps not understanding it sufficiently in the African context (Motsei & Nkomo, 2016; Van der Westhuizen, 2021). Also, many studies seem to focus on the effect of workplace bullying on the victims and their organisations and how to deal with it. Yet studies exploring the critical success factors such a programme should consist of, that is, a process and intervention level, seems lacking (Munir et al., 2020; Rai & Argawal, 2017). In line with the aim of this research, it is imperative to study which interventions are successful in eradicating workplace bullying and what factors they consist of that make them successful (Murray et al., 2019). This will enable IOPs, HR professionals, wellbeing champions and managers to improve current interventions, eradicate workplace bullying, and create a harmonious and safe workplace where employees can thrive and achieve strategic organisational objectives. In South Africa and globally, it is a basic and fundamental right for all employees to work in a safe and healthy environment.

Research is a systematic way of finding out about things that we don't know or things that nobody knows about (Walliman, 2010). "It is about advancing the frontiers of knowledge" (Walliman, 2010 p. 7). It is always imperative to learn from other scholars and their research, which provides other researchers with the basis for starting and

which direction to take with their own research (Salkind, 2014). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to answer the research question of what managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying are. This study was also keen on answering the question of what recommendations can be made to improve the effectiveness of such interventions to ensure workplace bullying is eradicated. In light thereof, the following specific aims were noted.

The specific literature review aims were to:

- Conceptualise workplace bullying and its related constructs.
- Explore bullying interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

The specific aims of the empirical study were to:

- Explore managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.
- Make recommendations towards the improvement of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

TRENDS FROM THE LITERATURE

Workplace bullying is defined as a situation where an individual (target) is subjected to harmful acts by others at work (Salin, 2021), and it has three facets, which are (1) frequency, which describes how often the incidence happens (2) duration, which indicates for how long, and (3) intensity of the bullying. For it to be seen as bullying, the actions toward the individual employee being bullied should have occurred repeatedly (Tye-Williams et al., 2020). These negative behaviours toward the victim should have happened once a week and over a six-month period (Anjum et al., 2019). The victim is seen as helpless and defenceless against the aggressors (Reknes et al., 2021).

It is agreed that workplace bullying has reached undesirable levels, and its impact is felt across organisations (Naseem & Ahmed, 2020). In South Africa, 77.8% of employees have attested that they have experienced workplace bullying in one form or another (WBI, 2013). There have been several studies conducted on the

consequences of workplace bullying (Baillien et al. 2017), and it is evident how the impact of workplace bullying has a negative impact on employees being bullied, those who are witness to colleagues being bullied, and finally the overall success of the organisation (Ngwane, 2018). Examples of workplace bullying include, among others, physical attacks, verbal abuse, social isolation, segregation, taking credit for someone's work, gossip and talking behind someone's back (Cunniff & Mostert, 2015). Previous studies about workplace bullying fall short in terms of exploring the interventions in place to eradicate this phenomenon and, specifically, the effectiveness of such interventions (Rai, 2016). Subsequently, there is a need to conduct further research on this phenomenon and how it can best be eradicated (Workman-Davies, 2019).

Björklund and Hellman (2019) posit that there is a perception that only managers, because of their positions, are the main perpetrators and their subordinates are always at the receiving end of being bullied. However, Busby et al. (2022) also note that managers can be victimised and bullied by their subordinates. Being new in a managerial role, role ambiguity, and a lack of support from those in power and influence may lead to managers being bullied (Björklund & Hellman, 2019).

Bullying has serious and unwanted consequences on both organisations and employees. Organisations suffer reputational damages, increased absenteeism, low employee productivity, low work engagement and low employee satisfaction. According to Mikkelsen et al. (2020), bullied individuals suffer psychological distress resulting in low self-esteem (Theophilus, 2021), depression, mental health problems, stress, and anxiety. Others developed physiological conditions like cardiovascular disease and diabetes, among others (Mikkelsen et al., 2020). Workplace bullying hinders employees' ability to sustain performance and engagement (Ciby, 2022). In severe instances, employees even contemplate suicide to escape bullies (Rosander et al., 2022). Munir et al. (2021) add that the cost to the organisation is also higher, as it might result in high employee turnover, which means they lose critical skills, must incur the expense of recruiting and training new employees, see a rise in litigation expenses, lowered productivity, increased absenteeism and presenteeism, and in some instances a higher demand for counselling and wellness services.

Organisations and employees get impacted negatively as bullied employees get disengaged and demotivated (Mikkelsen et al., 2020). This means that employee productivity is affected, and their overall performance is affected. In the long run, demotivated and disengaged employees mean that the overall productivity and performance of the organisation are negatively impacted (Ciby, 2022).

Bullying takes different shapes and forms (Maidaniuc-Chirilă, 2019). These forms may include verbal attacks such as shouting, humiliation, and silly jokes. Physical attacks manifest in shoving, pushing victims, hitting, beating, and physically threatening the victims. Social manipulation includes isolating, excluding, and taking credit for the victim's work, and cyber-attacks manifest in rude emails and online bullying.

Theophilus (2021) label types of bullying a little different than Maidaniuc-Chirilă (2019). Firstly, person-related bullying refers to negative behaviours that can potentially cause serious mental and psychological harm to the victim. This may cause anxiety, mood swings and signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Then, work-related bullying is unwanted, negative, repeated acts that have the potential to derail the performance of the victims. These acts can potentially lower productivity and the effectiveness of the victims. Also, institutional bullying is situated in organisational culture, structure and policies, which tacitly promote destructive behaviours and negatively affect employees. This is where those in positions of power and leadership ignore the wellbeing of their employees. Then bullying from managers is a widely researched and spoken about form of bullying where managers pick on certain employees and subject them to all sorts of humiliation, manipulation, degradation and isolation. Finally, bullying by colleagues occurs among co-workers in the same position or on the same job grade, where one is subjected to gossiping, degrading comments, talking behind one's back and nasty comments and isolation (Theophilus, 2021).

Vranjes et al. (2021) agree with the above researchers and concur bullying behaviour may include situations where someone is isolated or socially excluded from the group or where essential information is purposefully withheld. Rahman et al. (2020) finally also add bullying behaviour may include overburdening the victim with unpleasant tasks, micro-managing, and fault-searching.

Maidaniuc-Chirilă (2019) notes that individual and organisational factors contribute to bullying. Individual factors refer to the victims' and perpetrators' personal characteristics and personality traits, while organisational factors include organisational culture and how employees interact with each other. Khan et al. (2021) argue that competition brought about by globalisation contributes to workplace bullying. High rates of economic development and ever-changing technological advancements have put so much pressure on organisations to remain competitive, thus leading to strained social interactions that have not been witnessed as frequently before, leading to workplace bullying (Khan et al., 2021). Furthermore, Rosander et al. (2022) cite poor organisational leadership as one of the leading contributors to workplace bullying.

Einarsen and Einarsen (2021) mention different phases, levels and actors involved in the intervention process level. These include grouping the interventions as primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions while classifying them as pre-, during and post-bullying interventions. Primary interventions are aimed at preventing bullying and stopping it from occurring at all in the first place. These measures prevent and eliminate risk factors that may offset bullying in an organisation. Secondary interventions are those aimed at managing bullying and its evolution. Thus, considering how it manifests itself, how best it can be stopped while in the process, and how it can be prevented from spreading. Tertiary interventions are concerned with the aftermath of bullying incidents. How best to manage the consequences, and how can the victims be assisted in reducing the negative impact bullying had on their wellbeing?

El Ghaziri et al. (2019) add that primary interventions include having effective policies and adhering to legislation; training programmes aimed at enhancing leadership and management skills as well as improving interpersonal skills among colleagues and leadership; and, in general, creating an overall awareness of what is bullying and how it should be dealt with. Secondary interventions may include confidential reporting of incidences, supported by fair and trustworthy investigations, sanctioning and disciplinary action against the perpetrators. Lastly, tertiary interventions include programmes aimed at supporting the victims through employee assistance programmes and implementing remedial programs for perpetrators (El Ghaziri et al.,

2019). All these interventions may be developed and implemented on different levels ranging from individual, organisational, governmental, and societal levels, depending on where they happen and where the need is to be addressed (Eirnasen & Einarsen, 2021).

According to Orr and Seter (2020), there are different types of organisational development and levels of interventions to deal with workplace bullying. Organisational level-based interventions develop policies to counter bullying before it happens. Policies may be developed to stop bullying in its process and how to mitigate the after-effects of bullying. Organisational policies can be developed to promote a culture of zero tolerance toward workplace bullying. They also provide a safe space for victims to report bullying incidents. Target-based interventions are where new entrants to the organisation are socialised to anti-bullying policies during their onboarding processes. This is where third-party interventions are recommended to reconcile the victim and the perpetrators. Instigator-based interventions are mainly aimed at perpetrators. Anti-bullying policies are explained, and perpetrators need to know that their actions will never be tolerated in the business. This can also be done during the onboarding process. Bystander-based interventions are meant for those witnessing bullying incidents. In pre-bullying, bystanders can be socialised to report bullying when they witness and observe such behaviour. In-process means encouraging witnesses to report bullying, and post-process is the process of recognising and congratulating bystanders for reporting workplace bullying (Orr & Seter, 2020).

Policy communication, education and behaviour training should be conducted proactively to create awareness and prevent bullying before it happens (Munir et al., 2020). This should be followed by supporting victims through coaching and counselling on how to respond to being bullied, equip them with tools on how to resist the bullying, and lastly, how to counter the psychological and physiological effects of being bullied (Munir et al., 2020). One coping strategy employees being bullied can adopt to minimise and manage the negative impact is Folkman and Lazarus' stress theory (Biggs et al., 2017) which identified two problem-focused coping strategies: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is where the aim is to manage the encounter, while emotionally focused coping is where one

considers an employee's ability to apply emotional regulation. Emotion-focused coping may be influenced by one's personality and locus of control (Björklund and Hellman, 2019).

There are several stages employees go through when they attempt to cope with bullying (Björklund & Hellman, 2019). The Initial stage is where an employee underestimates and/or ignores the problem by choosing to keep quiet and ignore it. The next stage is usually when the employee realises the problem is persisting and will not be going away, after which they then decide to act and confront the bullies (Maidaniuc-Chirilă, 2020). When confronting the bully does not help, and the victim senses threats to their health or wellbeing because of the bullying, they may seek support from others and/or ultimately leave the organisation if the problem is not solved or the bullying escalates to a next level (Maidaniuc-Chirilă, 2020).

Research design

A research design is when a researcher designs a formal plan and deliberately answers the research questions and how the research processes will be conducted to meet the main aims of the research (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 37). This research adopted an exploratory, qualitative research design (Rahi, 2017).

