

**STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY MITIGATE BULLYING AMONG PRIMARY
SCHOOL LEARNERS AT THE SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT IN THE VHEMBE EAST
DISTRICT**

by

NEMBAHE AZWIMMBAVHI GRACE

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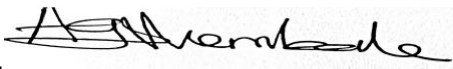
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Supervisor: Dr N. Ndou

10 November 2021

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Nembahe Azwimbavhi Grace, declare that this dissertation entitled: “Strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou circuit in the Vhembe East District” is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of references. This dissertation has not been submitted before for any degree or for any examination in another University.

Signature:  Student no: 30071895

Date: ...10 November 2021

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents, Mr Aaron and Mrs Mavis Ramvuvhelo, for giving me life, comfort and education as the best gift I have ever had. God bless you wherever you are. *“In daily existence, you did sing my endless praise; in death, the lyrics inspired me!”*

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou circuit in the Vhembe East District. The study intended to obtain strategies to effectively mitigate bullying by investigating male and female learners' experiences of bullying in the primary school context. Bullying is one of the major issues facing educators, learners, and school communities. To collect data for the study, a qualitative case study research approach was used, which included the use of focus groups, semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis methods. In addition, data was collected from learners, teachers, HODs and principals, respectively, using purposive sampling. The participants were selected based on their experience in the subject, thus resulting in the collection of trustworthy or authentic information (data). Moreover, this would assist in equipping the concerned school leaders with the knowledge on how to prevent bullying at the affected schools in future. After the themes and sub-themes had been developed, findings emerged, which included aspects such as detailing how bullying was committed in primary schools, the relevant community structures' role in tackling bullying in schools, and the role of school leaders in devising strategies to prevent bullying in primary schools. Thereafter, recommendations were developed detailing how school leaders should work together with other structures to prevent bullying and how to deal with the perpetrators of bullying.

Key words: intervention strategies, bullying, mitigate, learners behaviour, discipline

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

WHO	World Health Organisation
HOD	Head of Department
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CASS	Curriculum Assessment
REHC	Research Ethics Higher Committee
DC	Disciplinary Committee
UNISA	University of South Africa
CABF	Concerned Anti-Bullying Foundation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CCPF	Chinese Concerned Parents Forum
SMT	School Management Team
SGB	School Governing Body
EST	Ecological System Theory

Table of contents

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	v
CHAPTER 1:.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	3
1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.....	4
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	5
1.4.1 Main research question.....	5
1.4.2 Sub-questions	5
1.5 ASSUMPTION OF THE STUDY	5
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE/RATIONALE OF THE STUDY	6
1.7 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE	7
1.7.1 Consideration of the high rate of bullying in primary schools.....	8
1.7.2 Factors influencing bullying in primary schools	10
1.7.3 The effects of bullying on learning and teaching in schools.....	12
1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN	14
1.8.1 Research design	14
1.8.2 Research paradigm.....	15
1.8.3 Research approach.....	15
1.8.3.1 Population.....	16
1.8.3.2 Sampling.....	16
1.8.3.3 Sample size	18
1.8.3.4 Data collection techniques and instrumentation	18
1.8.3.5 Instrumentation.....	19
1.8.3.6 Data analysis and interpretation (strategies)	21
1.9 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS OR AUTHENTICITY IN THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH	23
1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	25
1.11 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	28
1.11.1 Limitations	28
1.11.2 Delimitations.....	29
1.12 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS	29

1.12.1 Bullying.....	29
1.12.2 A bullying child	30
1.12.3 Victim.....	30
1.12.4 Strategies	30
1.12.5 Effectively	30
1.12.6 Experiences	31
1.13 CHAPTER DIVISION.....	31
1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY	31
1.15 CONCLUSION.....	32
CHAPTER 2:.....	32
2.1 INTRODUCTION	32
2.2 KNOWLEDGE OF BULLYING AND ITS CONTENT ON LEARNERS IN SCHOOLS ...	33
2.3 EFFECTS OF BULLYING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS	34
2.3.1 Physical perspective	35
2.3.2 Psychological perspective.....	36
2.3.3 Emotional perspective.....	37
2.3.4 Spiritual perspective.....	37
2.3.5 Moral perspective	38
2.3.6 Cognitive perspective.....	38
2.4 FACTORS LEADING TO BULLYING IN SCHOOLS.....	39
2.5 STRATEGIES THAT COULD BE USED TO MITIGATE BULLYING IN SCHOOLS.....	42
2.5.1 Use of social workers.....	42
2.5.2 Inviting motivational speakers.....	42
2.5.3 Inviting religious leaders	43
2.5.4 Inclusion of parental structures.....	43
2.5.5 Teaching Life Skills or Life Orientation subjects	44
2.5.6 Development of learners' code of conduct	44
2.5.7 Enforcement of the disciplinary structures composed of the SMT and SGB.....	45
2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	45
2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY	48
CHAPTER 3:.....	49
3.1 INTRODUCTION	49
3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM.....	50
3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH.....	51
3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN	53
3.4.1 Case study	54
3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS	56

3.5.1 Focus group interviews	57
3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews.....	59
3.5.3 Observation	60
3.5.4 Document analysis.....	62
3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING	64
3.6.1 Population	64
3.6.2 Sampling	64
3.6.3 Purposive and convenient sampling.....	66
3.7 DATA ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION	67
3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS	70
3.8.1 Credibility.....	70
3.8.2 Transferability.....	70
3.8.3 Dependability	71
3.8.4 Confirmability	71
3.9 RESEARCH ETHICS	72
3.9.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation.....	72
3.9.2 Harm and risk.....	74
3.9.3 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity.....	74
3.9.4 Carefulness, honesty, and integrity (Deception)	75
3.10 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	75
3.10.1 Limitations	75
3.10.2 Delimitation.....	76
3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY	76
CHAPTER 4:.....	77
4.1 INTRODUCTION	77
4.2 DATA ANALYSIS FROM INTERVIEWS	77
4.2.1 Coding of participants	78
4.2.2 Emerging themes	79
4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Understanding the concept of bullying in the primary school context	81
4.2.2.2 Theme 2: Learner experience of the bullying behaviour	84
4.2.2.3 Theme 3: Social identities in, gender, home background, and sexual orientations	86
4.2.2.4 Theme 4: Causes of bullying in primary schools	88
4.2.2.5 Theme 5: Places and spaces of bullying in schools	89
4.2.2.6 Theme 6: Supporting victims and perpetrators of bullying	91
4.2.2.7 Theme 7: Leadership responsibility towards the effectiveness of learner's discipline	93

