

**An analysis of the extent of cyberbullying awareness among the stakeholders in the  
selected public school in Gauteng, South Africa**

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Lack of technological infrastructure and poor adoption of digital literacy in South African schools have been cited as some of the factors that impede the success of cyberbullying awareness implementation and monitoring initiatives in schools. The purpose of this study was to analyse the extent of cyberbullying awareness among the stakeholders in a selected public school in Gauteng, South Africa. To achieve this, a literature review on the latest international and local debates on cyberbullying and communication campaigns and strategies was undertaken. Self-awareness theory was used as the guiding theory for the study because of its ability to assess a person's reaction to and behaviour after exposure to information.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview with selected stakeholders (learners, teachers and parents). Through the use of discourse analysis to analyse the interviews, this study found that there was no cyberbullying awareness among the stakeholders within the school system. This lack of awareness was exacerbated by the technological knowledge gap, the non-implementation of a cyberbullying policy and the inability of schools to handle cyberbullying cases.

It is recommended that the Department of Basic Education should conduct ongoing training sessions on the 2012 School Safety Framework, specifically on cyberbullying, and also infuse it into the performance management of school principals. This study will equip the school system to respond to cyberbullying and engage in proactive measures to prevent it. Academically, this study adds to the ongoing discourse on the scourge of gender-based violence in general and cyberbullying in particular as the school system gradually moves into online platforms

Key terms: Cyberbullying, bullying, school safety framework, emotional connectivity, communication campaigns

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ANC	African National Congress
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DM	Direct message
ICT	Information Communication Technology
LO	Life Orientation
LSM	Living standard measure
NEA	National Education Association
SWD	South West District
UK	United Kingdom
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States of America

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The advent of digital evolution and the transition to digital technology has opened new opportunities; everything is at one's fingertips, learning and teaching has transitioned to virtual platforms people transact, consult and find love online. Failure to adapt to these technological opportunities isolates one from their advantages and lessons aligned with digital literacy, which also exposes one to online harm such as cyberbullying (Costley 2014:6).

Globally, digital learning has transformed the learning environment from traditional archives to advanced online libraries, where learning material is accessible on the go and outside the school premises. This new development has exposed learners to cyberbullying, where they face violence or gender-based violence at school or online harm at home while doing research for school purposes (Safe to Learn 2020). Petrov (2019) in the TechJury presents statistics that indicate a "global cyberbullying awareness of 75% with Sweden and Italy leading the chart with 91% awareness".

Contrary to the promising figures internationally, there are limited reports about South Africa's state of cyberbullying awareness; not much has been reported on the topic. A study by Smith (2015) highlights cyberbullying as a relatively under-researched phenomenon alongside topics like violence and cyberbullying in the workplace. Johannes (2018) in a Global Advisor study claims that 54 per cent of South African parents indicated that they know of a child experiencing cyberbullying. The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic increased "media consumption across the globe with book reading and audiobook listening up by 14 per cent, social media usage seeing an increase of 21 per cent and news consumption rising by 36 per cent" (Watson 2022). This development prompted the South African education system to adapt to digital literacy which was presented as the new normal for learning where schools had to adapt to online learning or face closures.

Digital literacy is defined as the "ability to locate and consume, create and communicate digital content, while simultaneously employing a process of critical evaluation" (Spires, Pail & Kerkhof 2017:2236). Technological infrastructure challenges left unprepared schools to grapple with online learning or face doom (Henekom 2020). This new emergency in the education sector also highlighted the need to redress the implementation of the bullying and cyberbullying policy in Gauteng, where stakeholders presented no understanding of existing bullying and cyberbullying policy – the 2012 School Safety Framework, a key instrument in creating cyberbullying awareness (Makota & Leoschut 2016). The rocketing numbers of

cyberbullying statistics in the global spectrum present none discrimination as a factor, when identifying cyberbullying victims; the phenomenon victimises both young and old regardless of one's socioeconomic status (Owaida 2020). A study by Chisholm (2014) suggests that collaborative efforts and good scholarship to improve an understanding of cyberbullying is among the effective ways of thwarting the cyberbullying problem in the school system. Literature by Cilliers and Chinyamurindi (2020) presents a drawback in South Africa's approach to handling technological learning where the focus is on technological proficiency rather than data security and another online-driven type of learning which could prevent cyber-driven attacks. This study explores and explains the cyberbullying phenomenon through an analysis of the extent of cyberbullying awareness among the stakeholders in a selected public school in Gauteng, South Africa.

The study followed a cross-sectional qualitative approach using a case study design and data were collected using videoed semi-structured interviews and a videoed focus group interview. The Stakeholder theory was used as the guiding theory for the study because of its ability to prioritise all stakeholders when delivering organisational communication messages. The prevalence of cyberbullying is a global phenomenon that haunts stakeholders in various sectors of society including the school system and most cyberbullying victims are minors who lack knowledge, compared to adults who are experienced and capable of handling the pressure associated with this form of bullying.

With this in mind, Odora and Matoti (2015:399) highlight that a "high percentage of adolescents are being exposed to interpersonal violence, aggression, mistreatment and harassment while online through what has been termed as cyberbullying". Ramorola (2013: 655) presents "South African teachers as more concerned with putting their focus on teaching how to use technology and ICT rather than learning technology usage" which expose learners to topics such as data protection and cyber security.

The point of argument is that young people's exposure to cybercrime prevention and awareness campaigns should be key in "education training modules where information on information system security, cybercrime victim protection and support, online safety" should be prioritised during cybercrime awareness messages (Bele, Dimc, Rozman & Jemec 2014:282).

With this in mind, training learners on e-safety policies might serve as an active solution to influence passive onlookers who witness cyberbullying cases to assist victims and play an active part in the school's anti-bullying strategies (Cowie 2013). MMA SA Mobile report (Mobile Marketing Association 2015) depicts internet usage as a known socioeconomic challenge, where a family's living standard measure (LSM) has no bearing on internet usage and

affordability. The African National Congress (ANC) through Minnaar's (2018) article highlights "free internet access as a basic human right for South Africans, from rural to metropolitan areas in all public schools, clinics, libraries". The purpose of this study is to explore and explain an analysis of the extent of cyberbullying awareness among the stakeholders in a selected public school in Gauteng, South Africa. #Delete cyberbullying (2013) depicts South Africa as among countries that still lag in e-safety awareness and educational activities.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The lack of digital literacy in South African schools and failure to introduce cyberbullying policies has propelled the escalation of physical bullying to digital means, where traditionally, bullying victims are unable to escape their bullies with the homework time opening the battle field and the internet fuelling the fire. South Africa's Refiwe Mughana, a Limpopo learner who committed suicide, is an example of a life cut short from altercations that resonated from homework time while using digital technology for school purposes (Bhengu 2021a). The South African media has headlined the cyberbullying phenomenon as a prevalent problem that demands effective solutions and intervention from policymakers and communities (Smit 2015).

A recent cyberbullying awareness study conducted in South Africa highlighted the failure of the education system to equip teachers to deal with cyberbullying, which ultimately leads to poor handling of cyberbullying cases when they occur (Cilliers & Chinyamurindi 2020). Hanley (2009) articulates that "a Canadian study found that 70% of students have been bullied at least once online and 23% of middle-school students surveyed were bullied by email and 41% by text message on their cell phones". Laas and Boezaart (2014:2673) argue that "bullying, violence and harassment are not dissimilar" and this fact is boldly highlighted in the latest cyberbullying figures which present high prevalence of cyberbullying in South African schools. This point highlights cyberbullying occurrence as an overlap from physical violence, where inclusion of technology exacerbates the pain.

The South African media has headlined cyberbullying phenomenon as a prevalent problem that demands effective solutions and intervention from policymakers and communities (Smit 2015). The suicide case, of a 13-year-old Pretoria girl published in the media in February 2019 alarmed South Africans and prompted the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to enhance cyberbullying policies and awareness campaigns in schools (Gous 2019). In order to promote a cyber-friendly environment, the government through the department of Public Service and Administration has introduced a method to screen applicant's past internet activities as part of background check before one could be offered a government employment (Molosankwe 2013). The dynamic nature of cyberbullying, with alarming media reports and circulated violent videos

of learners and teachers highlight a gap in literature, this has propelled the researcher to pursue the topic (Moyo 2017). South Africa's drawback in the Education system is having no stand-alone cyberbullying policy. The national government has integrated the cyberbullying topic into the South African School Safety Framework (2012) which generally addresses all types of bullying, this alone highlights a neglect from the education sector in addressing cyberbullying. This study explored and explained the extent of cyberbullying awareness among the stakeholders in a selected public school in Gauteng, South Africa.

The study assessed the efficiency of the school's existing stakeholder communication initiatives regarding the 2012 School Safety Framework. The selected school for the study was a public Information and Communications Technology (ICT) school in Pretoria that fully utilises ICT systems as a method of teaching and learning. The government provides digital devices to all learners of this school. The study established how the school communicated or promoted the 2012 School Safety Framework to its stakeholders as part of cyberbullying awareness. The study pinpointed cyberbullying as a prevalent problem that promotes illicit online behaviour among learners (Lai et al. 2017).

Chisholm (2014) depicts cyberbullying as an acceleration or an extension of traditional bullying where a bully utilises technological devices in various forms to repetitively cause emotional distress. The NEA policy brief (National Education Association 2012:2) highlights "school staff training as essential in addressing all forms of bullying in the learning environment including cyberbullying". The point of the argument is that cyberbullying in schools will never be solved without creating awareness and employing extensive training of educators and other members of the school system (Dogan, Dogan & Celik 2021). Hester (2012) emphasises parents supervising their children's internet access as a more progressive way to address cyberbullying than merely limiting or depriving them of internet access, which ultimately becomes one of the reasons victims do not report cyberbullying. The mandate from the 2010 United Nations Assembly is to "deter cybercrime and make it an integral component of national cyber security and critical information infrastructure protection strategy" (Gercke 2014:2).

### 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study analysed the extent of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders in the selected public school in Gauteng, South Africa. The study was cross-sectional. A cross-sectional study is pinned as the study that is conducted at one point in time, while longitudinal studies are the type of studies that permit observation to be conducted over an extended period (Babbie, Mouton, Payze, Vorster, Boshoff & Prozesky 2001). The purpose of this study was to explore and explain the extent of cyberbullying awareness among the stakeholders within the school



system. The research established the level of awareness of stakeholders about the cyberbullying phenomenon. The researcher believed there is a gap when it came to addressing the cyberbullying topic in South Africa even though quite a few studies had been conducted on the topic. The latest media reports and death statistics globally, highlight an information gap which ultimately boils down to a lack of awareness messages for cyberbullying victims (Petrov 2019). The study employed two qualitative data-gathering methods using a virtual video format in the form of a focus group interview and videoed one-to-one interviews.

A video focus group interview was conducted with a group of teachers. Other stakeholders (learners and parents) were engaged in one-to-one video interviews. The time dimension of the study was one month. Data gathering was conducted in September 2021. The plan was to evaluate how the 2012 School Safety Framework guides schools in creating awareness of the cyberbullying phenomenon. Babbie et al. (2001:92) share a view that “exploratory and descriptive studies are often cross-sectional studies”.

The research by Moyo (2017) argues that an increase in the prevalence of cyberbullying signals an inability for schools to effectively manage the cyberbullying phenomenon because cyberbullying happens outside school premises and during operating hours. In many cases, teachers or school administrators are not equipped to deal with the phenomenon (Dogan et al. 2021). Cyberbullying affects the entire school system; extensive awareness campaigns across all platforms will have a positive bearing on how stakeholders react to cyberbullying incidents (Chisholm 2014).

## 1.4 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This section highlights the goal and objectives of the study.

### 1.4.1 Goal

The goal of the research study was to explore and describe the extent of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders within the school system.

### 1.4.2 Objectives

For the researcher to achieve the aims, certain objectives which outline the following actions were formulated (De Vos et al. 2011):

Main study objective:

- To explore and describe the extent of stakeholder awareness of cyberbullying within the school system.
- To describe the efficiency of the 2012 School Safety Framework among stakeholders.
- To evaluate the stakeholders' trust in the school's approach to cyberbullying.
- To determine the school's response to cyberbullying.

The study explored and described by qualitative means the extent of cyberbullying awareness by testing schools' communication channels, communication initiatives and messages (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter 2009). The research topic was information-seeking; it uncovered how stakeholders at the school were aware or not of the cyberbullying topic. It highlighted how the school's communication initiatives impacted the framework.

The 2012 School Safety Framework is a policy that assists Gauteng schools with the regulation of cyberbullying. The research questions helped to test stakeholders' understanding of the policy contents. In South Africa, the DBE's (2012) School Safety Framework serves as a guide for schools during the implementation of the cyberbullying framework. The researcher was interested in examining stakeholder knowledge of the 2012 School Safety Framework and discovering how it assisted the school in the regulation of cyberbullying.

## 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study employed qualitative research in which data were gathered in a natural setting influenced by technology using a video focus group interview and video one-to-one semi-structured interviews. The study focused on exploratory and descriptive approaches; the researcher sought a clearer understanding, better definitions of concepts and evidence that would help measure validity (Chalmers 2010). In a positivist paradigm, hypotheses must be answered; in the interpretivist paradigm, the main research question and sub-questions that guide the study focus must be answered. The study explored and explained the extent of cyberbullying awareness among the stakeholders in the selected public school in Gauteng, South Africa. These stakeholders are key beneficiaries of the 2012 School Safety Framework. The main research question and four sub-questions were formulated as follows:

Main research question – How does the school raise awareness of cyberbullying among its stakeholders?

RQ1 – To what extent is the 2012 School Safety Framework assisting schools during anti-cyberbullying campaigns?

RQ2 – What are the school’s communication activities in creating awareness on cyberbullying?

RQ3 – To what extent is the school equipping stakeholders in dealing with cyberbullying?

RQ4 – To what extent are parents involved in the monitoring and control of cyberbullying problems in the school system?

## 1.6 UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

The media headlines on the topic of cyberbullying in South Africa remain a cause for concern. However, the 2021 announcement relieved many South African cybercrime victims when President Cyril Ramaphosa passed into law the Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020 in June 2021 (South Africa 2021). The introduction of this Act followed the suicide case of Lufuno Mavhunga, a Limpopo Province learner who took her own life after her physical bullying incident went viral, with all South Africans both young and old sharing the video in their multiple online social media applications with views of getting justice for the victim (Tshikalange 2021).

The Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020 forbids “disclosure of data messages which are harmful and to provide for interim protection orders; to further regulate jurisdiction in respect of cybercrimes and someone charged under this bill can face 15 years in prison” (Jacaranda FM 2021). The first study assumption is that inefficient school communication channels about cyberbullying and cyberbullying policy affect stakeholders’ cyberbullying awareness. For the cyberbullying policy to be successful, the school needs to utilise efficient communication platforms to address its stakeholders.

The second assumption is that there are limited cyberbullying messages to stakeholders. The cyberbullying crisis is not a one size fits all problem. It is perpetrated on different media devices and different virtual platforms; at times perpetrators act on an anonymity basis applying advanced technological skills. A successful approach to addressing cyberbullying requires diversity.

The power of the multiplicity of virtual platforms makes the wound unbearable for victims, as one post is tagged, re-Tweeted, shared and escalated globally because virtual communities have no ‘geographic limitation’ meaning someone on Facebook or Instagram in South Africa might have online friends which he never met who are based in Europe. Campagna (2016) presents online social media applications as opportunistic and risky platforms that are engineered for capturing users on a much more aggravated density. With this in mind, training learners on e-safety policies might serve as an active solution to influence passive onlookers who witness cyberbullying cases to assist victims and play an active part in a school’s anti-

bullying strategies (Cowie 2013). Davis and Nixon cited in Hinduja and Patchin (2018:104) state that “perpetrators, onlookers and victims are not equipped on dealing with cyberbullying”. That is what happened in Lufuno Mavhunga’s bullying incident; onlookers cheered, recorded and posted the video which trended without considering the victim or the bully (Bhengu 2021a). South Africans who trended the video thought they were getting justice for Lufuno; they were not aware that sharing that video was breaking the Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020 (South Africa 2021), which was not passed into law at the time.

All of this boils down to a lack of awareness on messages about the cyberbullying phenomenon. Research from Cowie (2013) highlights training as an effective method to curb cyberbullying, not necessarily limiting learners’ online activities. Controlling cyberbullying becomes complex for teachers because it happens outside the school’s perimeter. The fact is that teachers at times do not have control of or are not well equipped to address the phenomenon (Dogan et al. 2021). A third assumption is that lack of parental involvement derails the success of cyberbullying awareness. The school system includes several structures from industry leaders, principals and members of the school governing body, teachers, parents and learners.

All these structures need to be involved to address cyberbullying effectively. Meanwhile Cassim (2013:1) suggests that “a collaborative effort by all role players is also necessary to address the rise in cyberbullying”. Without the inclusive involvement of all parties, the cyberbullying awareness campaign will run without success. The fourth assumption focuses on the insufficient training of stakeholders to address cyberbullying.

The study employed an interpretivist paradigm, where the researcher’s own beliefs, experiences, knowledge on the topic and previous research guided the underlying assumptions, from what is believed to be true without existing proof (Wagner, Khawulich & Garner 2012). The choice to opt for a qualitative study was motivated by studying a smaller sample, where the researcher acquired intimate findings about the phenomenon rather than generalising from a bigger sample (Walters 2001).

## 1.7 METHODOLOGY

To sensibly address the topic of cyberbullying with bullying victims, bully’s onlookers and potential victims, the researcher opted for a qualitative case study research design, “a study that followed a naturalistic approach” (Wagner et al. 2012:126). A thoughtful process was employed to increase credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, to ensure that the findings are credible and can be transferred on a bigger sample (Wagner et al. 2012).

The study employed more than one data-gathering instrument that allowed infused emotions with reactions during the data-gathering process. This was executed in the form of a videoed focus group interview and videoed one-to-one semi-structured interviews (Golafshani 2003). Merriam (2009) adds that the use of more data-gathering instruments in a study increases credibility and transferability. The decision for the researcher to employ the qualitative case study was to obtain thoughtful descriptive findings; it was not intended for generalisation. The decision on the methodology was intentional.

## 1.8 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study revolves around conscientising school stakeholders on ill behaviours that occur as a result of usage of communication technology in learning. Key concepts of the study were formulated around negative communication, which literature in this particular study referred to as cyberbullying. The description of cyberbullying highlighted an overlap with traditional bullying. The literature presented indicates that the introduction of technology in learning has exacerbated traditional bullying. Alternatively, one can refer to cyberbullying as an evolution of traditional bullying, wherein the bully uses technology to show off or ridicule the victim. They employ internet applications to publicise traditional bullying activities for online popularity.

Simon and Goes (2013) define the scope of the study as the key points or reference where the research problem originates. Other authors highlighted that a “good research scope establishes a researcher’s competence, expertise and integrity” (Akanle, Ademuson & Shittu 2020:107). One could argue that the scope summarises what the study is about, including the gap identified in the literature or the gap the study aims to bridge. This particular study presented clear limitations, with the sampling decision being the first limitation.

Limited sample was utilised due to budget constraints; this became a limitation because the findings cannot be generalised. Lack of technological resources in schools and vandalism was another limitation. The researcher faced challenges in finding schools with proper functional technological infrastructure. As a result, normal government schools that were identified as hotspots by the Department of Basic Education failed to make the selection.

Non-implementation of cyberbullying policy is another limitation that was identified. Stakeholders had no reference, knowledge or any guidance from the policy in dealing with cyberbullying. It was discussed that the 2012 School Safety Framework is currently only available on the internet. Despite being online for eleven years, this policy has failed to reach

participants at this particular school. A decision on the choice of methodology to conduct a qualitative case study was also a limitation, as the study caters for a small intimate sample; however, this was an intentional decision. The researcher wanted to get thick descriptive findings that will be credible and transferable. The aim was not to generalise but to make inferences per case (Wagner et al. 2012). The study will add value to the subject field of communication and fill a gap in research on the topic of cyberbullying, which is relatively under-researched in South Africa. The study highlights technological infrastructure as a key problem that led to the digital divide gap which hinders other stakeholders from monitoring cyberbullying.

## **Definition of key concepts**

### **Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is defined as a dynamic type of bullying that is perpetrated using technological devices, with the potential to exacerbate through online sharing, tweeting and retweeting the problem (Notar, Padgett & Roden 2013).

### **Bullying**

In this study, bullying has been classified into two types: traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Traditional bullying is defined as “physical or psychological weakness, or it might refer to numbers of aggressors, or popularity/rejection in a peer group context” (Smit 2013:83). The literature provided has highlighted an overlap between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, wherein traditional bullying incidents are captured and posted online.

### **Framework**

The Cambridge Dictionary defines frameworks as “a supporting structure around which something can be built; a system of rules, ideas, or beliefs that is used to plan or decide something” (Partelow 2023). The study focuses on the 2012 School Safety Framework, which serves as a comprehensive bullying policy in South Africa, addressing both bullying and cyberbullying.

### **Policy**

Policy is defined as a “plan of action agreed to by a group of people with the power to carry it out and enforce it” (Dukeshire & Thurlow 2002). Policy Implementation (2001:08) describes policy as a means of governance, its implementation, and the enforcement of rules among an

organisation's stakeholders. In this study, the 2012 School Safety Framework is the policy used to address issues related to bullying and cyberbullying.

### **Digital Divide**

Literature has referred to the divide as digital inequality, grouping it into three factors: "access to hardware, understanding digital means of communication, and internet affordability" (Mlaba 2021). In this study, the digital divide was defined as the situation where stakeholders are unable to use technological resources, and in some cases, they cannot afford to own these resources. All descriptions of the digital divide affected stakeholders who participated in the study.

### **Digital Age**

The digital age is defined as an era of digital technology where technology plays a pivotal role. It is presented as the ability to absorb and consume information through the use of computers and online networks, where young people "extend some of their offline habits" (OECD 2018:8). In the study, the digital age is referred to as the current educational era where learning is digitised.

### **Digital Literacy**

Digital literacy is defined as practices that involve the ability to locate and consume, create, and communicate digital content while simultaneously employing a process of critical evaluation (Spires et al. 2018). In this study, digital literacy has been defined as the ability of stakeholders to utilise computer-mediated technologies.

### **Training**

Mango (2023) defines training as the "action of informing or instructing your employees on a certain task in order to help them improve their performance or knowledge". In this study, training was mentioned as a requirement within the school system to equip all stakeholders with knowledge of cyberbullying and the usage of technological resources.

### **Awareness**

The purpose of the study is to examine the extent of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders within the school system. This concept played a pivotal role, and awareness extended to knowledge of technological usage. Gafoor (2012:02) defined awareness as "knowledge of something" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary).

## **Stakeholders**

Stakeholders are defined as “individuals or groups who have an interest in or some aspect of rights or ownership in the project. They can contribute in the form of knowledge or support, or they can impact or be impacted by the project” (McGrath & Whitty 2017:728). In this study, stakeholders are learners, teachers, and parents, all of whom are members of the school system.

## **Learners**

The Britannica Dictionary (2023) defines a learner as a “person who is trying to gain knowledge or skill in something by studying, practicing, or being taught”. In this study, learners are students of different grades from one school.

## **Teacher**

A teacher is defined as a “person who delivers an educational program, assesses student participation in an educational program, and/or administers or provides consistent and substantial leadership to an educational program” (Lal 2016). In this study, a teacher is defined as a supportive mediator between a learner and a parent. According to cyberbullying literature, there must be collaboration between a teacher and parents to successfully address cyberbullying.

## **Parents**

The definition of a parent in the “Standard” Dictionary of the English Language (1953) defines a parent as someone who has generated a child; a father or a mother (Persson 2019). In this particular study, a parent is referred to as someone who takes financial responsibilities and ensures the safety of a child. This can be a biological father, mother, or relative.

## **Netiquette**

Netiquette refers to a set of rules for Internet etiquette and may be an important means of reducing disinhibited behaviour online (Notar et al. 2013). In this study, netiquette is emphasised when creating cyberbullying awareness messages. Stakeholders are taught how to respond to cyberbullying rather than engaging in retaliatory behaviour.

## **Firewalls**

Firewalls are defined as network devices that enforce an organisation’s security policy (Ingham & Forrest 2014). In the study, they are referenced as a security measure to protect end-users



from harmful cellphone or online applications when they are using the internet.

### **Emotional Connectivity**

Literature highlights “successful emotional communication as crucial for social interactions and social relationships” (Yuvaraj et al. 2016). In this study, emotional connectivity is defined as the ability of both parents and children to connect beyond the constraints of their parent-to-child barriers.

### **Suicide**

Suicide is defined as “an act of intentionally terminating one’s own life” (Gvion & Apter 2012). In this study, suicide occurs as a result of cyberbullying, where the victim sees no other way to escape the pain of victimisation and humiliation than by taking their own life.

## **1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the cyberbullying phenomenon in a school setting was contextualised. The literature presented the broad underlying factors of cyberbullying, both global and local, and the associated dangers that affect various stakeholders (learners, teachers and parents). The objectives, research questions and assumptions were also presented.

### **1.9.1. Chapter 2: The concept and sub-themes associated with cyberbullying**

This chapter outlines the concept and sub-themes associated with cyberbullying, such as the global state of cyberbullying and legislation, cyberbullying statistics, the state of schooling in Africa and South Africa, the digital divide, the jurisdiction of cyberbullying in South African law and the technological knowledge gap – a theme associated with technological usage which is aligned with the training of stakeholders on both policy and technological expertise in order for stakeholders to be able to use a computer and know how to monitor cyberbullying.

### **1.9.2. Chapter 3: The role of communication in addressing cyberbullying**

The third chapter presents the role of communication in addressing cyberbullying in schools. Concepts such as communication, communication and cyberbullying, the importance of communication in a cyberbullying campaign, the organisational system and stakeholder roles, communication channels and communication effectiveness from impact and response are highlighted. This chapter highlights cyberbullying as a negative communication. The highlighted concept gives a guideline on how any campaign, including cyberbullying phenomenon, needs to be communicated successfully.

### **1.9.3. Chapter 4: Research Methodology**

The methodological orientation chapter presents the research design and all technical aspects such as population sampling methods, units of analysis, accessible population, data interpretation and analysis and ethical issues. To present the validity and reliability of the study, technical aspects and how the study obtained the findings are important.

### **1.9.4. Chapter 5: The presentation of the results and analysis**

In this chapter, empirical findings were presented and analysed in line with the themes and sub-themes that talk about the objectives and research questions of the study.

### **1.9.5. Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations**

The last chapter presents the study summary, key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO: INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL APPROACH TO CYBERBULLYING**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter introduced the study topic, where the cyberbullying phenomenon was contextualised in terms of how it affects stakeholders within the school setting. The literature presented the broad underlying factors of cyberbullying from a global perspective, as well as in Africa and locally, with associated dangers that affect various stakeholders (learners, teachers, and parents). The objectives, research questions, and assumptions were also presented. In this chapter, an overview of the literature about cyberbullying in the school system was tabled.

In the discussion, two research objectives were addressed: first, to describe the efficiency of the 2012 School Safety Framework among stakeholders; and second, to explore and describe the extent of stakeholder awareness of cyberbullying within the school system. The purpose of this study was to explore and explain the extent of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders in the selected public school in Gauteng, South Africa. These two objectives consider the main research question which aims to establish how the school raises awareness of cyberbullying among its stakeholders.

The literature review was presented from a global, African and local perspective. The themes addressed include the global stance of cyberbullying and legislation, the state of cyberbullying in Africa and the state of cyberbullying in South Africa. Further themes underpinned the state of schooling in Africa and South Africa, the jurisdiction of cyberbullying in South African law, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, the Protection of Personal Information Act, Freedom of Expression, bullying and cyberbullying in schools, cyberbullying strategies, traditional bullying, cyberbullying, the causes and effects of bullying and the generation gap in technology usage.

### **2.2 GLOBAL STATE OF CYBERBULLYING AND LEGISLATION**

The prevalence of cyberbullying has become a shared concern globally; the versatility and intensity of the crime on victims highlight the inability of some countries and states to legislate cyberbullying (King 2010). Woda (2014) presents a milestone for some countries and states with evidence highlighting the success of launching cyberbullying laws. Countries and states such as Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), Hawaii, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee and Wisconsin are among countries and states recorded as having strong cyberbullying legislation.

Saengpranga and Gadavanijb (2021) share alarming figures from the UNICEF Poll in which 33% of adolescent participants from 30 countries highlighted that they were cyberbullied; meanwhile, the Pew Research Centre reported that 59% of United States (US) youth have experienced cyberbullying such as offensive name-calling, rumour spreading and receiving unwanted images. New research by Amnesty International (2017) presents alarming figures which highlight a gender-driven type of online abuse, where Twitter was used to specifically target women. The study presents 23% of online harassment using Twitter between women between the ages of 18 and 55 in countries like Denmark, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the USA.

Some countries such as the UK with no stand-alone cyberbullying laws utilise several existing laws that can be applied in cyberbullying cases and online harassment, such as the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, Breach of the Peace (Scotland), Defamation Act 2013. This point exposes the UK as among the countries that have not made progress in terms of giving cyberbullying the attention it deserves. Marczak and Coyne (2020) bring a different view on what exists as cyberbullying legislation in different countries and states; they pinpointed the UK as launching dedicated cyber related laws where a cyberbullying offender will not escape on technicalities when charged with a cyberbullying offence.

### 2.3 CYBERBULLYING STATISTICS

The latest research reports the prevalence of cyberbullying on a global spectrum. On an international front, the statistics presented by Feinberg and Robey (2008:10) show “93% internet usage in the US by the youth between ages of 12-17” and continuous growth of their online presence through online profiles. Rose and Dowling (2019) present increased police figures internationally where England and Wales recorded sexual offences as a result of online dating. In the African continent, a Kenyan university study presented a 75.8% prevalence of cyberbullying which occurred in the form of deceit (Ndiege, Okello & Wamuyu 2020). Gilbert (2015) in the Saturday Star released figures from a global study that surveyed almost 5000 teens between ages 13 to 18 in 11 countries, presented that 18% of teens have reported they were bullied online. In South Africa, the figure was 24%. South Africa is ranked the fourth highest after New Zealand, the US and Ireland (Gilbert 2015).

A study by Cilliers and Chinyamurindi (2020) presented a drawback in South Africa’s approach to handling technological learning where the focus is on technological proficiency rather than data security and other online-driven types of learning which could prevent cyber-driven attacks. Metz (2011:537) defines an act of good morals as “ubuntu, humanness or

personhood". The opposite is unconscionable. South African media reports present a cause for alarm on the topic of cyberbullying. Top of the list is circulating perpetrated violence on social media, involving learner-to-learner violence in some cases and teacher-to-learner violence in others (Gopolang 2018). These videos ultimately suggest a lack of morality in onlookers who watch the violence and do nothing to help but capture the incident on a video tape to share it on their social media handles publicly or anonymously which portrays a lack of humanity. Computer-mediated technologies offer users a unique platform, with privacy when users are conversing online. The privacy offered by the internet and flexibility open both good and dangerous opportunities and the latest statistics from a Global Advisor study conducted in 28 countries highlight cyberbullying as a growing problem with 64% of the 4000 participants believ(ing) that children are at risk (Newall 2018).

The South African education system is regulating cyberbullying through its 2012 School Safety Framework. This is a policy document that generally addresses bullying and cyberbullying. Van Zyl (2016) through his article on SAINTS website presents an outcry from the South African Media when it comes to school violence when he highlighted difficulty in managing the learner behaviour problem. The latest trending violent videos on Facebook, one about a KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) student and another showcasing a male teacher being attacked by two male students during class are clear examples that the 2012 School Safety Framework and the code of conduct clause in the South African School Act 84 of 1998 are not effective when it comes to dealing with law and order in schools (Van Zyl 2016).