Research approach

The interpretivist paradigm was more suitable for making meaning and interpreting the managers' lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). For this study, managers' lived experiences were interpreted through inductive and interpretive approaches, which focused on understanding the individual meaning and the importance of reporting on the complexity of the situation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) when they shared their perceptions about the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

The following assumptions formed the basis of this study:

- Ontological assumptions speak to the nature of reality as experienced differently by individuals and what can be known about that reality as seen and interpreted by that individual (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, this study aimed to explore the nature of the reality of how managers perceive the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.
- Epistemological assumptions refer to the relationship the researcher establishes with the participants who own the knowledge of the topic being studied. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, the researcher aimed to establish a trusting relationship with the managers to allow them to feel comfortable to share authentically their experience of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.
- Methodological assumptions refer to the practical method the researcher applies to gain insight and knowledge into what participants believe in acquiring additional knowledge on the topic being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Therefore, this research was guided by a research design which enabled the researcher to methodically gain insight into the lived experiences of the managers to better understand their perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying and to enable the researcher to make recommendations toward the improvement of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

The study approach employed was phenomenology. Phenomenology approach is more suited when studying effective emotional as well as more intense human experiences (Worthington, 2013). Phenomenology is what appears in the consciousness and that which give unique meaning to individual (Manen, 2017), hence it assists in participants giving meaning to their experiences of workplace bullying.

Research strategy

The researcher employed an interpretive strategy to gain deeper insight and understand how managers perceive the effectiveness of interventions to eradicate

workplace bullying. In addition, to obtain recommendations on how such interventions can improve or be effective in eradicating workplace bullying. This was done by listening to and recording the subjective views and experiences of the participants (Rahi, 2017).

Research methodology

This section gives an overview of the research setting, a description of the entrée, and establishes the research roles, sampling, and data collection methods. Additionally, how data was recorded, strategies employed to ensure data quality, ethical principles, and the data analysis method applied are discussed.

Researching setting

The research setting is the environment in which the research will be conducted. (Asenahabi, 2019). In this study, the research setting was an organisation in the FMCG sector in Gauteng South Africa, where bullying seems to be a regular and troublesome occurrence affecting both employees and the organisation negatively. The organisation employs approximately 10 000 employees across different skills and job levels. Even though most organisations face daily challenges with workplace bullying, in this organisation, managers are often challenged with instances of workplace bullying reported to them and which they need to deal with. Therefore, in line with the topic of this study, this organisation was an ideal setting to conduct this research.

Entrée and establishing researcher roles.

The HR Director granted permission to undertake the study. Unisa granted ethical clearance (see annexure C). The manager who has been in the business for more than two years was identified by the researcher and, via email, informed of the study using a participant information sheet. This information sheet outlined the rationale for the study and invited them to participate. All managers who indicated their willingness to participate were requested to sign an informed consent form before the data

collection. See Annexure B for an example of the informed consent form. In line with COVID-19 protocols, participants were invited to partake in the interviews via Microsoft Teams. Participant anonymity and confidentiality were protected by using pseudonyms and conducting the meeting privately. The researcher fulfilled an empathetic and subjective role for respondents to feel comfortable sharing their in-depth, personal experiences (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The researcher acknowledges his own biases because of his shared working experience with the participants and is a colleague of the managers. The researcher eliminated bias by asking respondents to confirm their understanding and interpretation of what the respondents shared to ensure the captured data accurately reflects their narrative (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006; Yin, 2010).

Trustworthiness was important to ensure a rigorous study. The semi-structured interview questions (see Annexure A) guided the researcher to remain true to the research aims.

Sampling

The population of this study were approximately 10 000 employees within the FMCG sector. Purposive sampling was used as this enabled the collection of rich data from participants, that is, managers, who can speak with authority to the topic being researched as they have lived experience with the phenomenon in question (Etikan et al., 2016). The researcher decides what needs to be known and purposively goes out to find participants who will be able to provide relevant data (Etikan et al., 2016). Therefore, the purposively selected sample was consistent with managers who could share their views on the effectiveness of interventions to eradicate workplace bullying. In addition, they could make recommendations on how such interventions can be improved or be more effective in eradicating workplace bullying.

Within qualitative research, there are questions about the appropriate minimum number of participants to be interviewed. According to Abdul et al. (2018), in qualitative research, the number of participants cannot be the primary objective if the main purpose is to gather as much data as the researcher can get to receive in-depth information about the phenomenon being studied. The sample size is guided by

answering the question of whether adding additional participants will provide new data or not and should no new information or themes emerge, data saturation has been reached (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). Thus, the researcher stopped recruiting participants when themes were repeated, no new data was forthcoming, and the participants provided no additional insight. There is no one-size-fits-all in research. Data need to be analysed until no new information is provided (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

In this study, ten managers were selected to partake as they complied with the following inclusion criteria. That is, any person in a managerial position, irrespective of age, race, or gender, with two or more years' experience as a manager and who had experience dealing with bullying incidences and subsequently gained experience and insight into the available interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. Table 3.1 provides an outline of the characteristics of the ten participants, including the managerial positions they hold.

Table 3.1

Biographical information of participants

Participant	Race	Gender	Position
P 1	African	Male	Technical Manager
P 2	African	Female	HR Manager
P 3	African	Female	HR Manager
P 4	African	Male	Logistic Manager
P 5	Indian	Female	Quality Manager
P 6	African	Male	Technical Manager
P 7	African	Male	Production Manager
P 8	African	Male	Production Manager
P 9	White	Male	Engineering Manager
P 10	White	Male	Production Manager

Table 3.2 provides an outline of the inclusion and exclusion criteria according to which the then participants were selected.

Table 3.2

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Manager with over two years experience in the organisation.	Managers with less than 2 years' experience
Managers who have experienced bullying	Managers who haven't experienced bullying
Managers who have used intervention to eradicate bullying	Managers who haven't used any intervention to eradicate bullying

Data collection methods

According to Barriball and While (1993), within interpretive, qualitative research, semi-structured interviews are effective ways of collecting data in people's natural settings by allowing the participants to elaborate on what they know and how they feel about a specific phenomenon being investigated (Barriball & While, 1993). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain insight into the subjective experiences of managers and their experiences of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. Also, to gain their insight into the possible recommendation of how current interventions can be improved to make a greater impact.

It is important when conducting semi-structured interviews to look at the research approach the researcher employs, the purpose and goal of the research, and the questions to be asked in the interviews (Flick, 2004). Therefore, the study used a semi-structured interview guide (see Annexure A) in which open-ended questions were formulated to guide the researcher to stay on course in line with the research aims. Due to COVID-19 and social distancing protocols, interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams. The interviews were conducted in English, as the participants were comfortable with this language.

Data recording

In accordance with the guidance provided by the Research Ethics Review Committee and the Health Professions Council of South Africa, permission was obtained prior to the interviews from the participants to record the interviews. The recording function within Microsoft Teams was used for this purpose. The researcher ensured all ethical considerations outlined in the informed consent form (see Annexure B) were adhered to prior to, during and after the interviews. This included ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, so the researcher ensured all participants' identities were protected by using pseudonyms and removing any other identifiers. Additionally, the researcher obtained permission from the participants to take notes during the interviews and took responsible for transcribing the interview data.

Data analysis

In this study, content analysis was used to analyse the data collected as it fits well within the interpretive, qualitative research approach (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). The researcher used content analysis to analyse and interpret the data from the verbatim interview transcripts to ensure he stayed true to the participants' voices. The goal of content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Content analysis is defined as a research method applying a subjective interpretation methodology of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

In accordance with principles of content analysis, the researcher followed the following steps: Codes were developed as the data were being analysed. The researcher used a descriptive coding process to group text or words that encapsulated the general idea of the text. These words typically assisted the researcher in describing the data in a highly condensed manner, allowing the researcher to refer to the content. The next step was coding the text line by line. This meant getting deeper into the data and assigning codes. The main aim was to get any other rich data and make meaning of the codes already generated.

From coding, the researcher moved to analysis. It is important to note that this was a seamless exercise as the coding has shown the researcher possible emerging themes. Codes were categorised, and themes were identified at this stage. By creating these coded categories, the data were organised, and connections between different groups of codes were seen. Naturally, themes developed from the categorisation and the researcher named them according to the categories and their relationship pertaining to the research questions (Elo et al., 2014).

Strategies employed to ensure the quality of data

Trustworthiness is important in qualitative research as it ensures rigour (Connelly, 2016). For any research to be rigorous and trustworthy, the researcher should ensure credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Credibility refers to the extent to which the researcher's analysis and interpretation are a true reflection of the participants' voices (King & Horrocks, 2010). To ensure credibility for this study, the researcher transcribed the recordings of the interviews verbatim and then listened to them again to authenticate the true nature of what the participants said. Each participant was asked to verify the transcripts to be a true reflection of what they shared in the interviews. Credibility was further enhanced by reflecting on the participants' true and lived experiences and supporting the analysis and interpretation thereof with verbatim quotes.

Transferability was ensured by providing a detailed account of the research methodology and design (Creswell, 2009). The researcher kept in close contact with the supervisor, who consistently monitored how the data were analysed and advised on correctly identifying themes that developed from data analysis. Well-established research methodologies were used to increase transferability. Participants were also thoroughly described, which helped establish the transferability of the findings. Well-established research methodologies were used in this study to increase transferability. This study being interpretivist means that another researcher could come to a different conclusion.

Confirmability deals with the researcher's ability to explain to others how data was collected, and the findings and conclusions were attained. This was enhanced by the researcher keeping all the collected data recording transcripts (Creswell, 2009). This was also done when the researcher acknowledged possible bias due to his working relationship with the participants.

Authenticity refers to the fairness that the researcher applies in the whole research process (Creswell, 2009). During the reporting phase specifically, the researcher used verbatim quotations as per the recording of what participants shared about their perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. Participant responses were presented in the final report to ensure fairness.

Dependability means whether the researcher is consistent with other studies conducted by other researchers concerning the same phenomenon and whether it will yield the same results and similar outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the researcher described the research design and methodology in detail and provided verbatim quotes to support the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Methods to ensure ethical research principles

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology's Research Ethics Review Committee of the University of South Africa to conduct the research (see Annexure D). The study's information was shared with potential participants, who were invited to contact the researcher should they wish to participate. All participants had to sign an informed consent form before the data collection commenced, which outlined the purpose of the study, their role and all ethical considerations that will be attended to (see Annexure B). Participants were also ensured that their confidentiality would be protected, they would remain anonymous, and that participation would be completely voluntary (Halai, 2006).