4.2.2.8 Theme 8: The culture and climate of primary school regarding learner discipline	94
4.2.2.9 Theme 9: Factors influencing causes of bullying in schools	95
4.2.2.10 Theme 10: Learners' understanding of bullying behaviours amongst each other	96
4.2.2.11 Theme 11: Programmes that are effective in the preventing of bullying in primary schools.....	97
4.2.2.12 Theme 12: Effectiveness of preventing bullying on teaching and learning in primary schools.....	98
4.2.2.13 Theme 13: Formulation of an anti-bullying policy	99
4.3 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS	103
4.4 OBSERVATION ANALYSIS	104
4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY	106
CHAPTER 5:.....	106
5.1 INTRODUCTION	106
5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY.....	107
5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS	114
5.3.1 Recommendations to schools	115
5.3.2 Recommendation to the Department of Education	116
5.4 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	116
5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	116
5.6 CONCLUSIONS	117
6. REFERENCES	117
APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM UNISA	130
APPENDIX B: CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.....	133
APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT	134
APPENDIX D: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITHIN THE SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT	136
APPENDIX E: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS	138
APPENDIX F: A LETTER REQUESTING PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINORS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT	140
APPENDIX G: CONSENT TO PARTICIPANT IN AN INTERVIEW: PRINCIPAL.....	144
APPENDIX H: CONSENT TO PARTICIPANT IN AN INTERVIEW: TEACHER	149
APPENDIX I: CONSENT TO PARTICIPANT IN AN INTERVIEW: HODs	154
APPENDIX J: FOCUS GROUP ASSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT	159
APPENDIX K: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS FOR LEARNERS	161

APPENDIX L: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS	162
APPENDIX M: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HODs	165
APPENDIX N: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS	168
APPENDIX O: LETTER FROM THE EDITOR.....	171

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The study focused on learners' bullying in primary schools as an issue of concern to principals, teachers, parents, and the Limpopo Department of Education. During the school years, bullying was one of the worst expressions of violence in the peer contexts (Downer, 2012:31). In this context, a school is one of the key conditions set up to support learners and to create safer and more secure conditions for them so that they might become tomorrow's exemplary adults, either at their workplaces or in their communities. However, bullying has turned primary schools into dangerous environments (de facto "jails") where learners are not free or safe (De Wet, 2016b:56). Safety is a core environment foundation for a school where learners from different backgrounds (culture, religion, race, sexual orientation, etc.) experience freedom of expression and association rooted in the acceptance of coexistence and the accommodation of one another (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2016:18). According to Hutzell and Payne (2017:122), bullying does not respect such accommodation and coexistence. Instead, it promotes terror intimidation and extreme discomfort, negatively affecting learners' performance and attitude, which could potentially be permanently damaging. Nonetheless, children will behave like children. For instance, instead of studying in the afternoon, they would rather play or misuse this precious opportunity to study.

Teachers understand that bullying interferes with social improvement, it can prevent the child's capacity to improve at school; and it may be a major contributory factor in extreme adolescence troubles (Gordon & Morin, 2019:49). It does not build a learner's character, and is certainly not an inevitable part of growing up. It is an ugly and, at times, devastating experience that needs to be controlled by vigilant teachers and parents (Wolke et al., 2013:18). In support of these views, Menesini and Salmivalli (2017:18) stressed that an anti-bullying ethos at school promotes children's learning attitudes that could also be quickly adapted to the provision of good social and

foundations for dealing with key issues such as culture, religion, race, sexual direction, and so forth, when these arise or are encountered at school. Bullying is considered a critical social problem by several international agencies worldwide (Bakar, 2017:37). Such is the psychological impact of bullying. We should not be surprised to see an exodus of very young learners leaving one school for another where they expect to find peace, safety, and stability (Cornell & Limber, 2016:231).

Bullying poses a considerable risk to vulnerable children, such as those with disabilities, refugees, migrants, those who are excluded or belong to a minority group, or those with peer group difficulties. For instance, as we would expect, the South African government allows refugee children to be granted admission in South African schools. These children suffer higher instances of bullying, to the extent that some find themselves treated like slaves. In this context, some of these children experiencing bullying could not report this because they feared reprisal from peer groups. This clearly indicates that refugee children are victims of xenophobia (Notar, et al, 2013:63).

Based on the above, it is possible to conclude that there is a likelihood that those who do not live in the vicinity of schools, including teachers and the concerned stakeholders, could well underestimate the negative consequences caused by the bullying pandemic in primary schools today. The reason for this is that the most common bullying actions are usually done in what we might call “hiding places” located in close proximity to the physical location of the schools themselves. Concurring with the above, Downer (2012:16) states that reducing the extent to which the bullying occurs in most primary schools requires the intervention of social workers or established motivational speakers. By so doing, the bullying could eventually be stopped. Juvonen and Graham (2014:101) further refer to ‘bullying’ as an act that involves dynamic interaction between the perpetrators and their victims. It is also of importance to note that the bullies feel bad after a bullying incident. However, they cannot reverse their actions, since they need to abide by their peer groups’ instructions as they receive appraisal and in some cases recommendations from the peer group leaders (Mwamwenda, 2012:68).