## 2.4 STATE OF CYBERBULLYING IN AFRICA

The African Union has prescribed a common approach in dealing with cybersecurity and cybercrime, where a "rapid pace and innovation of Information Communication Technologies within African countries will bridge a gap that derails legislation and adoption of policies that deal with cyber security and cybercrime which also includes cyberbullying" (Module 7: Cybercrimes 2020:11). The Kenyan study of Makori and Agufana (2020:54) presented the ill-preparedness of Kenya to progressively deal with cyberbullying where "they discouraged the use of mobile phones in schools" instead of employing a more direct approach.

Be that as it may, the proliferation of mobile phones in the whole sub-Saharan region has changed the game for young people. Smartphones are now an essential tool for learning for young people whether they are poor or rich, even in very remote rural areas (Makori & Agufana 2020). In 2020, mimecast.com highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic presented another global pandemic on businesses and schools in different countries, which enforced organisations to tap into a more cyber-driven approach with little to no preparation. This trend

drove unprepared organisations and countries into a crisis and cyber criminals capitalised on this; Africa was no exception (Nabe 2020). A new report by the International Criminal Police Organisation published in (Business Tech 2021) listed South Africa as a country with the third-highest number of cybercrime victims worldwide, at a cost of R2.2 billion a year. This report concurs with another report from the South African Banking Risk Information Centre which shares evidence of gross fraud losses on South African issued cards that increased by 20.5% from 2018 to 2019 with card-not-present fraud and banking malware attacks, behind only Russia (Business Tech 2021).

There is a correlation between cyberbullying and cybercrime, where some occurrences share similar patterns, such as digital extortion, flaming, catfishing, cyberstalking, online harassment and trolling (Stylios et al. 2016). The Cybersmile Foundation (2022) adds that cyberbullying does not discriminate whether you are rich, poor, young or old.

A successful anti-cyberbullying campaign will not only benefit the education sector but the community at large, where the campaign will also enlighten stakeholders about other cyber-related risks (Gabrielli et al. 2021). The point of the argument is that “collaborative efforts and good scholarship to improve understanding of cyberbullying is among effective ways to thwart the cyberbullying problem in the school system (Chisholm 2014:83)”.

#### **2.4.1 State of schooling in Africa and South Africa**

The global COVID-19 pandemic realigned Africa’s position within the education system to integrate an innovative approach by “combining high-tech and low-cost solutions to ensure a safe continuity of learning during school closures” (Jenkins & Agbor 2021:1). Despite the technological demands prescribed by COVID-19, a new normal which included working from home and online learning emerged in both learning and working environments. Technological infrastructure challenges left schools unprepared to grapple with online learning and facing doom (Henekom 2020).

When one looks at South Africa’s positioning, it is a democratic country that is still trying to leapfrog from the consequences of the apartheid regime which enforced division in the education system through the Bantu education system, a curriculum that led to socioeconomic inequalities (Parker, Morris & Hofmeyr 2020). These inequalities still exist in the education system despite living in a democracy. They manifest through the digital divide, a division between those who have and those who have no means. One’s socioeconomic status prescribes which type of education you receive and this divide was highlighted between “schools in high and low socio-economic statuses”, during the COVID-19 pandemic (Dutt &

Kumari 2016: 334). Singh (2004:3) defines the digital divide as a “gap between those who have access to digital technologies and information on the internet and those who do not”. Ntaka (2020) in her Daily Maverick article argues that rural and township schools bore the brunt during the COVID-19 pandemic, with learning halted due to a lack of technological resources and the inability of these schools to take learning to online platforms. This negatively highlighted the divide between well-resourced schools and those without. Technologically resourced schools continued with learning while under-resourced schools in townships and rural schools were left to suffer (Ntaka 2020).

In the past, South African youth faced a lack of opportunities that were fuelled by Bantu education and the apartheid regime but the Y-generation in South Africa today face a different obstacle – digital inequality. Mlaba (2021) in her Global Citizen article categorises digital inequality into three factors access to hardware, understanding digital means of communication and internet affordability. A failure to attend to the digital revolution exposes organisations and their employees to cyber – attacks either a personal or business level, that is why some organisations are embarking on cyber driven trainings to empower employees (Galligan, Herrygers & Rau 2019).

All these challenges are encouraged by the era we are living in – the digital age. OECD (2018:8) define the digital age as the ability to absorb and consume information through the use of computers and online networks, where young “extent some of their offline habits”. One’s failure to consume information results in missed opportunities and exposure to digital risks. Most young people who later become cyberbullying victims use technology without understanding the risk factors associated with being online and internet safety protocols (DG Impact Report 2018). The literature above addresses the main objective of the study which aims to explore and describe the level of stakeholder awareness of cyberbullying within the school system.

Everything is at our finger tips; learning and teaching have transitioned to virtual platforms and people apply for jobs, find love and make payments online. Failure to adapt to these technological platforms, isolates one from the advantages and lessons of the digital age (Costley 2014). On a day-to-day basis the education system is challenged by bullying and cyberbullying which happens within the school system; bullying policies help schools as a point of reference when dealing with bullying (Makota & Leoschut 2016).

Globally, education systems have reported a high prevalence of bullying, embodying an integrated approach where traditional bullying is exacerbated by technology among young people. This type of bullying requires prevention strategies to reduce its occurrence among the

youth (Nebraska & Bauman 2011). With this in mind, Feinberg and Robey's (2008:2) study suggests that the "combined efforts of school and home are needed to prevent, reduce, or eliminate cyberbullying". The same problem is not different in South Africa despite limited research on the topics of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying (Popovac & Leoschut 2012:02). The following literature addresses the second objective of the study which is to describe the efficiency of the 2012 School Safety Framework among stakeholders.

#### **2.4.2 Stakeholder awareness of the 2012 School Safety Framework**

Policies are part of strategic decision-making for organisations or entities and are aimed at administering law and order that will enable an organisation to achieve its business goals or enhance its stance when dealing with certain issues or behaviours among its stakeholders (Cerna 2013). For schools to be in a position to ensure the protection of learners during school operating hours and on school premises, "implemented laws that offer a guideline on dealing with different types of bullying, including cyberbullying" are needed (Stopbullying.gov 2001:2). In South Africa, the 2012 School Safety Framework is the existing policy that is currently guiding schools to administer issues of bullying which stem from physical violence to violence accelerated using gadgets known as cyberbullying.

Policy Implementation (2001:08) presents policy as "governance, its implementation and enables the organisation to be able to enforce the rules among its stakeholders". Childnet International (2016:09) guided that the school's "anti-bullying policy or school behaviour policy must make reference to specific types of bullying, including cyberbullying". The second objective of the study was to describe the efficiency of the 2012 School Safety Framework among stakeholders at the selected school. The plan was to look at the impact of the mentioned policy in handling cyberbullying. The interest was from implementation to post-implementation, including lessons learned. Unfortunately, this objective was not met for the chosen school because the data collection highlighted that the framework was yet to be implemented at the school. The decision of including this objective was aimed at assessing how the policy would enhance awareness messages and anti-cyberbullying strategies.

### **2.5 JURISDICTION OF CYBERBULLYING IN SOUTH AFRICAN LAW**

The notion of capturing a violent incident and posting it online in the name of justice for the victim led to a victim's suicide and South Africa is still reeling from the shock. Lufuno Mavhunga was a Limpopo Province learner who took her own life after her bullying video went viral, with all South Africans both young and old sharing the video in their WhatsApp statuses and social media pages. This drove the victim to the point of no return; it showed a lack of ubuntu as some



did this for likes and following under hashtags for getting justice for Lufuno (Metz 2011). This incident put pressure on the government. Since then, there is a glimmer of hope for South Africans. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the new Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020; the Act was passed into law in June 2021 (South Africa 2021). The Act forbids disclosure of data messages which are harmful and to provide for interim protection orders; to further regulate jurisdiction in respect of cybercrimes and someone charged under this bill can face 15 years in prison (Jacaranda FM 2021). Previous cyberbullying research from Mabika and Dube (2017) presents a drawback for South Africa in dealing with the cyberbullying topic where many still underestimate its intensity. The latest media reports portray cyberbullying as a monster not only to children but to adults as well; cyberbullying does not discriminate whether you are rich or poor, young or old (The Cybersmile Foundation 2022).

An example of a cyberbullying incident that affected older people is that of political moguls Zinzi Mandela and Phumzile van Damme who were bullied by the famous South African Afrikaans musician Steve Hofmeyr who threatened to take their lives on his Twitter account if they did not give him the land. This is a classic example of cyberbullying. The two public figures opened cases in this regard supported by the ANC, the ruling party (Modise 2019). King (2010) pinpoints an unpopular view that many stakeholders will not support, especially those already dealing with the aftermath of cyberbullying in their families. He argues that the most effective way to deal with cyberbullying is in classrooms, not courtrooms.

## 2.6 SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT 84 OF 1996

Redressing a negative education history and system was prime in South Africa's political landscape. This paved way the way for the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (South Africa 1996), which emphasises the right to education. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 discourages any form of violence on school premises, with emphasis on democracy, known discrimination, learner's right to privacy, respect and dignity. The argument here is that school violence, which manifests as traditional bullying and later advances to the technology-inflicted type of violence using the internet, contradicts all values presented by the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, which discourages school violence and promotes the equal right to education.

In South Africa, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 is enough to guide the school system to enforce a code of conduct to make the school environment healthy and safe for all stakeholders. The components of the Act, which talks about democracy, known discrimination and the right to privacy and dignity, are a great start in addressing bullying but it needs to be updated with points that integrate cyberbullying and cyber-attacks to highlight the progress

made by schools integrating the technological era as part of the teaching curriculum. The dynamic nature of cyberbullying allows bullies an opportunity to argue that they did not physically invade anyone's privacy when they were abusing another individual.

Due to the dynamic nature of cyberbullying, one can send a message in the comfort of one's own home, bullying another learner who is in a different location. The Act needs to acknowledge technological evolution because today's classes occur virtually; everything, including teaching in schools, has transitioned to online platforms. Technological change has enabled people on a global spectrum to utilise mobile devices as an add-on form of computer-mediated technology. The use of mobile devices did not present major risks until the "widespread use of the second generation, digital network phones in the 1990s among young people" which presented the use of the short message service (SMS) and, ultimately, the use of online communication platforms such as Mxit and Facebook to name a few (Donegan 2012:34).

The use of mobile devices introduced independence and flexibility, in terms of when people can communicate, how they communicate and the flexible language they can use when communicating online. All of these offer an added right to privacy for end-users (Chisholm 2014). The right to privacy through computers and mobile devices enables people to become part of the virtual community, as it allows individuals to respond to communication privately, in bed under their blankets, in the park away from curious eyes (South African Bill of Rights: Chapter 2, p6). The fact is that virtual communities are not geographically bound; they present individual isolation, which ultimately opens doors to online harm (Chisholm 2014).

Ridings and Gefen (2014) define virtual communities as people who interact through computer-mediated technology using the internet; unlike traditional forms of communicating where one interacts with a colleague at work in the tea room, the virtual community has no geographic limitations, which means a virtual community is not physically bound. People in various cities can form part of virtual communities. They are usually aligned by common interests. Ghamrawi (2022) presents the school system as another type of virtual community where the Covid 19 pandemic and school closures across the globe enforced schools to take teaching and learning to virtual platforms. This introduction of virtual learning opened doors to online harm (Chisholm 2014).

## 2.7 PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION ACT 4 OF 2013

The pioneers behind technological evolution focused their energies on selling their innovations to the world. The argument here is that the same energy was not emphasised when highlighting

dangers and threats that come with technological change (Unprecedented Technological Risks 2014). Even today, academics, parents, youth and even the government are raving about technological change which is a result of the Fourth Industrial Revolution without putting emphasis on cybersecurity or enforcing laws to prevent cybercrime (Xu, David & Kim 2018). If prevention is indeed better than cure, countries including South Africa need to focus their energies on enhancing or developing cybercrime laws to protect their resources and their people, especially the future generation. Sutherland (2017:83) articulates that “South Africa still lags behind advanced economies when it comes to addressing cybersecurity legislation”. In achieving this, South Africa made strides when parliament officially implemented the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act 4 of 2013 (South Africa 2013). The POPI Act is going to help prevent the distribution of personal information without concern.

The POPI Act aims to “give effect to the constitutional right to privacy, by safeguarding personal information when processed by a responsible party, subject to justifiable limitations that are aimed at balancing the right to privacy against other rights, particularly the right of access to information; and protecting important interests, including the free flow of information within the Republic and across international borders”. The POPI Act forbids the distribution of individual information without concern. Facebook through data mining, found itself in hot water for selling personal information to businesses who manipulated the information for political gain (Zinolabedini & Arora 2019). Direct marketing is one of the areas where personal information is used by businesses.

This is where a consumer will be called by a company selling them something and in the middle of the conversation, they request concern from an individual for their partners to use the same information for marketing purposes. When individual companies do this, they are making sure they are compliant with the POPI Act requirements (Government Gazette 26 2013). The POPI Act also serves as a guardian angel to internet users; this Act protects the accessing and distribution of personal information without the concern of an individual. This Act focuses more on social media sites that also distribute personal information and sell it to companies for marketing purposes (Government Gazette 26 2013).

## 2.8 FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The Bill of Rights of the constitution of South Africa under section two of South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (South Africa 1996) makes it difficult for schools to manage cyberbullying cases as the Act stipulates that “learners have a right to freedom of expression”. The point about freedom of expression is very dynamic. At times, even when cyberbullying occurs, a learner can debate his or her way out by arguing that the statement made to the victim was exercising

their freedom of speech. They were not being vindictive. They were simply expressing themselves as it is written in black and white in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 that learners have a right to freedom of expression. Another Act in South Africa set to protect victims against cyberbullying is the Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011 (South Africa 2011) which allows a child or his or her parent to apply for a protection order against the bully in the magistrate court. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 also emphasises learners' "right to privacy, respect and dignity". The same Act contrarily protects perpetrators or antagonists under freedom of speech. Freedom of speech across the globe has taken power away from the education system's ability to intervene in cyberbullying cases, especially those that occur outside school premises, even in cases where they bring negative implications for the smooth running of schooling operations (Hester 2012).

Literature from Hester (2012:7) highlights the school's difficulty to "preserve a balance between students' rights to free speech and cyberbullying". Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017) highlight that a growing number of young people utilise mobile technological devices with the internet. The affordability of cell phones has no relevance to socioeconomic status. The affordability of smartphones, the accessibility of data through free Wi-Fi platforms in public libraries, unlimited access and unsupervised online activity are the reasons why cyberbullying is on the rise (Minnaar 2018). The positive side of these technological platforms is that they offer youth massive opportunities for their school content research and networking opportunities where they can make friends online through social media platforms

## 2.9 BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING IN SCHOOLS

Psychologists classify problematic behaviour in children under the bullying umbrella, where this type of cruel behaviour occurs in various forms. Marsh (2018:1) classifies bullying into three criteria "intentionality desire or goal of inflicting harm, intimidation or humiliation, showing repetitiveness and most importantly, with a power imbalance between the socially or physically more prominent bully and the more vulnerable victim". Bullying occurs in different forms: in the traditional form, which is physical, and in cyberbullying, which uses technology.

### 2.9.1 Traditional bullying

Traditional bullying is defined as physical violence that occurs, inside and outside school premises if not controlled (Shariff 2009). The media outcry on the topic of bullying which has transitioned into digital means is putting pressure on various countries globally to give immediate attention to prevention measures on all bullying. The latest research from Aune (2009) articulates that the integration of cyberbullying into the school curriculum will help

schools combat cyberbullying. In South Africa, the cyberbullying policy is embedded in the general bullying document; there is no stand-alone cyberbullying policy. According to Olweus (1994), a child is being bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed to the repetitive, aggressive behaviour of a more powerful child, aiming to cause harm or disturbance to the less powerful child. Dordolo (2014) concurs with Olweus (1994) and characterises traditional bullying as a form of bullying that presents aggressive behaviour or intentional harm dealing with an imbalance of power. The International Center for Research on Women (2018) adds a compelling view on the global prevalence of online gender-based violence, where a traditional GBV occurrence or behavior is now captured online to trend, and statistics presents everyone as a potential victim to this trend both young and old.

### **2.9.2 Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is a new form of bullying which has been classified as an extension of traditional bullying through the use of technology, where the bullying incident goes beyond a physical altercation between a victim and a perpetrator; it involves onlookers or bystanders who are either cheering, taking videos or forwarding the cyberbullying content and completely failing to stop the cyberbullying incident (Barlinska, Szuster & Winiewski 2013). Larsen (2014) highlights bystander intervention as a progressive way of preventing bullying and cyberbullying.

Another way of dealing with the cyberbullying problem has been to encourage positive behavioural patterns or bystander effect on onlookers as a positive way that can impact cyberbullying incidents; bystanders can intervene in various forms such as advising victims or warning bullies and stopping the cyberbullying incidents (DeSmet et al. 2012).

Shariff (2009:3) defines cyberbullying as a “modern-day version of traditional bullying” which occurs outside the schoolyard without supervision. It is either physically or remotely channelled using technology. Peebles (2014) reiterates that the pervasive and unique nature of the cyberbullying phenomenon enables a bully to inflict emotional pain and cause distress to the victim anonymously. The anonymity of cyberbullying and lack of empathy and compassion make bullies crueller (Barlett, Gentile & Chew 2016). StopBullying.gov (2021) defines cyberbullying as when a child is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child, using the internet.

The argument is that cyberbullying starts with mere communication and exchange of information between the victim and the bully; one could sum it up as communication that went wrong. StopBullying.gov (2021) reiterates that the way to a cyberbullying-free world is to equip all stakeholders including parents on how to handle virtual learning and cyberbullying, this

includes understanding and monitoring a learner's online activities. DQ Impact Report (2018) argues that equipping young people would not necessarily stop cyberbullying from occurring but would limit the emotional damage and long-term effects it causes to the victims because victims will be equipped to handle it when it occurs. Cyberbullying is technologically driven and some researchers classify it as "bullying perpetrated by the use of electronic devices" (Menesini, Nocentini & Palladino 2012:314).

## 2.10 CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF BULLYING

The latest research presents the bully's family culture and environmental upbringing as the core factors that negatively influence the bullying or cyberbullying behaviour; a violent upbringing or a bully's behaviour could be a signal of the bully's cry for help or child neglect (Marsh 2018). Makota and Leoschut (2016:18) pinpoint South Africa's "high level of violence in schools as a reflection of a complicated combination of history and recent stresses on individuals, schools and broader communities". Makota and Leoschut (2016) prescribe a solution to bullying as one that requires a collaborative effort between all stakeholders (teachers, parents and learners) where cooperation from all role players leads to well-mannered behaviour.

DQ Impact Report (2018:3) argues that "equipping children with digital skills can minimise harmful side-effects and maximise the opportunities of technology". Training of stakeholder's proper internet ethos will also help minimise drawbacks associated with "cyber risk pandemics such as internet addictions, offline meetings and online sexual behaviours" which are after-effects of excessive online activity, especially on young people (DQ Impact Report 2018:3).

StopBullying.gov (2021) reiterates that the latest research emphasises the efficiency of bullying and cyberbullying prevention programmes which require a cohesive approach in training where all stakeholders – learners, teachers and parents – will be trained continuously. The education system needs to establish and put emphasis on laws and policies that will guide schools in handling all forms of bullying, such as the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013, the Protection from Harassment Act 17, the 2012 School Safety Framework and the Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020.

This literature talks about the third objective which aims to evaluate the stakeholder's trust in the school's approach to cyberbullying. For one to trust the school, one needs to know that the school adheres to the South African Schools Act and POPI Act which protects publishing one's personal information without concern, which is what happens in many cyberbullying cases, where onlookers publish violence to gain likes online at the cost of others.

## 2.11 TECHNOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE GAP

Globally, education systems are facing the mammoth task of incorporating technology into the teaching curriculum. This incorporation requires training teachers with the necessary knowledge of technology so they can overcome the risks, such as cyberbullying, associated with using technology (Dogan et al. 2021). Existing cyberbullying research highlights a knowledge gap among stakeholders in the school system, which ultimately affects the regulation of the cyberbullying policy. The identified gap presents a divide when it comes to the knowledge of online safety protocols for all users (Hinduja & Patchin 2018). The research topic examined the extent of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders in the school system.

The study assessed the ability of teachers to handle cyberbullying and evaluated how parents monitor their children's online activities without invading their privacy. Kyobe, Oosterwyk and Kabiawu (2018) present the view that a learner's prolonged usage of technological devices, increase their exposure to cyberbullying. The gap in technological proficiency between teachers and learners when it comes to utilising technology is another hindrance that makes it impossible for teachers to address cyberbullying effectively (Mikusa 2015). StopBullying.gov (2021) reiterates that the latest research emphasises the efficiency of bullying and cyberbullying prevention programmes which require a cohesive approach in training where all stakeholders – learners, teachers and parents – will be trained continuously.

The DQ Impact Report (2018) argues that through attending cyberbullying prevention programmes, student bystanders, who refuse to get involved during bullying incidents, will learn a sense of responsibility to assist in defusing the violence or reporting a cyberbullying incident using the knowledge they have acquired from cyberbullying programmes. The tactic to curb cyberbullying needs to follow the saying that says "it takes a village to raise a child". This statement means that another learner can assist a victim to report a cyberbullying incident they have witnessed or anonymously come forward. Doing something is part of prevention, which ultimately leads to saving lives (Villarejo-Carballido et al. 2019).

Davis and Nixon cited in Hinduja and Patchin (2018:104) emphasise "building positive bystander behaviour". Onlookers have a responsibility to influence their schoolyard positively by helping victims out of the situation or intervening to calm both parties. The question that bothers the researcher is why people reach for their phones to record rather than diffuse the conflict. This is what happened with the ANC MP, Mduduzi Manana, who assaulted three women in the Cubana nightclub in Fourways; bystanders took a video that later trended on social media and led to his being fired by parliament (Herman 2018).

This case is another example of cyberbullying that shows the lack of empathy and morality in today's generation. Bystanders failed to diffuse the fight but took a lengthy video. In this instance, onlookers who were at the nightclub shared the violence from traditional bullying by posting it on Twitter, without concern for any of the participants who were in the video (Panumaporn et al. 2020). Manana was scrutinised for his actions. He was punished by society and forced to resign from his position but no one, including law enforcers, ever asked about the POPI Act or questioned the person who distributed the video on Twitter. In South Africa, there is a term called 'Black Twitter'. Black Twitter where many bullies, use hate speech and racial attacks behind freedom of speech, which is in Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights in South Africa's constitution (Dyke-Beyer 2018).

The latest incident of bullying perpetuated by onlookers involved the Limpopo scholar Lufuno Mavhunga who took her own life after seeing her traditional bullying video trending all over the internet with South Africans both young and old, tweeting and re-tweeting the incident (Shange 2021). Communicating a school's anti-bullying campaigns will influence positive bystander behaviour. For that to happen, the school needs to communicate relevant messages using various platforms about the dangers of cyberbullying to all stakeholders.

## 2.12 CYBERBULLYING STRATEGIES

The pervasive nature of cyberbullying left cyberbullying victims with mental health problems, where some suffer from "low self-esteem, anxiety, anger, depression, frequently report absent from school, poor grades with an increased tendency to violate against others, to youth suicide" (Brown, Jackson & Cassidy 2006:15). Different countries globally, including South Africa, are embarking on cyberbullying awareness messages but there are no tangible results that highlight the successes of the awareness messages. This statement brings the researcher to the topic of emotional intelligence. What is emotional intelligence and how can it assist cyberbullying victims?

The latest research, present emotional intelligence as the ability of a person to be able to control their emotions and reactions despite the actions of others towards them (Cantero, Bañuls & Viguer 2020). Emotional intelligence enables individuals in the school setting and workplace to be able to adhere to organisational norms or code of conduct regardless of how cruel the situations they encounter. Emotional intelligence enables one to act professionally even when tested or provoked beyond measure. Another research concurs with the earlier definition and highlight emotional intelligence as the ability to prevent, reduce, enhance, or modify an emotional response in oneself and others, as well as the ability to experience a range of emotions while making decisions about the appropriateness or usefulness of an emotion in



a given situation (Brackett, Rivers & Salovey 2011). Emotional intelligence teaches learners about avoiding giving a negative reaction because two wrongs do not make a right. There is a saying that silence is golden; entertaining cyberbullying makes the situation worse. A learner's understanding of emotional intelligence motivates applying zero responses to bullying and cornerstones addressing cyberbullying. The outcry and high statistics presented through research and the media globally are not an indication that there are no awareness messages of fighting cyberbullying. The point would be for role players involved to discover effective ways to address cyberbullying.

Research from (Beghin 2020) suggests that cyberbullying topics be integrated into the school curriculum. The question is about how many employees who have policy documents in their cupboards from the organisations they work for actually know these policies by heart. The answer is very few. The same goes for the DBE. Cyberbullying is addressed in the 2012 School Safety Framework. The question is what has been done to ensure the framework is implemented effectively.

Some researchers shared a view that "stable emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of better coping abilities" (Saeed, Kiani & Javed 2019:665). The big challenge for the government is to empower learners to be able to cope when they are faced with cyberbullying incidents. Another point would be to empower victims to realise that bullies are the ones who need help because they are not in the right mental state and that bullying is a bad example.

## 2.13 CONCLUSION

A literature study was conducted to gain insight into the topic of cyberbullying awareness. The key themes discussed in the literature review gave an overview of the state of education in the country and the inequalities presented by the education system where learners from well-resourced and under-resourced schools do not get the same privileges from the education system. The literature review on the state of schooling in Africa and South Africa highlighted that one's socioeconomic status determines the quality of education one receives. It was clear in the literature that today's classroom has moved from a traditional setup to a digital one, which enables both learners and teachers to interact from different locations.

Two-way communication yields better understanding, results and more progress in learning. These digital libraries make the learners of today more advanced in undertaking online research. All of these advantages open stakeholders to online harm such as cyberbullying. These learners are born into technology; they are tech-savvy. This makes adults trail behind when it comes to technology usage. Young people are affluent when it comes to technology;

adults are unable to monitor and mentor their technological usage. The mentorship is vice versa. It is adults who take notes from the young ones. The literature review findings after data collection highlighted that the first research objective to establish stakeholder awareness about cyberbullying among stakeholders has not been met. Themes and sub-themes such as communication campaigns, cyberbullying awareness, continuity and diversity were used to measure this research objective. The literature study highlighted that cyberbullying does not discriminate; it affects both young and old and people from all sort of life regardless of gender or religion.

The second objective of the study was to describe the efficiency of the 2012 School Safety Framework among stakeholders and it was also tested among the three stakeholder participant types (learners, teachers and parents). According to the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (2012), the mandate for the 2012 School Safety Framework is to “emphasise the importance of a holistic approach to addressing school safety and discipline”.

The latest literature study on the 2012 School Safety Framework highlight today’s South African classroom as “slowly becoming sites of violence”. This argument is supported by trending violent classroom videos showcasing violence between learners or better yet learner-to-teacher violence. The literature review highlights that South Africa has a plethora of acts, policies and plans to deal with bullying and cyberbullying. The South African Schools Act, POPI Act and Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020 are remarkable breakthroughs for South Africa on the topic of cyberbullying. It can however be argued that while these strategies are noble, sizeable studies refute that they reach the intended stakeholders. Simply put, policy in South Africa exists but it has not yet impacted stakeholders

## 2.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, an overview of the literature about cyberbullying in the school system was tabled. The themes from the literature review which support the research topic were discussed. In this chapter, two research objectives were addressed: to explore and describe the level of stakeholder awareness of cyberbullying within the school system and to describe the efficiency of the 2012 School Safety Framework among stakeholders. The two objectives respond to the main research question which aims to establish how the school raises awareness of cyberbullying among its stakeholders. Research question number three was also aligned with the literature review which questions to what extent the 2012 School Safety Framework assists the school during anti-cyberbullying campaigns. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework.

## **CHAPTER THREE: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN ADDRESSING CYBERBULLYING**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

It is impossible to delve into the concept of cyberbullying without overlapping with the concept of communication as both cyberbullying and communication are interrelated. They both define a form of communication. Cyberbullying can be referred to as a negative form of communication that includes communication tools and an unpleasant message tone. In this case, the context of the message carries a negative connotation and the platform where the message is transmitted reaches a wider audience.

Three factors play a pivotal role in communication: message encoding, transmission and decoding. The dynamic nature of cyberbullying makes it complex. It does not only occur on the personal front but some cyberbullying cases occur in the place of work. The latest research alludes to the fact that work policies have so far failed to assist victims or to put emphasis on anti-cyberbullying campaigns in the workplace. In a latest study on workplace bullying add that many cyberbullying victims at workplaces die silently in fear of further victimisation due to no available workplace cyberbullying policies (West, Foster, Levin, Edmison & Robibero 2014).

This becomes worse when the bullying comes from their direct supervisors. This point presents an argument that cyberbullying is a two-fold issue; it occurs on a personal front or in the workplace (West et al. 2014:600). This chapter presents how communication can play a role in introducing the topic of cyberbullying to stakeholders. Themes such as the importance of communication campaigns or strategies, communication and cyberbullying, the importance of communication in campaigns, organisational systems and stakeholder roles, communication channels and effectiveness of communication channels will be discussed in line with the third and fourth objectives of the study which are to evaluate the stakeholder's trust in the school's approach to the handling of cyberbullying and to determine the school's response to cyberbullying

### **3.2 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

The term strategic communication is an organisational communication tool that organisations use to communicate with different organisational sub-structures. This includes synergised communication messages to ensure that various organisational stakeholders are fed with relevant communication material to achieve organisational goals (Sutherland, Ali & Khattab 2020). In many cases, communication is emotional; it either evokes good or bad emotions in

the receiver. Kerr and Scharp (2020) define emotional communication as a communication that emphasises the emotional aspect of the message highlighting key aspects like feelings, mood and how that message is received. A good message will bring laughter but a harmful message will bring unpleasant feelings. The definition of cyberbullying and how it occurs depicts it as a communication that delves into emotions to make the receiver feel bad, that is, it is a toxic kind of communication.

Xu and Trzaskawka (2021:932) similarly define cyberbullying as a “behaviour that includes posting rumours, threats, sexual remarks, revealing the victim’s personal information, or pejorative labels including hate speech”. Xu and Trzaskawka (2021) presents cyberbullying as negative communication that is geared towards causing harm. Meanwhile, other scholars depicted communication as the process of creating meaning as well as ascribing it (Giffin & Patten 1976). Angelopulo and Barker (2013:76) define communication as a “transactional and symbolic process in which messages are exchanged and interpreted to establish understanding between parties”.

Sibiya (2017) similarly defines the communication process as an Interaction between people in cyclic where an encoded message needs to be clearly communicated with understanding in order to achieve the desired intent, this is where a communication message is successful because it achieved the desired intent, and when communication fails to achieve its intention, it signals that intended meaning was not achieved. This was a study of cyberbullying awareness, where communication played a pivotal role in establishing whether the stakeholders were aware or not about the cyberbullying phenomenon within the school system. Strategic communication plays a key role for education systems in driving the topic of cyberbullying to relevant stakeholders and running integrated synergised messages to ensure that the message is received by all stakeholders (Sutherland et al. 2020).

### 3.3 COMMUNICATION AND CYBERBULLYING

King (2010:849) defines the term cyberbullying as “cruelty to others by sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression using the internet or other digital technologies”. The definition of King (2010) presents cyberbullying as an unhealthy type of communication but this definition still falls under communication. In other words, cyberbullying represents hate speech, and hate speech is also a form of communication.