Confidentiality refers to the management of confidential research information and implies that the researcher is committed to ensuring participants' safety from data gathering to storage (Nel & Fouche, 2017). Noting that workplace bullying is a very sensitive topic, researchers may pose a risk to participants and the company. Ethical

research aims to do no harm, and every effort was made to ensure confidentiality and that the participants felt comfortable participating freely. Confidentiality is further a means of protecting the participants from personal risks, such as being further victimised by colleagues or perhaps even negatively impacting their career advancement. Participants were interviewed privately and individually to allow them to discuss their experiences freely and openly on Microsoft Teams. The research data are confidentially stored on the researcher's laptop and protected by passwords. The only people who could access this information were the researcher, his supervisor, and the transcriber, who signed a confidentiality agreement. All hard copies have also been stored securely in a lockable cupboard. All electronic and hard copies of records will be permanently destroyed after five years.

Anonymity protects participants' identities, preventing them from being recognised, identified or traced. Participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. The identity of the organisation in which the study has been conducted has also been ensured by not including it in any of the verbatim quotes or the reporting.

Participation in this study was completely voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw at any time without any consequences. There was also no monetary compensation offered to any of the participants.

Reporting

The study was qualitative, and an inductive approach was used to work through the raw data obtained from the interviews and to answer the research questions. Findings were reported using a qualitative, narrative writing style in which verbatim quotations from the participants supported all analysis and interpretations. The findings were presented in the form of themes, sub-themes and properties which emerged from the data. Finally, the empirical findings were merged with the literature review findings and presented by means of conclusions drawn.

FINDINGS

The empirical aims of the study were, firstly, to explore managers' perceptions of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. Secondly, it was also to look at the effectiveness of these interventions and other recommendations to improve the effectiveness of these interventions and the impact of bullying on the organisation and its employees. Five themes emerged from the data analysis with respective subthemes and properties and reflected in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Themes and sub-themes of managers' perceived effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

Themes	Sub-themes
Forms of bullying	Physical abuse
	Verbal abuse
	Written communication abuse
	Threat of exclusion and segregation
Factors enabling a bullying environment	People specific factors
	Organisational culture factors
Disabling the impact of bullying	Psychological impact
	Physiological impact
	Employee performance impact
	Organisational performance impact
Effectiveness of current interventions	Awareness and empowering
	Role of HR
	Organisational design
Recommendations for improved interventions	Efficacy
	Improvements
	New interventions

Theme 1: Forms of bullying

Forms of bullying as a theme provided the researcher with evidence that participants are aware of bullying incidents in their organisation. It consists of four subthemes: physical abuse, verbal abuse, written communication abuse and threats of exclusion and segregation. The theme is imperative to the research and to determine managers' awareness of workplace bullying in their organisation and the form that it takes for it to be identified and labelled correctly as workplace bullying.

Physical abuse

The first sub-theme to emerge was physical abuse. Most managers agreed that they had experienced it themselves or that others have observed it happening to colleagues. Participants referred to instances of being shoved, pushed and even slapped.

“It was almost like sort of actually doing something, um, to you better than just talking. So, if you can see that if it wasn't in the workplace, this person would have maybe slapped you or whatever the case is” (Participant 3).

“Uh, one of the worst case scenarios I've seen is a manager actually slapping, uh, one of the, the, the employees” (Participant 8).

“And when I delivered that information to her to say, you know, your safety and your health is more important to me than being at an audit. And also others could get sick. She got really angry with me. And when we return back to the audit so that she could leave home check, she actually shoved me. So she physically pushed me from behind” (Participant 5).

“So I kept keeping my cool around her. And then unfortunately now in June, it escalated to a more physical incident uh towards me. And sadly, the auditor had also seen it” (Participant 5).

Verbal abuse

The participants commented that bullying took on a verbal form. The perpetrator spoke to victims by belittling subordinates, shouting, ridiculing and tone of voice talking to subordinates and was generally perceived as someone who talks down on people in a threatening manner.

“Because the way that he comes across it's intimidating. He refuses to cooperate. He wants things done in a certain way, the way that he talks to the person. Um, and like I said, the intention is belittling, he shouts in front of everyone, ridiculing the person” (Participant 3).

“Okay. Um, I think for me, my experience has been, um, one where, um, one of the managers, um, male colleague, um, has been like the way that he approaches and addresses employees, talking down on them and, um, in a threatening manner” (Participant 3).

“...it's the mostly it's the tone of voice that was used very harsh tone” (Participant 7).

“Then also what made me think there was bullying is the tone in terms of the threatening tone and saying no, you can't tell me anything you must do as I say, you know, that forceful tone” (Participant 7).

Written communication abuse

Participants mentioned numerous types of how written communication abuse plays out. Reference is made to how victims are being ostracised or threatened with termination of employment; also being excluded from taking part in important discussions; others felt how they were addressed or “spoken to” in emails was inappropriate. One participant commented on how they could feel the person “shouting” to them through the email, making it “verbal”. Others were assigned roles with fewer responsibilities than it would have been in a normal, good working relationship.

“Let's call it a in a manner such that yeah, effectively they bully people on email like yeah. Bullying people on emails and some of the comments were like it comes as a surprise” (Participant 6).

“Um, it's not just the verbal, um, uh, actions. It's also an email. You can see that the email etiquette is not appropriate. Sometimes you can feel the shouting in the email” (Participants 3).

“But it got so heated in the email. I remember I was told that if you don't agree with what I'm telling you, that just know that you will have to actually exit by the gate” (Participant 1).

Threat of exclusion and segregation

Participations also spoke about how incidences of exclusion and segregation whereby participants observed how work was withheld from colleagues. Also, colleagues' voices were taken away from them as they were not allowed to contribute by sharing their inputs or merely just not heard and told how things would be done.

“And you know, making themselves do less of a job compared to the other people whereby the work is supposed to be distributed equally. Then also they also made me think there was bullying” (Participant 7).

“Logistics or HR or quality, but those people were isolated because in the first place it was you don't have, any, anything worthwhile to, to, to contribute. Um, so I take that as, as, as bullying in an organisation” (Participant 4).

“...um, they feel that they are marginalized to some extent” (Participants 3).

“... whereby the other person is not given an opportunity to sort of take a part or explain whereby for example, manager would say to a person reporting to them that this is how you're supposed to do this thing. And when the person below them tries to explain they wouldn't actually take that any explanation and then actually, they would read in the person that if you don't do the as I say, you'd be disciplined or make sure you get fired,” (Participant 7).

Apart from being excluded/segregated, participants noted how IPAs were used as a tool to threaten colleagues.

“He starts making threats. Like no who's yeah. Who's gonna do it if you're not gonna do this I will hold the IPAs if you are not gonna comply to my request. I'm not gonna do your IPA” (Participant 6).

Theme 2: Factors enabling a bullying environment

Bullying doesn't happen in isolation, but factors provide fertile ground for it to happen and thrive. This theme was important because for one to understand workplace bullying, one should also understand the factors contributing to creating an enabling environment for bullying. Two sub-themes emerged from the voices of the participants, namely the people-specific factors and the organisational culture factors.

People specific factors

Participants observed that bullying doesn't happen in isolation, but these are factors that contribute to being bullied. Employees' personal characteristics and personalities provide the fertile ground for bullying. Participants believe that individual personal factors or attributes contribute to bullying incidents. Those who are resilient manage to counter bullying. They also felt those with strong characters could withstand the onslaught.

“...this is this actually this behaviour tantamount to bullying because if I speak to him, his main victims or victims is mainly females. So, um, he targets certain groups because I haven't really seen this being more prevalent in males. It's more than females. Very few males have complained on him” (Participant 3).

“So, and then it spirals until it depends now on individuals, uh, uh, uh, resilience or reaction to things” (Participant 4).

“...so, because I've got a very strong character it doesn't suppress my creativity” (Participant 10).

Participant 3 specifically mentioned that gender also contributed to bullying.

“...this is this actually this behaviour tantamount to bullying because if I speak to him, his main victims or victims is mainly females. So, um, he targets certain groups because I haven't really seen this being more prevalent in males. It's more than females. Very few males have complained on him” (Participant 3).

Participant 5 shared how frustrating it is to not be able to speak up, as negative conversations seem not to be tolerated. Also, speaking up might mean you will be bullied or labelled as a troublemaker, and this fear impacts an employee's willingness to speak up.

“And it's almost like I felt like I needed to be heard because I can sense here that you you can't say anything about the employees. You mustn't say anything negative. The employees are supposed to say negative things about the managers, but we mustn't say...” (Participant 5).

“Someone who keeps quiet I would think is due to being fearful of the bully” (Participant 7).

“But you can sense that if you ask too many questions, it's almost like they see you as a problem, they see you as a person trying to stir where you shouldn't” (Participant 5).

Participant 6 noted feeling employees cannot speak up as it is not received with objectivity and often defaults to non-performance accusations.

“She was not sure they will listen to her or take her side or listening to this thing with what we call neutrality” (Participant 6).

“She couldn't raise other issues because she had fears because people might not believe her because people might think she is making excuses for not meeting certain requirements or shortfall in her working environment” (Participant 6).

Participants believe that individual personal factors or attributes contribute to how they deal with bullying incidents. Those who are resilient managed to counter being bullied. They also felt that those with strong characters were able to withstand the onslaught

“So, and then it spirals until it depends now on individuals, uh, uh, uh, resilience or reaction to things” (Participant 4).

“...so because I've got a very strong character it doesn't suppress my creativity” (Participant 10).

Organisational culture factors

Participants mentioned incidences of managers or employees in authoritative positions or with tenure or more specialist knowledge using these positions of power in such a manner that it results in a culture of bullying. As noted by Participant 3 below, managers tend to speak down or adopt a threatening style of communication with their subordinates. This results in employees feeling threatened and disrespected.

“Okay. Um, I think for me, my experience has been, um, one where, um, one of the managers, um, male colleague, um, has been like the way that he approaches and addresses employees, talking down on them and, um, in a threatening manner. Um, and, uh, there is a complete disregard of manners,” (Participant 3).

“...you would see that when that that person tries to raise issues that are of real concern, so let's call it let's say, compliance issues or things like that. And it requires capital funds that will be shot down without real reason for being shot down. So not a good reason for shooting it down. But, but it would, it would be seen as a game, or it would go by unnoticed almost because of the position that individual holds within the business. It's very difficult to give this information to you without giving names as I said” (Participant 9).

“I think it was bullying because the request from the employee was an honest and fair request. Every employee needs to have their job description if they want a copy of it. And for the manager to escalate it to personal because it did it became quickly became personal that the employee is being disrespectful for asking such. So, for me, I think that was bullying you could hear you know, you've got power, therefore you are abusing your power” (Participant 3).

Participant 9 further notes how even among executives, bullying happens as some executives who's been with the organisation longer will use their tenure to overpower and undermine colleagues. This again results in creating an organisational culture in which power is abused.

“...you have the same level of executives, the one is able to undermine the rest because of his authority slash, not authority, because he's got the same experience as another or the same authority as another executive, but because of his time in the company and his reputation he is able to, to undermine the efforts of others, if you want to call it that”. (Participant 9).

Participants 5 and 10 agree with Participant 9 above and mentioned that there is a perceived organisational culture of entitlement where those who have been in the organisation longer feel entitled or have the right to behave in a certain way.