According to Hood and Duffy (2017:25), the ability for any learner to bully other learners in schools does not bode well for his or her future character development. It also compels any right-thinking person to conclude that such bullies end up becoming ill-mannered adults. Bullying in schools should be put to an end so that all learners have the opportunity to learn and become tomorrow's leaders. From the researcher's own experience as a teacher, she has never seen any officer from the Department of Education coming to address learners about the issue of bullying at her school. Apart from this, the researcher has also not found any research on the study's topic conducted in her own school or in any neighbouring school. This implies that there is a knowledge gap concerning the question, "Why is there a high rate of bullying in most primary schools, particularly at the Sambandou Circuit in Vhembe District?" Usually, every question that is posed should be followed by an answer. The answer to this question seems dependent on the outcome of this study. To conclude this section, it can be said that the reason why bullying is still at its peak could be that there is a lack of knowledge of the problem, which limits the ability to find strategies to reduce bullying at the affected schools.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is a growing concern at the Sambandou Circuit in the Limpopo province that there is a considerable incidence of bullying in many public schools. This bullying has a negative impact on learner performance and wellbeing, to the extent that, in severe instances, learner suicide has occurred. Thus, the research problem of this study mainly revolves around the need to develop strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District. In this regard, the Limpopo Department of Education (2014:51) issued a report recognising that most schools in the Vhembe East District, particularly those under the Sambandou Circuit, are deeply embroiled in the bullying actions occurring between learners and teachers. Outcries and complaints are time and again being sent to the department, seeking assistance in this matter. Allisop and Van Zyl (2017:82) also conducted a study at the Sambandou Circuit. The results revealed that bullying, particularly on a learner-to-learner basis, happens daily in schools in the area.

However, in the past, researchers who conducted studies on this topic stated that bullying is a social problem troubling both learners and teachers in schools, but they were silent on possible strategies to mitigate this problem. It is only recently that researchers have shown an interest in the topic under study. Further investigation into the available literature on global debates around the topic was conducted, and the results stressed that school bullying, whatever form it takes, is still at an exceptionally high level.

Burton (2010:43) conducted a study on bullying in Australian primary schools. This study revealed that most of the perpetrators are boys rather than girls. It also further emphasised that bullying is an exploitation of an imbalanced power relationship and involves aggression that may occur both physically and emotionally. It can be performed in different ways, such as directly by a person or through the transmission of an electronic message (cyberbullying). As the Australian case shows, bullying is a global phenomenon (Chauke, 2014:36). The aforementioned has been verified by the researcher's personal experience working for the past 15 years in a bullying-affected school under Sambandou Circuit in Vhembe East District. It is also a fact that most school bullies are boys from violent families, where one can assume that they lack good parental guidance. The question that remains to be asked (and should be asked often) is, "Why is there a high rate of bullying activities amongst primary school learners in schools?" It is hoped that this study's findings will not only provide the answer to this question, but that all stakeholders will find an answer to this question.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary goal of this research is to investigate strategies that could be effectively used to mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District. The objectives that guided this study were based on the following primary goals:

- To define bullying in primary school contexts.
- To determine factors that cause bullying among primary school learners.
- To describe the effects of bullying on teaching and learning at the affected primary schools.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to Hasa (2017:37), the research question aids in narrowing down the explanation and clarification to an unequivocal solicitation that the specialist attempts to answer. Furthermore, Du Plooy (2012:76) also maintained that research questions are used in research for a variety of reasons. Kumar (2014:65) highlighted that research questions are based on the number of the objectives and also pointed out that the sub-topics could be as many as possible. Despite this, they should be based on the main topics.

1.4.1 Main research question

- What strategies can be used to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District?

1.4.2 Sub-questions

- How can bullying be defined in the primary school context?
- Why was bullying taking place in primary schools of Sambandou Circuit?
- How does bullying affect teaching and learning in primary schools?

1.5 ASSUMPTION OF THE STUDY

Cowie and Hornby (2013:61) referred to the term “assumption” as a thing accepted as true or sure to happen, before it has happened and has even not yet been approved.

From the researcher's perceptive, assumption could be easily called the "expectation" that any person could make concerning what he or she is expecting to happen sooner or later. Furthermore, in the research world, this can simply be referred to a hypothesis. This study aimed to establish the appropriate strategies for mitigating bullying among primary school learners under the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District.

The study's research questions are centered on the study's specific objectives, as should normally be the case in the research world (Creswell, 2013:46). The key phrases will also be described clearly so that readers or future beginner-researchers would not encounter any difficulties while conducting research on the same topic. Moreover, the appropriate methods for data collection and analysis, and the correlating research designs were chosen. Kumar (2014:39) supports this point by stating that a suitable research design should be used to achieve the study's objectives. A case study research design, for example, should be used in a qualitative method, whereas a survey or quasi-experimental research design should be correctly used in a quantitative approach.

The qualitative research approach adopted in this study entailed the use of a well-chosen purposive sample. The researcher visited the five sampled schools so that the principals could provide her with suitable participants to be used in the study. Purposive sampling, used in a qualitative approach, relies on perceptions, innovation and/or the findings of the previous studies based on the same topic (Neuman, 2018:112). This means that the study should obtain valuable data from experienced participants. This further implies that the study's findings would be trustworthy or authentic in nature. Moreover, it would also mean that the participants would answer the posed questions freely and honestly based on their personal experiences.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE/RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The term "study rationale" describes the standards or reasons that clarify the decisions, causes, or beliefs of the actual actions/reasons of why something is being

done (Wehmeier et al., 2014:102). In this study, the “rationale of the study” would mean the provision of the reasons for why the researcher has decided to conduct a research study on the present topic. For example, there has recently been outcries or complaints concerning factors influencing the high rate of bullying in primary schools at Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District. In some instances, parents approached the school principals. They lodged complaints about the experiences and safety of their children. In this context, Circuit offices forwarded the complaints to the Department of Education. However, the researcher is yet to see any department head addressing learners at the school where she is currently teaching.

Nengovhela (2017:4) also reported that many learners in the five sampled schools under the Sambandou Circuit had quit schooling due to bullying. Moreover, the bullies knew that nothing would be done to them (regardless of their offence). On this same theme, the researcher witnessed a female teacher being hit by a stone while trying to stop a bullying incident being carried out in her class. During the hearing, it was revealed that the culprit (a boy) was from a violent family and is also known to be troublesome in his community. As a result, he was suspended for two months and thereafter came back to school.