The point in King’s (2010) definition is that cyberbullying is a form of unhealthy communication. Another important point is that cyberbullying is dynamic. It can happen on a personal or professional platform. When it occurs professionally, it manifests in the form of workplace

bullying, which might have negative effects where employee morale decreases or other forms of misbehaviours like absenteeism start to creep in due to unpleasantness at work (Sarkar 2015). Cyberbullies share their feelings simply because they want to make fun of something or maliciously torment someone's image online. Even receivers of the information sometimes watch and do nothing or simply condone the action. Campbell (2005) argues that in events where there are active anti-cyberbullying campaigns, onlookers learn to act by silently reporting cyberbullying. This helps in combating cyberbullying or creating awareness on the topic of cyberbullying, which ultimately results in victims getting the help and support they need during these trying times. Science Daily (2018) concur with the previous statement that training staff, students and parents on the policy will combat cyberbullying as they will be equipped to identify it when it occurs and be able to identify cyberbullying when they see it happening.

### 3.4 IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN CAMPAIGNS

The goal of human communication is always getting your point across and influencing others to see things from the communicator's perspective. This is when a persuasion technique is employed in communication with the intent of "modifying beliefs, values, or attitudes of others" (Romanova & Smirnova 2019:55). 5 Explaining Theories of Persuasion (2004:104) argues that "persuasion is not accidental, nor is it to coercive. It is inherently communicational". The topic of persuasion is introduced as an idea that the education system can utilise to make the 2012 School Safety Framework known to all stakeholders at the same time make cyberbullying messages appealing to those for whom it is intended.

The success of a communication message includes the process where the communication has occurred in a full circle, using a two – ay communication process where the sender has sent the message; the receiver received the information and got a chance to interpret it, understands and then sends feedback (Van Ruler 2018). Three steps of the communication process have occurred and the time for evaluating the communication message is what determines whether the communication message hit or missed the mark. The communication feedback determines if the element of persuasion in a communicated message was a success.

Rajhans (2018) adds that effective communication management includes a successful communication strategy that outlines an action plan of synergised communication messages in a campaign, meaning there must be a plan from execution till the end for the success or effectiveness of the communication message. This point highlights the usage of communication channels for the campaign, such as the communication, advertising or publicising of the cyberbullying topic to stakeholders as a way of creating awareness. The discussion about the importance of communication talks to the third objective of the study

which aims to conduct a thorough investigation of the school's response to cyberbullying.

A cyberbullying strategy or campaign is a communication need or problem that needs to be communicated to stakeholders in the school system to ensure that stakeholders are equipped to successfully deal with cyberbullying and prevention (Notar et al. 2013). Frandsen and Johansen (2017) define a communication strategy as a tailored plan particularly designed by organisations to reach specific communication goals. In this study, how the school communicated its anti-bullying or cyberbullying campaigns to its stakeholders was investigated. The education system has various stakeholders: learners, teachers, parents, members of the school governing body, members of the learner representative council and officials from the DBE, including school administrators, all these stakeholders need to part of stakeholder communication of DBE (Koschmann & Kopczynski 2017).

Rajhans (2018:49) defines stakeholders as "individuals, groups or organisations who may affect or be affected by the outcome of the project". Different organisations launch different communication strategies for various campaigns or products and stakeholder communication is designed to influence key stakeholders or target markets which are intended for that particular message or campaign (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel 2009). Rajhans (2018) highlights effective stakeholder communication as always influenced by positive organisational stakeholder relationships. In simple language, an organisation needs a system in place to liaise with all its stakeholders and at times the organisation needs their buy-in for the success of certain projects. These campaigns are usually driven for a certain period, where the organisation evaluates whether the campaign was a failure or a success by critically assessing the utilised communication channels and feedback received during communication and assessing how the synergised communication messages in various channels intended for that particular campaign were received.

After the campaign was launched, it needs to be analysed and evaluated to ascertain the type of feedback received from stakeholders (Samovar et al. 2009). Jeme (2020) share a similar view on their understanding of communication strategy and highlight it as a planned goal-driven effort that is time orientated to achieve certain organisational goals. Mohr and Nevin (1990) highlights a communication campaign as a planned effort to achieve an organisational communication message. Different campaigns are always synergised to achieve a specific purpose starting from intended stakeholders, message, medium of communication and time frames.

The argument is that efficiency of bullying and cyberbullying prevention programmes requires a cohesive approach to training where all stakeholders (parents, teachers and learners) will be

trained continuously (Lan, Law & Pan 2022). Latha et al. (2020:02) adds that exposure to awareness messages heightens one's knowledge about cyberbullying or promotion of that particular message. Karni and Vierø (2017) conclude that promotional messages and awareness messages are efforts towards goodwill but according to the self-awareness theory, behavioural change is a choice that encourages an individual to behavioural change.

### 3.5 ORGANISATIONAL SYSTEM AND STAKEHOLDER ROLES

The education system is comprised of stakeholders who play different roles within the education system for the system to have structure, values and norms that enable the department and the school to function optimally (Cabardo 2016). The department of education is made of different structures that are part of a system and latest literature pinpoint a system as "any entity, conceptual or physical, which consists of interdependent parts"; these parts could be various sub-units and their stakeholders within an organisation (Sillitto et al. 2017:4-5). The functioning of an organisational system includes a coordinated process with everyone playing a role to ensure a smooth transition on any organisation campaign or communication through an effective two-way communication process (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang 2014).

The critical point is that various organisations have different types of stakeholders who play crucial roles in organisational functioning. In this study, the targeted stakeholders are learners, teachers, and parents. These stakeholders require the 2012 School Safety Framework to be launched using different communication strategy tools in order to reach all stakeholders. The research topic touched all stakeholders of the education and their awareness of the topic of cyberbullying was investigated. The education system has a combination of different sub-structures that are interrelated; when combined, they – learners, teachers, parents, principals, members of the school governing body, officials from the DBE, textbooks suppliers etcetera – form a whole (Benna, Abratta & O'Learyb 2016).

McGrath and Whitty (2017:728) defines stakeholders as "individuals or groups who have an interest or some aspect of rights or ownership in the project, they can contribute in the form of knowledge or support, or can impact or be impacted by, the project". Rajhans (2018:49) similarly defines stakeholders as "individuals, groups or organisations who may affect or be affected by the outcome of the project". Kolesnikova (2022) from the Studybay website, lists "parents, school staff and teachers, district staff, principals, school board, the business community, taxpayers and other community members as stakeholders of the school system". In this study, the critical stakeholders were learners, teachers and parents; they are all part of the internal and external structure of the school system. Teachers and learners are part of the internal stakeholders while parents are part of the external stakeholders (Aidoo 2013).

Stakeholders and their positioning within the organisation are very crucial for organisational success (Brown 2022). Wu (2007) highlights the significance of the stakeholder's role as very crucial, where each organisation can distinctively identify various stakeholder roles for organisational success.

The argument here from Wu (2007) is that every stakeholder is positioned in a specific role for a purpose within the organisational structure, and their purpose in some cases is there to nature their own agenda. Kolesnikova (2022) similarly highlights the roles of all stakeholders in the school and briefly presents each stakeholder's role and expectations. They highlight that the teacher's role is to teach, the learner's role is to learn and respect the rules of the school and the parent's role is to support the learning activity, which includes helping learners with homework and paying school fees to enable a smooth running of the teaching programme. The proper implementation of a communication strategy about cyberbullying across all organisational channels will enhance stakeholder awareness of the phenomenon.

### 3.6 COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

In an organisational setting, communication channels stipulate a direction of how each organisation directs its communication messages for both internal and external stakeholders. They emphasise how the structured network in place, including the protocol involved, is geared towards achieving internal or external communication strategies or goals (Angelopulo & Barker 2013). The communication networks become critical for the success of a communication message.

A more technical view of communication networks present is as pattern of communication among a group of designated individuals using different structures, from traditional to technology driven means (Feeley, Chen and Lee 2014) . Adu-Oppong and Agyin-Birikorang (2014:2) define communication as the "process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another". In their argument (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang 2014) add that in order for communication to be meaningful it has to be able to achieve a purpose which it was intended for, this where it influences behaviour from those who received the communication message.

For the cyberbullying policy and cyberbullying messages to be successful, the education system needs to do more than just supply the policy documents; it must empower learners with "online safety education as well as empathy training and internet etiquette" (Herrera, Kupczynski & Mundy 2015:6-7). Cowie (2013) is of the view that training learners on e-safety



policies has the power to influence passive onlookers who witness cyberbullying cases to assist victims and play an active part in the school's anti-bullying strategies. Davis and Nixon cited in Hinduja and Patchin (2018:104) highlight that "perpetrators, onlookers and victims are not equipped on dealing with cyberbullying".

### 3.7 EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Communication channels are the "technical (or formal) side of the communication process that allows the transfer of information from sender to receiver and vice versa" (Anna et al. 2017). With this in mind communication channels are not the only tool that a communicator needs to achieve effective communication; the message and context of the message are critical elements that contribute to a successful communication message. Watson and Noble (2014) pinpoint communication effectiveness as the process that integrates input (the reason the organisation wants to communicate) and the outputs which in many cases refer to the produced material that will be distributed to the people or audiences which results in the outcomes and the impact.

The outcome and the impact are the end goal; they answer the purpose of the communication. At this stage, the communication process is evaluated and analysed to assess whether it achieved the desired goal or not. This point talks about the correct communication channels and how they reach audiences. Reaching target audience goes with targeting a specific channel and audience regardless of the medium. The point of argument here is that numbers of the channel does not always translate into the intended outcome or impact. All of that could have been done but the message still fails to achieve its intended goal.

Novák and Hradec (2020: 1290) argues that communication is "more effective when the marketing message is delivered via channels and with attributes preferred by targeted audiences so the message needs to be adjusted accordingly." Angelopulpo and Barker (2013) add that communication channels are motivated by an organisation's management style which pinpoints the communication structure in terms of hierarchy.

An organisation's management style has an impact on the effectiveness of organisational communication regardless of the communication style in place. Some organisations are closed organisations, while others utilise the classical management approach where the communication message is driven from the one-way perspective with no opportunity for feedback. This approach is more production-driven than allowing creative flair but the communication messages can also become successful. Among the listed organisation types are open types. These types of organisations utilise a two-way communication approach with

less patriarchy in their structure (Angelopulo & Barker 2012). Being open, organisations open doors to learning and learning organisations are change-driven organisations with a knowledge orientation framework where interpersonal communication or interactions are highly emphasised to spread learning and to influence organisational performance (Bolisani & Bratianu 2018). Chisholm (2014) highlights cyberbullying as a universal problem that affects the entire school system; extensive awareness campaigns across all platforms will have a positive bearing on how stakeholders react to cyberbullying incidents.

This point boils down to interpersonal communication as a communication method that needs to be employed by the education system to ensure the success of the cyberbullying campaigns and policies, where communication will be encoded and decoded to the sender and feedback from stakeholders using various platforms, this end will highlight how the communication was received (Naudé, Froneman & Atwood 2003). In the list of organisations, there are also closed organisations.

Robles (2020) argues that regardless of the organisation's communication style, effective workplace communication is essential for successful organisational communication messages. This point highlights that understanding the audience's available communication channels, and planned feedback opportunity" is what sets apart different organisations and their achievements (Saninaa et al. 2017). In the 1990s, organisational communication research turned to critical theories to examine how communication could be used to both oppress and liberate organisational members; at the extreme, critical studies of organisational communication seek to demonstrate how change in communication in organisations can be accomplished. As they do still today, scholars in this era conducted research from critical and feminist perspectives using qualitative methods.

Cowie (2013) highlights training as an effective method to curb cyberbullying, one that not necessarily limits learners' online activities. Controlling cyberbullying becomes complex for teachers because it happens everywhere – at home and in the park – and teachers have no control when cyberbullying happens outside the school's perimeter. Parent training is also essential in the anti-bullying campaign to ensure they continue with after-school monitoring through monitoring learners' home computers and gadgets.

### 3.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework that was applied in this study is Stakeholder theory. Kerlinger (1986:9) defines a theory as "a set of interrelated constructs, definitions and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of

explaining and predicting phenomena”. Another author Kivunja (2018:46) argues that a theoretical framework “comprises the theories expressed by experts in the field into which one plan to research, which you draw upon to provide a theoretical coat hanger for your data analysis and interpretation of results”. Chukwuere (2021) highlights a theoretical framework as the basis that “informs a researcher direction, from technical aspects in terms of how they will literature relevant literature, in line with the tabled problem statement, study type, data collection, analysis, and the discussion of the findings”.

A theory usually emerges from a long process of research that uses empirical data to make assertions based on deductive and inductive analysis of the data. Cynthia and Azadeh (2014:12) define the theoretical framework as “the ‘blueprint’ or guide of the study”. One would argue that the theoretical framework is the researcher’s way of knowing. It is how the researcher looks at the world and that is why the researcher’s biases are always feared whenever qualitative research is applied to a study. However, the inclusion of a theoretical framework helps the researcher to present the purpose of the study better.

Theoretical and conceptual framework are two important components that “ground theoretical constructs and help clarify researcher’s arguments following research guideline when presenting generalisability of the findings” (Adom, Hussein & Agyem 2018:438). The framework presents theories that the researcher intends to use to prove the reliability of the study. In the current study, the researcher identified Stakeholder theory, a theory that is derived from the communication discipline. This theory talks to how the organisation make stakeholder communication as a matter of importance.

### **3.8.1 Stakeholder Theory**

The prevalence of cyberbullying is a global phenomenon that affects stakeholders in various sectors of society, including the school system. Wilson, as cited in Nisbett and Wilson (1977), argues that most cyberbullying victims are minors who lack knowledge, in contrast to adults who are experienced and capable of handling the pressure associated with this form of bullying.

As mentioned earlier, the identified theory for the study is Edward Freeman’s Stakeholder theory. This theory focuses on organisational stakeholders with the aim of influencing behavioral change (Simon 2016). Stemming from the communication discipline, the stakeholder theory underscores the importance of communicating with all stakeholders in an organisation. Hillman and Keim (2001:860) define stakeholder theory as a “management theory based on the moral treatment of stakeholders and not a moral theory that also happens

to be relevant to management”. Considering the dynamics of cyberbullying and how it affects stakeholders, the stakeholder theory became the most relevant and suitable theory for the study due to its nature of prioritising and treating stakeholders equally when addressing communication messages. Koschmann and Kopczynski (2017:07) suggest that the focal point of this theory is driven by “stakeholder thinking and a stakeholder perspective”, which could be a solution to uproot the cyberbullying phenomenon. The latest research on cyberbullying suggests a holistic approach involving all stakeholders to address cyberbullying within the school system.

King (2010) defines cyberbullying as an unhealthy form of communication, but this definition still falls under communication. In other words, cyberbullying represents hate speech, and hate speech is also a form of communication, or one could refer to it as an unhealthy type of communication. Another argument is that the anonymity and lack of face-to-face contact with the victim exacerbate the problem (Kyobe, Oosterwyk & Kabiawu 2016). This point strengthens the argument that the prevalence of cyberbullying is not solely a result of a lack of awareness messages in the school system (Cilliers & Chinyamurindi 2020). Rajhans (2018:49) defines stakeholders as “individuals, groups, or organizations who may affect or be affected by the outcome of the project”.

Kolesnikova (2022), from the Studybay website, lists “parents, school staff and teachers, district staff, principals, school board, the business community, taxpayers, and other community members who are stakeholders of the school system”. In this study, the critical stakeholders were learners, teachers, and parents; they are all part of the internal and external structure of the school system. Teachers and learners are part of the internal stakeholders, while parents are part of the external stakeholders (Aidoo 2013). Mashigo (2020) defines stakeholder theory as an approach that promotes fairness and prioritises practising equality among organisational stakeholders. The point of argument is that stakeholder theory will enable an interplay among educational stakeholders through its communication channels to effectively address the cyberbullying topic.

The American Psychological Association (2011) advises that a way to create a cyberbullying-free world includes making tough decisions, such as refraining from bullying and ignoring the bully. This point should be included in the school’s anti-cyberbullying policies, which need to be communicated to stakeholders. It is argued that in some instances, perpetrators are not even aware of the intensity of their actions, and the lack of awareness messages on cyberbullying becomes a contributing factor to the bully not realising how damaging their actions are to the victim (Tzani et al. 2011). In some cases, bullies only change or regret their actions after a tragedy when there is already a loss of life (Shange 2021). This content relates

to the fourth objective of the study, which was to determine the school's response to cyberbullying. A stakeholder's exposure to awareness messages about a certain topic leads to being informed about the topic, but that does not necessarily influence or change their behaviour (Araújo-Soares et al. 2019). Corrective behaviour is an individual decision. A bully can change their behaviour after attending an awareness event, while another bully might choose to continue bullying and become defensive.

### 3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the role of communication was presented as a necessity in any organisational campaign. The DBE needs to launch a successful cyberbullying campaign that will be introduced to the school system. In this chapter, communication literature was presented that talks to the third and fourth objectives of the study, which looks at stakeholders' trust and the school's response to cyberbullying. By exploring the two key objectives, literature presented that communication can be of great help if properly employed in any organisational campaign.

Stakeholder responses highlighted that due to none existing communication campaigns about the topic of cyberbullying, stakeholders have no trust in how the school handles cyberbullying campaigns. Other sub-topics covered the importance of communication in a cyberbullying campaign, organisational system and stakeholder roles and the effectiveness or impact of communication channels. The theoretical framework for this study is stakeholder theory, which focuses on strengthening communication lines to all stakeholders. The focal point of stakeholder theory shares similar sentiments with literature that advocates for a cohesive approach as a suitable way to tackle cyberbullying, ensuring that awareness messages reach all stakeholders.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The first three chapters presented an overview of the study. Chapter one focused on the introduction and background of the study. The second chapter dealt with the literature review which unpacked the topic of cyberbullying internationally, in Africa and locally with a critical analysis of conducted research and existing policies and legislation on the cyberbullying crisis in different countries and states. The previous chapter explained the communication concept as a solution to addressing cyberbullying within the school system, adding components such as communication strategy and synergised messages to enhance the messages about cyberbullying.

The focal point of Chapter three redefined cyberbullying as negative communication. The themes in the chapter prescribed how the proper use of communication can serve as a solution in any awareness campaign or programme intended for stakeholders. In the previous three chapters, the four objectives of the study were outlined and expounded. This chapter focuses on methodological orientation; the chosen research design, basic research inclusive of research methodology and qualitative case research are discussed. The researcher's action plan, inclusive of resources at hand, which outlines time frames for data collection, sampling methods and choices of sampling techniques are presented.

### 4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher opted for qualitative case study research, "a study that will follow a naturalistic approach" (Wagner et al. 2012:126). The plan was to identify a research method that presents an ideal footprint outlined by the researcher for the journey (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter 2012). This included the paradigm – the lens through which the researcher plans to look at the journey or reality –and ontological assumptions – assumptions about the nature of reality (Wagner et al. 2012).

The research design chosen for the study was basic research. Du Plooy (2009) defines basic research as a communication study where the study aims to uncover certain truths about reality. Wagner et al. (2012:21) similarly define a research design as an "architectural blueprint" which is followed during a building process; the structure prescribes the type of material needed to build a certain type of building. The research design summarises all the ingredients that the builder needs to produce the required structure. Babbie (2013: 75) add that research design "focuses on the logic and end products". In this particular study, the research problem

was to investigate the extent of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders. This study employed exploratory and descriptive research objectives. The researcher did not follow clear logic or formal structure; the assumptions would be proven by observation after conducting research or interviewing participants (Deptt & Islamia 2016). In this case, the assumption was that the lack of cyberbullying awareness campaigns at the school threatens learner's online safety. The researcher investigated the extent of stakeholders' cyberbullying awareness within the school system. The plan was to look at how the school creates cyberbullying awareness, how cyberbullying is communicated, the school's response and the impact of the 2012 School Safety Framework on stakeholders.

The views and opinions of the research subjects determined the extent to which communication initiatives at the school have impacted their awareness or lack thereof of the cyberbullying phenomenon. The 2012 School Safety Framework is a general bullying policy that is helping Gauteng schools to deal with bullying and cyberbullying. The research approach utilised was a qualitative case study, where the 2012 School Safety Framework and data from previous research served as guides for the study. Latest literature presents study research as a flexible approach capable of "providing an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon using a variety of methodological data-gathering tools, to focus on a smaller population to either confirm or deny an assumption" (Harrison et al. 2018:01). Taherdoost (2016:22) defines case study research as a "type of study that usually opts for a known probability or judgemental type of sampling" that will enable a researcher to select a small sample from the sampling frame.

The sample for the study was a relatively small sample that gave intimate non-numeric data in the form of verbatim statements. Twenty-seven participants were interviewed. The researcher did not aim for a total representation of the sample but provided a rationale on why certain decisions were made; the researcher selected three participants from the DBE. The data-gathering methods employed in the study included one video focus group interview with a group of teachers and telephonic video one-to-one interviews with learners and parents. The video part of the interviews enabled the researcher to remotely record non-verbal cues from participants.

The instructions to conduct virtual interviews were terms and conditions that were given to the researcher by the Unisa Ethics Committee and the DBE when granting the researcher permission to access the school. The ethics certificate highlighted that there must be no face-to-face contact between the researcher and participants during data collection. This was in line with the national state of the disaster which was declared in South Africa in March 2020 when the first COVID-19 case was recorded in KwaZulu-Natal. The data gathering took one month from 1 to 30 September 2021 (Babbie et al. 2001).

### 4.3 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The data collection process is a universal process that includes testing ideas and concepts under study through the collection of information; this process differs in each chosen research methodology. Literature attest to the statement above and highlighted data collection as a set of tools that the researcher identifies as suitable when collecting data for the study (Rimando et al. 2015). It is connected with epistemology – the way of knowing or the lens that the researcher utilises to get to the information required for a collection that will best answer the research question.

Kabir (2016:202) define data collection as the process of “gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses and evaluate outcomes”. Morgan and Harmon (2001:02) highlight the importance of improving data collection techniques as the way to ensure quality data findings that will ensure “accuracy, validity and reliability”.

The study employed two data-gathering techniques, a video focus group interview and videoed semi-structured one-to-one interviews using a WhatsApp application. The reason for this choice was to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings (Wagner et al. 2012). The researcher opted for the video format to ensure that the virtual interviews still offered the same advantages as face-to-face interviews where non-verbal cues could be captured. This was the only available option for the researcher to access the participants due to the COVID-19 pandemic which challenged the education system globally with back-to-back school closures.

A focus group interview is a data collection method that offers the opportunity to develop fresh perspectives from respondents. In-depth interviews give insight from participants and establish stakeholder cyberbullying awareness while following logic or a structure of questioning. The process unpacked stakeholder views on the topic of cyberbullying. The focus group interview and semi-structured interviews offered intimate primary data; subjects expressed opinions and behaviour in their own terms (Wagner et al. 2012).

Qu and Dumay (2011) pinpoint semi-structured interviews as a data collection tool that incorporates an interview guide, according to specific themes, to answer the research objectives and research questions. A newly developed interview guide was developed and later tested on three stakeholders of the school (an individual learner, teacher and parent) in the pilot study. After the pilot study, eight semi-structured video interviews were conducted with a heterogeneous sample of learners and parents. The chosen learners who were part of the



study participated with their parents. Eight teachers formed a video focus group interview. The challenges of infrastructure and the digital divide where some participants were not familiar with video applications such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Skype prompted the researcher to use the WhatsApp video application, which is unable to record video presentations. The researcher's alternative was to record all interviews in a separate audio device for transcriptions purposes.

The researcher ensured the privacy and anonymity of participants; no names were used in the study (Dube, Mhlongo & Ngulube 2014). The granted ethics clearance certificate classified the study as a medium-risk study. This is because the study included minor participants. Datta (2018) defined sampling as the process of selecting the population for the study based on decision on how the researcher want the findings to be "that is" generalised or not and resources at hand.

Etikan and Bala (2017:215) define a judgemental or purposive sample as a sampling design that is "based on the judgement of the researcher as to who will provide the best information to meet the study objectives". The sample in the proposed research was representative of three stakeholders in the school system – learners, teachers and parents.

#### 4.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING METHODS

Alvi (2016:11) defines sampling as a "process of extracting representatives of a study that represent the target population, where a smaller number is explored to answer the research question". In other words, the target population is a representation of all subjects that are affected by the study. In this case, it is the three stakeholders – learners, teachers and parents. The researcher opted for a purposive sample which is a form of known probability sample that ensures that "all individuals, groups and settings are considered for selection if they are information-rich" (Onwuegbuzie & Collins 2007:287). Taherdoost (2017:21) defines non-probability sampling as the type of sampling that is "associated with case study research design and qualitative research".

The researcher resides in Pretoria, and the signing of consent and assent forms by parents and learners was done with the help of the school. The back-to-back school closures challenged the researcher during this process but the decision to approach a learner and a parent helped to locate parent participants with ease. The school assisted with the stakeholder contact lists and the researcher used applications such as email, telephone and WhatsApp to recruit and finalise study participants.

## 4.5 ACCESSIBLE POPULATION

The list of schools identified by the DBE as cyberbullying hotspots did not help locate an accessible population. Most of these schools had no infrastructure, no computer libraries or technological infrastructure. The researcher had to identify and locate schools that the DBE listed as ICT schools; these schools had better infrastructure and resources. The researcher purposely selected the given School in Mamelodi East in Pretoria. The study employed purposive/judgement sampling (De Vos et al. 2011). Three participant groups were identified – learners, teachers and parents. Eight learners, teachers and parents of heterogeneous samples took part in a focus group interview and one-to-one semi-structured video interviews. All the above-mentioned sample groups represent the target population. This sample was drawn from the entire school population sample.

## 4.6 UNITS OF ANALYSIS

The units of analysis for this study were the stakeholders – parents, teachers and learners. Twenty-seven participants from the three identified groups participated in the study. They were grouped according to a single focus group interview with teachers and one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the individual learners and parents. The plan was to have 12 interviews of a homogenous group are all that is needed to reach saturation. Conceptually, saturation may be the desired end point of data collection (Guest, Bunce & Johnson 2006).

A short description of units of analysis from the school included learners, parents and teachers. Kumar (2018:71-72) defines population parameters as the “person or object from which the business researcher collects data. It answers the question of ‘what’ and ‘who’ is being studied”. A focus group interview included teachers inclusive of both genders from administrative staff and junior and senior teachers. The sampling frame utilised was purposive sampling; a school that had resources and technological infrastructure inclusive of WI-FI hotspots was selected. Learner group participants included learners from grades 10 to 12 with both genders represented.

In terms of parent participants, the researcher selected the parents of the learner participants. This decision helped to get to the bottom of learner-parent monitoring when learners were off the school premises. This group also included both genders. The researcher recruited 12 members in each group to ensure there was preparation for unforeseen circumstances, such as participation withdrawal and in cases where a participant was infected by COVID-19 and too sick to participate. If 12 members are organised, the focus group or semi-structured interviews can still have an acceptable number to reach saturation (Guest et al. 2006).

The final number of participants who agreed to participate in each stakeholder group was eight participants (Terre Blanche et al. 2009).

#### 4.7 RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND PILOT STUDY

In the South West District where permission was granted, the selected School was the first ICT School that permitted the researcher. The school met the selection requirements because it is an ICT school. The school principal delegated a teacher, to assist the researcher to contact research participants. The selected teacher, provided a contact list of learners and teachers.

The researcher presented a moderator guide which included the research purpose, objectives, summary and interview questions. The presentation of the moderator guide was done virtually and participants had a chance to voice their views off record before agreeing to embark on the study. During this process, the researcher recruited three participants for the pilot study (one learner, one teacher and one parent). Terre Blanche et al. (2009:94) refer to pilot studies as “preliminary studies on small samples that help to identify potential problems with the design, particularly the research instrument”.

The researcher conducted a pilot study with the three mentioned stakeholders from the school. The reason for the pilot study was to test the relevancy of the moderator guide, troubleshoot any problems and assess if the information in the interview schedule was relevant (Strydom et al. 2011). The three identified stakeholders belonged to the school system. The virtual nature of the interviews and network problems during peak time drove interviews to last between 30 and 45 minutes. This process gave the researcher confidence in the drafted interview schedule which themed the research questions aligned with the study’s four objectives (Bless et al., 2013).

After the pilot study, the researcher recruited eight learners, eight teachers and ten parents. The reason for the ten parents was that some parents attended the interview as a couple. The researcher chose the WhatsApp application for the data collection. It was easy to use and enabled face-to-face communication through its video application. The researcher opted for the WhatsApp application against Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Skype. WhatsApp was easy to use; it is an application that comes installed on all participants’ smartphones, unlike other applications that required extensive signing up, downloading of applications and registering and sending of links for meeting invitations. The digital divide became a hindrance for this to be possible as most stakeholders did not know how to use these applications.

## 4.8 ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Ethical clearance is one of the key requirements for any research. Ethical certificates give participants comfort that due process has been followed and that during their participation, they will be protected from harm. Wagner et al. (2012) present the safety of participants from harm as a prerequisite for a researcher when adhering to ethical considerations. In this case, harm does not only translate to physical harm but also presents emotional and psychological trauma. The researcher explained the topic to the participants beforehand and made it clear that the topic was on cyberbullying awareness not cyberbullying experiences. This eliminated participants who would present with emotional trauma after participation.

The drafted interview questions approached the topic to avoid a situation where participants shared their cyberbullying experiences. Be that as it may, the researcher was lucky to find participants who had been cyberbullied but volunteered to participate; they stated that they had overcome the painful ordeal that had happened in their lives. Two organisations that offer counselling services, Radio Pulpit and Hospivision, were approached to offer counselling services to those participants who might present traumatic experiences after participation.

Bless et al. (2006) also highlight a participant's harm as more than physical harm; hence, the need for anonymity to avoid victimisation. In this case, the researcher did not have that challenge; some of the participants were cyberbullying victims who had already dealt with the trauma. They volunteered to contribute to the study. The plan was to interview representatives from the DBE; however, these representatives failed to avail themselves after several attempts to meet. The researcher decided to exclude the DBE members after numerous interview cancellations without reason. The supervisor advised the researcher to write a final email setting the last interview date and highlighted that further cancellation would result in the DBE's exclusion from the study.

### 4.8.1 Informed consent

Strydom (2011:121) describes compensation as reimbursing participants for participating in a study and as being "reasonable due to cost incurred, such as time away from work or free time spent in the project". In this study, stakeholders of the school system (learners, teachers and parents) were briefed prior that there would be no compensation. Participation was purely voluntary (Patton cited in Strydom 2011). A letter of informed consent was read to each of the participants in English and explained in Setswana and isiZulu, where necessary. This was done before interviews commenced to ensure that no participant felt coerced to participate in the study. Additionally, Appendix J, informed consent, contained detailed aspects of confidentiality,

avoidance of harm or discomfort, debriefing, recording of the interview, as well as storage of data for archival or future research purposes as recommended by Neuman (2007).

#### 4.9 SAMPLE METHODS

A sampling method is a critical decision-making tool for data collection layout and is motivated by methodology, target population, population sample and size, accessibility, the procedure for ethical clearance and sensitivity of the topic. Alvi (2016:11) defines sampling as a “process of extracting representatives of a study that represent the target population, where a smaller number is explored to answer the research question”.

The decision on the sampling includes methodology, duration and time available to complete the study (Mackie et al. 2021). In this particular study, the researcher opted for a purposive sample which is a form of non-probability sampling that ensures that all “all individuals, groups and settings are considered for selection if they are information-rich” (Onwuegbuzie & Collins 2007:287). The researcher started by requesting permission from the DBE, where she submitted Appendix D to DBE to conduct the study in a School in South West District. The DBE issued Appendix D, a permission letter granting the researcher to conduct research. The researcher followed all ethical clearance processes to protect and ensure the anonymity of all participants (Wagner et al. 2012).