“And also, if you in terms of bullying, what I found as well is if the person's been here longer than you, they've kind of set themselves, cemented themselves within a group of people in the business that tend to have this bullying, harassing behaviour” (Participant 5).

“Maybe the other party, so let's just call this party, the bullying party, having a longer, significantly longer period of experience. So, I think it naturally infers that this person might feel that they have dominance over you” (Participant 10).

Another organisational culture factor which is experienced as bullying by participants is where employees who are regarded as subject matter experts adopt a tone in which they speak down on other colleagues who lack knowledge or experience instead of adopting a communication style which is more educational in nature. As Participant 4 notes:

“...but if interacting with, with, uh, uh, regarding a technical procedure, or maybe if we take yourself ...as we have as an HR, but you need to interact regarding a procedure, which is technical, be it in production or engineering, um, you make, you tend to find subject matter experts in those roles, uh, saying you don't know anything. This is how we do it. Uh, from my perspective, I take it as, as bullying because the, in a good organisation, people should educate each other” (Participant 4).

Agreeing with the discussions above on tenure, experience and knowledge, participants 9 and 6 also felt that even though an employee may lack tenure or perhaps be less experienced and knowledgeable, each employee should be given the respect and time to give their input and be heard, without being treated as unequal and in a disrespectful manner.

“...more experience within the company or more say, is able to use that to discard the input or effort of the other executive. Why based on that, even if that is not, even if it's not, I'm trying to find the right terminology, but even if it's not so if it doesn't deserve to be discarded, so even if the other individual what is trying to put to the table is for the greater good of the business” (Participant 9).

“She was not sure they will listen to her or take her side or listening to this thing with what we call neutrality” (Participant 6).

A culture of impunity was reported. While participant 5 notes there are no repercussions for bullying behaviour, participant 1 provides an example of a colleague who seems to feel they have a license and the freedom to dominate and should an employee not be happy. They are free to leave the service of the organisation. This results in an organisational culture where employees with authority might feel they are untouchable as there would be no consequences for their actions.

“...they do that because there's no repercussions for this kind of behaviour” (Participant 5).

“The HR lady was actually forcing that the guy that she was dating becomes my mentor. And from the qualifications as well as experience point of view, it didn't make ethical sense. I was like, this for me doesn't hold water. Rather give me someone who's very experienced than me, who's been in the business, who can really bet to me or to because they are in a relationship with you. So just to make the boyfriend look good, as far as the company books are concerned. So that's where I challenged back. But it got so heated. I remember I was told that they that if you don't agree with what I'm telling you, that just know that you will have to actually exit by the gate” (Participant 1).

Finally, participants 5 and 8 observed a general disrespect for organisational values and even an absence of personal values, resulting in organisational culture with no respect for values, further creating an enabling environment for bullying.

“I think it sets a precedent that we don't respect our values and then also what I've seen from this particular individual, because they kind of have this influential nature” (Participant 5).

“So, it really depends on what is your, and also what culture does the company have? Is it welcoming for you to address or...” (Participant 8).

Theme 3: Disabling the impact of bullying

The third theme to emerge from the data was the disabling impact experienced by participants of workplace bullying. This theme was important in understanding the impact that workplace bullying has on employees and the organisation. It was apparent that bullying does not only negatively impact individuals (psychologically and physiologically) but also the organisation and those bystanders witnessing bullying. Bullying impacts negatively on employees and their performance. It affects the organisation and hinders its performance as well. This theme has four subthemes, which are psychological impact, physiological impact, employee performance impact and organisational performance impact.

Psychological impact

Participants made it clear from their observations that the impact of workplace bullying on one's psychological health is undisputed. From the participant voices, it is evident being exposed to bullying caused employees to experience increased levels of anxiety and fear while feeling isolated and alone, indicating a lack of support.

“...because bullying can really affect you psychologically” (Participant 2).

“You're bringing anxiety. And so of that, uh, health issues, mental issues, mental health issues” (Participant 8).

“But it has affected me. You know, it's I mean, absolutely. Yeah, no, I simply I don't feel comfortable being alone in the room within the last day or two” (Participant 5).

“...and I think it got to a point that she felt she didn't get support at all from, she felt she was on her own” (Participant 6).

“Uh I think you feel very alone because you never know. You know, sitting here as a manager, you would think that you have the same rights as employees who come to work to be protected”. It felt very alone. I didn't know who to talk to except my own manager who gave me the support” (Participant 5).

Some participants also noted that feeling insecure and doubting oneself, even fostering thoughts that you are a failure.

“I obviously wanted to improve the team at the department, but you've got this employee that knows how to target and actually affect your whole psyche because you question everything you do after that” (Participant 5).

“Employees also feel insecure. ...For me, it made me feel insecure, but more than anything...” (Participant 1).

“So, from that angle, it actually showed me that when there's people that hold powerful positions in the company, there is an element of insecurity with their subordinates” (Participant 1).

“It's, it's like, you're a failure. You don't know what you're doing” (Participant 4).

Participants further note emerging feelings of being a villain, worthless, undervalued, and powerless/disempowered. One participant also expressed how this leads to a lack of trust between leader and follower.

"They're the ones who made things happen, not you, who then got involved at the last end and ran around then so, so, so, so it's, it's like the heroes, they are heroes who identified. So you are a hero, a villain. In most cases you are a villain and you are not, recognized then, uh, as an individual" (Participant 4).

"You know, and makes you, makes you feel pretty worthless, it makes you feel that nobody can see the value that you're trying to add" (Participant 10).

"It's you know it causes a lot of mistrust and let me call it mistrust on the leader neh, yeah it's like I can't trust this person" (Participant 6).

"That's the biggest thing with one party will feel defeated and powerless in terms of how to fight back, or how to defend themselves". Yeah, like I was saying, the effects on the individual being bullied is that of feeling powerless, fearful, scared" (Participant 7).

"Yes I would. I would. I would say it's disempowering. As we say if I look at it as an outsider, I know that that specific individuals shortly after a sequence of these events, so it happened more than once" (Participant 9).

"They start, um, being fearful and timid, and they don't want to engage with this manager" (Participant 3).

Physiological impact

Participant 6 and Participant 8 also allude to the physiological impact of being bullied on employees who develop health issues, even to the extent that they are hospitalised.

"She ended up sick and in hospital" (Participant 6)

"...and so of that, uh, health issues" (Participant 8)

Employee performance impact

From the participants' voices, it is evident how bullying has a disabling impact on employee performance. Participants note how being bullied and intimidated results in employees feeling demotivated and disengaged, resulting in less innovation and creativity where needed and the work not being done.

"So they feel obviously intimidated. Some of them escalate the issues. They, they withdraw, they become disengaged" (Participant 3).

"So we end up with, uh, demotivated employees, disengaged employees, and very frustrated employees" (Participant 3).

"...decide I don't want to always have an argument with this person or always have a debate with this person so I'm just going to conform to what he says and suppress my creativity" (Participant 10).

"You can impact their performance at work by doing that, and they won't deliver. Um, and it's not that they won't deliver, but obviously they would have, um, uh, more errors because, uh, they more, uh, traumatised, uh" (Participant 8).

"...you kind of suppress the creativity," (Participant 10).

"So, so number one, obviously we are all humans and any comments from we all humans, we, we have feelings and anything that is said even as formal as possible, uh, uh, impacts us, uh, it impacts our, our, motivation" (Participant 8).

Organisation performance impact

Participant 10 and Participant 7 indicate how bullying impacts team functioning as it affects how employees engage with others and how they choose to build relationships, preventing collaborative teams with low team morale.

"...it doesn't affect my inquisitive mind but what it does affect is the way I make relationships or the way I network with that individual specifically, you know, which is not always the greatest way because in my world you know, you should be in a collaborative team where everybody brings a part to the greater team" (Participant 10).

"so it actually affects the team morale, as well, when there's incidents of bullying". (Participant 7).

It is further evident, and perhaps to be expected, how organisation productivity and the bottom line are negatively impacted by bullying behaviour. Employees seem to under-deliver or just deliver enough to stay out of trouble. Furthermore, exerting efforts to be creative and innovative also seems to decrease.

"On the organisation then, productivity is, is, is definitely affected". (Participants 4).

"...so they're not doing, uh, they're not producing, or they're not being productive. They're not being efficient in, in, in, in delivering that commitment" (Participant 4).

"Yeah to the organisation now what is happening now impact now is that people are just doing enough to cover their butt neh" (Participant 6).

"I think I think their creativity or their willingness to try new things get suppressed you know, if they keep on getting shut down by that person, eventually why come up with new ideas why come up with new suggestions and projects if if you always get shut down" (Participant 10).

"...in terms of the organisation, it actually affects performance of the of the of the person. So, when someone is always fearful and scared, it affects the morale. So, performance will definitely drop in those situations" (Participant 7).

Furthermore, a culture of just doing what you are told to do seems to emerge as employees are not encouraged to be creative and innovative, and silos are created. Participant 4 specifically shares a concern about the organisation not remaining relevant and even becoming obsolete. Participants further note how agendas are not aligned to organisational strategy, causing the organisation damage.

“And they're not encouraged to think outside the box, therefore long term for the organisation. You, you then have people who just wait for instruction than take initiative and introduce continuous improvement, uh, uh, initiatives” (Participant 4).

“And therefore, then slowly, the organisation becomes a dinosaur, uh, because in the same way that dinosaurs went extinct, um, they are not adapting to the environment” (Participant 4).

“Yeah it causes a lot of silo mentality” (Participant 6).

“It creates silos. And you all know with silos, you don't, you don't really deliver effectively” (Participant 4).

“I think the problem with it is that it enables a specific group or individual to drive their agenda. And that agenda might not always be the best agenda for the company at that given point in time” (Participant 9)

“...it would, it could impact the business by not having the right things happen at the right time” (Participant 9).

Participants indicated concerns that organisations lose good people, and experienced employees, resulting in high labour costs.

“The skin was loaded on the flesh before you realize it was like a fully-fledged case. And that guy ended up losing his job”. (Participant 1).

“It was not the only case at the time, by the way, there were people who did lose their jobs through the same lady” (Participant 1).

“You would lose good people. You would lose good people. Because obviously those people would feel they are not heard or they are not, they don't carry the same amount of sway or they are not able to influence peers, or then managers, the managers, so you firstly would see attrition probably escalated for those specific individuals, but you would also It could also have a negative impact on various other aspects” (Participant 9).

“I think, uh, the bad impact, the more on, on the performance and, and health wise from a company, uh, point of view, obviously most people leave when they experience such things” (Participant 8).

“...so let's start with the negative, the negative about it is, and I think it's heavily linked to the turnover, the amount of turnover of people that we have new people come into the business, they spend a year or two year, they realize they're not in the click and what not, and then they leave” (Participant 10).