As mentioned earlier, concerned school leaders lack knowledge about where bullying is happening, something the researcher herself is aware of (as previously mentioned, she has not found any research on the study’s topic conducted in her own school or any neighbouring school at the Sambandou Circuit).

1.7 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE

Gustafsson (2017:72) highlighted that in pursuance of understanding the term “preliminary literature review,” it should first be broken down into two simpler parts, namely the prefix “pre,” meaning “before” and the noun “review,” which in its verbal form implies a reconsideration of all that previous researchers have said about the topic discussed. In addition, Gonzalez-Dehaas (2020:82) also maintained that the

preliminary literature review refers to a literature review done before a more detailed one, which would usually appear in Chapter 2 of the study.

Oates (2013:43) also indicated that a “literature review” is critical as it is a vital part of a research study through which researchers work through the interests and concerns of the previous research works detailing the key things they have said. Furthermore, Kumar (2014:76) also stressed that the selected topics should focus on the study's objectives and research questions even at the preliminary literature review part. On the same note, he stated that the sub-topics could be as numerous as possible, but they must be linked to the main topic. Therefore, this research addresses the following topics:

1.7.1 Consideration of the high rate of bullying in primary schools

Gordon and Morin (2019:55) assert that “many aspects need further explanation, but the bullying crisis appears to have become an obvious matter to many people, be they in schools, at their homes, or somewhere else in society.” In other words, it is known that it exclusively happens in most primary schools, rather than in secondary schools. To further support the notion that bullying in primary schools is a global issue, Govenon and Graham (2014:110) found that in Russia, approximately 20% to 25% of youths in primary schools are involved in bullying as perpetrators, victims, or both, while in schools. Bullying is sometimes based on the imbalance of power (e.g., minors bullied by senior learners, or those seen as powerful bullying the less powerful, particularly girls). Still, on the same note, girls do not appear to be interested in bullying activities; hence they are rarely found to be involved in such activities. Perhaps this is because they are not as physically strong as their male counterparts.

In trying to understand and explain bullying in primary schools globally, this issue of power imbalance should not be underrated. Typically, it is derived from power differentials such as physical strength, social status in the group, or the group size (e.g., a group targeting a single person). Unfortunately, learners who do not have

friends or who do not belong to any peer group are vulnerable to being victims of bullying in schools, whereas those belonging to groups are less at risk. If we consider the rate of bullying, whether carried out in secrecy or publicly, it would appear that the abolition of corporal punishment has worsened the situation in South African schools. It is also a fact that bullying should be viewed as the systematic abuse of power involving aggressive behaviour aimed at causing harm to someone intentionally.

This shows that bullying can become a bad habit, one in which a victim could be bullied continuously. As a teacher, the researcher's observation is that bullying has a noticeable impact on teaching and learning. For example, a learner who has just been assaulted or robbed of pocket money would find it extremely difficult to cope during class lessons. It is possible that such a learner would lie to his or her parents to avoid going to school the following day. In most cases, the victim would hardly reveal such an incident to their parents, fearing reprisals from the peer bullies. Swearer et al., (2014:30) also stressed that learners who bully others usually exhibit a complex array of psychological, cognitive, and social characteristics. Moreover, bullying can also have a negative impact on the victim's educational performance. For instance, when a learner is bullied before they write a test or exam, it could lead him or her to perform poorly in the test itself (as a result of the psychological and emotional trauma experienced).

In addition, bullying can have a deleterious effect on a victim's physical and mental health, reducing the likelihood of successfully adopting adult roles. As a result, damaging the possibility of forming lasting interpersonal relationships, integrating into work, and being economically independent (Hood & Duffy, 2017:13). In keeping with the examples cited, Hutzell and Payne (2017:25) also reported that 55% to 64% of South African students are bullied daily in primary or secondary schools. This shows that the rate of bullying is higher in South Africa than elsewhere; hence, the concerned stakeholders in the affected schools do not have the appropriate strategies to reduce it. The World Health Organisation (2014:62) also reported that 1452 school learners aged 8 to 12 years are bullied in primary schools at least every day in Algeria.

However, it shows that in every country, the rate of bullying is at its highest in primary schools. Considering the rate at which bullying is happening in primary schools today, one could conclude that bullying continues to occur in schools at a high rate.

Apart from the question of the high frequency of bullying in schools, what is significant is the issue of the kinds of bullying highlighted. Silva (2017:45) acknowledged the three types of bullying, namely direct actual bullying, direct verbal bullying, and social bullying. A single bullying action might involve all three at once.

An example of verbal bullying would be when one of the bully's insults another learner in a rude manner by calling them a dog or a monkey. This also happens when female learners are being bullied through cyberbullying, which typically involves sending rude or obscene words, images, or depicted actions that have a severe effect. Such bullying is usually aimed at young girls because they are known to be sensitive and/or short-tempered, and thus the bullying is likely to provoke a reaction from them. Direct bullying could occur in the form of pulling a person's hair. For instance, a bully could walk into a classroom and pull a fellow learners' hair from behind without any reason. Since there are different kinds of bullying found among learners in primary schools, all factors should be considered when assessing and evaluating the rate of bullying in affected schools. Finally, Khuzwayo et al., (2016:15) also noted that learners bullied in schools are more likely to wet beds, have sleeping problems, and have complications and abnormal aches. In fact, "How clearly can a learner who did not sleep well the previous night due to bullying concentrate on schoolwork well?"

1.7.2 Factors influencing bullying in primary schools

De Wet (2016b:50) asserts that "In life, something or an action does not just happen, but it occurs due to some cause-factors. However, there should be a fact or circumstance that helps to produce a result, and the same also applies to bullying." Furthermore, it also means that the bullying affecting most primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe District, will come to light and thus resolved. More

significantly, this could be achieved after the concerned stakeholders [(teachers, principals, the school management team (SMT), school governing body (SGB), and heads of department (HODs)] have thoroughly read the findings of this study. To be precise, the factors or causes of bullying in primary schools should be identified before it can be put to an end.