The Unisa Ethics Committee issued an ethical clearance certificate. The DBE also issued a permission letter and a list of schools, highlighted as cyberbullying hotspots. Both documents advised the researcher to use technology to collect data and avoid going to school due to the Covid-19 risk. The research participants included minors; the researcher ensured that the parents of minor participants signed the consent forms permitting their children to be part of the study. To make the recruitment process easier, the researcher recruited the parents of the learner participants to take part in the study. The formulated research questions were the same for all stakeholders (learners, parents and teachers).

This was done to prove the relevancy of existing literature, which highlights parents’ and teachers’ lack of knowledge in using technological devices as the reason there is a prevalence of cyberbullying and poor monitoring (Cilliers & Chinyamurini 2020). All participants signed the informed consent form, which binds the researcher to ensure the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of participants at all costs (Wagner et al. 2012). Minor participants also signed assent forms to confirm their interest in being part of the study and that all participation was voluntary; no participant was coerced to participate.

The researcher did not deceive participants to get information. Participants have not been harmed in any way; there was no reciprocity on participation. It was also explained to participants that withdrawal before or during the actual interview was allowed in case participants felt they were unable to continue (Terre Blanche et al. 2009). This process ensured that the study adhered to all ethics processes to protect and ensure the anonymity of all participants (Wagner et al. 2012).

#### 4.10 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The study employed discourse analysis which is a qualitative data analysis and interpretation methods that permits more than one data analysis technique to be utilised. Literature define discourse analysis as a “cluster of methods and approaches with some substantial common interests rather than a single, unitary technique” (Bavelas, Kenwood & Phillips 2002:103). Hewitt (2009:2) adds that discourse analysis is a research method that “involves examining communication to gain new insights”. The plan was to narrow down intimately all collected data from the transcribed verbatim recordings of the focus group interviews and telephonic interviews, assisted by jotted notes.

The raw data from the virtual focus group interview and the semi-structured video interviews formed primary data. McMullin (2021:03) defines transcribing as an “action of providing a written account of spoken words into a meaningful context. In qualitative research, transcription is conducted from individual or group interviews and generally written verbatim (exactly word-for-word)”. During this stage, the researcher contextualised the verbatim transcripts into different categories or themes that helped answer the research questions. Linneberg and Korsgaard (2018:6) defines coding as the “process of breaking down data into component parts, which are given names or categories”.

Cope (2010:283) highlight coding as a process of narrowing down concepts according to different categories to help confirm or deny the researcher’s assumptions though use of themes or patens. The researcher did not utilise coding software; coding was done manually. After categorising the text from the focus group interview and one-to-one semi-structured interviews with individual learners and parents, the researcher prepared a table that outlined the differences in terms of stakeholder awareness about cyberbullying and the mitigating factors on what was lacking from the school if there was any lack in terms of their awareness message on cyberbullying. This was a communications study and tested the approximate level of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders (learners, teachers and parents) in the school system. This study was information-seeking and aimed at addressing the practical problem of cyberbullying.

#### 4.11 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Internal validity is the process of proving that the utilised research instrument is suitable for the study. Streefkerk (2021) presents internal validity as the “degree of confidence that the causal relationship being tested is trustworthy and not influenced by other factors or variables and also highlighted external validity as the extent to which results from a study can be applied (generalised) to other situations, groups or events”. Internal validity aligns with assessing the research instrument used to collect data, whether it is indeed accurate and whether it gives similar results.

When one uses different methods but reaches similar or the same results that means that a particular design is indeed valid and gives genuine and trustworthy findings. Wagner et al. (2012:64-65 refer to internal validity as “the degree of confidence that the causal relationship being tested is trustworthy and not influenced by other factors or variables”. It is where the research method and data-gathering instruments can help the researcher answer the research question. The researcher opted for a cross-sectional study, where the plan was to conduct research at one point in time using two data-gathering instruments to ensure that the data gathered was dependable and the information gathered was trustworthy” (Hemed 2015).

#### 4.12 QUALITY OF DATA

Trustworthiness in research ensures the quality of data. The constructs that follow indicate how the study established its genuineness and trustworthiness.

##### **4.12.1 Trustworthiness and credibility**

The study employed a thematic analysis, which is a data analysis framework that involves the interpretation of themes to derive meaning and answer research questions (Wagner et al. 2012). To ensure that findings are trustworthy and credible, the study utilized two data-gathering instruments: a virtual focus group interview and one-to-one video telephonic interviews.

The use of these methods helped the researcher present credible findings. Credibility focuses on ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of the findings, with the goal of demonstrating that the inquiry was conducted in a manner that accurately identified and described the subject (Strydom & Delpont 2011:420).

Credibility employs strategies such as member checks and triangulation. To enhance trustworthiness, the researcher conducted member checking and followed up with participants

to verify the accuracy of the transcribed and interpreted information (Fox & Bayat 2007:107). This exercise was carried out during debriefing sessions after all virtual interviews.

#### *4.12.1.1 Credibility*

The study employed a qualitative case study approach, where every detail was verified for each case. This was crucial to ensure the credibility of the findings (Wagner et al. 2012). Credibility, in this context, is concerned with ensuring the authenticity of the findings, with the goal of demonstrating that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to accurately identify and describe the subject (Strydom & Delpont 2011:420).

The researcher obtained ethics clearance from the Faculty of Humanities' Research Ethics Committee and the Faculty of Health Sciences' Ethics Committee. Additionally, permission was obtained from the Department of Basic Education to conduct the study, and the school voluntarily agreed to participate. Participants were introduced to the purpose of the study, and the researcher had received training in research methodology at honours and masters level. The researcher's supervisor possesses extensive qualitative research experience and is a senior lecturer at the Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of South Africa.

#### *4.12.1.2 Transferability*

The main focus of the study was not to generalise or transfer the findings, but to pave the way for future investigations that could explore the same inquiry with a larger sample or more cases. In this study, transferability is supported by the fact that it followed a qualitative approach, examining cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders across multiple cases and themes.

Transferability pertains to the researcher's consideration of whether the findings from a specific situation or case can be applied to another (Strydom & Delpont 2011:420). While transferring findings from one qualitative study to another can be challenging, the strategy of triangulating multiple cases was adopted to enhance the generalizability of the collected data (Strydom & Delpont 2011:420).

#### *4.12.1.3 Dependability*

Dependability involves assessing the process followed by the researcher, its stability, and consistency. This concept relates to the idea that "positivist notion of reliability assumes an unchanging universe where inquiry could, quite logically, be replicated" (Strydom & Delpont 2011:420). The research process was also subjected to external reviews to ensure consistency



and stability in the research process, verifying that the researcher maintained a consistent approach.

All research notes, data records, and transcripts are meticulously kept in the audit trail. In fact, all activities of the research process are documented to maintain consistency in reporting. The researcher adhered to the proposed and approved process for conducting the study, with ethical clearances in place to enforce compliance and maintain consistency. These practices are implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

#### *4.12.1.4 Conformability*

Conformability pertains to the researcher's objectivity (Shurink et al. 2011:421). It implies that research findings must be shaped by participants and not influenced by the researcher's biases. Peer debriefers were employed to assist the researcher by providing feedback on the interview schedule and the generated themes. These peers offered critical perspectives on the study and were well-informed.

Additionally, member checking was conducted with participants during the interviews. This process involved the researcher examining the information provided, seeking additional insights and reactions, and validating some of the information. The research environment was conducive to openness, allowing participants to express themselves freely. This approach facilitated reflection on the information provided and ensured that the researcher accurately represented the participants' views. Participants' direct quotes were faithfully reflected, and the researcher maintained a true reflection of the information, avoiding any confusion.

### 4.13 VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

During the recruitment of participants, the researcher emailed both Appendix E, the approval letter from the DBE, and Appendix F, the ethical clearance certificate from Unisa with Appendix I, J and K which contained moderator guide, letter of informed consent and letter of assent for minor participants. The researcher explained that participation was voluntary (Babbie 2014) All interested participants signed the informed consent forms (Marshall et al. 2006).

It was explained that if participants decided not to participate in the study, their decision would not affect their relationship with the school. The plan to have an interpreter connected online during interviews was in place. Appendix H was issued, where the researcher appointed a professional interpreter who is a language expert in Setswana Language. Setswana language is a local language in Pretoria. The appointed interpreter, interpreted the all documents from the moderator guide, informed consent and assent forms, these documents were ready for

those participants who were not affluent in English and IsiZulu. After finalising the recruitment process and presentations, the researcher realised that a translator would not be necessary as the participants and the researcher were all able to communicate in English, isiZulu and Setswana. The interview guides for all participant groups named Appendix A, B and C) were shared with participant groups.

#### **4.13.1 Deception of subjects/respondents**

The researcher shared the moderator guides with all participants virtually using the WhatsApp application and hardcopies were also provided to the school to distribute to the participants. This process enabled the researcher to explain and discuss the purpose of the study with all the participants and allow the participants a chance to ask questions and also share their views on the topic (Babbie 2014). All the pros and cons were explained to the participants and their decision remained the same. The decision to participate for those who participated was an informed decision; it occurred after they had listened to the researcher's online presentation and were allowed to ask questions. Participation required an internet connection and interested participants utilised their own internet connection to participate; those who were unable to afford data for themselves were excused from participation.

Learners used the school's Wi-Fi. It was arranged that they accessed the school's Wi-Fi after hours through the school's ICT technician who ensured uninterrupted connection. The researcher was transparent about the study and no deceitful information was provided that could lead to the refusal to participate in the study (Strydom 2011). Those who participated did so of their own free will.

#### **4.13.2 Violation of anonymity and confidentiality**

To ensure the total protection of participants, the researcher used pseudonyms to identify participants during the videoed one-to-one telephonic interviews. This process ensured total protection because all participants were allocated numbers instead of being called by their names on record to ensure the research adheres to anonymity and confidentiality (Dube et al. 2014). They were referred to as Learner Participant 1, Learner Participant 2 etc. or Parent Participant 1, Parent Participant 2 etc. These numbers were extended to cover all participants in each of the videoed one-to-one interviews. The same approach was used during the teacher video focus group interview. Participants in the focus group interview were identified slightly differently, using colours such as Ms Pink, Mr Grey and Ms Yellow, instead of numbers. Referring to participants using colours was easier than using numbers as the network kept rotating participants' placement on the video screen due to network connection. In the focus

group interview, anonymity was exercised through the signing of consent forms. Even though this process was implemented, the researcher had no total control over other participants in the group that might discuss the contents of the interview outside the focus group interview. Participants were assured that the data of this study would be shared only with the university research supervisor for academic purposes (Babbie, 2014).

#### **4.13.3 Debriefing participants**

The researcher allowed an opportunity for debriefing after the interviews. This was done to allow participants to share their experiences of the interview and, where possible, to provide the researcher with the opportunity to address any misconceptions or possible forms of harm that might have occurred unintentionally during the interviews. Strydom (2011) believes that any academic study is a learning experience for both participants and researchers.

Debriefing sessions are the best way to complete the learning experience that begins with the agreement to participate (Turk 2002). During debriefing, the researcher also checked whether the data collected were accurate and whether the answers given reflected what participants had wanted to say.

#### **4.13.4 Action and competence of the researcher**

Strydom (2011:123) indicates that “researchers are ethically obliged to ensure that they are competent, honest and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed investigation”. The researcher is equipped with adequate interviewing skills to handle interview situations and probing. In this study, the researcher followed all requirements of the Unisa Ethics Committee and the process of getting approval from the DBE. The researcher was granted an ethical certificate to start the field research.

### **4.14 CONCLUSION**

The presented literature on the chapter highlights choices made on the research methodology and other technical aspects of the study, including time frame. The researcher opted for the qualitative case study as a research design. This decision was taken after deciding on the research topic, population sample and how this population will be accessible to the researcher inclusive of budget issues and time frames. Sampling was defined as a process of extracting representatives of a study that represent the target population, where a smaller number is explored to answer the research question. The study employed two data-gathering techniques, a video focus group interview and videoed semi-structured one-to-one interviews using a WhatsApp application. The reason for this choice was to increase the reliability and

trustworthiness of the findings. The researcher opted for the video format to ensure that the virtual interviews still offered the same advantages as face-to-face interviews where non-verbal cues could be captured. This was the only available option for the researcher to access the participants due to the COVID-19 pandemic which challenged the education system globally with back-to-back school closures. Ethical clearance issues were addressed and study participants were protected. The presented literature addressed all ethical issues.

#### 4.15 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, methodological orientation was discussed. The chosen research design, basic research inclusive of research methodology, qualitative case study research, data-gathering methods and the reasoning behind all the decisions were tabled. The identified themes played a pivotal role in preparing the interview guide. The same interview guide was utilised for both the focus group interview and the videoed one-to-one semi-structured interviews. The next chapter is about data collection and presents the results and findings of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a methodological orientation. In this chapter, the data collected from the field research is presented and analysed. The research objectives, along with the formulated sub-themes from the research questions, are interpreted and analysed. The study employed discourse analysis which is a qualitative data analysis and interpretation that permits more than one data analysis technique to be utilised. Discourse analysis is a “cluster of methods and approaches with some substantial common interests rather than a single, unitary technique” (Bavelas, Kenwood & Phillips 2002:103). The purpose of this study was to explore and explain the extent of cyberbullying awareness among the stakeholders in the school system. The chosen school for the study was a high School in Mamelodi East in Pretoria.

### 5.2 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The collected data were interpreted and analysed. Data were grouped according to the participant’s biographic profile and list variables such as gender and age. These three variables highlighted the participants’ categories, age and gender and helped to argue the information gap which will be presented as a big challenge when it comes to embarking on cyberbullying prevention and monitoring in the data interpretation stage of the study.

The second phase of the empirical findings looked at the themes and sub-themes generated from the data; the researcher deliberated on the collected data extensively. This meant that the findings were presented and discussed making use of different themes and sub-themes generated from the collected data. Direct quotations from research participants and the literature enhanced the arguments in each theme to substantiate the findings. This was done following the thematic analysis. The biographic information of the participants is described in Table 5.2.1.

Table 5.1 Biographic data of participants

Number	Gender	Age	Participant Description	Race and Nationality
1	Male	17	Learner Participant 1	Black South African
2	Female	16	Learner Participant 2	Black Zimbabwean
3	Female	17	Learner Participant 3	Black South African
4	Female	15	Learner Participant 4	Black South African

Number	Gender	Age	Participant Description	Race and Nationality
5	Female	16	Learner Participant 5	Black South African
6	Female	17	Learner Participant 6	Black South African
7	Female	14	Learner Participant 7	Black South African
8	Female	15	Learner Participant 8	Black South African
9	Male & Female	55 & 52	Parent Participant 1 (Couple)	Black South African
10	Female	39	Parent Participant 2	Black South African
11	Female	48	Parent Participant 3	Black Zimbabwean
12	Female	42	Parent Participant 4	Black South African
13	Female	48	Parent Participant 5	Black South African
14	Female	50	Parent Participant 6	Black South African
15	Male & Female	50 & 52	Parent Participant 7 (Couple)	Black South African
16	Male & Female	48	Parent Participant 8 (Couple)	Black South African
17	Male	40	Teacher Participant Mr Grey	Black South African
18	Female	30	Teacher Participant Ms Pink	Black South African
19	Female	32	Teacher Participant Ms White	Black South African
20	Male	35	Teacher Participant Mr Black	Black South African
21	Female	31	Teacher Participant Ms Green	Black South African
22	Female	35	Teacher Participant Ms Yellow	Black South African
23	Female	36	Teacher Participant Ms Blue	Black South African
24	Female	29	Teacher Participant Ms Brown	Black South African

### 5.3 RELEASE OR PUBLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

The presented findings of the study are an actual interpretation of the collected data from the field research. The generated literature review themes were presented to pinpoint the dynamics of cyberbullying from a global perspective, in Africa and from a local – South African – perspective. The findings will be published in the form of a written mini-dissertation made understandable and accessible to the public (Strydom, 2011).

The researcher's mini-dissertation will remain the property of the University of South Africa. Working hand in hand with a supervisor as co-author the researcher will submit a manuscript for possible publication. With this publication, the researcher hopes to provide scholars in the

broader psychosocial sphere with fresh insight into the topic of cyberbullying. Details of participants will be protected and kept confidential. (Lin 2009). The researcher aims to publish the findings of this study in a journal, following the university's guidelines.

#### **5.4 PLANNING FOR RECORDING DATA**

Data recording is always planned to suit the setting where data will be collected (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos 2011). The data collection for this particular study was collected in a virtual setting (online) using a WhatsApp video application format. The researcher booked appointments with each participating individual in all the group categories. Particulars of participating participants, including alternative telephone numbers, were acquired before the interviews.

This was done to prevent cancellations. In cases where there were network challenges, the researcher advised participants to prepare alternative network starter packs to ensure interview schedules were not cancelled. All participant interviews were scheduled and conducted after hours and at weekends. This was a directive highlighted in the permission letter issued by the DBE.

##### **5.4.1 Data preparation and preliminary analysis**

Preliminary analysis is the process of scrutinising raw collected data and grouping such data into themes and sub-themes to align the research questions with the sub-questions to answer the research objectives (Schurink et al. 2011). The researcher conducted a preliminary analysis and started listening to all the interviews recorded by the different stakeholder participants. In this process, interview questions were scrutinised according to the listed themes from the interview questions.

The interview questions were grouped according to six themes which linked to the main research question and sub-questions: Theme 1: Communication campaigns and channels, Theme 2: Implementation of the 2012 School Safety Framework and its impact, Theme 3: Knowledge gap, Theme 4: School's response to cyberbullying, Theme 5: Trust and reaction to the online sex tape and Theme 6: Social media influence on schools and families.

##### **5.4.2 Managing the data**

All the physical transcription sheets and records were filled separately. Pseudonyms were given to each participant to protect their identity and the date and time of the interview were recorded. Each file was labelled with a pseudonym. The group of learners were given

pseudonyms such as Learner Participant 1 and parents were given pseudonyms such as Parent Participant 1. The same applied to teachers in the teacher video focus group interview, however, pseudonyms in the teacher focus group were named differently; for better understanding during the focus group interview, these participants were given pseudonyms such as Mr Black, Ms Pink and Mr Grey.

This approach was utilised to avoid spot reallocation that changes during a video call at times because of network problems colours were used to identify each participant. They were identified according to the colour of the clothes they were wearing or the colour of the wall during the videoed group interview sitting. The data were transcribed verbatim from the digital recordings and stored on a computer; the document was protected with a PIN to assure the safety of the information. During this stage, data were only accessed by the researcher (Lin 2009).

### **5.4.3 Interview recording and field notes**

Field notes which were recorded during the focus group interview and the one-to-one semi-structured interviews aided with an additional layer of information during the process of grouping themes together which was part of data interpretation and analysis (Phillippi & Lauderdale 2018). The themed interview questions made it easy for the researcher to ascertain whether the identified themes talked to the research questions or not. This was done to categorise the collected data so that the researcher would be in a position to interpret it internally into meaning (Schurink et al. 2011). During the recording of interviews, the researcher probed participants to get clearer responses from participants and also to ascertain whether participants understood the meaning behind their responses.

### **5.4.4 Categories and coding of data**

Coding is the process of grouping and categorising pieces of collected data into themes and sub-themes and newly coded information is compared with old and named differently (Wagner et al. 2012:31). The researcher listened to the recorded interviews and identified themes from the three interviewed stakeholders (learners, teachers and parents). A preliminary table was developed reflecting the main themes and sub-themes to form a framework for discussing the findings. This is called a 'first order' analysis category of meaning (Linneberg & Korsgaard 2019).

A framework tailor-made for discussions and analysis took place by using the actual quotes of the participants. All the interviews were conducted in English although some participants emphasised some terms in isiZulu and Sepedi. The direct quotes from participants support



these themes and the literature will be used to substantiate the themes that were generated. The following table provides a summary of the themes and sub-themes:

Table 5.2 Themes/sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Communication campaigns and channels	Communication and awareness of cyberbullying messages Effectiveness of communication channels about cyberbullying Continuity and diversity of the cyberbullying message
Implementation of the 2012 School Safety Framework and its impact	Training and support (computer literacy levels)
Knowledge gap and digital divide	Understanding online safety protocols Understanding cyberbullying
School's cyberbullying response	Peer-to-peer counselling
Trust and reaction to online sex tape	Emotional connectivity
Social media influence on schools and families	Online hook-ups and handling of direct messages (DMs)

## 5.5 APPLICATION OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The study employed discourse analysis, which is a qualitative data analysis and interpretation method that allows for the utilisation of multiple data analysis techniques. Bavelas et al. (2002:103) define discourse analysis as a “cluster of methods and approaches with substantial common interests, rather than a single, unitary technique”. Hewitt (2009:2) further explains that discourse analysis is a research method that involves examining communication to gain new insights. In the forthcoming discussion, raw data was condensed into themes and subthemes that address the research questions and objectives.

The raw data collected from the virtual focus group interview and the semi-structured video interviews constituted primary data. McMullin (2021:03) defines transcription as the “action of providing a written account of spoken words in a meaningful context. In qualitative research, transcription is typically carried out for individual or group interviews and is generally written verbatim (word-for-word)”. During this stage, the researcher contextualised the verbatim

transcripts into different categories or themes that aided in addressing the research questions. Linneberg and Korsgaard (2018:6) define coding as the “process of breaking down data into component parts, which are assigned names or categories”. Cope (2010:283) emphasises coding as a process of refining concepts into different categories to either confirm or refute the researcher’s assumptions through the use of themes or patterns. The researcher did not employ coding software; instead, coding was done manually.

After categorising the text from the focus group interview and one-to-one semi-structured interviews with individual learners and parents, the researcher created a table that outlined the differences in terms of stakeholder awareness about cyberbullying and the mitigating factors related to any gaps in their awareness of cyberbullying messages from the school. This study, centered on communication, aimed to test the level of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders (learners, teachers, and parents) in the school system. It was an information-seeking study aimed at addressing the practical problem of cyberbullying.

## 5.6 PRESENTING DATA

This was the final stage of data analysis. The researcher presented the data in a report using themes, sub-themes and categories generated from the findings. The exact words of participants were quoted verbatim. The researcher summarised the data from the participants’ responses and supported the data with current literature (Schurink et al. 2011).

## 5.7 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

### **5.7.1 Theme 1: Communication campaigns and channels**

The research questions were grouped according to six themes. These six themes talked to the research question and sub-questions. The first theme focused on understanding how the school created awareness or handled cyberbullying-related messages among stakeholders (learners, teachers and parents) of the school system. Questions under this theme were formulated to look at communication campaigns that the school had spearheaded on the cyberbullying topic.

It was important for this theme to test how the cyberbullying message was communicated to stakeholders to understand the existing campaigns on the topic. It was of prime importance to ascertain how the 2012 School Safety Framework, a policy on bullying and cyberbullying, played a role in the school’s communication campaigns. The distribution or communication of the 2012 School Safety Framework is one of the mechanisms that contributes to the school’s communication campaigns about bullying and cyberbullying. In this instance, the researcher

tested the stakeholders' understanding of the framework and their understanding of the contents of this important document to stakeholders. A sub-theme about the diversity of the cyberbullying topic emerged. It was important to understand how the cyberbullying topic was handled or presented in the school's communication channels.

#### *5.7.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Communication and awareness of cyberbullying message*

About 20 participants from the study said that they had no recollection of the school's communication campaigns on the topic of cyberbullying. Six parents indicated that they had never received any form of communication about cyberbullying. One parent mentioned that a cyberbullying incident had been reported by the school in a meeting he attended before COVID-19. In conclusion, the responses from all stakeholders highlighted the lack of communication about cyberbullying campaigns. This sub-theme revealed that the school had no direction on how to handle cyberbullying awareness campaigns. Stakeholders thus had no clear knowledge of how to handle cyberbullying cases when they occurred.

Parent Participant 3:

"I always receive letters and SMSs about school activities but I don't recall receiving any message about cyberbullying. Even now I don't know what you mean by cyberbullying".

*I have always received letters and SMSs about school activities, but I do not recall receiving any message on cyberbullying. Even now I do not understand what you mean when you refer to cyberbullying.*

Parent Participant 1 (husband and wife):

"Ayikho I report esiytholile nge cyberbullying".

*We have not received any report on cyberbullying. English*

Parent Participant 3:

"It was discussed in other parents meeting that I attended. We were told some learners were involved in cyberbullying; this was before COVID-19".

*It was discussed in a parent meeting that I attended. We were told some learners were involved in cyberbullying; this was before COVID-19.*

Parent Participant 8:

“I don’t remember seeing any message on cyberbullying”.

*I do not remember seeing any message on cyberbullying.*

The researcher examined the next group of participants – the teachers – and the same question was put to the teachers to establish how the school communicates and creates awareness among stakeholders. Teachers play a significant role in any school programme’s activities. Teacher participants in the focus group interview also highlighted the failure of how the cyberbullying topic had been addressed at the school. They argued that the topic was addressed on a reactionary basis. It is not in the DBE’s curriculum where teachers are guided on how to handle it. This theme proved that the integration of cyberbullying into the school curriculum is still a research recommendation, not yet implemented in reality. At this stage, the DBE curriculum does not include the topic of cyberbullying. The teacher interview responses attested to the fact.

Teacher Participant Ms White:

“As a school, we’ve never conducted awareness campaigns about cyberbullying. On the other side, we have never sent any form of communication to stakeholders, the reason being, we are also thumb-sucking; we are not equipped to advise anyone on it”.

*As a school, we’ve never conducted awareness campaigns about cyberbullying. On the other side, we have never sent any form of communication to stakeholders, the reason being, we are also thumb-sucking; we are not equipped to advise anyone on it.*

Teacher Participant Mr Grey:

“The department never drove that kind of message in the school. Cyberbullying is not in our teaching scope. We can’t waste 45 minutes preparing for a lesson not covered in the scope”.

*The department never drove that kind of message in the school. Cyberbullying is not in our teaching scope. We can’t waste 45 minutes preparing for a lesson not covered in the scope.*

Teacher Participant Mr Purple:

“I can’t really say that was creating awareness for our learners; we have dealt with cyberbullying after a trending traumatic video on the internet. We just talked about it and warn them”.

*I can’t really say that was creating awareness for our learners; we have dealt with cyberbullying after a trending traumatic video on the internet. We just talked about it and warn them.*

Teacher Participant Ms White:

“It’s quite difficult for teachers to handle cyberbullying because they have not received adequate training on how to even deal with it”.

*It’s quite difficult for teachers to handle cyberbullying because they have not received adequate training on how to even deal with it.*

Teacher Participant Ms Blue:

“Teachers are not trained to handle this cyberbullying”.

*Teachers are not trained to handle this cyberbullying.*

The direct quotes from the respondents highlighted that nothing has been done to create awareness of cyberbullying. The researcher asked the same awareness question to the learner participants who indicated that cyberbullying message was seldom discussed in the curriculum. They mentioned that the way it was addressed was reactionary and not effective. Learners mentioned that cyberbullying awareness was only addressed in the Life Orientation (LO) subject after a video trended on social media; teachers came back to class and warned learners against cyberbullying.

Learner Participant 3:

“Awareness was done through teaching in an LO class, through a research assignment”.

*Awareness was done through teaching in an LO class, through a research assignment.*

Learner Participant 8 also attested to the fact that she had heard about cyberbullying in the LO class after the Lufuno Mavhunga incident that happened in Limpopo Province (Bhengu 2021a). Learner Participant 7 also commented that cyberbullying was never addressed at school; it was only addressed after learners had bullied each other.

#### *5.7.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Effectiveness of communication channels about cyberbullying*

In this sub-theme, the researcher tested communication effectiveness: Is communication about the topic of cyberbullying effective in the school? If the answer is ‘yes’, how is it communicated? Communication channels and messages on the topic were scrutinised. Karni and Vierø (2017) adds that promotional messages and awareness messages are efforts towards goodwill, the availability of a communication message and platform and suitability of the platform to the audience adds to effectiveness of the message. The point of argument is that efficiency of bullying and cyberbullying prevention programmes requires a cohesive approach to training where all stakeholders (parents, teachers and learners) will be trained continuously (Lan et al.

2022). In other words, communication channels need to assist the organisation to communicate the training or anti-bullying campaigns.

This message will follow the three-stage process of the communication message (Drew 2022). After the entire three steps communication process has occurred, evaluating the communication message is what determines whether the communication message hit or missed the mark.

Teacher Participant Mr Red:

“When a cyberbullying incident has happened, we talk about it during the Life Orientation class, but I don’t regard that as effective communication. What about learners who are not in that class”?

*When a cyberbullying incident has happened, we talk about it during the Life Orientation class, but I don’t regard that as effective communication. What about learners who are not in that class?*

Teacher Participant Ms Blue:

“Effectiveness of cyberbullying message will require training off teachers for now we not trained”.

*Effectiveness of cyberbullying message will require training off teachers for now we not trained.*

Parent Participant 3 highlighted the existing communication channels that are effective in the school such as SMSs, letters and the Facebook page exist but reiterated that he had never received a message about cyberbullying on these channels.

Parent Participant 3:

“I always receive letters and SMSs or Facebook notifications about school activities but I don’t remember. I don’t know what cyberbullying is. You know I almost refused to participate, in fear of exposing my small knowledge”.

*I always receive communication from the school through letters and SMSs or Facebook I have not received anything on cyberbullying. I do not know what is cyberbullying and I almost refused to participate in fear of exposing my small knowledge.*

Learner Participant 1:

“The only time I heard of cyberbullying was during an LO class; besides that, time I never heard of it”.

*The only time I heard of cyberbullying was during an LO class; besides then, I never heard of it.*

Participant responses from across the board highlighted that a small attempt to communicate the cyberbullying message was through the teaching curriculum in the LO class. Besides that, nothing had been done at the school. Cowie (2013) highlights training as an effective method to curb cyberbullying although not necessarily limiting learners' online activities.

Controlling cyberbullying becomes complex for teachers because it happens everywhere – at home and in the park – and teachers have no control when cyberbullying happens the outside the school's perimeter. Parent training is also essential in the anti-bullying campaign to ensure they continue with after-school monitoring through monitoring learners' home computers and gadgets (Notar et al. 2013).

The participant responses highlight the lack of the proper use of communication channels, such as communication, advertising or publicising of the cyberbullying topic to stakeholders, for campaigns. Campaigns were never undertaken. The upcoming themes also pinpoint the DBE's failure to introduce a bullying policy in this particular school.

#### *5.7.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Continuity and diversity of the cyberbullying message*

One of the reasons cyberbullying is more worrying and, in the spotlight, than traditional bullying, is due to its nature of continuity; it can proceed beyond certain times, even demographics (Hills 2017). This theme focused on continuity and diversity where the researcher tested how frequently the school communicated the message of cyberbullying to the stakeholders and when that message was communicated, was it diverse to suit various audiences or stakeholders. Hills (2017) argues that cyberbullying is continuous; it crosses times and borders. A victim can be tormented at home, after school or during work hours even when they are demographically separated from the bully. This finding tested the continuity of the message of cyberbullying, how it was communicated and how diverse the communication was.

Parent Participant 3:

“Cyberbullying is still foreign in the school. We are nowhere near discussing continuity or diversity”.

*Cyberbullying is still foreign in the school. We are nowhere near discussing continuity or diversity.*

Parent Participant 4:

“Cyberbullying topic was raised in a meeting I attended. I’m not sure I can say that message was diverse or continuous. I heard it once”.