“...it was there was then taken to a DC for performance, and eventually was dismissed...” (Participant 2).

Theme 4: Effectiveness of current interventions

The main purpose of the question in this theme was to explore if managers were aware of the interventions available in the organisations aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. What those interventions are and whether they are effective or not. This theme had three subthemes: awareness and empowering, the role of HR and organisational design.

Awareness and empowering

Most participants noted that they are unaware of any interventions to eradicate workplace bullying. Some participants shared how they did try and report incidences with the aim of being attended to but were merely dismissed or perceived as a troublemaker.

“Uh I, to be honest with you...I don't know what what's in place, because even when I did report this incident of what happened where I was shoved. I was simply dismissed” (Participant 5).

“So I actually don't know what's in place. Uh and I feel like if I do ask, it's going to be seen as, OK, what are you trying to do”? (Participant 5)

“No...there's no intervention neh, there's no formal interventions. There's nothing like procedure or policy that says when you feel like this or bullying eh, this is the process to follow” (Participant 6).

“There's no, there's no interventions to be honest because, you know, this type of things as if you escalate you go to HR and you go somewhere, it might not end well before you be the victim” (Participant 6).

Contrary to the above participants' voices, other participants spoke about an external service provider appointed by the organisation, ICAS. As an independent consulting and advisory services company, it seems participants experience ICAS as an effective source for employees to contact if they experience bullying. It is not evident from the participant voices if this service is also aimed at eradicating bullying but rather just providing counselling services to victims.

“Um, but, um, there's also, um, ICAS, independent consulting and advisory services. We have, uh, the, our service provider wellness service provider” (Participant 3).

"The other one is the ICAS the ICAS, to a great degree, it is effective"
(Participant 1)

"...also with ICAS. Because with ICAS, they go right to the bottom of what is happening, and I think I'm not sure I think they do escalated to the director level to say there's a problem" (Participant 2)

"Uh, they can utilize the ICAS routes for counselling, which is available telephonically or emails, or they can book a physical session" (Participant 4)

In addition to ICAS, participants also mention the existence of a hotline through which they can anonymously report bullying incidents.

"... the anonymous call where you remain anonymous" (Participant 1)
"Yeah. Uh, hotline, uh, the, is the number that's all employees have. I'm trying to think what's the number, of my head I don't know it, that you can call to, to express, uh, issue that you experiencing at work. Uh, it's completely anonymous." (Participant 4)

"...also there's the toll free number, which I could also call to get assistance as well." (Participant 7).

Finally, participants provide evidence of an environment where they feel empowered to speak up against bullying. Participants allude to not accepting bullying behaviour and pushing back, utilising their own inner strength, support from the union and factors such as policies and what is deemed ethical to support their non-acceptance of bullying behaviour.

"...and he tried it also in me, but I, I came down really hard on him and I was very clear that I will not accept him, addressing me in that way" (Participant 3).

“So you may find that at times you even question or push back and say, but guys, this is not ethical” (Participant 1).

“I remember at the time I even challenged them to say, why not fire me today, instead of waiting for me to not even do what it is that you're asking me to do” (Participant 1).

“he actually challenged, this was actually coming from an HR manager at the time, then he challenged the HR manager to say, according to our policies, what you guys have done, will definitely not happen. And it's not allowed in this organisation” (Participant 1).

“So I kept keeping my cool around her” (Participant 5).

“She didn't disclose to the business, she sort of told some of us and was not comfortable sharing with people because she felt was not sure like she might end as a victim and nobody was gonna believe her” (Participant 6).

“...bullying is actually still taking place to this day. Maybe to qualify that statement, what I've seen is that when there's an element of threat, people end up opting for just going with business as usual. So that they are actually not put under a spotlight, or they will all lose their jobs” (Participant 1).

“Obviously it's the first platform from the, the guys inside the factory. So the guys on the floor that are under the union, their first people, or they, they talk to you about this thing. So, yeah, they definitely do help them, uh, even within themselves, um, the guys on the floor, uh, if there's some sort of bullying or if there's some sort of, um, uh, uh, uh, and, and, and unhealthy environment, um, they would actually, uh, try to, uh, come in and settle it” (Participant 8)

Role of HR

Participants note the existence of a grievance procedure managed by the HR department through which one can report instances of workplace bullying and alludes to the organisational disciplinary code.

“Okay, so, so first of all, there is the, the formal sitting, uh, you can consult HR and raise a grievance, which you will be handled through the formal grievance process” (Participant 4).

“Okay, the two that I will actually mention, one, it's a, they, let me call it the HR grievance system, or channel” (Participant 1).

“Okay. So, uh, for aggrieved, uh, for us, we complete a grievance form, uh, and you state, why you feel aggrieved and, uh, and obviously by who and the, the, the nature of events from your perspective, in terms of why you're saying you are aggrieved “(Participant 4).

“Um, obviously, um, it's the disciplinary process first, obviously there is certain behaviours that are expected that are enshrined in the disciplinary code, excuse me, that are related to, to behaviour as expected in the organisation” (Participant 3).

“...and code of conduct and ethics in place that is used as a reference in disciplinary processes or expectation, expected behaviours from each and every one” (Participant 3).

Theme 5: Recommendation for improved interventions

During the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked three further questions about existing and additional interventions. That is:

- How effective are these interventions? Please elaborate
- What recommendations can you make towards improving the effectiveness of these interventions?
- What recommendations can you make towards additional interventions the organisation can consider?

Emanating from the responses were three sub-themes: efficacy, improvement and new interventions.

Efficacy

Most participants feel that the interventions are working, and if an incident is reported, there is an outcome, whether positive or negative. However, it depends on the level at which you report the incident.

“They are effective and do work, but I think they something, um, beyond, uh, those interventions that we can do” (Participant 3).

“100%. So which is why I'm saying, because of the experience that I had at ..., I picked up some effectiveness of this, let's say system” (Participant 1)

“It does get investigated and there is always an outcome. So they do at least try to find the problem, the root of the problem that has been reported. It's not something that you report and nobody attends to. So I would say in that sense, yes, it is effective” (Participant 2).

“I think, I think they're effective. Um, and, and it really depends, uh, uh, which level are you laying a complaint on” (Participant 8).

“Uh, I think they are effective. And, and, um, with employees that have used this channels, uh, I know they, they come out, uh, of, of they got the desired result” (Participant 4).

“...for the current company that I see the fact that, um, um, I've seen people actually run the process and different results come in, uh, with a positive or negative towards whoever, uh, applied for, but fairness was actually applied” (Participant 8)

“I think they are working. The reason I say they are working is because of I've personally dealt with some of the grievances” (Participant 7)

“I also got my desired results to some extent. Um, uh, because now there is the awareness on the perpetrator that this is, this is the effect of what you're doing and, and on record for more records, um, even if they don't want to they are forced by the organisations governing rules that they should oblige” (Participant 4)

“...from that perspective. I think that's when picking up a bit of ineffectiveness, but the fact that eventually the person was actually dealt with, I think from that angle, I will say there is an element of effectiveness” (Participant 1)

Improvements

Participants' recommendations were focused on the role HR play. Firstly, they should resume a role of neutrality and independence, and secondly, HR should be quicker in attending to reported incidences.

“I think for HR to be impartial, as well as unbiased. Because if HR is employed, and they are on the payroll of that specific company, I can tell you, they'll always be these gaps, where they are also threatened themselves. So the recommendation I would make is that if they can make

HR to be an independent sort of body or function, where they do not fall part of that organisation is payroll. So that will give them the boldness of not being partial” (Participant 1).

“But as soon as you have HR being an employee of that organisation, hi, I can tell you, we will forever be sitting with this bullying cases” (Participant 1).

“So I think, with that one, I would say, if they can maybe improve on not having to wait for many cases, before they can actually attend to an issue that will actually make their own that whole system more effective” (Participant 1).

“Because, like, I did see that with my experience, people just kept on sending these long strings of complaints. But it was after like a few that they started to actually act upon it” (Participant 1)

“So maybe if they can, let's say increase the level of sensitivity. But if they get the first or even the second complaint, they jump right into it to actually start investigating that will actually make it more effective” (Participant 1)

There is a need for a suggestion box where people will safely go and report bullying cases by putting complaints in the secured box.

“...some satellite stations, they can maybe avail, let's say, complaints boxes, where people if because I've seen other people don't have the time to go sit down, and maybe type in emails” (Participant 1).

“...and from experience, they worked very well with, uh, uh, what you call them, the suggestion box, suggestion boxes, and more often than not, uh, be it a monthly thing that we welcome suggestions around this topic” (Participant 4).

Participant 1 felt that language is a barrier to the efficiency of the interventions.

“Or sometimes some people are not as good maybe in writing English. So if they can just open that element of saying, there's an element of anonymity that is existing, however, we allow people to write in their language, you don't need to include your name, right, whatever your complaint is, at your own convenient time” (Participant 1).

“Yeah, unfortunately, everything is actually communicated using English as the medium of communication. So maybe in that space, the other recommendations I will also put forward. I know, maybe it's gonna be a bit stretchy to expect organisations or, let's say, institutions, like ICAS, to actually cover all 11 languages, but if they can maybe just improve it, if they are able to cover four or five of the mainly spoken languages, where they do that, even if they get a call from someone who speaks Sepedi, for instance and they want to lodge a complaint, they can clearly articulate it in their language, when someone on the site can be able to translate that back into English” (Participant 1).

New interventions

Participants indicated a definite need for a policy against bullying. This policy should not only define and describe what constitutes bullying behaviour, but a greater awareness should be created of this policy and how it can deter bullying behaviour, assist employees who are being bullied, and create a safer work environment.

“Firstly, I'll say there must be a policy, which really defines what bullying is, because it could be the example that could be giving you I see it as bullying, but somebody might see it as something different. So the policy is very important to define” (Participant 2).

“I think there definitely must be policy around this. I just haven't found them” (Participant 5).

“Number two, once there's a policy, then people must know about the policy. So it must there must be education, you know, around the issue of bullying, because it could very well be happening a lot. But people don't know that actually, this is bullying. They just know that I'm being mistreated by this manager. But I don't know why they don't understand that that is actually bullying” (Participant 2).

“I think there definitely must be policy around this. I just haven't found them” (Participant 5).

“In the absence of that safe environment and policy, at least that make people feel safe to come forward, nobody's gonna come forward, because you don't know how it's gonna end, or the company will take sides with the bully neh” (Participant 6).

“I think there needs to be a very clear policy for both managers and employees and a consistency, consistent application of that policy, and it needs to be communicated” (Participant 5).

“I think for me, the other thing that we can do is be more, um, uh, in terms of intentful awareness at work. It shouldn't be something that happens instantaneously and you only deal with it as an, as it happens, it should be something like gender based violence like the Aids day, where we're talking about bullying in the workplace and, um, and how it happens and what is being bullied, what employees should do. So raise more awareness, train employees” (Participant 3).