Numerous factors cause bullying in schools, excluding those happening at home, and in public places. These include many factors from our daily thought and life. Royse (2017:18) suggests factors such as domestic violence, lack of parental guidance, and dysfunctional families. Furthermore, under certain circumstances, a terrible school and social environment could well result in causing bullying in schools (Mncube & Steinmann, 2014:56). In support of the foregoing views, De Wet (2016b:45) also highlighted that gender is one of the factors that could unexpectedly influence bullying in boys more than girls. It is also reported that 51% of school children in South Africa started bullying at an early age (Moloi, 2015:56). How learners wear their school uniform or the vehicles that drop them off at school could trigger bullying behaviour in learners, especially primary school learners. For example, if a learner is dropped off in luxury cars, their jealous peers could interpret this as an intentional, ostentatious flaunting of wealth and privilege. The aspect of dressing well at school could also be the reason why learners are bullied at school. This should be reported to parents and in certain cases to the police.

Menesini and Salmivalli (2017:86) also pointed out that some children become victims of bullying due to their social popularity. The reason is that learners who hail from poor families would be predisposed to feel jealous of those from wealthy families. For example, a learner's brother could be a famous reggae singer, thus contributing to why the learner is bullied at school. On the other hand, due to the inferiority complex experienced by those from poor families, his or her siblings could engender such jealousy in bullies in schools. On the same note, primary school learners who bully others are reported to be either addicted to alcohol or smoking dagga (Smith et al., 2015:89). Immediately after a learner is known to be a victim of bullying, their friends

usually distance themselves from such a victim, citing the dating wishes for social contacts, friendship, and love.

As already mentioned, many factors influence primary school learners to resort to committing bullying. On the other hand, lack of parental guidance influences learners to level bullying actions against other learners. Hennik et al., (2020:113) also contended that although parents provide their children with role models when growing up, one thing that remains constant is that we are our children's learning models. Therefore, our attitudes about behaviours or any other form of manners could guide them towards ideal behaviours that will benefit them as adults. In addition, Merriam and Grenier (2018:37) also noted that a parent needs to be a positive role model for their children in order to assist them in becoming tomorrow's well-respected adults. On the contrary, most bullies are learners who have grown up without guidance from their parents. For example, most learners who are bullies lacked guidance from their parents while growing up. In summation, it then leads one to conclude that a lack of parental guidance impacts children's behaviour in schools.

1.7.3 The effects of bullying on learning and teaching in schools

Mncube and Steinmann (2014:86) also maintained that the bullying levelled against other learners has often negatively impacted learners' academic performance in schools. Furthermore, it should be often realised that there is a strong connection between the menace exploitation and a helpless scholarly performance versus social change, and poor mental prosperity. In support of the above, Cornell and Limber (2016:78) noted that bullied learners could develop issues such as negative, physical, social, emotional, academic, and mental health issues despite their grade. On the other hand, bullied learners, especially those in primary schools, are more likely to experience depression, stress and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in important personal needs and beneficial activities. Moreover, the bullied learners are also prone to miss, skip or drop out of school unnecessarily.

Thus, it can be suggested that protecting learners from being bullied allows them to be successful adults.

Other signs that could show us that a learner is being bullied could include seeing their changed eating patterns and preferring solitary attitudes when at home. Additionally, bullied learners usually lose interest in school activities. In such an instance, it would also mean that when other learners are doing group work in classes, the bullied learners will not participate wholly-heartedly; hence, they are used to being in isolation at home. It is also of cardinal importance that such bullying victims would have not gained anything after participating in group activities at school.

Nevertheless, group activities appear to be of much benefit, since learners of different intelligences would be participating in those groups. The reason for this is that some learners would be good in certain activities, while other learners are good at explaining how something works. Therefore, bullying results in negative consequences for learners. In addition to the examples mentioned above, bullied learners may continually complain about their health. For example, if a monthly test is to be written and a learner experiences painful headaches due to bullying, they could miss the test. Unlike in the past, monthly or end-of-year tests were the most important criteria. CASS marks are used today to determine the promotion of any learner to the next grade. Moreover, factors that influence teachers and learners performance after experiencing bullying are discussed in Chapter 2. In addition, another issue brought about by school bullying is the dropping out of learners. This suggests that stakeholders tasked with mitigating bullying amongst learners in primary schools should prioritise the resolving of this issue.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

1.8.1 Research design

A research design is a layered strategy for data collection and analysis (Gray, 2013:111). Bless et al., (2013:52) and Oates (2014) agree that a research design is related to testing hypotheses. In this perspective, a research design should be considered a requirement of the most appropriate processes that must be carried out to test the specific hypothesis under the given conditions. Furthermore, Terre Blanche et al., (2013:94) emphasised that a research design serves as a link between research questions and research implementation. A research design is also understood as an item that characterises a general system that a scientist uses to co-ordinate segments of the research intelligently and coherently. Subsequently, guaranteeing that a specialist addresses the research issues ensures that the research is conducted correctly (Lee, 2019:123).

As this study used a case study research design, the researcher was able to collect data through face-to-face interviews (Creswell, 2013:53). The reason for this is that the researcher chose a qualitative data approach. Moreover, according to Burns and Grove (2012:71), a case study is a particular user, programme, or event that is studied in depth over a set period of time. A case study approach appears to be appropriate for this study, as it keeps the researcher learning about the topic at hand. Through its use, the higher rate of bullying in primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District, might be effectively mitigated. Most importantly, a case study also gives permission to a researcher to further investigate an individual or programme changes over a long time. For example, in relation to the topic under study, when referring to “Strategies that could effectively mitigate in pursuance of reducing the rate of bullying being perpetrated by older boys against minor learners at the affected schools, especially primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit.” In this regard, while interviewing the participants, the researcher also learnt about the participants individually, but it took long before the researcher could win them over to talk about the bullying activities they were part of in school.