*Cyberbullying topic was raised in a meeting I attended. I’m not sure I can say that message was diverse or continuous. I heard it once.*

Parent Participant 5 responded to the question but contradicted herself. She mentioned she had once received a letter about cyberbullying but contradicted her statement that she did not recall receiving a letter with such content.

Parent Participant 6:

“The school don’t communicate cyberbullying message to parents. I have never received any message about cyberbullying but I have seen my daughter work on a homework on cyberbullying. I can’t say seeing my daughter doing homework that’s diversity”.

*The school did not communicate cyberbullying message to parents. I have never received any message about cyberbullying but I have seen my daughter work on a homework on cyberbullying. I can’t say seeing my daughter doing homework that’s diversity.*

This sub-theme assessed how the cyberbullying message was delivered to stakeholders. Responses from all participants highlighted that there was no diversity in the cyberbullying message. Stakeholders mentioned that the message of cyberbullying was not communicated by the school. Another group of stakeholders Teacher Participant Ms Pink and Teacher Participant Mr Black shared similar views that cyberbullying was not communicated at the school and the little attempt done in the LO class to address it did not qualify as a diverse or continuous approach.

Teacher Participant Mr Grey:

“The cyberbullying message need a guideline for now we as school are not equipped to guide learners on cyberbullying”.

*The cyberbullying message need a guideline for now we as school are not equipped to guide learners on cyberbullying.*

Two learner participants, Learner Participant 1 and Learner Participant 3 mentioned it was once discussed in an LO class.

Learner Participant 7:

“The school is not even addressing cyberbullying. We can’t discuss continuity or diversity because school don’t take it seriously”.



*The school is not even addressing cyberbullying. We can't discuss continuity or diversity because school don't take it seriously.*

All stakeholders shared the same views on the diversity of the cyberbullying message – the school did not talk about the diversity or continuity of the cyberbullying message. Be that as it may, a reactional attempt to disseminate the cyberbullying message, as mentioned by a group of learners and teachers, did not make the cyberbullying message diverse for all stakeholders. There is no diversity and continuity in the school's cyberbullying messages.

### **5.7.2 Theme 2: Implementation of the 2012 School Safety Framework and its impact**

This theme deals with the 2012 School Safety Framework, a policy on bullying and cyberbullying. Knowledge or stakeholder awareness of the cyberbullying policy is another way for the DBE in Gauteng to thwart the problem of cyberbullying. This policy deals with general bullying and cyberbullying. It guides stakeholders and the school on how to deal with cyberbullying incidents. This theme tested stakeholders' knowledge of the 2012 School Safety Framework and their knowledge of the contents of the policy. All stakeholders (learners, teachers and parents) of the school indicated that they had never come across the 2012 School Safety Framework which is a policy implemented in Gauteng to deal with bullying and cyberbullying. The policy document on cyberbullying is a legitimate guideline that can guide stakeholders on how to deal with cyberbullying and can be downloaded from the internet.

Parent Participant 3:

"I don't know it. I don't remember receiving the framework".

*I do not know it. I do not remember receiving the framework.*

Parent Participant 1:

"I'm not sure what 2012 School Safety Framework entails; I don't recall receiving it".

*I'm not sure what 2012 School Safety Framework entails; I don't recall receiving it.*

Parent Participant 4:

"I've never come close to that document; I don't know it".

*I have never come close to the document; I do not know it.*

Teachers are the trusted custodians of law and order who oversee processes on behalf of the education system from teaching to rules and regulations. The responses from the teacher's focus group interview highlighted the failure of the DBE to implement the 2012 School Safety Framework at the School.

Training of teachers is a must to ensure they understand how to regulate when a cyberbullying incident occurs and put emphasis on correct internet ethos. In this study, teachers were asked about the 2012 School Safety Framework; their responses highlighted that the policy has not been implemented. All teacher participants attested to the same response that they had neither received the framework nor got trained on it.

Teacher Participant Ms Pink:

"We don't know the document. I Googled it before this interview just to prepare myself so I'm not found wanting. Well, that was just for preparation. As teachers of this school, we have never received this policy document before".

*We have no knowledge of the document. I googled it before this interview just to prepare myself, I'm lost. I did that to prepare. As teachers of this school, we have never received this policy document before.*

The learners were also asked about the 2012 School Safety Framework and their responses were similar to those of other stakeholders. Their responses highlighted that the 2012 School Safety Framework had never been implemented at the Secondary School. All stakeholders vowed they had never received this policy document.

Learner Participant 2:

"Mmh ... I googled it before this interview. I swear I never, never laid my eyes on it except now".

*"Mmh ... I googled it before this interview. I swear I have never laid my eyes on it, except now".*

Learner Participant 7 also stated that she had never seen the mentioned policy document and had no knowledge of what the document contained. Learner Participant 8 also stated that she had never heard of it.

Learner Participant 6:

*"Azange ngayinikwa muhlawumbi ngayinikwa angazi angiwagcini amaphepha mina".*

*"It was never given to me. Maybe It was given, I'm not sure. I hardly keep papers.*

The policy has had no impact because it had not been implemented; the policy had never reached its intended destination. Stakeholders of this school are yet to receive it. At this point, this policy has not been implemented at the School. Stakeholders have been left in the dark about this policy and mistakes made by stakeholders when dealing with cyberbullying are justified.

#### *5.7.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Training and support (computer literacy levels)*

This sub-theme examined training and support. The researcher assessed the computer literacy levels of stakeholders to establish their technical expertise in terms of computer literacy and to understand any kind of training or workshop that they might have attended on the topic of cyberbullying. With this sub-theme, the researcher could ascertain whether adults would be in a position to monitor learners with their technological expertise, especially those driving cyberbullying attacks. The parent participants were divided into two on this sub-theme; some stated that they are computer literate because they use computers at work but highlighted a challenge of resources at home where they do not own desktop computers with fully running internet. The other group of parents stated that they were not computer literate.

Parent Participant 8:

I work with computer. I am computer literate.

*"I work with computers. I am computer literate".*

Parent Participant 2:

"I am not computer literate. I only use WhatsApp and Facebook with my phone".

*"I am not computer literate. I only use WhatsApp and Facebook with my phone".*

Parent Participant 3:

"I use computers at work; therefore, I am computer literate".

*I use computers at work; therefore, I am computer literate.*

Parent Participant 1:

"No, I'm not computer literate. I'm old; I don't use these things. I only make calls and sent SMSs. I don't even use WhatsApp. Only my son uses a smartphone for school, not us".

*No, I'm not computer literate. I'm old; I don't use these things. I only make calls and send SMSs. I don't even use WhatsApp. Only my son uses a smartphone for school, not us.*

Teachers also mentioned a lack of computer proficiency which made it difficult for them to monitor learner devices during school hours. This answer was awkward for teachers. It was quite challenging for teachers to admit in a focus group that they needed computer training. Not in so many words, they highlighted computer training as one of their needs to master dealing with computers and the internet.

Teacher Participant Mr Black:

"I am a beginner but I am able to use computer efficiently".

*I am a beginner but I am able to use computer efficiently.*

Teacher Participant Ms White:

"I am an intermediary".

*I am an intermediary.*

Teacher Participant Ms Pink:

"Honestly, I am still struggling in using a computer. I always need help. I cannot add my name on people who are computer literate".

*Honestly, I am still struggling in using computers. I always need help. I cannot add my name on people who are computer literate*

Teacher Participant Ms Yellow:

"Eish ... It's difficult. We were never trained to use computers. The challenge now is to use the same computer to teach".

*Eish ... It's difficult. We were never trained to use computers. The challenge now is to use the same computer to teach.*

The learners' and teachers' responses highlighted a training need in both computer literacy and cyberbullying. Learners were using gadgets, such as laptops and tablets, for which they were never formally trained.

Learner Participant 6:

"I am able to use computer and I can also ... I set it up in terms of hardware. I'm self-taught".

*I am able to use computers, I can set my hardware and work station. I'm self-taught.*

Learner Participant 3:

“I am learning to use the computer but I’m not where I need to be”.

*I am learning to use the computer but I still have a long way to go.*

Learner Participant 2:

“We have not been taught enough to use technology, myself included. Yes, we are given gadgets but we are not trained. Even our so-called teachers are struggling. Some teachers ask for our help from time to time when they are challenged by technology. These gadgets were ditched with no training”.

*We have technological devices but we have not been trained on how to use them. I am also included in that list, even our teachers lack training, from time to time these gadgets challenge them in front of us.*

Most learner participants echoed the same sentiments as teacher participants – the gadgets at their disposal were handed out without proper training for both learners and teachers. Some experienced challenges in fully utilising them. Stakeholders were not trained to use technological devices. This point supports the argument that was introduced in the literature – the lack of technological expertise for both parents and teachers make it difficult for them to monitor learners’ online activities which could result in cyberbullying.

### **5.7.3 Theme 3: Knowledge gap**

In this theme, the researcher tested the knowledge gap through monitoring and control. All stakeholders were asked how they monitor learners’ devices or online activities. At the same time, this tested their understanding of internet safety protocols as a sub-theme. This theme presented the knowledge gap among stakeholders where the latest research highlighted the challenge for parents and teachers when it came to monitoring learners’ online activities due to their lack of technological expertise. This theme also highlighted another factor – learners are manipulative; the behaviour they display to adults has nothing to do with their online behaviour. Parents were asked how they monitored their children’s phones; these are the responses from interviews.

Parent Participant 3:

“I monitor my child’s phone by taking her phone without alert”.

*I monitor my child’s phone by taking her phone without alert.*

Parent Participant 1:

“We do not monitor his phone ... (They laughed.) He will never allow us to touch his phone, never. We also don't bother; he is a boy ... boys will be boys.

*We do not monitor his phone ... (They laughed.) He will never allow us to touch his phone, never. We also don't bother; he is a boy ... boys will be boys.*

Parent Participant 5:

“I made sure that we share the smartphone so that I can monitor who she is chatting to on WhatsApp and on Facebook. I am doing this to protect her to stop her from talking to boys. She is young; it's too early for her to be talking to boys”.

*I made sure that we share the smartphone so that I can monitor who she is chatting to on WhatsApp and on Facebook. I am doing this to protect her to stop her from talking to boys. She is young; it's too early for her to be talking to boys.*

Parent Participant 4 said that she randomly checks the phones of her children without alerting them.

Parent Participant 7:

“We are not monitoring her phone. If we have any concern, we talk to her. As a family, we talk a lot. Based on her behaviour, we have established trust. Because of that, we do not look through her phone. We only limit her online activity during exams. We also check her statuses on WhatsApp and Facebook. The reason for doing this we trust her”.

*We are not monitoring her phone. If we have any concern, we talk to her. As a family, we talk a lot. Based on her behaviour, we have established trust. Because of that, we do not look through her phone. We only limit her online activity during exams. We also check her statuses on WhatsApp and Facebook. The reason for doing this we trust her.*

The response from parents highlights a knowledge gap in terms of monitoring and control. The majority of them highlighted that they did not physically monitor their children's devices due to the trust their children had earned from their everyday behaviour within the household. The younger parents mentioned trust as the reason for not monitoring their children's devices. They also highlighted that they sat their children down and had open communication.

The same question was put to the teachers in the focus group interview.

Teacher Participant Ms White:

“There is nothing to monitor because the Wi-Fi passwords are not given to learners. Our IT teacher connect learners each time they need to use the internet.”

*There is nothing to monitor because the Wi-Fi passwords are not given to learners. Our IT teacher connect learners each time they need to use the internet.*

Teacher Participant Mr Grey:

In class, you create your own rules to manage learners' technological usage. In my class, phones are used when there is a need.

Teacher Participant Mr Red:

'In my class, no phones unless we are using it for curriculum purposes it'.

*In my class, no phones unless we are using it for curriculum purposes it.*

The school's Wi-Fi access was well managed; learners were unable to connect without teacher supervision. Other teachers also mentioned that there was a code of conduct in terms of how devices were used on the school premises. Teacher participants mentioned that different teachers exercised different rules to ensure there was law and order and that there was no misuse of technological devices in the classroom. These responses from teachers highlighted that there was limited time for learners to perform cyberbullying mischief during class due to the controlled timetable for classes from the school's starting time to after school. This point leaves the entire monitoring to parents.

Learner Participant 1:

"My parents check my phone once in six months. I think it's because they trust me".

*My parents check my phone once in six months. I think it's because they trust me.*

Learner Participant 6 (laughing):

"My parents don't monitor my phone; they very old. They can't use smartphone but I am teaching them. Their own phones only make calls; they use old model phones so no one monitors my stuff".

*My parents don't monitor my phone; they very old. They can't use smartphone but I am teaching them. Their own phones only make calls; they use old model phones so no one monitors my stuff.*

The learner responses highlighted a lot of deceit. Some participants highlighted that they behaved well at home and not at school. Another participant, who shared a smartphone with her mother, mentioned that her mother's method of monitoring was outdated and that she did not use the same smartphone to chat with boys; she used a different device.

This theme highlights the necessity of training for all stakeholders for a better understanding of cyberbullying. Understanding cyberbullying and proper internet ethics is another remedy to prevent cyberbullying or to empower stakeholders to exercise resilience when they are cyberbullied. This theme highlights the inability of parents and teachers to monitor learners' online activity and their lack of knowledge of why the monitoring of learner devices is important.

### 5.7.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Understanding online safety protocols

In this sub-theme, the researcher tested the stakeholder' understanding of basic cyber security protocols to ascertain if stakeholders understood the risks associated with online learning or online traffic and how to mitigate those risks in cases where they were confronted with cyber security risks. The parents were the first group of participants to table the term firewall.

Parent Participant 3:

“I think firewalls it’s something like when you lock your computer. It protects one from hacking you. It’s a security option”.

*I think firewalls it’s something like when you lock your computer. It protects one from hacking you. It’s a security option.*

Parent Participant 3 showed a minimal understanding of firewalls but her explanation was enough because she is not an expert in the field of Information Technology. In short, she understood that firewalls are there to protect a computer from unwanted traffic. In her explanation, she mentioned that firewalls enable one to be protected from online harm and that there is a way to limit access to your computer by setting login details.

Other parents indicated a lack of knowledge when it came to internet safety protocols. The younger parents showed more understanding compared to the older ones. As Parent Participant 5 stated, she has no clue about what a firewall is and its usage or purpose. Parent Participant 4 lacked confidence in her understanding of firewalls but her response showed she had an overview of what a firewall is. She highlighted that they are a form of security for the internet or computers to block unwanted things. Parent Participant 5 displayed the knowledge gap as she completely shows her lack of understanding of the term firewall.

Parent Participant 5:

“I think firewall it’s for turning off the fire; if there is a fire or even if a car or house is burning. Hey, I’m not sure” ... (she laughs).

*I think firewall it’s for turning off the fire; if there is a fire or even if a car or house is burning. Hey, I’m not sure ... (she laughs).*

This parent’s responses highlighted her lack of knowledge of technical terms and an inability to be able to assist her children when it came to applying security features on internet devices. The teacher participants’ responses to the question about firewalls were the most shocking; most participants were unable to answer this question or showed no understanding of firewalls



or online safety protocols. Some vowed to not know about firewalls and kept quiet.

Teacher Participant Ms White:

“I think firewalls ... It’s more like a limiting access on certain websites when you are on the internet”.

*I think firewalls ... It’s more like a limiting access on certain websites when you are on the internet.*

Teacher Participant Mr Black stated he was not sure where he had heard the term firewall. Teacher Participant Ms Pink shook her head as she battled to answer while she snickered softly.

Teacher Participant Mr Grey:

I’m sorry... let someone else take this one. I don’t want to embarrass myself. I don’t have a clue of what that is”.

*I’m sorry... let someone else take this one. I don’t want to embarrass myself. I don’t have a clue of what that is.*

These teacher responses highlight the necessity to implement a cyberbullying policy in the school. Following the policy guide, the school can embark on a more technical type of monitoring where the use of spyware technologies can be recommended. There was no difference in responses to this question even among the learners. They also showed limited knowledge of firewalls and their usage.

Learner Participant 3:

“I think firewalls is something that help to protect your computer to manage network traffic. It protects you from being hacked”.

*I think firewalls is something that help to protect your computer to manage network traffic. It protects you from being hacked.*

Learner Participant 7, showing limited knowledge in her response:

“Firewall is like systems that are put in place to protect your information”.

*Firewall is like systems that are put in place to protect your information.*

The rest of the participants displayed no knowledge of firewalls.

Learner Participant 2:

“I don’t know. I never heard about firewall before”.

*I don't know. I never heard about firewall before.*

In a nutshell, responses from all stakeholders highlighted a knowledge gap and that the stakeholders did not understand basic internet safety protocols such as firewalls which are essential in protecting one online. The cyberbullying policy should be implemented. This policy contains all the information about proper internet ethos and protocols when one is online.

### *5.7.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Understanding of cyberbullying*

The school is an ICT school. In this sub-theme, the researcher tested the stakeholders’ understanding of the term cyberbullying. The responses indicated that all stakeholders understood the term cyberbullying but their understanding was not extensive; their handling or resisting it when confronted by the phenomenon is doubtful.

Parent Participant 2:

“I can say cyberbullying is bullying that happens online”.

*I can say cyberbullying is bullying that happens online.*

Despite promising responses from some respondents on their understanding of the cyberbullying term, some were quite the opposite.

Parent Participant 1 (husband and wife):

“Cyberbullying ... hay, we don’t know it. No, sorry we don’t know it”.

*Cyberbullying ... sorry, we don't know it. No, sorry we don't know it.*

Parent Participant 3, responding in isiZulu:

“Ifana ne bullying ye technology ngamaphone. La bethukana ngokuthumelana izithombe”.

*It's like technology bullying through phones it's harassment – sent nasty pictures something like that.*

Parent Participant 4:

“It’s like internet bullying where they will send you funny messages and hacking your

phone”.

*It's like internet bullying where they will send you funny messages and hacking your phone.*

Parent Participant 6 explained that the technological aspect of cyberbullying and its diversity enables it to happen everywhere which makes all stakeholders targets. The findings from the parents' responses differed; younger parents had a better understanding of cyberbullying than older parents. The older parents who did not use smartphones indicated they did not know about cyberbullying.

The researcher also checked responses from the teacher focus group interviews. Teachers showed a clear understanding of what cyberbullying is and how it occurs.

Teacher Participant Mr Black:

“Cyberbullying is form of abuse through the internet which violates people’s rights and dignity”.

*Cyberbullying is form of abuse through the internet which violates people’s rights and dignity.*

Teacher Participant Mr Grey:

I think cyberbullying is one of the dynamic concepts that involve a number of things. Where someone post my pictures without my concern ... any uncomfortable act done online to degrade my name is cyberbullying.

*I think cyberbullying is one of the dynamic concepts that involve a number of things. Where someone post my pictures without my concern ... any uncomfortable act done online to degrade my name is cyberbullying.*

The learner participants also had a clear overview of the term cyberbullying even though their description of cyberbullying lacked insight. Their responses failed to highlight the intense side of cyberbullying, which advances to cyber-extortion and other more complex technological attacks. They failed to add arguments about other parties involved including onlookers and their role of merely doing nothing to intervene in cyberbullying incidents or encouraging cyberbullies.

Learner Participant 6:

“It’s a bullying that occurs on social media where learners look down on each other”.

*It's a bullying that occurs on social media where learners look down on each other.*

Learner Participant 1:

"It's a harassment that is done digitally by a person who tries to intimidate others".

*It's a harassment that is done digitally by a person who tries to intimidate others.*

Learner Participant 3:

"It's bullying that occurs when a learner or person who threatened or harassed the victim while they hide behind the screen at times, they use anonymity when doing this".

*It's bullying that occurs when a learner or person who threatened or harassed the victim while they hide behind the screen at times, they use anonymity when doing this.*

The recorded views from all stakeholder's highlight that they have an idea of cyberbullying but still need more information to understand how it manifests. Their general responses lacked insight into preventing this form of bullying. The implementation of the cyberbullying policy and training of stakeholders on the policy is urgently required.

#### **5.7.4 Theme 4: School's Response to cyberbullying**

In this theme, the researcher wanted to test the school's cyberbullying response or assess how the Secondary School previously responded to or dealt with cyberbullying cases. The findings looked at the kind of support that the school offered to cyberbully victims who were roasted on the School's Facebook roast page. Parent participants mentioned they did not know the school's cyberbullying response. Parent Participant 5 presented her dissatisfaction with the school. She criticised the school's approach to dealing with cyberbullying, referring to how insensitive the school was in dealing with her daughter's cyberbullying case who was cyberbullied by a male learner.

Parent Participant 2:

"I did experience a problem of cyberbullying with my child. I met with teachers but till today I am unhappy with how the school handled it. I am of the view, the bully who bullied my daughter is still bullying others even today. His parents were never notified. There was no sense of urgency on the side of the school about the matter as if I'm being dramatic".

*I have had a cyberbullying experience that was not resolved. The school failed me and my daughter, the way it was handled was unsatisfactory.*

Parent Participants 3 and 6 indicated they did not know how the school handled cyberbullying. They reasoned that there had not been any communication in that regard but they believed

maybe the school silently deals with the matter with affected individuals. They highlighted that the school had no anti-cyberbullying strategy and no guideline or programme to deal with cyberbullying when it occurred. Teacher participants attested to this by highlighting the involvement of the school's governing body in dealing with general discipline matters and bullying, adding that cyberbullying is not handled because the committee was not trained to handle this form of bullying.

Teacher Participant Mr Black:

"We have discipline committee that deals with bullying and other discipline issues not cyberbullying. Cyberbullying victims don't come forward; it doesn't get officially reported".

*We have a discipline committee that deals with bullying and other discipline issues not cyberbullying. Cyberbullying victims don't come forward; it doesn't get officially reported.*

Teacher Participant Mr Grey similarly shared his frustration that there was no programme and guidelines in place for teachers on how to deal with cyberbullying. He mentioned that this has challenged teachers when dealing with reported cyberbullying cases. Known implementation of policy or training on handling the phenomenon has been a major drawback for the school.

Teacher Participant Ms Pink shared the difficulty for both teacher victims and learners in dealing with cyberbullying as there was no official help offered by the school to all those victims of the Facebook roast page. She mentioned that the cyberbullies would share even teachers' private intimate information, which killed a lot of teacher confidence and coping was hard. As she had become a victim of the school's roast page herself and she had been depressed; she did not get any help or counselling. She had had to adapt or die; her choice had been to adapt and it eased with time.

The findings from learner participants also reiterated the same point that the lack of anti-bullying programmes which included training and creating awareness for all stakeholders was a big problem at the school. Learner participants reiterated that the school did not take cyberbullying offences seriously but maintained the notion that it was teenagers growing up, while victims suffered a huge psychological trauma from the ordeal.

Learner Participant 3:

"The principal warned about the roast page at the assembly and warned people to stop roasting others online. The roast page started as a joke and it ended very badly".

*The principal warned about the roast page at the assembly and warned people to stop roasting others online. The roast page started as a joke and it ended very badly.*

Learner Participants 2 and 3 shared how traumatic it was to deal with the aftermath of being

roasted on the school's Facebook roast page, a page that was created by the schools cyberbullies. The two learners mentioned that they had never reported the ordeal at home in fear of judgement. Learner Participant 3 said that when sexual-related attacks happened in South Africa, authorities and the community at large asked what you were wearing, instead of dealing with the offence. This reason made them die silently.

Learner Participant 4:

"I was roasted and never got help. This pain and hurt I suffered tampered with my self-esteem and it goes with me wherever I go. It will forever live on; it's like a stain. I did not tell them at home. It's tough being a girl in the black culture".

*I was roasted and never received help. This pain and hurt I suffered tampered with my self-esteem and I carry this wherever I go. It will forever live on; it's like a stain. I did not tell them at home. It's tough being a girl in the black culture.*

Learner Participant 5 added that she had also been roasted on the school's Facebook page by learners who did not approve of her leadership as a female president. She mentioned that the sad part was that online bullying stays with you wherever you go; people who saw it always refer to you as 'that girl'. She mentioned that overcoming cyberbullying was hard; she had to mentally overcome the ordeal or stay depressed. As a leader she had to soldier on; she understood that leadership was not for the fainthearted. The school still lags in its cyberbullying response; they have no active solution to dealing with cyberbullying.

The school's previous cyberbullying victims mentioned that they did not receive any help. Younger victims (learners) felt that the cyberbullying problem was not taken seriously by the school. Other stakeholders, teachers, shared that they had not been equipped to monitor cyberbullying and their handling of previous cyberbullying had not been good. The implementation of a cyberbullying policy and the launching of an anti-cyberbullying strategy are active ways of dealing with cyberbullying.

#### *5.7.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Peer-to-peer counselling*

This theme presented a new direction which could serve as a solution to cyberbullying but be a big disaster if not managed and monitored well. Most stakeholders supported peer-to-peer counselling as a progressive way to deal with cyberbullying. Peer-to-peer led programmes include trained young people who serve at the forefront of school-led anti-cyberbullying campaigns, where young people reach out to their peers for help before adult involvement as a method to encourage victims to come forward and report cyberbullying.

In some cases, victims prefer to be assisted anonymously without records written down as evidence. Participants believed that peer-to-peer counselling could bridge the age gap and help in dealing with cyberbullying; victims could still be assisted even if they were ashamed to come forward. Parent Participant 2 welcomed the idea of peer-to-peer counselling, stating it would help those learners with strict parents or who had parents with busy challenging jobs who were never home to be able to get help or have someone to talk to about matters of the youth, not only bullying and cyberbullying.

Parent Participant 7:

‘The truth is, it’s not that easy to talk. Peer-to-peer will help kids. I think they might be free to talk; some might not be free to talk to us parents’.

*The truth is, it’s not that easy to talk. Peer-to-peer will help kids. I think they might be free to talk; some might not be free to talk to us parents.*

Parent Participant 8 also believed peer-to-peer counselling could assist learners with strict parents but also warned that parents should also learn to be approachable to their children so they were able to ask them for help. The teachers also shared similar views to the parent participants’ views on the idea of peer-to-peer counselling. They are of the view that trained young peer counsellors would help more children come forward to report cyberbullying cases.

Teacher Participant Mr Grey:

“I think peer-to-peer is a good thing; it will encourage victims to come forward. Younger persons will feel free to confess to another younger person than to adults”.

*I think peer-to-peer is a good thing; it will encourage victims to come forward. Younger persons will feel free to confess to another younger person than to adults.*

Teacher Participant Ms Pink:

“I think peer-to-peer could work. If people can be nicer and learn spirit of ubuntu, it can work, not only to teenagers but society at large. People need to learn kindness again as adults to face the same cyberbullying problem”.

*I think peer-to-peer could work. If people can be nicer and learn spirit of ubuntu, it can work, not only to teenagers but society at large. People need to learn kindness again as adults to face the same cyberbullying problem.*

Teacher Participant Ms White shared a different view on the idea of peer-to-peer counselling

and highlighted the lack of maturity of young counsellors as a hindrance to the success of a peer-to-peer campaign. She stated that young people would fail to adhere to confidentiality clauses and joke about sensitive issues.

Teacher Participant Mr Black said:

“From my personal experience, trust could be a problem when a peer is the one handling your cyberbullying case. Some young people will not feel comfortable to confide to other young people. In my view, peer-to-peer is a recipe for disaster”.

*From my personal experience, trust could be a problem when a peer is the one handling your cyberbullying case. Some young people will not feel comfortable to confide to other young people. In my view, peer-to-peer is a recipe for disaster.*

The learner participants also showed mixed feelings on the idea of peer-to-peer counselling. Participants shared the view that the integration of peer-to-peer counselling in the school’s anti-bullying programme would encourage more victims to come forward.

Learner Participant 7:

“Most of us fail to speak to our parents; a peer will not judge or shout at you”.

*Most of us fail to speak to our parents; a peer will not judge or shout at you.*

Learner Participant 3 also stated that she believed peer-to-peer counselling could be a good idea as some learners did not feel comfortable talking about those things to older people or parents. But young counsellors, too, need to have respect before victims can trust them. Learner Participant 6 also shared a view against peer-to-peer counselling, stating she believed peer-to-peer counselling was a bad idea as learners were full of games and mockery and added she preferred to talk to an adult, not a peer. Peer-to-peer counselling has good and bad sides. If handled professionally with the necessary training and support, young counsellors and adults can work together for the greater good. Another highlighted fact is that if peer-to-peer counselling is not well supervised it will cause even greater damage.

### **5.7.5 Theme 5: Trust and the reaction to online sex tapes**

This theme tested trust and the reaction to an online sex tape among the stakeholders of the school system (learners, teachers and parents). The failure to report cyberbullying is usually associated with the type of messages that are exchanged between the bully and victims, some of which include sexting, which makes it difficult for the victim to ask for help from parents or adults because these messages will reveal the role they played before the bullying occurred.



The findings from the parent interviews highlighted that there was no trust between learners and adults. It further highlighted that learners lack honesty or pretend when they deal with their parents. Parent participants were of the view that their relationships with their teenage sons and daughters were very close and that if they faced cyberbullying, they would easily confide in them but the learner interviews disputed this fact. Parent Participant 8 believed she and her daughter were very close; they had a very intimate relationship, with nothing separating them. If her child faced cyberbullying, she would come straight to her for help. She also stated she would report cyberbullying as an adult if she were to be cyberbullied; she would never give in to the bully's blackmail.

Parent Participant 2:

"Cyberbullying is not easy. I have once intervened on my daughter's cyberbullying at school. I spoke to both kids and resolved it privately without the school involvement. Talking and asking for help is the only way to deal with cyberbullying".

*Cyberbullying is not easy. I have once intervened on my daughter's cyberbullying at school. I spoke to both kids and resolved it privately without the school involvement. Talking and asking for help is the only way to deal with cyberbullying.*

Parent Participant 4 highlighted speaking out as a solution and a way to regain control from the bully. She also indicated an understanding of online safety protocols, such as blocking and firewalls, would definitely help in dealing with cyberbullying. Parent Participant 4 also highlighted that she would seek help if, as an adult, she faced cyberbullying because once the bully starts to bully you, as a victim, do not have control. She highlighted that seeking help was the only solution. The findings also tested the parent's reaction to cyberbullying sex tapes and how they would react if their children were in a cyberbullying sex tape. The findings stated blame as the reason children did not come forward for help from their parents or teachers.

Parent Participant 4:

"I will be angry if I see her sex tape. We will be disappointed and angry but it will be the time she needs us most; we will support her".

*I will be angry if I see her sex tape. We will be disappointed and angry but it will be the time she needs us most; we will have to support her.*

Parent Participant 8:

"I don't know how my reaction will be like; hyo, I will be sad and disappointed to see my daughter in a sex tape".

*I don't know how my reaction will be like; hyyo, I will be sad and disappointed to see my daughter in a sex tape.*

Parent Participant 2, laughing as she responded, mentioned that her laid-back personality would help her not to make an already bad situation worse. Despite her calm demeanour she mentioned that she would be devastated and disappointed in her daughter for allowing herself to be in that compromising position as if she had not been raised well. Another group of stakeholders, the teacher participants, also responded on the level of trust between them and learners and what they would do if they faced a cyberbullying incident. Some of the teachers in this school had been cyberbullied on the school's Facebook roast page that had been created by cyberbullies. The teachers all responded that they would seek help if cyberbullied.

Teacher Participant Ms Brown:

*"Every action has consequences; I will own up to my actions if then I'm in a sex tape. I will not give the bully power. I will talk and seek for help immediately".*

*Every action has consequences; I will own up to my actions if then I'm in a sex tape. I will not give the bully power. I will talk and seek for help immediately.*

Adult participants in both the parent and teacher groups highlighted that they did not take kindly to blackmail and that they would seek help immediately if they faced cyberbullying or cyber-extortion even if the incident showcased them in a compromising position. They all vowed to be compassionate and supportive but all refused to offer the same kind of support if the tables were turned – if their romantic partners were the ones involved in a sex tape.