“Maybe during you know our notice board, we can put it up there something around bullying, have some topics around it to create more awareness that will also help a lot” (Participant 7).

“I think I think a communication around it. I think making people aware of their rights, making them aware that as much as you have managers in an organisation, they also deserve to be respected” (Participant 5).

“I think firstly, maybe would be to, to highlight, or maybe communicate more directly in terms of the, if someone is experiencing bullying that they can raise it” (Participant 7).

“I think it's, it's just awareness to employees that if you report an issue, uh, yes, we are the victim of bullying” (Participant 4).

“I think maybe, if we can create more awareness so that everyone in the plant understands that if they are bullied, they can raise it up” (Participant 7).

“So education in terms of what bullying is, and how do you identify it, not just for employees, but for also managers so that you know when you know that this is this is defined as for an example sexual harassment, people know what sexual harassment is, then they know that they can't do it. So if you don't know you don't know what you're doing, you don't know that you're doing something wrong, you will continue doing it (Participant 2).

“I think regular workshops would work. Okay. Um, I mean, you're trying to build a culture. The only way you could do that is by talking, talking, talking about it” (Participant 8).

Participants are of the view that interventions shouldn't be one-sided and only aimed at victims. When the policy has been made available to all employees and managers, transgressors must be punished. This is consequence management.

“I think for me, um, like I mentioned, is to ensure that, uh, the, ICAS, for example, does not just look at the side of the victim, but of the perpetrator as well. So let us be more, um, intentful about helping the perpetrator too, to solve, uh, get out of the type of conduct and stop the bullying” (Participant 3).

“Uh, and then something can be done to assist the bullied and to also assist the bullies, uh, to, to be cognisant of what they are doing. Uh, yeah” (Participant 4).

“Once the knowledge has been shared, those who are actually bullying people, action must be taken against them, the company must be seen to be doing something. So you can't we can't just report a person and say this person is a bully and nothing happens” (Participant 2).

“And, um, and also the fact that, um, if employees persists with the bullying, that the organisation will not tolerate such behaviours and as such employees will do, this would actually be removed from site” (Participant 3).

“So it's important that there must be visible results when there is something and same principle that is applied with sexual harassment. You don't take it lightly you investigate properly, you go through the hearings to ensure that yes, for sure it's bullying, and there is outcome in terms of how do you deal with it with the bully. So for me that that would assist” (Participant 2).

Participants mention that as a service provider, ICAS must publish articles that raise awareness about bullying. There should also be weeks dedicated to raising awareness about bullying where victims share their experiences with others.

“ICAS in our case, must also assist from month to month have articles on bullying, you know, share the information, what is bullying? How do they say it, how they can help us help you when you are being bullied? You know, exactly the same way with any other issue, whether it's sexual harassment, whether it's unfair labour practice everything. There must be information in terms of it” (Participant 2).

“We can have we can have awareness weeks on bullying were they the people who probably have been bullied to the point of you know, because bullying is so bad that you can actually it can affect you psychologically. So people are willing to come and share their stories we can have such as you

know, way it's a week we are dedicating this week to bullying we share stories we share information. So that's just one of the things that can happen we have one week where you adjust on that week, you focusing on bullying" (Participant 2).

Participants express the need to implement the signing of a declaration where each employee commits to a workplace free of bullying. Also, new employees should be aware of the company's position on bullying upon inception and sign this declaration.

"...some form of declaration that employees make, I think when they joined the organisation, um, when you sign, um, and, uh, it's part of, uh, something that we keep in your file that you have pledged that this is how you're going to behave. And should you maybe, probably it'd be proven to behave either then what we expect of you and how on what you have pledged, then the organisation will act accordingly. So it's something that, uh, probably that we need to ensure that as employees enter the organisation and we are clear about just like we make employees declare their personal interests, we should also make them pledge, um, like against bullying" (Participant 3).

"Perhaps during induction when people are inducted to include so that people understand that the business does not tolerate any form of bullying" (Participant 7).

Participants mentioned that the environment (culture) should be free of fear for employees to raise bullying cases. The organisation should create a culture and environment where people will feel safe to report bullying incidents but also express a strong stance on not tolerating bullying behaviour. Participants also recommended that the organisation explore platforms such as WhatsApp and Chatbox and take videos as tools to be used to eradicate workplace bullying, regular workshops and bullying awareness talks.

“So, so I think the improvement will be to, to, to, to put stern controls and even examples of, of, of, of, uh, to create a safe space that whoever speaks out shall not be victimised to remove the fear. Uh, that's what can be done” (Participant 4).

“I think the first starting point, the company must create a safe environment neh, security for people who feel they are victims to come forward and say this is what is happening” (Participant 6).

“So I think the company process should be followed fully, to ensure that the perpetrators also know that something that you don't consider doing” (Participant 7).

“...but I think we can probably even introduce more, uh, options, uh, or platforms that guys can, you know, uh, send in a message or send in a WhatsApp and stuff, and then shoot a video of whatever they're complaining about, like a way to actually, uh, like a Chatbox or use WhatsApp” (Participant 8).

“WhatsApp number that people can, uh, easily, um, drop, you know, a message that I'm having a problem with this, uh, the name, what is the situation? Here's a video, here's a picture and stuff like that” (Participant 8).

DISCUSSION

Main objectives of the study

The general aim of this research was to explore managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of an intervention aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. In addition, to obtain recommendations on how such intervention is to improve to be more effective in eradicating workplace bullying. The literature review aimed to conceptualise workplace bullying and its related constructs and explore bullying interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. The specific empirical study was to explore managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating

workplace bullying and recommend improving interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. Furthermore, organisations and their employees were to benefit, as the findings of this study would assist in creating a conducive environment that enhances employee wellbeing and contributes to improved productivity.

INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS WITH LITERATURE

The findings revealed that employees are aware of workplace bullying. Some have experienced it, and others have witnessed it happening. They have witnessed and experienced the behaviour over time and its harmful effects on the victims. They are aware that it should be consistent and happen over time, deliberate and not as a once-off incident. This is consistent with the study carried out by Björklund et al. (2019), where participants agree that for it to be labelled as bullying, it should have happened repeatedly over a period.

It is also revealed through the finding that there ought to be power imbalances between the perpetrators and the victim (Motsei & Nkomo, 2016). The victims or those on the receiving end of the bullying phenomenon should be helpless to defend themselves against the bullies. This is consistent with literature by Mokgolo and Barnard (2019), who agree that there should be a power imbalance relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.

One of the findings pertaining to the definition was that there is a subtle difference between workplace bullying and harassment, according to one of the participants. This agrees with a study by Maidaniuc-Chirilă (2020) that indicates that many confuse workplace bullying and harassment in other cases.

Theme 1: Forms of bullying

The findings indicated that from participants' experiences, bullying in their organisation is not uniform. Incidences have different forms and shapes. Some get shoved from the back, which is a physical attack. Others are ridiculed through emails. Others have credit for a job well done or being able to be included in certain tasks taken away from

them. This agrees with studies by Maidaniuc-Chirilă (2020), which identified forms of bullying, such as social isolation, gossiping, physical, verbal and scapegoating.

In agreement with what the participants have alluded to, Yamada et al. (2018) speak of physical abuse where the victim is abused physically by the perpetrators, while others are verbally abused as they get shouted at (Namie & Nameie, 2009; Yamada et al., 2018). Workplace bullying may also take a form of written abuse where victims are abused in the form of how they are communicated to in the form of written communication such as emails, memorandums etc. (Wong-Lo, 2015). Lastly, other victims are isolated from activities they are supposed to be part of and are threatened as well (Rositter & Sochos, 2018).

Theme 2: Factors enabling a bullying environment

The findings confirm that workplace bullying does not happen in a vacuum, but several factors contribute to this phenomenon (Nel, 2019). The contributing factors can be categorised into two sub-themes: people-specific and organisational-specific factors.

At a people-specific level, one of the contributing factors to bullying is an individual's gender. According to some of the participants, one's gender and, in particular, females are prone to bullying cases as opposed to their male counterparts. This has been confirmed by (Maidaniuc-Chirilă (2019), who says that females are more subjected to workplace bullying than their male colleagues. Maidaniuc-Chirilă (2019) also concurs with participants that individual personality traits, attributes and internal locus of control are some of the most common contributing factors that mitigate workplace bullying. Participants mentioned that those with strong character and those who are resilient enough could sustain the bullying scourge.

Organisational culture is the distinct and unique way employees behave in relation to one another and displays the organisation's beliefs and values systems (Odor, 2018). Therefore, organisational culture may provide a fertile ground in which behaviour which constitutes workplace bullying is fostered (Pheko et al., 2017). At an organisational level, participants noted an organisational culture in which less tenured

employees are prone to be the victims of workplace bullying (Bokek-Cohen, 2022) and in which a culture of entitlement exists where those who have been in the business longer feel they are superior and entitled to do as they wish without any repercussions. The organisational culture also seems to be one where employees who wish to contribute towards the enhancement of the organisation with their inputs, knowledge and skills are not being heard and ignored (Tribou & Kidd, 2022). Similar to findings by Agotnes et al. (2018) and Mokgolo and Barnard (2019), there seems to be a culture of impunity where perpetrators know that nothing will be done about them, which indicates how those in management and leadership positions tacitly promote and enhance bullying behaviour by doing less or nothing to counter reported bullying cases.

Theme 3: Disabling the impact of bullying

It has been noted and written that workplace bullying has a devastating impact on individual employees and the organisation in general. Participants mentioned the psychological impact that workplace bullying has on individual employees. They also mentioned how workplace bullying impacts the physiological part of employees and how their performance is negatively impacted. Lastly, participants touched on how workplace bullying negatively impacts the organisation's overall performance.

The above observations by participants are in line with literature by Bernstein and Trimm (2016), who state employees develop feelings of fear, anxiety and low self-esteem, emanating into psychological problems because of workplace bullying. As examples of the impact on physical health, Nielsen et al. (2012) and Bernstein and Trimm (2016) found some employees may develop sleep disorders and musculoskeletal problems due to workplace bullying, while according to Geleta (2020), others develop cardiovascular diseases. Employee performance is negatively impacted as their creativity gets stifled, and they become demotivated, disengaged and less productive (Osler, 2021). Lastly, organisational performance is also impacted negatively as it affects team functioning, relationship building, morale and collaboration (Walker & Stones, 2020). Workplace bullying also creates silos which result in less innovation and creativity (Osler, 2021). This extends to fears of becoming

obsolete, agenda being misaligned with organisational strategy and finally, high turnover because of either voluntary resignations or dismissals and the high cost associated with it (Ferreira, 2019; John et al., 2021). In agreement with Karatze et al. (2016), organisations pay the price because of low productivity, increased cost of litigations and high turnover, which ultimately affect their bottom line.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of current interventions

Training, educating and raising awareness about bullying incidences before they happen is one of the interventions employees recommend employers should put in place to empower employees and eradicate workplace bullying (Doran et al., 2020). As noted by participants, awareness and empowerment are necessary as it seems most employees are not even aware of any workplace bullying policies that are in place aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

Participants, however, indicate an awareness of some interventions and feel these are working effectively, such as ICAS and the hotline. HR's integral role in ensuring a grievance process is in place and well-functioning is also noted (Doran et al., 2020). On an individual level, some employees take it upon themselves to stand up against bullies, while others decide to rather ignore the problem and not act upon it (Osler, 2021).