In support of the above, Cohen et al., (2013:19) also indicated that when using a case study, specifically in a qualitative approach, there is always a possibility that the hypotheses would be easily revealed. The examples provided suggest that the case study approach is relevant for this research because it gives the researcher an opportunity to record the details about the

surroundings being studied, including the information about the physical environment, and any historical economic and social factors that have a bearing on the situation.

1.8.2 Research paradigm

Struwig and Stead (2017:74) posit that a research paradigm is a process that describes what should be studied and how research should be interpreted. Therefore, a research paradigm could also be referred to as a method. Moreover, it can also be used to explore strategies to mitigate the bullying of primary school learners in the case study area. On the other hand, Du Plooy et al., (2014:36) also stressed that a research paradigm serves as a lens of organising principles through which reality will be interpreted. Furthermore, Brink et al., (2018:78) noted that a research paradigm could enable any researcher to tell a consistent story by displaying a meaningful and functional word when subjected to hesitations in life, especially while conducting a research study. Consequently, before strategies of mitigating bullying in primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in Vhembe East District could be devised, the causes must first come to light using an appropriate research paradigm.

1.8.3 Research approach

Mandal (2018:51) referred to a research approach as a process that involves obtaining scientific knowledge by means of using various methods and procedures in the research world. According to Terre Blanche et al., (2013:99), the term research approach could be understood if it could first be divided into two parts while being explained, namely research and approach. For example, research would mean a careful study of subjects, especially in terms of discovering new facts or information about them. On the other hand, an approach would refer to dreaming or thinking about something or a task aimed at finding an answer. Therefore, a research approach would mean a method to be used in a scientific manner in the research world. In this regard, the researcher successfully used a research approach to explore strategies to be effectively used in mitigating bullying among primary school learners at the

Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District. Floyd and Fowler (2014:82) also cautioned that the difference between a paradigm and an approach only crops up in the way one uses them in a coherent storytelling manner for a research study. In this context, looking or trying to deeply reason about the two terms; paradigm and approach leaves one with no other option but to agree that they all mean a method that could be used in research to find a solution to the research problem of the phenomenon under study.

1.8.3.1 Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2013:231) posit that a population is defined as a group of people or events whereby a sample is drawn, and which results can be easily summarised. Brink et al., (2018:78) defined a population as an entire group or a group of items and events that the researcher intends to study. Additionally, Neuman (2018:123) defined a population as a group or approximate of individuals' organisational social artefacts objectives (e.g., mass media messages) or interpersonal relationships and events. Silva (2017:51) maintained that a community is the total number of people of all analysis included in the study.

The population for this research was comprised of learners, teachers, principals, and HODs. A sample is frequently drawn from the population; thus, it refers to all possible cases of what the researcher is interested in learning (Monette et al., 2012:93).

1.8.3.2 Sampling

According to Struwig and Stead (2017:36), a sample is a procedure by which a given number of subjects from a population are selected to represent a population. In the present study, the researcher requested names of five public primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District to be used throughout the data collection procedure. The researcher used purposive sampling to identify the five selected schools based on their socioeconomic status. Learners in those schools were

sampled from Grade 4 to 7 for a wider perception on bullying. A principal, HOD, and teachers per school were purposively selected to participate in the study, knowing that they had vast knowledge of how bullying had been happening at the affected schools. The researcher also tried to vary the gender of the participants to avoid bias. Two male principals, three female principals, three female HODs, two male HODs, five male teachers, five female teachers, four male learners, and four female learners took part in the study. Thus, a total of 28 participants took part in the study. This kind of purposive sampling allowed the researcher to reach out to people who were likely to have the information needed and were willing to share it with the researcher in question (Silva, 2017:31). Furthermore, a purposive sample seems suitable for this study, since it relies on factors that ensure that the information obtained is of a high order of valuable content. The smaller sample sizes involved in purposive sampling enable the researcher to conduct interviews faster than larger samples as found in the qualitative approach.

Apart from this, purposive sample also helps give users the most accurate information that can help the goals of this research be met (Mohd Arfin, 2018:66). On the one hand, a purposive sample is also extremely useful in cases where the researcher intends to construct a historical reality, describe a phenomenon, or develop something about which only a little is known (e.g., the drug lords place if in operation or the prostitutes dwelling place). Before conducting the interviews, this researcher first visited the selected primary schools and consulted principals on how best to select the participants to ensure optimum contributions from participants in the research. The three categories of respondents were decided based on their respective suitabilities: learners were suitable because their experience of bullying was firsthand, teachers could readily identify who the bullies were, and principals were familiar with what is happening. Whatever occurs in a school environment is reported to the principal, which means they have access to bullying reports. Finally, the Circuit and District had also been selected because their schools were embroiled in the bullying crisis at the time.

1.8.3.3 Sample size

The present study was conducted at the five purposively selected primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District. It is also further highlighted that an adequate sample is solely determined by how homogeneous or heterogeneous the sample is. The study's participants were selected using purposive sampling: two male principals, three female principals, three female HODs, two male HODs, five male teachers, five female teachers, four male learners, and four female learners took part in the study. Thus, a total of 28 participants took part in the study.

1.8.3.4 Data collection techniques and instrumentation

Allen (2017:52) stressed that another form of classifying a research study, apart from the research design or methodology, is by exploring its data collection technique. After being granted permission to conduct a research study from the Research Ethics Higher Committee (REHC), the researcher first consulted the parents of the learners. The aim was to ensure that they had all signed the informed consent forms. Signing the informed consent forms serves as insurance for the participants during the main investigation in case any life-threatening incident occurs. In addition, the researcher includes a pre-session with half of the respondents, and those taking part in it, who will not form part of the main investigation. During the pre-test session, the questions from the interview guide were corrected; this enabled the participants to familiarise themselves with the questions to be posed during the interviews. A pre-test session also makes it easier for the interviewer to know the type of individual they will be working with. Before the interviews, the researcher first requested permission to use a tape recorder with participants (Cornell & Limber, 2016:75). The reason for this was that some of the participants were not used to being recorded while speaking. Moreover, to ensure that the participants understood the questions, the interviewer started by translating the interview questions into vernacular before proceeding with the interviews.