Parents mentioned they would support their children despite the shame of the incident in online sex tapes. Teachers attested to the same but highlighted that forgiveness only goes to minors not adults; their sexual partners would not be supported or forgiven if they had been involved in an online sex tape.

Teacher Participant Ms Pink:

*"I will support a child or learner but not my partner. I will be mad as hell and ask what you were thinking. Imagine the shame, being labelled "Ag shame, look at the wife of a cheater". I'm afraid it will be end of the road for me and my partner, sorry".*

*I will support a child or learner but not my partner. I will be mad as hell and ask what you were thinking. Imagine the shame, being labelled "Ag shame, look at the wife of a cheater". I'm afraid it will be end of the road for me and my partner, sorry.*

Teacher Participant Ms Brown:

“I will say what the f\*ck, bro’. I can support a minor not a grown-ass man, hell no”.

*I will say what the f\*ck, bro’. I can support a minor not a grown-ass man, hell no.*

Teacher Participant Mr Grey:

“If it’s my child or a learner faces sexting, I will be there for them but not my partner. As an adult, I expect her to lead a principled life, failing which I will help her pack her belongings. Simple as that, no forgiveness”.

*If it’s my child or a learner faces sexting, I will be there for them but not my partner. As an adult, I expect her to lead a principled life, failing which I will help her pack her belongings. Simple as that, no forgiveness.*

Teacher Participant Ms White also highlighted that hell would break lose if her partner was in a sex tape. She indicated that she can be lenient to a child or a learner but not to her romantic partner. In these stakeholder groups, the responses highlighted why statistics present high levels of suicide for adults: societal expectations and shame are the reason they end their lives.

Younger participants alluded to the same fact that judgement is the reason victims end their lives after cyberbullying.

Learner Participant 2:

“Judgement is bad from our parents if you are a girl child. I was cyberbullied. I never reported it at home. I thought about suicide but my friend’s support is the reason I’m alive. Sometimes our parents set pressure by making us fulfil their unaccomplished dreams”.

*Judgement is bad from our parents if you are a girl child. I was cyberbullied. I never reported it at home. I thought about suicide but my friend’s support is the reason I’m alive. Sometimes our parents set pressure by making us fulfil their unaccomplished dreams.*

Learner Participant 8:

“Yes, I will talk if I’m cyberbullied. But I can’t tell my mom if my sex tape is circulating. I will only trust my friend, not an adult ... sorry. I won’t kill myself though”.

*Yes, I will talk if I’m cyberbullied. But I can’t tell my mom if my sex tape is circulating. I will only trust my friend, not an adult ... sorry. I won’t kill myself though.*

Responses from learner participants highlighted their lack of trust in adults and stipulated judgement as the key reason cyberbullying victims suffer in silence. One learner participant highlighted suicide as their option to escape shame from an online sex tape.

Learner Participant 1:

“If I could be cyberbullied, I would tell my mother first. Mom and I, we close. But if it’s a sex tape. Hyo, I would explode or commit suicide. I can’t face that kind of judgement”.

*If I could be cyberbullied, I would tell my mother first. Mom and I, we close. But if it’s a sex tape. Hyo, I would explode or commit suicide. I can’t face that kind of judgement.*

Learner Participant 7:

“It will depend how intense is the bullying but I won’t tell my mom. If it’s a sex tape, I’m going to tell my friend, then my friend will tell my mom”.

*It will depend how intense is the bullying but I won’t tell my mom. If it’s a sex tape, I’m going to tell my friend, then my friend will tell my mom.*

The responses from adult participants gave a clue why victims commit suicide and another learner participant mentioned judgement and shame as the reasons she would commit suicide if she had been embroiled in an online sex tape. Other learner participants mentioned they would not tell parents at home; they would fight the online sex tape all alone without family involvement. This theme highlighted the lack of trust between parents and their children. The irony was that parents thought they had a close relationship with their children but the children highlighted that they would not go to their parents for help. Children mentioned that they behave for keeping the peace; there was no way they would approach their parents for help during the circulation of an online sex tape.

Another female participant who was a victim of roasting on the school’s Facebook page mentioned that she had dealt with the cyberbullying incident alone. The parent of the same learner did not know until after taking part in the interviews that her child was once involved in a sexting incident on the school’s Facebook roast page.

There is no trust between learners and adult stakeholders during a cyberbullying incident; learners would not go to adults for help. Adults mentioned that they would be understanding and compassionate when learners were cyberbullied but highlighted that their romantic partners would be kicked while they were down for bringing shame and judgement to the family. This theme highlights that there is a lot of work for the DBE. They need to launch cyberbullying campaigns for stakeholders urgently because cyberbullying does not discriminate. Whether one is young or old, mistakes can be made.

#### *5.7.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Emotional connectivity*

This theme tested emotional connectivity. The idea was to establish how connected learners were with adult participants, especially their parents. For one to be able to discuss adolescent issues and matters of the heart, the literature highlights emotional connectivity as a way for

youth and adults to ensure they have a bond where they can discuss intimate issues or relate at that level without judgement. In the African culture from ancient times, most parents raised their children by creating boundaries between them and their children. These boundaries worked to sustain order in many homes but also created an emotional gap which resulted in a lack of communication. The parents' responses on this theme highlighted that they did not discuss intimacy or dating issues with their children, stating that their children were still young. Not in so many words, their responses highlighted that there was no emotional connectivity between them and their children.

Parent Participant 7 said they had not arrived at the stage to discuss boys as a family; their daughter was still very young so the subject of sex or intimacy was not relevant yet. Discussing that particular subject at this time would be premature; she was only 16 years old. Another participant, Parent Participant 6 said that she had developed a friendship with her three girls.

They discussed intimacy and dating issues even though they had not yet come forward about whether they were dating or not. She stated that her girls knew she was quite flexible and understanding. She said she conducted sex talks and dating stories so that when it was time to date, they would seek guidance from her instead of repeating the mistakes she made as a youth.

Parent Participant 3:

"I can't lie ... she told me she is not ready to have boyfriends or discuss them with me. I know she is lying; I can see she is already dating".

*I cannot lie ... she has told me; she is not ready to have boyfriends or discuss them with me. I know she is lying; I can see she is already dating.*

Parent Participant 8:

"We have not gotten to the stage of talking about boys. She told me she will tell us when she has a boyfriend".

*We have not gotten to the stage of talking about boys. She told me she will tell us when she has a boyfriend.*

The responses from the parent participants highlighted a relational gap and a lack of emotional connectivity between adults and children. In the previous theme when the researcher tested trust, learner's highlighted judgement and cultural expectation as the reasons they could not confide in their parents when facing an extreme cyberbullying case such as a sex tape.

Teachers also shared their views on how they relate with learners emotionally. Teacher

Participant Mr Black laughs while explaining that they did have a strong relationship with learners. They did come to teachers with relationship problems. However, as teachers, they also stood their ground and warned them against dating early and other ill-discipline issues.

Teacher Participant Ms White:

“Our job as teachers is to offer co-parenting so we draw the line by not playing a role of parents, even when advising on intimate issues”.

*Our job as teachers is to offer co-parenting so we need to draw the line by not playing a role of a parent, even when advising on intimate issues.*

Teacher Participant Ms Pink:

“Personally, I have had lot of instances where I find girls talk about sex. I try not be a parent, be a sister to help”.

*Personally, I have had lot of instances where I find girls talk about sex. I try not be a parent, be a sister to help.*

Learner participants also responded to emotional connectivity with older stakeholders (teachers and parents) and highlighted that they had healthier relationships with teachers than their parents. Learner Participant 7 mentioned yelling as a reason she does not emotionally connect with her parents. These responses highlight a danger zone: in an extreme cyberbullying incident, these learners will not approach their parents for help.

Another participant in the previous theme mentioned suicide as her only escape if she were to be embroiled in a sex tape.

Learner Participant 6:

“I can speak to my teacher not my parents about such issues of love and sex; they are very judgemental”.

*I can speak to my teacher about love and sex not my parents; they are very judgemental.*

Learner Participant 7 reiterated that they were unable to discuss intimate issues with their parents; she felt they did not have that type of relationship but she could maybe try with her father but not with her mother. She mentioned the reason for this: she knew her mother’s take on relationships and her expectations of her as her first daughter; all of these highlighted issues made it impossible to have any talk about intimacy issues with her mother.

Learner Participant 8:

“I am able to connect emotionally with my teacher but I cannot do the same with my parents; they are judgemental and yell a lot even on simple issues”.

*I am able to connect emotionally with my teacher but I cannot do the same with my parents; they are judgemental and yell a lot even on simple issues.*

The responses on emotional connectivity highlighted a lack of collaboration and an age gap which becomes a factor; younger participants do not trust older stakeholders for fear of judgement. A lack of emotional connectivity between stakeholders, especially between parents and learners is highlighted. Even the emotional connectivity between learners and teachers was not strong enough to help a suicidal learner experiencing a lot of cyberbullying pressure.

### **5.7.6 Theme 6: Social media influence in school and families**

This theme was aimed at testing the positive and negative influence brought about by internet usage and social media applications in the lives of stakeholders at school and work and on the family front. Responses from parent participants highlighted their understanding of social media and awareness of the dangers associated with social media which highlighted the positive impact social media applications have brought in their everyday communication.

As Parent Participant 5 put it, social media was when one used online applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram; she alluded that she used social media to communicate cheaper with the children and free Wi-Fi in the township or school makes communication more cost-effective.

Parent Participant 2:

“Social media includes use of online applications like WhatsApp and Facebook but when used careless, it becomes very risky. I worried for the kids”.

*Social media includes use of online applications like WhatsApp and Facebook but when used careless, it becomes very risky. I worried for the kids.*

Parent Participant 6 defined social media as an online communication platform that one could use for fun, business and pleasure. She said that it made communication easy, especially the WhatsApp application. Teacher participants shared their understanding of the term social media platforms and shared how social media had enhanced teaching even more during the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown where learners had to attend in shifts to avoid overcrowding.

Teacher Participant Ms White:

“Social media is a platform to socialise with other people online. I am on Facebook,

WhatsApp, Twitter and LinkedIn. We are all on social media as teachers. It's definitely good for teaching".

*Social media is a platform to socialise with other people online. I am on Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and LinkedIn. We are all on social media as teachers. It's definitely good for teaching.*

Teacher Participant Ms Green believed that social media influence had been very good for schooling. Applications such as WhatsApp helped improve teaching during lockdown; through WhatsApp, teachers were able to liaise with learners at home who were attending the next shift.

During the time of data collection, Ms Green highlighted that the same method was still in place as COVID-19 protocols prohibited normal learner attendance. Teacher Participant Ms Pink also mentioned that social media had made communication easy at school for teaching, general announcements and on a personal front.

Teacher Participant Mr Black:

"Social media is good for communication today, both work and personal. As teachers, we have WhatsApp groups aimed at enhancing teaching and communication with learners".

*Social media is good for communication today for both work and personal. As teachers, we have WhatsApp groups aimed at enhancing teaching and communication with learners.*

Learner participants were the stakeholder group that spoke highly of social media stating its convenience for one to respond in real-time or at a later stage. They mentioned the added features such as Messenger on Facebook that enable one to make calls, video calls and voice recordings.

One can use Messenger and Facebook without data. Instagram and TikTok applications are also voice-call enabled; all these applications made everyone able to go live.

Learner Participant 8:

"Social media is an online platform that help spread information on personal and business level; it opens opportunities and makes learning very exciting due to available online learning research".

*Social media is an online platform that help spread information on personal and business level; it opens opportunities and makes learning very exciting due to available online learning research.*



Learner Participant 2 added that social media platforms were technologically enabled; they linked people to communicate globally. They were able to link people with common interests and strangers regardless of where they resided. Learner Participant 7 reiterated positive views from other learners about social media's good attributes but also hinted at the negatives. On social media there were risks and dangers and one could be taken advantage of by strangers or people they meet on social media.

She added that she had withdrawn her social media usage due to toxic people online. She concluded by highlighting the security features of social media that enabled one to block toxic people who were harassing others online. All stakeholders have accepted the positivity that social media brings in communication on the school and home front. They also highlighted the dangers associated with technological usage that requires users to be equipped with internet ethos knowledge.

#### *5.7.6.1 Sub-theme 6.1: Online hook-ups and direct messages*

In this sub-theme, the researcher wanted to examine stakeholder views on finding friendships and love online. These activities ultimately start with DMs or private messaging, an option allowed by many online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Tiktok. The line of questioning in this sub-theme established how participants formulated their relationships – online or traditionally.

Some stakeholder participants mentioned the crucial benefits of online platforms, including looking for opportunities, school research and sharing of information. However, in this technology-inclined society, people can lead two lives: real life and life in pictures (fake) with the notion of 'fake it until you make it'. Some of these people are called influencers; they represent the good life to which many young people aspire. Verifying the legitimacy of these online opportunities becomes very difficult for most adults (parents and teachers); the digital divide highlighted by the 2012 School Safety Programme makes them key targets for cybercrime.

Parent Participants 5 and 6 highlighted that although they were very active on social media, they entertained DMs with caution. Parent Participant 1, who participated with her husband, mentioned that they were not tech-savvy; they used old phones – the ones that came before smartphones for communication. Their form of communication is SMSs and calls.

Parent Participant 5:

"I am on social media. I use Facebook and WhatsApp. I don't entertain people who

become forward with me on my inbox or DM but I do respond to a simple 'hi'; when they start getting familiar with me ignore them. Well, I have never done a hook-up online. I'm in my early forties but I never done it. I can't lie. I have heard about the word catfishing but let me think ... No, I don't remember where and I don't want to try and embarrass myself. Let's move to next question".

*I am on social media. I use Facebook and WhatsApp. I don't entertain people who become forward with me on my inbox or DM but I do respond to a simple 'hi'; when they start getting familiar with me ignore them. Well, I have never done a hook-up online. I'm in my early forties but I never done it. I can't lie. I have heard about the word catfishing but let me think ... No, I don't remember where and I don't want to try and embarrass myself. Let's move to next question.*

Parent Participant 3, while laughing, mentioned that she entertained private messages on her online platforms stating that she responded to people she knew and that there was nothing wrong with her entertaining DMs (private messaging) because she was young at heart. Parent Participant 3 mentioned that she used Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp online applications. Parent Participant 3 also explained that catfishing was when someone hooked another online under a false identity, including even using someone else's pictures.

Parent Participant 6:

"As you can see, we are old people. We not on social media; we don't check school announcements in their Facebook page. We don't use social media or WhatsApp in our phones. We use SMSs when we communicate. We are not clued up with technology and internet. But we think technology is good if youth use is properly. No, I don't know what catfishing is".

*As you can see, we are old people. We are not on social media; we do not check school announcements in their Facebook page. We do not use social media or WhatsApp in our phones. We use SMSs when we communicate. We are not clued up with technology and internet. But we think technology is good if youth can use is properly. No, I don't know what catfishing is.*

The researcher moved to teacher participants who were part of the virtual focus group interview to hear their views on online hook-ups and DMs. Teacher Participant Ms Pink highlighted that she kept an open mind when dealing with online platforms. She mentioned that, after seeing her friend losing money through a Facebook hook-up, she did not entertain DMs at all. Teacher Participant Ms White mentioned she was single but not looking to be; be that as it may, she still checks her DMs with caution. She alluded that in her belief men who made moves on Facebook were cowards. Laughing, she also mentioned that she once catfished someone online.

Teacher Participant Ms Purple:

*Lezingane zine gwababa.* They cutting that part of approaching someone face-to-face. Once its online where is the fun in that? I'm against online hook-ups and entertaining.

DMs, if you want me, find me and come face-to-face, make an effort. I'm single but I don't entertain anything online. I am on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp.

*These kids are cowards. They are cutting the part of approaching someone face-to-face. Once its online, where is the fun in that? I'm against online hook-ups and entertaining DMs, if you want me, find me and come face-to-face, make an effort. I'm single but I don't entertain anything online. I am on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp.*

Learners also had a lot to say about online hook-ups and DMs. Social media has driven young people to be less driven about life; everyone wants to be an influencer, singer or socialite. This new trend, which sees everyone thriving to be an influencer, makes them vulnerable online and they later become victims of human trafficking.

Learner Participant Six:

"Every time someone DMs me on Facebook, I check their bio first and check mutual friends that is when I can entertain them. I have done hook-ups and I know what is catfishing; it's when you are approached by someone using illegitimate profile".

*Every time someone DMs me on Facebook, I check their bio first and check mutual friends that is when I can entertain them. I have done hook-ups and I know what is catfishing; it's when you are approached by someone using illegitimate profile.*

Learner Participant 4 mentioned that online hook-ups were the way of dating for the young generation; online offered everything at your fingertips – buying food, transacting online and even looking for a lover online, which is called hook-ups. She alluded that the term 'hook-up' sometimes means sex for money or sexual pleasure, not necessarily a relationship. She mentioned that her attempt at this had ended in tears and she had since withdrawn her Facebook activity because a dreadful person hurt her badly; she added that she had never been catfished in her life.

Learner Participant 8:

"I'm a man, bro' ... I'm a hunter that's where we hunt babes. But strange enough, girls are the ones who DM me but look at me though I'm a fine dude. Who would not DM this face lol ... (he laughs). In some cases, I ignore inboxes though. I don't respond to every DM".

*I'm a man, bro' ... I'm a hunter that's where we hunt babes. But strange enough, girls are the ones who DM me but look at me though I'm a fine dude. Who would not DM this face lol ... (he laughs). In some cases, I ignore inboxes though. I don't respond to every DM.*

Learners entertain DMs and online hook-ups; their responses highlighted that online is how they find love. Older participants, teachers and parents, admitted they entertained DMs but stated they disagreed on hooking up or finding love online. Some older participants in the

parent group did not use smartphones; in other words, they did not understand terms such as DMs, online hook-ups and catfishing.

## 5.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on data interpretation and analysis. The chosen type of data interpretation and analysis was thematic analysis. It was the most suitable way to analyse and interpret data for the qualitative case study research which was the chosen methodology for the study. During the analysis and interpretation, themes were formulated from the research questions. They brought broader insight and presented sub-themes, all of which worked towards answering the research question and sub-questions aligned with the study objectives.

The purpose of this study was to explore and explain the extent of cyberbullying awareness among the stakeholders (learners, teachers and parents) in the school system. The thematic analysis generated themes such as communication campaigns and channels, implementation of the 2012 School Safety Framework and its impact, knowledge gap, school's response to cyberbullying, trust and reaction to the online sex tape and social media influence in schools and families. Sub-themes were the understanding of online safety protocols, understanding of cyberbullying, training and support, computer literacy levels, continuity and diversity of the cyberbullying message, emotional connectivity, peer-to-peer counselling and online hook-ups and DMs. The next chapter is about presenting findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter summarises the empirical findings, tabled with themes and sub themes that are in line with the research aim and objectives of the study and presents the value the study brings to field of communication. Key findings, contributions and limitations are also presented and recommendations are made. In Chapter one, an introduction and background of the study were presented to contextualise the cyberbullying phenomenon and research questions, objectives and underlying assumptions. The next chapter presented in the study was the literature review in which the cyberbullying phenomenon was presented from an international and local perspective.

The key themes discussed were the global state of cyberbullying and legislation, the state of schooling in Africa and South Africa, digital divide, jurisdiction of cyberbullying in South African law and the generation gap in technology usage which aligned with the need for the training of stakeholders on both policy and technological expertise. These concepts in chapter two fuelled a discussion on the training for stakeholder groups to enable them to cope with the technological challenges presented when monitoring cyberbullying.

Chapter two dealt with the first and second objectives of the study which were to explore and describe the level of stakeholder awareness of cyberbullying within the school system and to describe the efficiency of the 2012 School Safety Framework. The third chapter of the study focused on the role of communication in addressing cyberbullying in schools. Concepts such as communication, communication and cyberbullying, the importance of communication in a cyberbullying campaign, the organisational system and stakeholder roles, communication channels and communication effectiveness were unpacked.

This chapter highlighted cyberbullying as a negative type of communication. The presented communication concepts gave a guideline on how a successfully communicated campaign leads to a successful campaign where communicators reach campaign objectives, including product awareness and happy clientele. The fourth chapter presented the methodological orientation. Research design and technical aspects such as population sampling methods, units of analysis, accessible population, data interpretation and analysis and ethical issues were discussed. The fifth chapter presented the results and analysis.

## 6.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

### 6.2.1 Discussion on Theme 1: Communication campaigns and channels

Notar et al. (2013:03) highlight an increase in awareness messages about “technology usage as a remedy in dealing with bullying and cyberbullying to aid parents, educators and psychologists in developing intervention and prevention strategies”. The researcher’s findings on Theme 1 which deals with communication campaigns and channels were that the school had not utilised its communication channels to communicate the message of cyberbullying. Stakeholders were all in the dark on how to handle the cyberbullying phenomenon. At the moment, stakeholders indicated that the message of cyberbullying was communicated to only one set of stakeholders – the learners. Learners agree that they had received a cyberbullying message in an LO class. Even in the learner group, not all participants were clear about receiving the message of cyberbullying in that particular class which means not all learner grades received educational message about cyberbullying.

#### 6.2.1.1 *Discussion on Sub-theme 1.1: Communication and awareness of cyberbullying message*

Latha et al. (2020) argued that exposure to awareness messages heightens one’s knowledge about cyberbullying or promotion. Karni and Vierø (2017) reiterates that promotional messages and awareness messages are efforts towards goodwill where the plan is to influence positive behaviour. Sub-theme 1.1 tested stakeholder awareness on the topic of cyberbullying where existing communication programmes determined how much exposure stakeholders received on the topic. The goal of an awareness campaign is to influence the intended stakeholders to adhere to the campaign brief or output.

One can test whether a message was a success by evaluating the stakeholders’ knowledge on the topic. Rajhans (2018) defines effective communication management as a type of communication that includes employing a successful communication strategy that outlines an action plan of synergised communication messages in a campaign, meaning there must be a plan from execution till the end for the success or effectiveness of the communication message. An organisation’s management style has an impact on the effectiveness of organisational communication regardless of the communication style in place. Some organisations are closed organisations; others utilise the classical management approach where the communication message is driven from a one-way perspective with no opportunity for feedback. This approach is more production-driven than allowing creative flair but such communication messages also

become successful. Angelopulo and Barker (2013) argue that communication channels are motivated by an organisation's management style which pinpoints the communication structure in terms of hierarchy. The stakeholder responses highlighted a minimal knowledge of the topic of cyberbullying due to a lack of existing anti-cyberbullying campaigns and policies. There is a lack of awareness among stakeholders on the topic of cyberbullying from a general overview to specific knowledge about policy contents.

#### *6.2.1.2 Discussion on Sub-theme 1.2: Effectiveness of communication channels about cyberbullying*

The Cybersmile Foundation (2022) states that cyberbullying does not discriminate between rich and poor or young and old. A successful anti-cyberbullying campaign will not only benefit the education sector but the community at large. Such a campaign will also enlighten stakeholders about other cyber-related risks (Gabielli et al. 2021). The point of the argument is that "collaborative efforts and good scholarship to improve understanding of cyberbullying is among effective ways to thwart the cyberbullying problem in the school system" (Chisholm 2014:83). The learners highlighted that the topic of cyberbullying was delivered in the form of literature in an LO class. Existing attempts to address the topic of cyberbullying at the school were deemed ineffective by stakeholders because the school failed to communicate with all stakeholders, including parents and teachers.

#### *6.2.1.3 Discussion on Sub-theme 1.3: Continuity and diversity of the cyberbullying message*

Hills (2017) presents cyberbullying as a continuous form of bullying that crosses time and borders; a victim can be tormented at home, after school or during working hours and even when they are demographically separated from the bully. One of the reasons cyberbullying is more worrying and, in the spotlight, than traditional bullying is due to this continuity. Sub-theme 1.3 focused on continuity and diversity where the researcher tested how frequently the school communicated the message of cyberbullying to the stakeholders and when that message was communicated if it was diverse enough to suit various audiences or stakeholders. For any communication message to be successful, it needs to be consistent and synergised. Communication messages presented in the form of a communication strategy help organisations achieve their intended communication mandate. The cyberbullying message was not continuous at the school; the school had failed to communicate the cyberbullying message due to failing to launch the cyberbullying policy known as the 2012 School Safety Framework.



## **6.2.2 Discussion on Theme 2: Implementation of 2012 School Safety Framework and its impact**

Literature presents the “need for policy analysis” for a new brewing form of bullying for educators, parents, policymakers and legal scholars which manifests as a modern form of bullying known as cyberbullying that, at times, presents as an extension of physical bullying using gadgets (Brown et al. 2006). DQ Impact Report (2018:3) argues that “equipping children with digital skills can minimise harmful side-effects and maximise the opportunities of technology”. All stakeholders reported that a cyberbullying policy had not yet been introduced at the school.

Teachers mentioned that the DBE had not set measures in place to implement and introduce the policy to stakeholders. Currently, stakeholders at the school were exposed to bullying without help or intervention. The school had a Facebook roast page which saw learners and teachers suffering at the hands of cyberbullies. The school had figured out a way to remove the school’s roast page and victims soldiered on to heal from this with no formal programme in place to help them.

The responses presented were alarming to parents who were expected to monitor their children’s devices after school hours without extensive knowledge of internet protocols (Notar et al. 2013:137). Stakeholders were not trained or informed about the 2012 School Safety Framework. This policy had not been implemented at this school. The school had not received formal counselling on dealing with the topic of cyberbullying.

### *6.2.2.1 Discussion on Sub-theme 2.1: Training and support (computer literacy levels)*

Training of stakeholders in proper internet ethos will help minimise the drawbacks associated with the “cyber risks pandemic such as internet addictions, offline meetings and online sexual behaviours” which are after-effects of excessive online activity, especially among young people (DQ Impact Report 2018:3). Lack of training on teachers to utilise technology makes result in poor adoption of digital technology in both learning and cyberbullying (Moodley et al. 2015). With this in mind, training learners on e-safety policies might serve as an active solution to influence passive onlookers who witness cyberbullying cases to assist victims and play an active part in the school’s anti-bullying strategies (Cowie 2013). Davis and Nixon cited in Hinduja and Patchin (2018:104) emphasise that “perpetrators, onlookers and victims are not equipped on dealing with cyberbullying”. That is what happened in the Lufuno Mavhunga traditional bullying incident; onlookers cheered, recorded and posted the video to trend it without considering the victim or the bully (Bhengu 2021a). South Africans who trended the

video thought they were getting justice for Lufuno; they were not aware that sharing that video was breaking the Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020 (South Africa 2021). All of this boils down to a lack of awareness messages about the cyberbullying phenomenon. Research from Cowie (2013) highlights training as an effective method to curb cyberbullying while not necessarily limiting learners' online activities. Controlling cyberbullying becomes complex for teachers because it happens outside the school's perimeter.

The underlying fact is that teachers at times do not have control or are not well equipped to address the phenomenon (Dogan et al. 2021). This sub-theme showed that stakeholders were not trained to monitor learners' online activities and parents and teachers lagged in this. Monitoring learners' gadgets and lacking the proper resources to monitor, learners at home were highlighted as stumbling blocks.

### **6.2.3 Discussion on Theme 3: Knowledge gap and digital divide**

The literature from (McDonough 2015) highlights age-sim as a contributor to digital divide, the term age- sim is use to classify the age gap aligned with knowledge between different age group and a gap in technological knowledge between learners and adults leads to digital divide. The responses from the teacher interview highlighted minimal monitoring and control; teachers exercise control inside the classroom but leave a gap on what happens beyond the classroom – during break time on the playground, on the streets and at home after school (Notar et al. 2013).

Parents and teachers are still trying to leapfrog when it comes to utilising technological resources. This sub-theme touches on the training of these stakeholders as a way forward in dealing with the cyberbullying problem. Without training, parents and teachers will never comprehensively monitor learners who utilise technology as part of their learning curriculum.

#### *6.2.3.1 Discussion on Sub-theme 3.1: Understanding online safety protocols*

Adorjan and Ricciardelli (2018:9) suggest a transparent “parental surveillance through spyware technologies and school-based policies towards technology in the classroom and school-based surveillance of students, as well as cyber safety programs and presentations”. The argument from Adorjan and Ricciardelli (2012) is foreign to the school because a baby crawls before walking. The 2012 School Safety Framework needs to be implemented first. Its implementation will enable the school to have an approach towards communicating the policy and the contents of the policy including online safety protocols such as firewalls. The implementation of and training in the cyberbullying policy and the launch of the school's tailor-

made anti-cyberbullying campaign are imperative to enable all stakeholders to understand the internet ethos.

#### ***6.2.3.2 Discussion on Sub-theme 3.2: Understanding cyberbullying***

Espelage and Hong (2017:374) define cyberbullying as a “wilful and repeated harmful act inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices”. Sub-theme 3.2 tested stakeholders’ understanding of the term cyberbullying. Teachers and learner participants showed a basic understanding of the term but parents’ understanding of the cyberbullying term differed. The younger parents had a basic understanding but the older group of parents did not understand it. The parent responses raised an alarm because by examining a basic overview of their understanding of the term, their copying capabilities were also established to be lacking. It was doubtful whether they could face cyberbullying and support their children who were being cyberbullied or, better yet, whether they could identify them as cyberbullies.

King (2010:848) pinpoints an unpopular view in his journal that many stakeholders will not support, especially those already dealing with the aftermath of cyberbullying in their families. He argues that “the most effective way to deal with cyberbullying is in classrooms, not courtrooms”. Campbell (2005) argues that in events where there are active anti-cyberbullying campaigns, onlookers learn to act by silently reporting cyberbullying; this helps to combat cyberbullying or create awareness on the topic of cyberbullying. Stakeholders understand cyberbullying but their responses lacked insight into cyberbullying prevention measures. The responses of neither young nor old stakeholders highlighted no indication on whether they could survive if faced with this form of attack. The implementation of a cyberbullying policy could reduce the knowledge gap among stakeholders.

#### ***6.2.4 Discussion on Theme 4: School’s response to cyberbullying***

Cowie (2013) highlights training learners on e-safety policies as an active solution to influence passive onlookers who witness cyberbullying cases to assist victims and play an active part in the school’s anti-bullying strategies. The responses from all stakeholder participants highlighted dissatisfaction with how the school had handled previous cyberbullying cases. Teachers shared that they were not well equipped to handle cyberbullying and as a result had made mistakes in the past. The training of stakeholders on proper internet ethos will help minimise the drawbacks associated with “cyber risk pandemics such as internet addictions, offline meetings and online sexual behaviours” which are after-effects of excessive online activity, especially on young people (DQ Impact Report 2018:03).

The school has no response to cyberbullying at this stage. The reason for this is none implementation of the cyberbullying policy and training of stakeholders. Cowie (2013) highlights training as an effective method to curb cyberbullying although not necessarily limiting learners' online activities.

Controlling cyberbullying becomes complex for teachers because it happens outside the school's perimeter. The fact is that teachers at times do not have control or are not well equipped to address the phenomenon (Dogan et al. 2021). The implementation of and training in a cyberbullying policy and the launch of the school's tailor-made anti-cyberbullying campaign are required.

#### *6.2.4.1 Discussion Sub-theme 4.1: Peer-to-peer counselling*

According to Abaido (2019:415) "33% of victims felt that what happened online needed to remain online and not taken out of online platforms, another 19.5% felt that they should just cope with the situation and not make a big deal out of it". These figures from Abaido (2019) highlight a need for peer-to-peer support as a solution or progressive way of dealing with cyberbullying. Even though peer-to-peer influence can bring harmony and trust from those victimised, when not supervised the outcome could deliver chaotic results (Van der Zwaan, Dignum & Jonker 2010).