Theme 5: Recommendations for improved interventions

There is a clear need to put effective interventions in place to eradicate workplace bullying (Escartín, 2016). While participants indicate that most of the current interventions are effective, both positive and negative outcomes are reported, which seem to be linked to the level at which bullying cases were reported and how they were handled. Improvements are proposed in terms of HR and their role, which includes being objective and independent, while also dealing with cases much quicker to display the seriousness with which they regard such instances and their commitment to eradicating workplace bullying.

New interventions are also proposed, including policies that specifically address bullying by defining the construct, describing what constitutes bullying behaviour, and the procedures to be followed should such an unfortunate instance occur (Escartín, 2016). Also, emphasis is placed on the need to increase awareness campaigns (Doran et al., 2020) to ensure a safer work environment. One way proposed is where current employees and all new recruits going forward sign a declaration to ensure a bully-free workplace. Tools such as WhatsApp, Chatbox and videos are also proposed, in addition to doing frequent awareness workshops.

In conclusion, there seems to be a perceived lack of consequence management. Participants feel bullies think they are untouchable because no matter what happens, nothing tangible seems to be done against them. With bullying incidences, the focus only seems to be on the victims, and sufficient action against the perpetrators is not observed. This is congruent with Eirnasen and Einarsen's (2021) study who argue that organisations may be seen as complicit in the problem by being silent in tackling and combating the problem, which includes the perpetrators and attending to their behaviour and what initiates it and keeps it going. Organisations need to implement remedial programs as part of their workplace bullying policies that will also attend to the perpetrator while supporting the victim and creating a safer, healthier, more productive work environment.

Limitations and recommendations

Certain limitations of this study have been observed. These include the fact that the study was only limited to a particular organisation; hence it cannot be generalised across all organisations in South Africa. The study further only interviewed a specific cohort of participants, that is, managers, therefore excluding the voice of other stakeholders impacted by bullying, such as the victims of bullies, colleagues of employees being bullied and HR who deal with grievances associated with bullies. Also, external subject matter experts have been excluded.

This study aimed to also make recommendations to IOPs, HR professionals, wellbeing champions and managers towards improving interventions to eradicate incidences of workplace bullying. One of the key roles of an IOP is to ensure employee wellbeing

towards maximising their potential and performance. Ensuring a safe work environment in which employee wellbeing is paramount is vital, thus necessitating eradicating counterproductive behaviours such as bullying, which becomes barriers to efficiency, productivity, employee engagement and employee wellbeing, to name but a few, leading to an unsuccessful or unhealthy organisation. Subsequently, it remains the IOP's responsibility to acknowledge the findings of this study and present strategic solutions to the organisation and all role-players involved with, or affected by workplace bullying to ensure this destructive phenomenon is effectively managed and eradicated. Also, to ensure recommendations are implemented. It is also imperative to frequently evaluate the effectiveness of such interventions and adopt as is deemed necessary.

Furthermore, in conjunction with IOPs, HR professionals and employee wellbeing specialists need to ensure the development and implementation of a policy addressing workplace bullying both from a victim and perpetrator's point of view. Such a policy needs to be clear on how workplace bullying is defined in the organisation and what the organisation regards as workplace bullying behaviour. Furthermore, what actions are to be taken when cases of bullying are reported in both supporting the victim and working to change the behaviour of the perpetrator? HR and employee wellness practitioners must develop and maintain harmonious relationships among employees within the organisation. Therefore, HR and Employee Wellness should act swiftly, without bias, judgement and subjectivity, on grievances about bullying incidences to create a safe environment free of fear. HR and Employee Wellness are further encouraged to lead more awareness campaigns to educate all employees on all levels, as per company policy, which includes new recruits during the induction process.

Managers should also be equipped through training programmes with the required skills to display appropriate behaviour and deal with bullying behaviour efficiently and competently in a proactive manner. The Occupational Health and Safety Act (1993) requires the employer to bring about and maintain, as far as reasonably practicable, a safe work environment without risk to the workers' health. Both parties must proactively identify dangers and develop control measures to make the workplace safe. The onus is upon the organisation to implement effective plans to prevent and

intervene to eradicate workplace bullying. Effective interventions are important if the incidences are to be reduced.

Further, recommendations are made for future research. This includes replicating this study by involving all other stakeholders involved in or affected by bullying to obtain their perspectives on this phenomenon. The study should also be replicated within other industries to enable drawing comparisons or identifying similarities or differences in trends.

Conclusion

The findings of this study represented findings emanating from data gathered through semi-structured interviews where managers provided their lived experiences of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. This qualitative research assisted the researcher in getting rich lived experiences of managers about workplace bullying, the nature of the phenomenon, the different forms of bullying, the main contributing factors to bullying, its impact, the efficacy and how to manage it.

Managers indicate their awareness of bullying incidents in their organisation. The impact that bullying has on both the organisation and the individual was evident from all participants. The participants widely addressed what had been put in place to eradicate bullying, and their perception of its efficacy was loud. Their suggestion for improvement and recommendations were made known by all participants. They mentioned a need to improve the current interventions by, among others retaining the ICAS intervention as it seems to be impactful, developing and implementing a policy that addresses bullying, and engaging in awareness campaigns and workshops to ensure all employees are informed as to what constitutes bullying and what the organisations position is on it.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion, limitations, contributions, and recommendations drawn from this study will be outlined and described in this chapter. The chapter outlines the conclusions in line with the aims of the study. Limitations of the literature review and empirical study are discussed, and the contributions towards improving the effectiveness of interventions that are aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and recommendations to IOP professionals, HR practitioners, employee wellness practitioners, managers and organisations for promoting a workplace environment conducive to employee productivity.

4.1 CONCLUSION

This section contains the conclusions in line with this study's empirical and literature review aims. The study's main aim was to explore managers' perceived effectiveness of intervention in eradicating workplace bullying.

4.1.1 Conclusions drawn from the literature review.

The researcher accomplished the following two specific literature aims.

- To conceptualise workplace bullying and its related constructs, and
- To explore bullying intervention aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

4.1.1.1 Conceptualising workplace bullying

Workplace bullying was defined and emphasised as a workplace problem that has an enormous impact on the success of an organisation, yet through the implementation of interventions, it does not yet show any signs of abating (Nel, 2019). Different types of workplace bullying were conceptualised. The causes of workplace bullying and the factors which enable it was also outlined. This study concludes that bullying is a reality and pose a serious problem to both organisation and their employees (Vranjes & Salin,

2022). Rosander et al. (2022) describe workplace bullying as a workplace situation where an individual is exposed and has to endure repeated acts of intimidation and harassment (both physical and emotional) by co-workers or seniors at work over a period. Furthermore, Nielsen et al. (2017) add that for this action to be labelled bullying, this undesirable behaviour should be repetitive and persistent.

Bullying is perceived by identifying different behavioural elements associated with and constitutes bullying behaviour (Liang, 2020). These are aggression and negative behaviour towards the victim, how often the behaviour happens, the balance of power between the victim and the perpetrator, the harmful effect of the behaviour and its duration (Nel, 2019). Other negative behaviour that defines bullying is when employees are isolated, given less work than other employees, given a workload that is more than others, gossiping about the victim and taken behind his/her back (Nel, 2019). Withholding information (relevant to a person's employment or role), humiliation and ridicule (Morrow et al., 2021).

There are several reasons why workplace bullying happens (Nel, 2019). These include power imbalances between the perpetrator and the victim (Vandekerckhove & Commers, 2003). Sometimes it can happen between peers (Park et al., 2020). This is the formal power imbalance between leaders and their followers (Nielsen et al., 2017). Agotnes et al. (2018) note the lack of leadership at the heart of bullying. Passive leaders and *laissez-faire* type of leadership create and aides an environment where bullying thrives (Rainey & Melzer, 2021). Motsei and Nkomo (2016) add that in South Africa, as is the case globally, bullying can be attributed to organisational changes, work design and organisational development and propose using Salin's framework of organisational changes to mitigate workplace bullying. According to Motsei and Nkomo (2016), competition for resources among employees, how the benefit structure is designed, and bureaucratic processes within the organisation are all elements that promote a bullying culture.

Workplace bullying takes different forms (Nel, 2019). Some are physically attacked, and others are verbally attacked (Al Muharaq et al., 2022). There are cases where other employees are attached via emails in the form of written communication abuse

while others are excluded from the decision-making process and threatened as well (Nel, 2019).

4.1.1.2 The efficiency of workplace bullying interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying in organisations.

The second aim was to explore the intervention aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 requires employers to bring about and maintain, as far as reasonably practicable, a safe work environment without risk to workers' physical and mental health (Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993). Therefore, it is in the best interest of organisations to promote a healthy, safe working environment for their employee and the overall performance of the organisation.

It can be concluded from the review of literature organisations opt to implement effective measures aimed at eradicating workplace bullying, yet organisations are often not as successful in what they wish to achieve (Osler, 2021; Richardson et al., 2016). Some organisations have specific policies designed only to address workplace bullying (Escartín, 2016) while others use bullying awareness training aimed at educating their employees on the phenomenon of workplace bullying and how to deal with it (Doran, 2020). In other organisations, leaders are assessed on their actions to ensure a no-bullying workplace (Shoukat, 2022). Other developed countries have legislation promulgated to deal specifically with workplace bullying (Varghese et al., 2022).

4.1.2 Conclusions drawn from an empirical study

This study achieved all its specific aims of its empirical aims as indicated below.

- Research aim 1: To explore managers' perception of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.
- Research aim 2: To make recommendations towards the improvement of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

4.1.2.1 Conceptualising workplace bullying

Managers' awareness of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

With respect to this aim, it has been concluded that managers are aware of the interventions their organisation has put in place to assist in eradicating workplace bullying. Managers are of the view that these interventions are effective, and their efficacy is visible to some extent. Some described their experience with workplace bullying as either being a victim themselves or having to deal with instances of bullying as a manager.

Recommendation for the improvement of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

This study also aimed to recommend improving interventions that are already in place. What can be done to improve what is available to increase efficacy? To this end, the manager made several recommendations aimed at improving the efficacy of current interventions, recommendations towards improving the current interventions further, and suggestions for new interventions to be considered. This includes the development of a comprehensive workplace bullying policy, improving the role of HR and employee wellness specialists, and launching awareness campaigns to educate and train all stakeholders on how best to deal with bullying behaviour and prevent it.