Each participant was interviewed in separate rooms, while principals and HODs were interviewed in their offices. Each interview lasted 25 minutes. When each response had been completed, it was recorded and transcribed to avoid delaying the data analysis process (Royse, 2012:98). It would also serve as a guarantee of the trustworthiness or authenticity of data during the data analysis. The findings developed were of a high standard for those researchers wishing to take this study further. When the interviews came to an end, the researcher expressed gratitude to the participants for agreeing to take part in the research. Moreover, they were assured that their contributions would not be shared with anyone.

1.8.3.5 Instrumentation

Bless et al., (2013:56) define instrumentation as changes in the measuring device or procedure over the course of time for the study being conducted. For Babbie and Mouton (2013:41), an instrument is also defined as an instrument or device used for a specific task, particularly delicate or scientific work. Marlow and Boone (2013:28) caution that before a measurement is used in the research process, it is also important to first assess its authenticity. Therefore, this would assist in confirming whether it could be used or not. The researcher used document analysis, observations, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews for data collection in this study.

- **In document analysis**, a letter requesting provision of the above-mentioned documents was addressed to the principal of each prospective school. This letter also clarified the research's objectives. The principal was promised that the documents would be kept safe. The researcher submitted the letter in person, requesting permission to make copies of the anti-bullying policy and the learners' Code of Conduct. Anti-bullying policies aided the researcher in analysing bullying policy and how learners abided by those policies. A behaviour record book for bullying assisted the researcher to analyse the statistics of bullying at school. The learners' Code of Conduct helped to evaluate how those rules bounded learners. The minutes of disciplinary

meetings also assisted the researcher in having evidence of whether the SGB and school management discussed and resolved those incidents at school. The researcher was given permission by the principal to obtain all the needed documents from the custodians, who were the principal, deputy principal, or HODs, depending on the school policy. After those documents had been analysed, confidentiality was secured by recovering all of the documents used in the analysis.

- **In the focus group**, the size of a group was small; they each comprised four learners (one group from each school). Focus groups were also conducted in a school, following the COVID-19 protocols by ensuring that these focus groups met in a disinfected, well-ventilated classroom.
- **In observation**, the researcher also used participant observation. The principal, HOD, teachers, and learners of each selected school were observed throughout the day for a period of five days per school. For observation to be appropriately carried out, an observation grid was used. The research followed the school programme so that carrying out the observation could not disturb the school's running. During the interview process, the following were considered:
 - i. Gatherings such as the morning assembly and the morning or afternoon study
 - ii. Arrival of learners in the morning
 - iii. Staff meetings
 - iv. Disciplinary Committee meetings and hearings
 - v. Sporting and cultural activities

During the interviews, the following participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews: teachers, HODs, and principals. Additionally, face-to-face or telephone interviews (in cases where participants were unavailable to conduct face-to-face due to COVID-19 restrictions or quarantine) were also used. An audio-recorder was used to record all the interviews. The first interviews were held at a place and time that were deemed fit by the participants. However, during those times, the interviewees were also informed whether there would be follow-up interviews.

1.8.3.6 Data analysis and interpretation (strategies)

According to Wagner et al., (2012:64), data analysis is the application of rationale and interpretation to the collected data. Zikmund (2013:102) defines analysis as the application of reasoning to the knowledge and interpretation of the data gathered. On the other hand, Downer (2012:46) emphasised that data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleaning, converting, and modelling data to the point where it should lead to the final stage of hearing what the participants have actually said.

The researcher's method of data analysis involved an interpretative/constructivist model, using descriptive coding of the participants' responses, interview transcripts, and relevant documents (Brink et al., 2018:67). This study made use of observations and document analysis, including structured and semi-structured focus group interviews. The data collected was analysed using the thematic content method. Punch (2013:16) stressed that to enable this process to be successfully carried out; the researcher should adhere to utilising the chosen instruments for data collection.

Data was gathered through semi-structured and focus-group interviews. Data gathered through semi-structured and focus-group interviews was recorded in the recording device and transcribed verbatim with immediate effect. In the meantime, the collated data was also organised into units for safe keeping. Those units were derived from the used questions. The same questions would serve as themes in order to organise data properly. Ultimately, coding of data process was used to make the data analysis process easier for the researcher. Here, coding refers to the classification of data under specific themes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:399).

Data collected by means of observation was classified according to the pre-determined topics as they appeared in the observation grid. Moreover, points and descriptors that appeared on the observation grid served as themes. Data from grids that had been collected from the selected schools were merged to form a single informative grid. There was nothing artificial or contrived about the way in which

observation was conducted; it took place in a natural setting with no one reacting in a way that showed they were conscious of and reacting to the observer in a way which showed they intended to influence or impress (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:376).

Information gathered from the documents was added to pre-determined themes with descriptors serving as themes. The documents were analysed through the thematic content data analysis method to profitable effect. Needless to say, the notable and distinct facts were then noted as themes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:368). For example, procedures explained in the learners' Code of Conduct were linked with procedures of handling violence to determine consistency and uniformity. Where differences occur, the researcher analysed the impact that could be brought on by such differences quickly.

To ensure a formal and organised approach to data analysis, the above analysis of documents, interviews, and observations were done according to the five steps referred to in Bhatia's analysis of the research process (Bhatia, 2019:56):

- ***Step 1: Acquaintance and immersion***

The research team read through the descriptions from the participants' responses several times during this step. The researcher also had the opportunity to supplement her notes by drawing diagrams. The researcher also engaged in a brainstorming session about what she had already done. In the interim, the researcher immersed herself in the world of the participants through face-to-face conversations. As the interviewer, the researcher would be able to recall their responses.

- ***Step 2: Creating themes***

It was during this stage that the researcher discovered the significance of the underlying key themes from the interviews. Furthermore, themes were first clustered

into themes and sub-themes in order for them to be well-coded during the data analysis process.