Peer-to-peer support is a solution to cyberbullying. Cowie (2011) highlights that in some cases, victims prefer to be assisted anonymously without records written down as evidence. Carr (1984) defines peer-to-peer counselling as an initiative that includes the training of peer-to-peer counsellors. The findings on the theme produced divided remarks. Some participants believed peer-to-peer counselling can be employed as a solution to cyberbullying and most participants believed it could bridge the generation gap between adults and young people, especially when addressing sexually related bullying such as sexting. But some participants feared learners were too immature to handle peer-to-peer support groups.

The proper implementation of a cyberbullying policy and anti-cyberbullying programmes need to be the first step before embarking on peer-to-peer campaigns. A peer-to-peer campaign needs to be led by a group of trained stakeholders who are equipped on policy matters and have ideas on how to integrate peer-to-peer counselling into an existing anti-bullying campaign to motivate victims to report bullying.

### ***6.2.5 Discussion on Theme 5: Trust and reaction to online sex tape***

King (2010:846) presents the national crime prevention view that “43 per cent of teen cyberbullying victims are reported as too ashamed or embarrassed to report the incidents to their parents and other authorities”. The teacher responses from the focus group interview partly clarified that embarrassment; shame and fear are among the reasons behind not reporting cyberbullying cases (Aune 2009). In other cases, victims fail to withstand the pressure and take their own lives.

Learner responses highlighted mistrust and they believed that some learners would commit suicide if an extreme cyberbullying incident were to occur (Le Cordeur 2021). Hinduja and Patchin (2018) argue that cyberbullying is not an adolescent problem only; it is an all-around crisis where adults also face online harassment. They mention privacy settings as one of the key things to eliminate online harassment or cyberbullying. In this case, training and support would not only work for the benefit of the school but would also empower all stakeholders because adults too do get cyberbullied.

Reporting when one is cyberbullied is one of the recommendations that national crime prevention has pinpointed as progressive in dealing with the phenomenon (King 2010). Learners have no trust in adults, such as their parents and teachers. They highlighted that they would not come to them for help if embroiled in an online sex tape or were the victims of cyberbullies. To avoid this outcome, adult stakeholders will have to apply compassion and understanding to cyberbullying victims and promote a positive environment that will encourage victims to come for help after being cyberbullied instead of dying inside all alone or better yet committing suicide.

#### ***6.2.5.1 Discussion on Sub-theme 5.1: Emotional connectivity***

Emotional connectivity is defined as the ability of both parents and children to connect beyond the jurisdiction of their parent-to-child barriers. Literature highlights a “successful emotional communication as crucial for social interactions and social relationships” (Yuvaraj et al. 2016).

Such a relationship should enable both parents and their children to be in a position to communicate and share more emotions where they have a healthy relationship that goes beyond what is culturally accepted or not without judgement. This point of a lack of emotional connectivity highlights the dangers of a cyberbullying case that happens through sexting, where the victim might have hooked up online with the bully and started an intimate relationship through sexting, sending nude pictures or even producing a sex tape with someone. Siegle (2010) highlight girls as predominant victims of sexting. The emotional

connectivity between learners and adult participants might encourage learners to come forward during a cyberbullying situation but lack of emotional connectivity pushes learners away, leaving them to handle the matter alone; the severity of the situation might drive them to commit suicide.

Childnet International (2016) pinpoints filming or taking photos of people without consent and posting them online as a growing trend which is a cyberbullying offence. The most circulated social media videos on the internet are those taken by onlookers who watch and do not interfere in physical abuse and violence, with the aim of naming and shaming. Some capture these videos for amusement to post on their social media pages to gain likes and following or have the video trend under their names.

In line with the subtheme of emotional connectivity a topic of online courtship was discussed where it was defined as the new way to acquire love for all age groups, according to the Pew Research Centre “three-in-ten Americans have used a dating site or app; 12% have married or been in a committed relationship with someone they met through online dating” (Anderson, Vogels & Turner 2020). Despite online dating presenting as a new norm across the globe, there is no emotional connectivity between adults and young people and that makes it impossible for children to come to their parents and teachers for help when cyberbullied was a result of online dating in fear of judgement.

#### ***6.2.6 Discussion on Theme 6: Social media influence in school and families***

The New Wave Report (2012) highlights the proliferation of internet usage in South Africa among teens as a major problem with 20% of internet users presented as people living below the poverty line, one in two being female, which suggests internet usage as a way of life. The responses from the study participants presented that social media had a positive influence on families and the school system.

The internet and social media usage in teaching became a lifesaver for learning globally during the COVID-19 pandemic. Be that as it may, digital divide was presented as a problem for the South African education system in tertiary education, high schools and primary schools during COVID-19 because of the lack of technological resources for teaching (Zalat, Hamed & Bolbol 2021). Some lecturers at South African universities had to contribute from their own pockets to assist their learners with technological resources such as laptops and data to continue learning (Reimers et al. 2020). The same assistance was not offered in secondary schools and primary schools, especially in schools situated in rural areas that lack technological infrastructure. ICT schools such as the selected school for the study were able

to continue learning successfully due to the technological infrastructure at the school where learners have laptops, tablets and free Wi-Fi. The same cannot be said for other non-fee-paying schools in the same area that have no computer libraries or technological infrastructure. Contrary to the opportunities available, there is a dark side to the use of technology where “social media platforms have become young people’s source to perpetrate online violence” (Patton et al. 2014:01). The MMA SA Mobile report (Mobile Marketing Association 2015) depicts internet usage as a non-socioeconomic challenge; a family’s LSM has no bearing on internet usage and affordability.

Damota (2019) highlights boredom as one of the key things that expose young people to social media dangers such as cyberbullying and other online addictions where their prolonged consumption of online content due to boredom makes them privy to online bullying and other mischiefs; in some cases, this happens as a result of peer pressure. Social media has had a big influence on stakeholders’ general communication at home and the teaching curriculum at school. This point highlights the exacerbated exposure of stakeholders to online harm and a great need to equip stakeholders with cyberbullying policies and prevention programmes.

#### *6.2.6.1 Discussion on Sub-theme 6.1: Online hook-ups and direct messages*

Whitty and Buchanan (2012:1) define an “online romance scam as a relatively new form of fraud that became apparent in about 2008, in this crime, criminals pretend to initiate a relationship through online dating sites and then defraud their victims of large sums of money”. Nyam (2020:188) define online dating scam/fraud as a “form of financial extortion carried out by individuals or organised groups using romance strategies to lure their victims via online dating sites”. The existing social networking applications like Facebook, WhatsApp and Skype can be used for online romance scams. Thousands of people today have been scammed by influencers on Instagram and TikTok who pose as brand ambassadors and the public later realises it was all a scam (Stahl, Haas & Schröder 2019).

An article on the BBC website by Okpattah (2021) reveals that some influencers are paid by big syndicates to influence the public into buying brands or participating in money-making scams, where personal information could be sold on the dark web. This threat does not only target young people; adults, who are defined as less tech-savvy, later become victims of online cyberbullying (Delete cyberbullying 2021). Adults are the target market and have been scammed of their valuable assets (Okpattah 2021). The term online dating is referred “as internet dating, which refers to an act of using dating sites to find a romantic partner” (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis & Sprecher 2012:04). Sarratt (2012:04) defines Facebook dating as the “newest method for courtship better than traditional courtship”. The researcher collected

literature that explains the repercussions of online hook-ups and DMs which lead to online romance; naïve individuals could become embroiled in online romance scams. According to research, women have become victims of this type of crime. Older stakeholders reported a high awareness of the dangers of online hook-ups and highlighted that they entertain DMs with caution.

Learner participants reported they are the target market for online hook-ups and that that was how they formed their romantic relationships. Their responses proved that the younger generation has transitioned from traditional means of finding love partners to online platforms. Learner responses highlighted that it was easy to find love online and that they had done it many times. This highlights a greater need for them to be equipped with online safety protocols. Contrary to the responses from the younger participants, adults' responses showed that they still carried the stigma that is attached to pursuing love online.

Society regards those pursuing love online as being desperate. Most participants indicated knowledge of catfishing. The world has changed and people find love online through online hook-ups that come through DMs when one is online. Some have gone to the length of finding love through online dating applications. The school needs anti-bullying strategies to curb online e-romance fraud which is perpetrated through utilising DMs and private messaging. Understanding online Safety protocols will assist those who pursue love online.

### 6.3 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the study was to explore and describe the extent of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders within the school system. The goal of the study was achieved through the following objectives:

Main Research Objective:

- To explore and describe the extent of stakeholder awareness of cyberbullying within the school system.
- To describe the efficiency of the 2012 School Safety Framework among stakeholders.
- To evaluate the stakeholder's trust in the school's approach to cyberbullying.
- To determine the school's response to cyberbullying.



## 6.4 REFLECTION ON RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND ACHIEVEMENT

The main research objective was to explore and describe the extent of stakeholder awareness of cyberbullying within the school system. This objective was addressed in Chapter two where the researcher conceptualised topics such as the digital divide, the state of schooling in Africa and South Africa and the legislation of cyberbullying in South Africa and the world. Communication channels and campaigns were linked with sub-themes such as cyberbullying awareness, continuity and diversity. This objective was met; the school has no cyberbullying campaigns and participants highlighted that there was no action plan in terms of dealing with cyberbullying.

The message of cyberbullying is always communicated on a reactionary basis such as after a trending cyberbullying video on the internet. There is no continuous or diverse message for stakeholders. The school has communication channels such as an SMS system, WhatsApp and Facebook page but these communication channels have not been utilised to promote the cyberbullying message or to create awareness about cyberbullying. The concepts that presented the state of schooling and history behind inequalities in education which present as the digital divide highlighted the digital divide as a challenge for stakeholders in today's technology-driven learning environments. The COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa, which involved a national lockdown, exposed the inequalities in the education system and most under-resourced schools failed to implement online classes.

An individual's socioeconomic status in South Africa prescribes the type of education that they receive. The literature unpacked the knowledge gap as one of the key contributions to the digital divide with stakeholders not on the same page when it came to issues of cyberbullying and online safety. Digital divide, discussion overlapped to knowledge gap where various age groups and their exposure to technology is not the same regardless of the adult's socioeconomic status. The literature presented young people as more tech-savvy which makes it very difficult for parents and teachers to monitor learners' technological devices. The second objective was to describe the efficiency of the 2012 School Safety Framework among stakeholders. This objective talks about existing policies in place to manage bullying and cyberbullying in Gauteng, South Africa and the world.

The literature presented a high prevalence of cyberbullying in South Africa and revealed that limited research had been undertaken on the topic. The implementation or none implementation of a cyberbullying policy and its impact theme merged with the sub-theme about the training of stakeholders on computer usage and relevant policies. The lack of computer training was another drawback that was highlighted by teachers and learners.

Due to their level of literacy on computers, they are not knowledgeable on using some online applications. They mentioned that despite being an ICT school, stakeholders lacked computer training. They were not trained to use technological devices. This objective was not met because it was discovered that the 2012 School Safety Framework had not been officially introduced to the stakeholders of the school. The school had not received this policy although the policy had been introduced ten years ago.

Responses from all stakeholders highlighted that training on the 2012 School Safety Framework was yet to be conducted by the DBE at this School. The responses from participants highlighted that the 2012 School Safety Framework was inactive and not able to assist the school system which meant that this policy had no impact on the school at the time. Participants mentioned that they had only learned about the 2012 Safety Framework during their preparation for interviews after receiving the moderator guides.

The third objective was to evaluate the stakeholder's trust in the school's approach to dealing with cyberbullying. This objective was discussed in Chapter Three. The interviews revealed that stakeholders, including teachers, had no trust or faith in the methods that the school had utilised in handling cyberbullying cases. Learner participants highlighted judgement as the main reason they do not report to their parents when facing cyberbullying. Parent participants were of the view that they had positive relationships with their children. The high suicide figures of cyberbullying statistics highlight the opposite. Learners mentioned that they fear judgement and shouting from their parents during a tragic cyberbullying incident; they mentioned that they would not go to their parents for help.

A sub-theme related to this objective tested trust and reaction to an online sex tape. Stakeholders all showed in their responses that they had not learned about any anti-bullying prevention strategies and were not in a position to assist either bullies or victims. Judgement from parents and teachers was a key factor. The stakeholders looked at the lack of morality of the act that the person had done, forgetting that the same person was a victim. Parent participants also highlighted they were not ready to deal with their children's intimacy issues due to their young age. Another sub-theme linked to this objective was emotional connectivity.

All responses had highlighted dishonesty. Parents were of the view that their children behaved well at school meanwhile learners mentioned that they behaved well at home to get their parents off their backs which was not their true behaviour. This discussion opened doors to a peer-to-peer counselling sub-theme where all stakeholders felt it was a good idea. The school could launch an anti-bullying campaign led by young people but monitored by adults; such an anti-bullying campaign would integrate ideas such as peer-to-peer counselling to assist those

victims who were not comfortable discussing their sexting bullying incidents with adults. The fourth objective was to determine the school's response to cyberbullying. This objective was addressed in Chapter three in which communication channels and campaigns were discussed, including the impact they have on the communication message. The responses from participants highlighted the school's communication channels as effective but the drawback was that there had not been any message about cyberbullying or awareness on those channels. This highlighted the lack of awareness messages about the cyberbullying phenomenon and touched on themes such as the knowledge gap and the digital divide. Sub-themes such as understanding online safety protocols and cyberbullying gave an overview of why stakeholders were not happy with the school's response to cyberbullying.

The interviews highlighted that the cyberbullying topic is still foreign at the school due to no implemented bullying policy. Stakeholders showed minimal knowledge of cyberbullying terms and online safety protocols. The participants' responses highlighted that the school's response to cyberbullying was inactive, in fact non-existent. This will be the case until the DBE comes to the school and implements the 2012 School Safety Framework. After officials of the DBE had applied delaying tactics, the decision to omit them from the interviews was taken by the researcher. Thus, objective four was not met.

## 6.5 KEY FINDINGS ALIGNED WITH THEMES AND SUB THEMES

The researcher was satisfied with the chosen methodology, a qualitative case study; it was suitable for the budget at hand. Data collection methods using a virtual focus group and one-to-one semi-structured video interviews were also suitable. The following findings and conclusions were reached and recommendations were made:

### **6.5.1 To explore and describe the extent of stakeholder awareness of cyberbullying within the school system**

#### *6.5.1.1 Key findings*

The finding from the communication campaigns and channels that the school has utilised to communicate the message of cyberbullying was that all stakeholders (learners, teachers and parents) indicated that the topic of cyberbullying was foreign to the school. In other words, the existing communication channels used in the school's day-to-day communication messages had not accommodated the topic of cyberbullying. The sub-theme on cyberbullying awareness proved that there had not been any awareness messages about cyberbullying at the school. To ascertain the precision of the finding about the lack of awareness messages on the school's

communication channels, a sub-theme on the continuity and diversity of the cyberbullying message on the channels was explored. The lack of awareness in the school was examined in terms of these sub-themes. This was done by establishing how often the message of cyberbullying was communicated to stakeholders and how diverse the message was. The findings came to one conclusion: nothing had been done to table this topic, neither on anti-bullying strategies nor policy. The responses from all stakeholders highlighted that the cyberbullying message was seldom disseminated at the school. Teachers who were supposed to be the pioneers in running the message of cyberbullying mentioned that the message or topic of cyberbullying was dealt with on a reactional basis. The school had no action plan or existing cyberbullying strategies to prevent its occurrence or assist the school's cyberbullying victims

Another sub-theme of cyberbullying awareness yielded similar results. Stakeholders mentioned that the school had not launched any cyberbullying campaigns or messages. All discussed themes and sub-themes spoke to the first research objective to explore and describe the extent of stakeholder awareness of cyberbullying within the school system. Testing the actual awareness messages, the effectiveness of communication about the messages and communication channels and the continuity and diversity of the message brought the researcher to the conclusion that the stakeholders of the school were not equipped to deal with cyberbullying and that fact touches on the lack of cyberbullying awareness.

## **6.5.2 To describe the efficiency of the 2012 School Safety Framework among stakeholders**

### *6.5.2.1 Key findings*

This objective was aligned with the theme of the implementation of a cyberbullying policy/ 2012 School Safety Framework and its impact and the sub-theme on training and support (computer literacy levels) to establish whether this policy had an impact on stakeholders or not. This objective was addressed in Chapter two and discussed with topics such as the legislation of cyberbullying globally, in Africa and South Africa.

The focal point was to check how the 2012 School Safety Framework, which is a policy on bullying and cyberbullying in Gauteng, was implemented at the school. The findings presented that stakeholders of the school did not know about any bullying or cyberbullying policy implemented by the DBE. This lack of knowledge presented an inability for stakeholders to deal with the cyberbullying phenomenon. Teacher participants mentioned that the policy in question had not yet been implemented at the school. This meant that stakeholders had not

received any guidance on how to handle cyberbullying cases. Most participants shared similar views that they only learned about the 2012 School Safety Framework when they received the moderator guide documents from the researcher. The sub-theme here was training and support (computer literacy levels). It was important to establish the stakeholders' technological knowledge of computers and the internet as the literature highlights a technological gap between learners and adults. This gap presents a knowledge gap and translates into the inability of adults to monitor learners' online devices. The findings highlighted the lack of training and the knowledge gap both in policy and technology.

Learners and teachers highlighted that they lacked computer training; they mentioned that they were never taught to use the devices they use comprehensively which makes it difficult to navigate the resources provided by the school. Parents were also divided on the responses. Some mentioned that they were tech-savvy; some were not tech-savvy. An additional factor was that there were no computers at home for parents to monitor their children's devices. The monitoring could only be done on the learner's smartphones directly. This finding highlighted that parents were not monitoring learner devices.

Their responses highlighted that they did not know monitoring was necessary and their judgement for monitoring was ill-informed. This included parents who were literate with high-profile corporate jobs. Computer literacy was highlighted as a crucial need for stakeholders because cyberbullying occurred through the use of technological devices. Teachers, learners and a few parents highlighted that they were not well trained with computers and were still struggling to fully utilise computers; however, the majority were able to use their smartphones, despite that challenge.

### **6.5.3 To evaluate the stakeholder's trust in the school's approach to cyberbullying.**

#### *6.5.3.1 Key findings*

The findings aligned themes such as stakeholder trust, the reaction to online sex tapes and emotional connectivity which highlighted a relationship gap between adults and youth. Learner responses highlighted that they did not trust adults in dealing with intimacy issues and responses from stakeholders highlighted that stakeholders have no trust in the school's approach to handling cyberbullying. Learners do not trust the school's response due to previous cyberbullying cases or in assisting previous cyberbullying victims involved in the school's 2018 Facebook roast page. Some of these victims mentioned that they did not receive any support from the school; they had to cope on their own after the bullying happened. This

meant, they had to accept the aftermath where they were referred to as ‘that girl from that video’ and other funny referencing. Stakeholders highlighted a lack of trust in the school’s approach to cyberbullying simply because they do not know how the school approaches cyberbullying cases. Parent stakeholders highlighted that cyberbullying messages had never been communicated to them. They have nowhere to reference the school’s approach to handling cyberbullying. Be that as it may, stakeholders highlighted that social media influence on families and school communication challenges made them look beyond negativity and learn to grab the advantages presented by social media usage in communication, be it personal or academic.

Parents of cyberbullying victims mentioned that they have no trust in the school’s approach, referencing their dissatisfaction with the failure of how the school intervened or failed to intervene in past cyberbullying cases. Learners mentioned that they fear judgement and shouting from their parents during tragic cyberbullying incidents. That was the reason they would not go to their parents for help. Stakeholders mentioned the age gap as a reason for there being no emotional connectivity or trust between younger and older stakeholders. The findings highlighted that learners do not feel comfortable talking to their parents about topics such as dating and sex.

#### **6.5.4 To determine the school’s response to cyberbullying**

##### *6.5.4.1 Key findings*

The findings highlighted dissatisfaction from stakeholders on how the school had handled past cyberbullying cases, including a Facebook roast page which tormented both learners and teachers at the school in 2018. This objective was discussed in chapter three where topics such as communication, communication effectiveness, the role of stakeholders in a communication campaign and organisational communication were tabled. Stakeholders highlighted dissatisfaction; some mentioned they did not know about how the school had handled or responded to cyberbullying in the past. Teachers highlighted the frustration of having to deal with cyberbullying cases without a policy or training to guide them on the best way forward in dealing with a cyberbullying case.

Peer-to-peer counselling coordinated with an anti-bullying campaign was suggested among the positive ways the school could use as a response to cyberbullying. Stakeholders’ responses depicted the school’s response to cyberbullying as poor. At this stage, the school had no policy and no anti-bullying strategies; nothing exists for the school to deal with cyberbullying. Learner participants mentioned suicide as the way out in dealing with an online

sex tape or an extreme cyberbullying incident. They mentioned they rather seek help elsewhere, not from their parents. Adult participants (teachers and parents) were very judgemental about how they would react when cyberbullying occurred to a member of the family; they vowed to support learners but did not offer the same support to their romantic partners. This finding highlighted that the school's response to cyberbullying had been very poor. This theme is aligned with a sub-theme such as online hook-ups and DMs. Learners mentioned that they pursue their romantic relationships on online platforms. Meanwhile, adult participants shared negative views of people who pursue romantic relationships online; some referred to this act as cowardly and desperate. These findings revealed how the school handled past cyberbullying cases aligning this sub-theme with emotional connectivity. The stakeholder responses highlighted the school's poor response in handling cyberbullying cases. In addition to this, the school has no policy and no anti-bullying strategies; nothing exists to assist the school in dealing with cyberbullying cases.

## 6.6 CONCLUSIONS

### 6.6.1 Conclusion: Communication channels

The school's communication channels such as Facebook page, SMS system, and formal letters are not utilised to communicate the message of cyberbullying to stakeholders; therefore, their availability is not useful because they have not been utilised. The message of cyberbullying is seldom communicated; hence, stakeholders believe that the school is not serious about dealing with cyberbullying. The Department of Basic Education has not introduced the 2012 School Framework to the school's stakeholders. Stakeholders only became aware of the Framework during their participation in the study. This statement applies to all stakeholders, including learners, parents, and teachers.

In all, the 2012 School Safety Framework is available on the internet, but no efforts have been made to raise awareness among the relevant recipients about it. There are no existing cyberbullying campaigns; the topic of cyberbullying has only been visited on a reactional basis after a trending cruel video circulated online. The information gap between stakeholders is the reason adults are not monitoring learners' digital devices. Digital literacy was raised as a concern by older participants, including teachers and parents. They emphasised the necessity for computer training to enable them to effectively monitor cyberbullying or their children's online activities. The digital divide was another issue, with some parents mentioning that they lack smartphones and are therefore unable to monitor their children's online activities during homework time.

### **6.6.2 Conclusion: Cyberbullying Policy and Computer efficiency**

All stakeholders did not know about the bullying and cyberbullying policy known as the 2012 School Safety Framework. Stakeholders highlighted a challenge with their technological usage; some mentioned they needed training to use computers. This included mostly teachers and learners and a few parents who did not use computers at work. The digital divide in the form of resources – the lack of technological resources at home – and the digital divide in the form of lack of knowledge have been identified as challenges when it came to monitoring learner devices.

### **6.6.3 Conclusion: Lack of emotional connectivity and Technological Gap**

There is a lack of emotional connectivity between young people and adults; parents are not aware of what they are dealing with and still regard their children as children who are not old enough to have romantic relationships. Contrary to that belief from parents, learners have mentioned they are already dealing with the heartbreaks which result from online dating.

Prolonged use of technology leads to cellphone addiction and victims become vulnerable to cyberbullying. The school's approach to handling cyberbullying has been very poor; stakeholders are ill-equipped on the topic of cyberbullying. Judgement is the reason cyberbullying victims commit suicide. In this study, age gap was highlighted as the reason for lack emotional connectivity between younger and older stakeholders. Judgement was identified as a key factor that heightens lack of emotional connectivity.

### **6.6.4 Conclusion: Poor Cyberbullying response**

The school's response to past cyberbullying cases has been labelled as very poor due to a lack of technological knowledge from stakeholders and a lack of training on policy and the topic of cyberbullying. Training on internet ethos is a solution for young learners so they can understand online safety protocols and the features of the applications they use that offer an opportunity to block or report bullies, instead of entertaining them. The conclusion was that stakeholders are not aware of cyberbullying terms and online safety protocols.

## **6.7 RECOMMENDATION**

### **6.7.1 Recommendation: Implementation of anti- cyberbullying strategy and policy**

The school needs to implement an anti-bullying strategy that should be incorporated into



policies, teaching methods, and extracurricular activities. It should be integrated into school programmes such as drama, entertainment, and communicated to all stakeholders to ensure comprehensive coverage. Given the complex nature of the cyberbullying phenomenon, the school should regularly launch cyberbullying awareness messages and activities across all the school's communication platforms, avoiding one-off campaigns.

School activities, such as drama and arts, must be used as elements of persuasion so that this message can be presented in the form of entertainment.

### **6.7.2 Recommendation: Training of 2012 School Safety Framework**

It is recommended that the Department of Basic Education should conduct ongoing training sessions on the 2012 School Safety Framework, launch anti-bullying awareness campaigns specifically on cyberbullying, and also infuse it into the performance management of school principals. Computer training must be provided to help teachers and learners who mentioned they are struggling to fully utilise the provided technological resources.

Teachers recommended that cyberbullying prevention messages be integrated into the teaching curriculum. More training on internet safety protocols needs to be conducted. In this training, the stakeholders also need to be informed about the dark web where there are dangerous people who are into cybercrime and prey on naïve online victims

### **6.7.3 Recommendations: Cyberbullying messaging**

Cyberbullying messages must be communicated on all the school's communication platforms, including sharing short catchy pamphlets about cyberbullying and other acts, such as the POPI Act and South African School Safety Act. The school's communication channels – SMS system, Facebook page and WhatsApp – are efficient and can be used as a start to communicate the message of cyberbullying.

### **6.7.4 Recommendations: Training on Internet Safety Protocols**

More training on internet safety protocols needs to be conducted; topics such as the dark web and cybercrime must be covered. First and foremost, DoBE must come to the school to introduce the policy aligned with training programmes that will integrate all stakeholders into the training

## **6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND POLICY**

The findings from the study highlighted the lack of knowledge among stakeholders in dealing

with cyberbullying. This led to the poor response or approach from the school in handling past cyberbullying cases which included the infamous Facebook roast page. The cyberbullying roast page entertained viewers with juicy gossip reveals while psychologically breaking the victims. Some of the victims referred to the experience as a stain that will forever shadow them regardless of where they go, attesting to the pain of being remembered as 'the girl in the video'.

None policy implementation is another drawback that was highlighted in the study. The DBE has failed to launch the policy at the school or schools in the South West District cluster. It is recommended that future research studies challenge the topic of cyberbullying on a broader scale with more schools participating in a similar study. A cyberbullying policy needs to be implemented as a matter of priority. The researcher discovered that it was not only the researched school that had not received this policy. A further 23 schools that were provided by the DBE as cyberbullying hotspots also did not have this policy.

What was worse was that those listed schools failed to make the selection criteria for the study due to their lack of technological infrastructure. The report from those principals was that some schools faced vandalism between the lockdown and the July 2021 unrest which hit Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. Be that as it may, they all attested to the same fact: they did not know the 2012 School Safety Framework. The framework is on the internet but has not reached the hands of the intended stakeholders. The supply of Wi-Fi and internet was another challenge that led to the omission of other schools in the South West District. Vandalism in these schools was geared towards technological infrastructure.

The 23 provided schools could not make the selection. The researcher had to look for a school with technological infrastructure. The reason for the failure to implement policy affected how schools responded to cyberbullying. With the new Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020, South Africa is capable of challenging the cyberbullying phenomenon but only if cyberbullying policy is implemented with ongoing anti-cyberbullying campaigns and the DBE offers schools all the necessary support.

## 6.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Terre Blanche et al. (2012:49) argue that units of analysis influence the decision on representativeness to ensure that the findings of a study are transferable. The researcher employed two data-gathering instruments – a videoed focus group interview and videoed one-to-one semi-structured interviews. The reason for this decision was to ensure that the findings are credible and can be transferred (Golafshani 2003).

Merriam (2009) adds that the use of more data-gathering instruments in a study increases

credibility and transferability. Qualitative research is a methodology that focuses on an intimate sample with a thick description. The reason for employing two data collection techniques was to avoid any element of bias in the data collection (Wagner et al. 2012).

The following may be regarded as limitations of this study:

The researcher wanted a 50/50 gender representation; this was not met due to male participants in all types of stakeholders showing less interest in participating. The sampling for the study was exclusive to the chosen school's population due to budget constraints. If the study had been conducted in more than one school in Gauteng, more perspectives may have added different or additional views. Despite the alarming truths about the state of cyberbullying in this particular school, the findings cannot be generalised but could be applied to a bigger sample with a different methodology and budget. At first, the 2012 School Safety Framework and technological resources were the selection criteria.

Upon visiting many schools in the district that do not know the 2012 School Safety Framework and/or do not have the technological infrastructure, the researcher removed the 2012 School Safety Framework as a selection criterion and only used technological infrastructure as a selection criterion. The July political unrest affected the interviews. Some parents who were keen to participate withdrew from the study after their workplaces were vandalised. There was a lot of uncertainty; they were no longer well emotionally and they withdrew.

The school had to close for safety. Interviews were delayed as it was not safe for anyone to be at school because some schools in the area were being vandalised and learner interviews had to be rescheduled to allow them to have WI-FI access during interviews. This fact added a two-week delay in the learner interviews. Some learners, when they returned from the school closure, withdrew their participation stating school deadlines and the researcher had to find replacements.

## 6.10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Cyberbullying is a global problem. South Africa is among the countries that are grappling with suicide cases caused by the cyberbullying phenomenon. The presented literature revealed that establishing cyberbullying laws and policies for schools will be a breakthrough for the education system in dealing with the cyberbullying phenomenon. The study unpacked the failure of the DBE to implement a cyberbullying policy in Gauteng schools. This had led to the failure of schools in developing their own anti-bullying strategies and communicating them to stakeholders (learners, teachers and parents).

The study presented a gap in policy implementation and training in equipping stakeholders with all the necessary tools required to grapple with the cyberbullying phenomenon. The purpose of this study was to highlight that gap and highlight existing cyberbullying tragedies the country has faced to showcase this problem as a matter of urgency for the education system to ensure that a cyberbullying policy is launched at schools and not only published in the media, which is the case with the DBE in Gauteng. The policy is on the internet but not all recipients have received the policy or are informed about it. After the Lufuno Mavhunga suicide incident, the DBE announced that they would be holding national anti-bullying campaigns to thwart the problem of cyberbullying in schools, which is not only a problem for learners. Teachers, too, have become cyberbullying victims. The promise to launch national anti-bullying campaigns across South Africa was published in the media but no school in the provided list from the DBE had been injected into that programme. In some of the videos that portray violence in the classroom, teachers have been ambushed by learners physically while their learner friends anonymously record and post the video online to trend. In the researched school, there was a Facebook roast page which tormented both learners and teachers.