4.1.3 Hypothesis resulting from the empirical study

The key hypothesis of this study is that managers are aware of the presence of workplace bullying incidents in their organisations. They are also aware of the interventions put in place to eradicate workplace bullying and the efficiency of those interventions. Managers see the value and the importance of such interventions on the wellbeing of the organisation and their organisation. Managers are of the view that the interventions are effective even though bullying incidences are continuing.

The secondary hypothesis relates to the following:

- The interventions are working to some extent but refining these interventions is necessary as workplace bullying remains a problem.
- Current workplace bullying intervention problems do not successfully incorporate all stakeholders and the role they should play in dealing with workplace bullying, both from the victim and perpetrator sides.

4.2 LIMITATIONS

Several limitations were identified within this research, and they are presented in relation to the literature review and empirical findings of the study.

4.2.1 Limitations of the literature review

Since the study is qualitative, many reflections in the literature review echo findings drawn from an interpretivist qualitative perspective. However, during the literature review, the researcher was able to access many studies which adopted a quantitative approach. The researcher further concluded there are limited qualitative studies who approach the research from a positivist and humanistic perspective. Subsequently, this can therefore be seen as a limitation necessitating more studies following a qualitative research approach.

4.2.2 Limitations of the empirical study

The most fundamental limitation of this qualitative study was that it focused only on one cohort, managers within the South African FMCG sector and context. Even though it is not the purpose of qualitative research, the findings cannot be generalised to other organisations. It should be noted that the qualitative nature of this study and the thorough presentation and detailed account of the research design allows for transferability.

Another notable limitation was the sampling of the participants. Purposive sampling was utilised. This means that the researcher selected the participants, and other cohorts of employees were excluded. Only managers who had been in the

organisation for more than two years were selected, and the study excluded other stakeholders. Therefore, further research, more inclusive in its sample and representative of all stakeholders, both internal and external specialists, from numerous industries, will help better understand workplace bullying and its related construct.

In conclusion, the researcher's biases have been factored in as another limitation and have been acknowledged. The researcher is employed within the organisation as an IOP intern within the HR department. However, the researcher, with the support of his supervisor, took numerous measures to mitigate bias. This was for instance done by making use of verbatim quotes to stay true to the voices of the participants.

4.3 CONTRIBUTIONS

The following section assesses the contributions of the theoretical and empirical study as it relates to the researcher, the employer, the discipline of IOP, HR professionals and society.

4.3.1 Contributions of the findings to myself as the researcher

The researcher has learnt a lot about the importance of creating a conducive, safe working environment for employees, free of destructive behaviour such as bullying. The researcher also gained invaluable insight into workplace bullying, resulting in increased personal awareness. He has been alerted about factors contributing to workplace bullying and the impact of workplace bullying on both the organisation and employees. The researcher has more awareness about interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying and how they can be made more efficient by improving the extent to which they cover all aspects related to this phenomenon.

4.3.2 Contributions of the findings to organisations

Organisations have been mandated by law to ensure that they are responsible for providing a safe and healthy working environment for their employees. By putting measures in place to stop, eliminate and eradicate workplace bullying, the

organisation will be fulfilling that mandate as prescribed by law. The findings of this study further present organisations with insights into the factors and causes of workplace bullying and the impact thereof not only on the employees but also on the organisation's success. This research further contributed by recommending to organisations the important elements that should be incorporated in workplace bullying interventions and how organisational culture should be informed through these interventions.

4.3.3 Contributions of the findings to industrial and organisational psychology

IOP's professionals as strategic partners in the organisation, as well as its HR and employee wellness departments, have a key role to play in ensuring the impact of workplace bullying on the psychosocial behaviour of employees and the success of the organisation is mitigated. This includes positively influencing organisational culture and creating a safe work environment conducive to employee wellness, efficiency and productivity.

4.3.4 Contributions of the findings to the human resources and employee wellness departments

The HR and employee wellness departments are responsible for developing and implementing policies and procedures that effectively deal with bullying incidences from the victim and the perpetrator's point of view. When employees are bullied, the risk of them wanting to leave the organisation increases, resulting in skilled employee loss, productivity decreases, and a possible toxic work environment can come to life. HR and employee wellness professionals are the custodians of employee wellness and should apply their knowledge and skills to develop and implement interventions to successfully eradicate workplace bullying.

4.3.5 Contribution of the findings to the society

As individuals spend more time at work than at home, creating a work environment in which employees can feel safe, be fulfilled, and thrive is imperative. Prioritising the wellbeing of employees reduce incidences of employees who are also part of

communities and society, impacting negatively on society because of their psychological and physiological struggles and related illnesses.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations based on the review of the literature and the findings of the empirical part of the study are outlined below.

4.4.1 Applications of the findings to organisational practices

The following recommendations are proposed to the organisation, including its leadership and the role of the HR and employee wellness departments, towards ensuring that bullying incidences decrease and are eradicated.

- Develop a comprehensive anti-workplace bullying policy which clearly outlines the organisation's position towards workplace bullying, how it will be dealt with by creating a preventative culture, supporting victims, and how perpetrators will be dealt with.
- Equipping all stakeholders with the necessary education and training to become skilled and competent in effectively working towards ensuring a workplace free of bullying and, should bullying occur, how to deal with it swiftly and efficiently.
- Have all employees sign a declaration in which they commit to ensuring a bully-free workplace.

4.4.2 Recommendations for future research

The following recommendations are proposed for future research.

- It is recommended that future research include involving all other stakeholders involved in or affected by bullying to obtain their perspectives on this phenomenon.
- The study should also be replicated within other industries to enable drawing comparisons or identifying similarities or differences in trends.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This is the final chapter of this study, and the researcher discussed conclusions, hypotheses, limitations, contributions, and recommendations of the study in line with the literature review and empirical aims, as stated in the first chapter of this study. The contributions and recommendations of the study were also described by the researcher, illustrating how an organisation can benefit from this study and how the researcher, the HR and employee wellness departments and IOPs' professional knowledge would be enhanced by this study.

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ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

TITLE: EXPLORING MANAGERS' PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT ERADICATING WORKPLACE BULLYING

1. Tell me about your experiences of bullying, as a manager in your organisation.
2. What type of interventions are in place to deal with workplace bullying?
3. How effective are these interventions? Please elaborate
4. What recommendations can you make towards improving the effectiveness of these interventions?
5. What recommendations can you make towards additional interventions the organisation can consider?

ANNEXURE B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



Ethical clearance reference number. 2021_CEMS/IOP_009

Research permission reference number (If applicable):

24-05-2021

Title: "Exploring managers perceived effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying: A Qualitative study"

Dear Participant,

My name is Azwihangwisi Alfred Singo and I am doing research with Dr Annelize Van Niekerk, an industrial and organisational psychologist and a senior lecturer at the department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology. I am conducting my research towards a Masters of Commerce degree in Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in the study entitled exploring managers perceived effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research to find out how managers perceive the effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying. The study will assist to improve the workplace and the wellbeing of employees and their organisation.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited to participate because you are a manager at the organisation with over 12 months experience in the company. The reason why you were chosen is to share your in-depth experience. Your contact details were obtained from your HR director who is the gatekeeper of this research. The protection of information Act (POPI) act

no 4 of 2014 necessitates the disclosure of how access was gained to personal information of participants. It is anticipated that a sample of 12 participants will suffice this study.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves conducting semi-structured interviews through Microsoft Teams. The interviews questions will be centred on workplace bullying.

The interviews will be between 60 and 90 minutes and will be conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. However, you will not be able to withdraw your responses since your data will be anonymous hence it will not be possible to identify you.

ARE THEIR ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

Some inconvenience and/or discomfort may be experienced when describing one's personal workplace bullying experiences. The study focuses on managers perception and participants will be asked to share lived experiences at workplace. Should you feel any discomfort due to interview questions, you may withdraw or inform me immediately. I will assist you with dealing with the matter further or refer you to a qualified and experienced professional at SADAG who will be able to assist you.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Information that you will share with me during the interviews will remain strictly confidential. You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research OR your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee and these people will also sign the confidentiality agreement. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet which will only be accessed by the researcher for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software programme.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

No payment or reward, financial or otherwise will be offered for participating in the research. Participants who agree to partake in the research must indicate the time slot that is most convenient for interviews.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Azwihangwisi Alfred Singo on 079 765 9692 or email hangwisie@gmail.com. The findings are accessible for five years. Please do not use home telephone numbers. Departmental and/or mobile phone numbers are acceptable.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Azwihangwisi Alfred Singo on 079 765 9692 or email hangwisie@gmail.com or 30638542@mylife.unisa.ac.za. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Annelize Van Niekerk on 012 429 8231 or email ynieka2@unisa.ac.za. Contact the acting research ethics chairperson of the committee, Dr. Maphala at 012 429 8355 or email maphabpm@unisa.ac.za if you have any ethical concerns.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Singo Azwihangwisi Alfred

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has informed me of the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and I am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the semi-structured interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & surname..... (please print)

Participant's signature.....Date.....

Researcher's name & surname: Azwihangwisi Singo

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

ANNEXURE C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNISA CEMS/IOP RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

06 May 2021

Dear Mr. AA Singo

NHREC Registration # : (if applicable)
ERC Reference # : **2021_CEMS/IOP_009**
Name : Mr. AA Singo
Student # : 30638542
Staff # : N/a

**Decision: Ethics approval from
06 May 2021 to 06 May 2024**

Researcher(s): Name: Mr. AA Singo
Address: 3096 Flamboyant Street, Louis Trichardt, 0920
E-mail address, telephone: 30638542@mylife.unisa.ac.za, 0797659692

Supervisor (s): Name: Dr Annelize Van Niekerk
E-mail address, telephone: ynieka2@unisa.ac.za, 012 429 8231

Exploring managers perceived effectiveness of interventions aimed at eradicating workplace bullying.

Qualification: Masters (MCom)- Post graduate degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa CEMS/IOP Research Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for **Three** years.

*The **low risk application** was reviewed by the CEMS/IOP Research Ethics Review Committee on the **28th April 2021** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was approved on **6th May 2021**.*

The proposed research may only commence with the provision that:

- 1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa COVID-19 Position Statement on research ethics dated 26 June 2020 which is attached.**



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Open Rtrb

2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.
3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Unisa CEMS/IOP Research Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **(06 May 2024)**
8. Submission of a complete research ethics progress report will constitute an application for the renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2021_CEMS/IOP_009** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,



Signature

Acting Chair of IOP ERC

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Signature

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ANNEXURE D: TURN-IT-IN REPORT

EXPLORING MANAGERS' PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT ERADICATING WORKPLACE BULLYING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

ORIGINALITY REPORT

10 %	10 %	1 %	3 %
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