Those victims were never assisted psychologically; they had to cope on their own. The lack of support structure is what leads victims to commit suicide. In this case, cyberbullying victims from the school had to find their own way to cope without any assistance. Learner victims highlighted that they could not trust their parents with their pain in fear of judgement. They chose to die inside and had not received professional help. The recommendations for this study, highlighted cyberbullying as a crisis that needed urgent attention. On the other hand, some teachers are reluctant to use mobile technology because they lack the knowledge and skills to integrate their teaching with learning, this makes technology acceptance a problem (Habibu et al. 2012:03). Consequently, the availability of laptops and tablets in schools has added on the procurement expenses for education system, but yet to make an impact in the teaching curriculum, teachers are not yet comfortable to integrate technology in their lessons (Tallvid 2014:505). Teachers who experience unsuccessful technology adoption in the classroom tend to feel demotivated, which strengthens the need for creating successful enriching classroom experiences of technology integration (Slaouti & Barton 2007). Technology integration is more complex as proficiency in technological skills does not ensure successful application in classroom practice (Van Laar et al 2017). Habibu et al. (2012:05) highlight integration of new technologies and training of teachers as a formula or solution to a technologically inclined classroom. While many teacher education programmes include various courses to assist teachers with technology integration-related knowledge, they often fail to provide opportunities for such knowledge to be applied.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WITH TEACHERS**

#### **Moderator guide for Virtual Focus group Interviews with teachers**

Dear participants,

My name is Nwabisa Noguba; I am a student researcher currently doing Masters in Communication Science with Unisa. I am recruiting eight participants who will formulate the research participants for the teacher's virtual focus group interview. The researcher is embarking on the study for graduation purposes under guidance of Dr. Mutambuli James Hadji who is a senior lecturer in the department of Communications Science at Unisa. Your school is among the schools that the researcher had purposely selected. The focus group i will help to explore the approximate level of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders in the school system (learners, teachers and parents) and its impact on cyberbullying promotional campaigns in a Tshwane school. The researcher has followed all ethical protocol, with both Unisa and Department of basic education. You are assured that your participation is purely confidential and anonymity will be exercised to avoid victimisation.

The participation on the study is voluntarily, the researcher will use the tape recorder to record this discussion to ensure thorough data gathering, but at any point participants are allowed to request that I pause the recording in case there are some sensitive issues that one feels should not be on the tape. As per consent document signed the participants are allowed to withdraw at any time, as along is before data interpreted and analysed. In conclusion there will not be any form of compensation for part taking in the study. The researcher is hoping the discussion will take approximately one and half hour. The researcher has organised counselling service should a need arise, where a cyberbullying victim experiences past psychological trauma due to being part of a discussion on the topic of cyberbullying.

#### **Theme One – Communication – channels**

- 1.1 How does your school raise awareness on cyberbullying among its stakeholders (learners, teachers, parents)?
- 1.2 How effective is the schools communication channels in spreading cyber bullying message?
- 1.3 What is your understanding of the (2012) School Safety Framework?
- 1.4 To what extent are the school's communication channels effective in raising

- awareness about cyberbullying policy/ the (2012) School Safety Framework?
- 1.5 How do you regard sensitivity/ lack thereof of cyberbullying information on the Schools communication channels?

### **Themes two – information Gap**

- 2.1 What do you understand about term social media?
- 2.2 In what way has technology use (inclusive of social media) influenced how you communicate?
- 2.3 How would you describe your literacy levels when it comes to computer usage and the internet?
- 2.4 In the media today we read a lot about the terms tech - savvy or being technologically smart” what do you understand about these terms?
- 2.5 What is your understanding on use of firewalls on the internet?

### **Themes Three - Messages – Continuity**

- 3.1 How frequent is the school communicating cyberbullying message to stakeholders?
- 3.2 How diverse are cyberbullying messages on the school’s communication platforms?
- 3.3 How would you define the impact of the cyberbullying policy on members of the school community?
- 3.4 How do you regard emotional connectivity between learners, teachers and parents?
- 3.5 What’s your view on how South African courts are executing cyberbullying?

### **Themes Four – Training and support**

- 4.1 To what extent are parents involved in the monitoring and control of cyber bullying problem in the school system?

- 4.2 How is the school equipping stakeholders (teachers, learners or parents) on the cyberbullying message?
- 4.3 How does the school control the usage of mobile and technological devices on the school premises?
- 4.4 How do you regard maturity or lack thereof of cyber bullies and their victim?
- 4.5 How do you view the school's support system on cyberbullying victims?

### **Theme Six – Trust**

- 5.1 If you could be cyber bullied by your classmate/friend or a stranger would you talk about it?
- 5.2 How would you define the term loss of control, when one is cyber bullied?
- 5.3 What's your principle on handling DM's and inboxes on Instagram, Facebook or random WhatsApp messages?
- 5.4 What is your view on peer to peer counselling in addressing cyberbullying?
- 5.5 What is the schools procedure on reporting forms of bullying?

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS WITH LEARNERS**

### **Moderator guide for Learners**

Dear participants,

My name is Nwabisa Noguba; I am a student researcher currently doing Masters in Communication Science with Unisa. I am recruiting eight participants who will formulate the research participants for the teacher's virtual focus group interview. The researcher is embarking on the study for graduation purposes under guidance of Dr. Mutambuli James Hadji who is a senior lecturer in the department of Communications Science at Unisa. Your school is among the schools that the researcher had purposely selected. The focus group i will help to explore the approximate level of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders in the school system (learners, teachers and parents) and its impact on cyberbullying promotional campaigns in a Tshwane school. The researcher has followed all ethical protocol, with both Unisa and Department of basic education. You are assured that your participation is purely confidential and anonymity will be exercised to avoid victimisation.

The participation on the study is voluntarily, the researcher will use the tape recorder to record this discussion to ensure thorough data gathering, but at any point participants are allowed to request that I pause the recording in case there are some sensitive issues that one feels should not be on the tape. As per consent document signed the participants are allowed to withdraw at any time, as long is before data interpreted and analysed. In conclusion there will not be any form of compensation for part taking in the study. The researcher is hoping the discussion will take approximately one and half hour. The researcher has organised counselling service should a need arise, where a cyberbullying victim experiences past psychological trauma due to being part of a discussion on the topic of cyberbullying.

### **Theme One – Communication – channels**

- 1.1 How does your school raise awareness on cyberbullying among its stakeholders (learners, teachers, parents)?
- 1.2 How effective is the schools communication channels in spreading cyber bullying message?
- 1.3 What is your understanding of the (2012) School Safety Framework?
- 1.4 To what extent are the school's communication channels effective in raising awareness about cyberbullying policy/ the (2012) School Safety Framework?
- 1.5 How do you regard sensitivity/ lack thereof of cyberbullying information on the

Schools communication channels?

### **Themes two – information Gap**

- 2.1 What do you understand about term social media?
- 2.2 In what way has technology use (inclusive of social media) influenced how you communicate?
- 2.3 How would you describe your literacy levels when it comes to computer usage and the internet?
- 2.3 In the media today we read a lot about the terms tech - savvy or being technologically smart" what do you understand about these terms?
- 2.4 What is your understanding on use of firewalls on the internet?

### **Themes Three - Messages – Continuity**

- 3.1 How frequent is the school communicating cyberbullying message to stakeholders?
- 3.2 How diverse are cyberbullying messages on the school's communication platforms?
- 3.3 How would you define the impact of the cyberbullying policy on members of the school community?
- 3.4 How do you regard emotional connectivity between learners, teachers and parents?
- 3.5 What's your view on how South African courts are executing cyberbullying?

### **Themes Four – Training and support**

- 4.1 To what extent are parents involved in the monitoring and control of cyber bullying problem in the school system?
- 4.2 How is the school equipping stakeholders (teachers, learners or parents) on the cyberbullying message?
- 4.3 How does the school control the usage of mobile and technological devices on the school premises?
- 4.4 How do you regard maturity or lack thereof of cyber bullies and their victim?



4.5 How do you view the school's support system on cyberbullying victims?

**Theme Six – Trust**

5.1 If you could be cyber bullied by your classmate/friend or a stranger would you talk about it?

5.2 How would you define the term loss of control, when one is cyber bullied?

5.1 What's your principle on handling DM's and inboxes on instagram, Facebook or random whatsapp messages?

5.2 What is your view on peer-to-peer counselling in addressing cyberbullying?

5.3 What is the schools procedure on reporting forms of bullying?

## **APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS.**

### **Moderator guide for Parents Interviews**

Dear participants,

My name is Nwabisa Noguba; I am a student researcher currently doing Masters in Communication Science with Unisa. I am recruiting eight participants who will formulate the research participants for the teacher's virtual focus group interview. The researcher is embarking on the study for graduation purposes under guidance of Dr. Mutambuli James Hadji who is a senior lecturer in the department of Communications Science at Unisa. Your school is among the schools that the researcher had purposely selected. The focus group i will help to explore the approximate level of cyberbullying awareness among stakeholders in the school system (learners, teachers and parents) and its impact on cyberbullying promotional campaigns in a Tshwane school. The researcher has followed all ethical protocol, with both Unisa and Department of basic education. You are assured that your participation is purely confidential and anonymity will be exercised to avoid victimisation.

The participation on the study is voluntarily, the researcher will use the tape recorder to record this discussion to ensure thorough data gathering, but at any point participants are allowed to request that I pause the recording in case there are some sensitive issues that one feels should not be on the tape. As per consent document signed the participants are allowed to withdraw at any time, as long as before data interpreted and analysed. In conclusion there will not be any form of compensation for part taking in the study. The researcher is hoping the discussion will take approximately one and half hour. The researcher has organised counselling service should a need arise, where a cyberbullying victim experiences past psychological trauma due to being part of a discussion on the topic of cyberbullying.

### **Theme One – Communication – channels**

- 1.6 How does your school raise awareness on cyberbullying among its stakeholders (learners, teachers, parents)?
- 1.7 How effective is the schools communication channels in spreading cyber bullying message?
- 1.8 What is your understanding of the (2012) School Safety Framework?
- 1.9 To what extent are the school's communication channels effective in raising awareness about cyberbullying policy/ the (2012) School Safety Framework?
- 1.10 How do you regard sensitivity/ lack thereof of cyberbullying information on

the Schools communication channels?

### **Themes two – information Gap**

- 5.4 What do you understand about term social media?
- 5.5 In what way has technology use (inclusive of social media) influenced how you communicate?
- 5.6 How would you describe your literacy levels when it comes to computer usage and the internet?
- 5.7 In the media today we read a lot about the terms tech - savvy or being technologically smart” what do you understand about these terms?
- 5.8 What is your understanding on use of firewalls on the internet?

### **Themes Three - Messages – Continuity**

- 3.6 How frequent is the school communicating cyberbullying message to stakeholders?
- 3.7 How diverse are cyberbullying messages on the school’s communication platforms?
- 3.8 How would you define the impact of the cyberbullying policy on members of the school community?
- 3.9 How do you regard emotional connectivity between learners, teachers and parents?
- 3.10 What’s your view on how South African courts are executing cyberbullying?

### **Themes Four – Training and support**

- 4.6 To what extent are parents involved in the monitoring and control of cyber bullying problem in the school system?
- 4.7 How is the school equipping stakeholders (teachers, learners or parents) on the cyberbullying message?

4.8 How does the school control the usage of mobile and technological devices on the school premises?

4.9 How do you regard maturity or lack thereof of cyber bullies and their victim?

4.10 How do you view the school's support system on cyberbullying victims?

### **Theme Six – Trust**

5.1 If you could be cyber bullied by your classmate/friend or a stranger would you talk about it?

5.9 How would you define the term loss of control, when one is cyber bullied?

5.10 What's your principle on handling DM's and inboxes on instagram, Facebook or random whatsapp messages?

5.11 What is your view on peer to peer counselling in addressing cyberbullying?

5.12 What is the schools procedure on reporting forms of bullying?

## APPENDIX D: Request letter to DoBE



Enquiries: Nwabisa Noguba  
Tel: 012 354 1644  
Cell: 0824840262  
Web: [www.sbah.org.za](http://www.sbah.org.za)  
Email: [Nwabisa.Noguba@gauteng.g.za](mailto:Nwabisa.Noguba@gauteng.g.za)

The Director Research Unit  
Gauteng Department of Basic Education  
012 3573440  
16/05/2019

Dear Ms. Sarie Khoza,

### **PERMISSION REQUEST LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Nwabisa Noguba; I am a student researcher currently doing Masters Degree in Communication Science. I hereby request permission to conduct research in a School in Pretoria which has already implemented the 2012 School Safety Framework. The study aim is to examine the extent of cyber bullying awareness among stakeholders (teachers, parents and learners) in the school. The plan is to establish how the school's communicate or promote the 2012 School Safety Framework, to its stakeholders as part of cyber bullying awareness. The study pinpoints cyber bullying as a prevalent problem that promotes illicit online behaviour among learners.

(Chisholm 2014:78) depicts cyber bullying as acceleration or an extension of traditional bullying where a bully utilise technological device in various forms to repetitively cause emotional distress. The department of basic education has been selected because it's responsible for regulation of bullying and cyber bullying in the Gauteng Province. The study seeks to offer assistance to evaluate extent of stakeholder's cyber bullying awareness. The study will employ three qualitative data gathering methods, focus group interview, and one on one Interviews. A single in depth interview will be conducted with an




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expert from the Department of Basic Education (DoBE), to establish the kind of support offered by the department during policy implementation. The researcher will conduct a focus group interview and one on one interviews with different stakeholders at the school. Time dimension of the study is a period of one month. Data gathering will be conducted in September 2020. Babbie and Mouton (2001:92) referred to cross sectional studies as those studies that are conducted at one point in time, while longitudinal are the type of studies that "permits observation to be conducted over an extended period". The study will offer information and bridge a digital divide gap among stakeholders.

The recommendations from gathered data will be submitted to the department as further assistance in dealing with the cyber bullying phenomenon. The researcher does not foresee potential risks, based on the fact that the study is not investigating individual cyber bullying experiences, but the researcher has proactively organised with her former employer (Radio Pulpit) and current employer (Steve Biko Academic Hospital, hospivision counseling service) that offer free counseling services to open doors for counseling to research subjects if a need arises. A feedback procedure will entail recommendation with results.

A prompt response to the request will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Nwabisa Noguba  
Student Researcher  
012 354 1644  
082 484 0262



## APPENDIX E: Approval Letter from DoBE



### GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

#### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	12 May 2021
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2021– 30 September 2021 2019/453AA
Name of Researcher:	Noguba NT
Address of Researcher:	2680 Section J Mamelodi West Pretoria
Telephone Number:	082 484 0262
Email address:	<a href="mailto:nogubatheo@gmail.com">nogubatheo@gmail.com</a>
Research Topic:	Cyber bullying awareness among ,stakeholders in the school system (learner, teachers ,parents)in Pretoria
Type of qualification	Maters Communication Science
Number and type of schools:	2 Secondary School
District/s/HO	Tshwane North ,Tshwane South, Tshwane West , Tshwane East

#### **Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

*Making education a societal priority*

#### **Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management**

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: [Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za)

Website: [www.education.gpg.gov.za](http://www.education.gpg.gov.za)

2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. **Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.**
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Mr Gurnani Mukatuni  
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: ...12/05/2021.....

2

**Making education a societal priority**

**Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management**

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za



## APPENDIX F: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM UNISA



### COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

19 January 2021

Dear Ms Nwabisa Noguba

**Decision:**  
**Ethics Approval from 19 January**  
**2021 to 18 January 2024**

NHREC Registration # :  
Rec-240816-052  
CREC Reference # : 2021-  
CHS - 36509205

Researcher(s): Ms Nwabisa Noguba email: [36509205 @mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:36509205@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

Supervisor: Dr Mutambuli James Hadji

**Title: Approximate level of awareness of cyber bullying among stakeholders and its impact on Cyber bullying policy in Tshwane.**

**Degree Purpose: Masters**

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The **medium risk application** was **reviewed** by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, on **19 January 2021** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. 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



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confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. 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.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (**18 January 2024**). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number **2021-CHS- 36509205** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature : 

Dr. K.J. Malesa  
CHS Ethics Chairperson  
Email: [maleskj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:maleskj@unisa.ac.za)  
Tel: (012) 429 4780

Signature : PP 

Prof K. Masemola  
Executive Dean : CHS  
E-mail: [masemk@unisa.ac.za](mailto:masemk@unisa.ac.za)  
Tel: (012) 429 2298



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## APPENDIX G: REQUEST LETTER TO NELLMAPIUS SECONDARY SCHOOL



Enquiries: Nwabisa Noguba  
Tel: 012 354 1644  
Cell: 0824840262  
Web: [www.sbah.org.za](http://www.sbah.org.za)  
Email: [Nwabisa.Noguba@gauteng.g.za](mailto:Nwabisa.Noguba@gauteng.g.za)

The School Principal  
Nellmapius Secondary School  
21/03/2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Nwabisa Noguba; I am a student researcher currently doing Masters Degree in Communication Science, with Unisa, under the supervision of Dr. Mutambuli James Hadji, a senior lecture in Public Relations and Corporate Communications. I hereby request permission to conduct research in your school. The Department of Basic Education Nationally has granted permission for the researcher to approach your school. Your school was in a data base of schools listed by the department as worth exploring on the topic of cyber bullying.

The purpose of this case study research is to explore the approximate level of cyber bullying awareness among stakeholders in the school system (learners, teachers and parents). The plan is to evaluate how the school handles the stakeholder communication campaigns about the school policy, which ultimately lead to stakeholder awareness on the topic of cyber bullying. Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017) in his study on cyber bullying identified a gap in the topic of cyber bullying by highlighting minimal conducted research in academia on the topic of cyber bullying in South Africa and the world. Attached kindly receive the approval letter from DoBE and the Ethics Certificates from Unisa Ethics Committee.

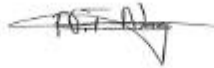


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A prompt response to the request will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Nwabisa Noguba  
Student Researcher  
012 354 1644  
082 484 0262



University of South Africa  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
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[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

## APPENDIX H: APPOINTMENT LETTER FOR TRANSLATOR FOR INTERVIEWS

# Lingua-World

TRANSLATIONS, INTERPRETING AND LOCALIZATION

LINGUA –WORLD PTY LTD

06 HOOD AVENUE

ROSEBANK, JOHANNESBURG.

2196

REG NO: 2012/088771/07

VAT: 4060262914

011 268 6361

29 January 2021

### Declaration for Nwabisa Noguba

This is to certify that a qualified language practitioner, **Thapelo Diphoko** who works with the Magistrate Court was appointed by **Lingua-world** to translate the documents of **Nwabisa Noguba**. The documents are **Moderator guide for telephonic interviews with parents** and **Participant Information Sheet**

By Management

Thank you

Signature:



Translator signature



Thapelo P. Diphoko

Lingua-world (Pty) Ltd

Tel: 011 027 1941

2nd Floor, No 6 Hood Avenue

Travel House Building

Rosebank, Johannesburg

info@lingua-world.co.za



## APPENDIX I: TRANSLATED MODERATOR GUIDE IN SETSWANA



### **Letlhomeso la kaelo la motsamaiso wa dipuisano ka mogala wa letheke le batsadi**

Batsayakarolo ba rategang,

Leina la me ke Nwabisa Noguba; ke moithuti yo dirang dipatlisiso tsa lekwalo la Masters la Saense ya tsa Tlhaeletsano. Ke mo letsholong la go ngoka batsayakarolo ba ba robedi ba ba tla thusang ka dipatlisiso ka go dira dipuisano ka mokgwa wa mogala wa letheke le batsadi. Radipatlisiso o letsholong la dipatlisiso tseno gore a batlisise sekgele sa gagwe sa thuto ka tlase go kaelo ya Dr. Mutambuli James Hadji yo e leng Motlhatheledi o mogolo lefapheng la Saense ya Tlhaeletsano kwa Unibesithi ya Afrika Borwa. Sekolo sa gago ke se sengwe sa dikolo tseo Radipatlisiso a se kgethileng go nna karolo ya dipatlisiso. Dipuisano ka mogala wa letheke di tla thusa go batlisisa boemo ba tlhokomediso ya go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlathheng go ba ba amegang dikolong le tlhotlheletso ya matsholo a tlhokomediso dikolong tsa Tshwane. Radipatlisiso o latetse ditaello tsotlhe tsa boitshwaro le Unibesithi ya Afrika Borwa mmogo le Lefapha la Thuto ya Motheo. O netefaletswa gore botseyakarolo jwa gago bo tla bolokiwa e le sephiri mme maina a gago a tla babalelwa go phema gore o feleletse o le motswasetlhabelo.

Go tsayakarolo dipatlisising tseno ke ka boithapo le kgetho ya motho, radipatlisiso o tla kgatisa poledisano ka mogala wa letheke go netefatsa gore kokoanyo ya tshedimisetso ke e tswileng matsogo, mme batseyakarolo ba letleletse go ka kopa gore dipuisano di emiswe bakeng sa nakwana fa e le gore kgang e bolediwang e masisi mo e leng gore ga nagane gore e tshwanela go nna karolo ya kgatiso, mme kgang eo ga ya tshwanela go kgatisiwa. Jaaka tokomane ya tumalano e saennweng, batsayakarolo ba letlelelwa go ka ikgogela morago nako nngwe le nngwe mme ba tshwanela go itsise radipatlisiso pela ga tshedimisetso e sekwasekwa le go tlhalosiwa. Go feleletsa, batsayakarolo ga ba lefiwe le go rotloetswa ka mokgwa mongwe. Radipatlisiso o na le tsholofelo ya gore dipuisano di ka tsaya nako e lekanang le metsotso e le masome a mane le bothano. Radipatlisiso o rulagantse ba ditirelo tsa go thoba maikutlo fa go ka tlhaga boemo bo bo tlhokang tirelo e jaalo mo e leng gore motsayakarolo o na le lemorago la go nna motswasetlhabelo wa go



kgerisiwa mo mafaratlatheng. Moranolodi wa puo o tla tlhophisiwa go thusa mo maemong ao e leng gore puo ke segoreletsi. Ka ntlha ya leroborobo leno la COVID-19, tshedimosetso e tla kokoanywa ka mogala wa letheke le ka mafaratlathiha a Zoom, Microsoft teams le mogala wa video wa whatsapp o tla dirisiwa go tshwara dikopano tseno, mme dipuisano tse tla kgatsiwa ke tse tla diriwang ka mogala wa letheke feela go thusa radipatlisiso go sekaseka tshedimosetso.

## **KOKETSA B: KAELO YA DIPUISANO TSA MOGALA WA LETHEKA LE BATSADI**

### **Setlhogo sa pele - Dikanale tsa Tlhaeletsano**

- 1.1. Sekolo sa gago se dira jang tlhokomediso ya go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlatheng mo go ba amegang (baitluti, barutabana, batsadi)?
- 1.2. Mekgwa ya tlhaeletsano ya sekolo e thusitse jang mo phasalatsng ya molaetsa ka ga go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlatheng?
- 1.3. O tloganyang eng ka (2012) letlhomeso la Polokego ya Sekolo?
- 1.4. Mekgwa ya tlhaeletsano ya sekolo e thusa go fitlhelela kae mo go phagamiseng tlhokomediso ka molawana wa go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlatheng kgotsa (2012) letlhomeso la Polokego ya Sekolo?
- 1.5. Maikutlo a gago ke a fe, fa e le gore selo se a dirwa, ka mokgwa o tshedimosetso ka ga go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlatheng e tsholwang ka teng mo dikanaleng tsa tlhaeletsano tsa Sekolo?

### **Setlhogo sa bodebi - Tlhokego ya Tshedimosetso**

- 1.1. O tloganya eng ka mafaratlathiha a leago?
- 1.2. Ke ka mokgwa o feng o mosha wa mafaratlathiha (go tsenyeletsa mafaratlathiha a leago) susumeditse jang mokgwa wa gago wa tlhaeletsano?
- 1.3. O ka tlhalosa bophagamo kitso ba gago ba go dirisa komporo le inthanete? Mo masedinyaneng re bala that aka go nna le kitso ya go dirisa tekhinoloji - o tloganya eng ka mafoko ao?
- 1.4. O tloganya eng ka thulaganyo e e sireletsang khomputara?



### **Setlhogo sa boraro - Melaetsa - Tswelopele**

- 1.1. O kopane le tshaeletsano ka melaetsa ya go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlhatlheng go ba ba amegang?
- 1.2. Melaetsa ka ga go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlhatlheng e farologantshwa ka mekgwa e ntseng jang dikanaleng tsa sekolo?
- 1.3. O tshalosa jang tshotholetso ya molwana wa go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlhatlheng mo dikolong?
- 1.4. Maikutlo a gago ke a feng mabapi le dikamano tsa maikutlo dipakeng tsa baithuti, barutabana le batsadi?
- 1.5. Maikutlo a gago ke a feng ka tiro ya katlholo ya dikgoro tsa tsheko malebana le go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlhatlheng?

### **Setlhogo sa bone - Katiso le Tshegetso**

- 1.1. Batsadi ba tshameka karolo e kana kang tlhokomelong le taolong ya bothata ba go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlhatlheng mo dikolong?
- 1.2. Sekolo se katisa jang ba ba amegang (Barutabana, baithuti kgotsa batsadi) ka go tshedimosetso ya go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlhatlheng?
- 1.3. Sekolo se laola jang tiriso ya megala ya letheka le di diriswa tsa tekhnoloji dikagong tsa sekolo?
- 1.4. Kakanyo ya gago ka maemo a kgolo kgotsa gongwe go tlhoka go kgola ga bakgerisi mo mafaratlhatlheng le kgolo kgotsa tlhokego mo go batswasetlhabelong ba go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlhatlheng?
- 1.4. Maikutlo a gago ke a feng ka tshegetso eo sekolo se e neelang batswasetlhabelo ba go kgerisiwa ga mafaratlhatlha?

### **1. Setlhogo sa borataro - Go ikanyega**

- 5.1 Fa o ka kgerisiwa mo mafaratlhatlheng ke moithuti mmogo le wena kgotsa tsala ya gago le fa e le motho fela o sa mo itseng o ka bua ka yona?





- 1.1. O ka tlhalosa go lathegelwa ke taolo jang, fa o kgerisiwa mo mafaratlhatlheng?
- 1.2. Melawana e laolang melaetsa e ke fa sephiring mo tirisong ya mafaratlhatlha a phedisano jaaka DM le Inbox mo go Instagram le Facebook kgotsa melaetsa e itsenela fela le go Whatsapp?
- 1.3. O e bona jang kang dikgakolo tse di tswang mo dithakeng tsa gago ka go kgerisiwa mo mafaratlhatlheng?
- 1.4. Ke mekgwa e feng e leng tirisong dikolong go tlaela mefuta e farologaneng ya go kgerisiwa?



## APPENDIX J: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT



Name of the Researcher: **Nwabisa Noguba**  
Address: **342 Jacob Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Rietfontein**  
Cell: **0824840262**  
Work: **012 3541644**  
Name of the Institution: **University of South Africa**

### Letter Informed Consent

**Title of the Study** The extent of cyber bullying, among stakeholders in the school (learners, teacher and parents) and how it affect the cyber bullring policy in Tshwane Schools.

#### **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of the research study is to explore and describe the extent of cyber bullying awareness among stakeholders (teachers, learners and parents) in Tshwane schools and how it affects cyber bullying policy. The information gained from this study will create awareness on the topic of cyber bullying and offer a solution on how the school sector can progressively address cyber bullying in Gauteng.

#### **Procedure**

You are hereby requested to participate in this study and also give consent for your child to participate. The researcher will explain the topic to be explored in the study, and give you a chance to share your personal opinions or input. All video one on one interviews will be conducted at the convenience of participants during working hours or after hours or weekends. Interview schedules dates and times will be communicated prior. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions for clarity, so that you can make an informed decision about engaging in the study. Thereafter you will sign the consent form before the interview commences.

#### **Risks and discomforts**

You will not suffer any risks or discomforts, but may get tired. Debriefing will be provided by the researcher after the interview. In case, counselling is required, you will be an organised counselling service at Radio Pulpit or Hospivision.

#### **Benefits**

The researcher hopes that the study will provide a better understanding of the factors involved in cyber bullying and information shared will equip all stakeholder ways on how to better handle the topic of cyber bullying. A topic that doesn't only affect the school, a crises



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[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

that affects schools and households.

### **Remuneration**

Participation will be purely voluntary; there will be no incentive for research participants.

### **Participant's rights.**

The researcher will explain prior to participants that it is their right to withdraw in the study should they experience any discomfort, and that information will be kept confidential. The researcher will not share it with the school or department.

### **Confidentiality, anonymity and privacy**

Confidentiality, anonymity and Privacy are cornerstone of any study. It's one of the critical things that Unisa ethics committee look at before granting the researcher with ethical certificate. Signing of consent reassures participants or parents of participants that the information collected from will be handled with confidentiality. Individual responses from the focus groups will not be identifiable, due to the fact that the researcher will not record any candidate names in her field notes. Feelings of participants and opinions will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. Data from this study will only be available to the researcher and her supervisor. Audio-recording will be made of the interview with your permission, but will not include your name to ensure confidentiality. Audio recording will assist the researcher during transcribing. Interviews will be conducted in a quiet and private room to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

### **Details of the researcher**

If you have any concerns or questions regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact:

Nwabisa Noguba (principal researcher)

**Cell number:** 082 484 0262

**E-mail:** [nogubatheo@gmail.com](mailto:nogubatheo@gmail.com)

### **Data Storage**

The information obtained from the participant will be stored in the Department of Human Sciences at the University of South Africa for the period of 5 years.

### **Data usage**



The data gathered will be used to compile a research report in the form of a mini-dissertation that will be available at the university library, and will provide a valuable input in the Media Studies, create awareness about cyber bullying a new monster that is ready to destroy young people.

**Declaration**

I understand my rights as a research participant, I voluntary consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about, how and why it is being conducted.

Signed on 15/05/2021 (date) at Mamelodi (place)

Signature of participant \_\_N.K\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher \_\_N.T\_\_\_\_\_



# APPENDIX K: LETTER OF ASSENT



## ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, LP 1 confirm that the person asking my assent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of 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 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 (if applicable).

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 interview data collection method.

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

Participant Name & Surnam Learner Participant one (please print)

Participant Signature.....SS.....Date.....21/08/2020.....

Researcher's Name & Surname: Nwabisa Noguba      Date 21/08/2020

Researcher's signature..........Date 21/08/2020



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## APPENDIX L: EDITING CERTIFICATE

**LET'S EDIT**

### EDITING CERTIFICATE

06 December 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

#### **DECLARATION: Editing of Dissertation**

This is to certify that the Master of Communication Science dissertation entitled “**AN ANALYSIS OF THE EXTENT OF CYBERBULLYING AWARENESS AMONG THE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE SELECTED PUBLIC SCHOOL IN GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA**” submitted by **Nwabisa Noguba** was edited for English language, grammar, punctuation and spelling by the undersigned. Editing also included addressing various formatting features of the document.

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*Bachelor of Arts (in Education)*

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Tel No.: **012 433 6584**, Fax No.: **086 267 2164** and Email Address: **editor@letsedit.co.za**



# APPENDIX M: TURNITIN REPORT

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Introduction

The advent of digital evolution and the transition to digital technology has opened new opportunities; everything is at one's fingertips and learning and teaching have transitioned to virtual platforms. People transact, consult and find love online. Failure to adapt to these technological opportunities isolates one from their advantages and lessons aligned with digital literacy, which also exposes one to online harm such as cyberbullying (Costley 2014:6).

Globally, digital learning has transformed the learning environment from traditional archives to advanced online libraries, where learning material is accessible on the go and outside the school premises. This new development has exposed learners to cyberbullying, where they face violence or gender-based violence at school or online harm at home while doing research for school purposes (Safe to Learn 2020). Petrov (2019) in the TechJury presents statistics that indicate a "global cyberbullying awareness of 75% with Sweden and Italy leading the chart with 91% awareness". Contrary to the promising figures internationally, there are limited reports about South Africa's state of cyberbullying awareness; not much has been reported on the

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