- ***Step: 3 Coding***

The researcher then labelled the various data so that they were all relevant to one or more developed themes. This was followed by using the important statements by coding them in different colours (e.g., strategies to effectively mitigate bullying amongst primary school learners in the Vhembe District's Sambandou Circuit). The reason for this is that the important statements were identified while summarising the study's recommendations.

- ***Step 4: Explanation***

The researcher had also used this time to correct errors made during the coding process. During this time, the researcher would strictly investigate more themes in depth. In such a case, the way forward was open for the thematic content data analysis to be used for the analysis process.

- ***Step 5: Interpretation and verification***

Finally, in this step, the researcher combines all the interpretations. This aided the researcher in addressing the flaws in the written accounts after a thorough review.

1.9 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS OR AUTHENTICITY IN THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Kumar (2014:96) suggests that there are four appropriate criteria to use when seeking ways to ensure trustworthiness or truthfulness in a qualitative approach, namely credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability.

- **Credibility**

Babbie and Mouton (2013:55) define credibility as the degree to which the researcher's findings could be considered dependable, believable, and factual. Furthermore, this would also mean that the findings developed have been produced using the canons of good practice in the research world.

- **Dependability**

Dependability refers to the degree to which the social competence are reliant on the producer and could be repeatedly assessed, and will keep on showing the same results (Creswell, 2013:31). In a well-conducted research study, an auditing approach will have been embraced with anti-biasness characteristics so that the other researchers could use it without any difficulties in their institutions. However, if the researcher establishes that most participants are giving the same answers to the posed questions, it would mean that the study has reached the dependability stage.

- **Transferability**

Monette et al., (2013:44) noted that transferability means the ability to apply the findings of one's study in another study, particularly if they have the same topic. Transferability will have been reached when the findings developed from the study could be used in other institution in future.

- **Confirmability**

Du Plooy (2018:79) also emphasised that confirmability refers to the correctness, relevance, or true meaning of data (information) collected in the research. Furthermore, Bhatia (2019:61) referred to confirmability as the way one implies anything correctly, in a true, accurate and definite way while conducting research. The findings of the study could be confirmed to have reached confirmability if they could reflect relevancy, accuracy, and credibility. In short, it then means that confirmability will have been reached if the findings can in future be used from one generation to

another by the researchers through displaying biasness or confusions while being used (Miles & Huberman, 2013:136).

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

"Ethics includes the duties of those who engage in research, those who take part in research, those who support it, and the recipients of it" (Punch, 2012:54). Therefore, it is important to uphold ethical considerations when conducting research. Miles and Huberman (2013:67) also cautioned that in any qualitative research, no researcher should relax their moral vigilance while conducting a study but should often ponder over the moral and ethical rules before starting a research investigation. Miles and Huberman (2013:82) further acknowledged that any social research, including education research, concerns people's lives in the social world, and should therefore be regarded as very important; hence, involving the crucial ethical issues in research. Moreover, Maree (2012:93) indicated that ethics are the fundamental cornerstones of research. For the purpose of this study, only four criteria for ethics were explicitly explained, as follows:

- **Informed consent and anonymity.**

After receiving ethical clearance from the University's REHC, the researcher consulted the leaders of the participants to ensure that they had all signed the informed consent forms. The reason is that these forms serve as an insurance policy during the investigation on the participants' lives. The researcher also informed the participants not to tell anybody about the venue they were operating from. They were assured that neither their contributions nor their identities would be revealed to anyone during or after the investigation. However, it was done in such a way that the participants' dignity and integrity were not jeopardised. Teachers, HODs, and key participants had all freely agreed to take part in the investigation. This means that consent to participate in the study should be obtained. A consent letter was distributed to the prospective teachers, HODs, and principals. The letter covered the purpose of the research and the reason for requesting the participants' participation. Moreover, the benefits of the study were

explained. The possible negative consequences that the participants might experience were also covered in the letter. Furthermore, it was explained that participation would not be rewarded by means of incentives. To ascertain approval of the study, the letter would bear the supervisor's contact information in the form of an e-mail address and telephone number. Upon understanding the above terms, the letter required the prospective participant to sign it as an indication of voluntary participation.

It is very probable that some of these learners may be under the age of 18; therefore, parental or guardian consent is required to participate; thus, parental assent for learner participants was assured before proceeding with the investigation. The researcher interviewed the learners through focus group interviews. The researcher phones each parent and/or guardian to ascertain whether they were willing to allow their children to participate in the study. The goal of the study was explained to the parents and/or guardians. The researcher also sent them a consent letter following the telephonic consent. The letter highlighted the possible harm and stigma that the participating learners might experience during the investigation. The letter also covered the learner's rights to withdraw participation at any time during the process of data collection if they wanted to. In addition, the letter stated that the learners were participating voluntarily without expectation of monetary benefits, only with the general benefits for every education stakeholder. The parents and/or guardians were required to sign the letter permitting the learner to participate in the study. The learner would also need to assent to participate as an individual. The learner was made aware that they should participate voluntarily, and that they could withdraw their participation at any time and that no subsequent penalty would follow. The parents and/or guardians was advised to keep a copy of the signed letter.

This investigation took place during the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, COVID-19 protocols were adhered to. Moreover, in cases where one of the participants become ill, the data collection proceedings would be stopped in order to adhere to UNISA's COVID-19 regulations and guidelines.

- **Right to privacy (confidentiality)**

The participants were informed before the start of the primary investigation that their surnames and names would not be published in any media during or after the investigation, nor would their personal information be requested. The issue of the participants' right to privacy was also addressed, so that they could feel free and welcomed. In addition, the research findings would not be given in exchange for any gifts or money. During the investigation, the researcher also warned the participants to refrain from speaking to any reporters or journalists. The researcher also assured the participants that the study's records would not be given to anyone unless a written approval letter from the manager was obtained. On the other hand, the study's results and contributions, would not be exchanged with anybody.

- **The right to be safe from harm**

The researcher assured the participants that they would be protected against any risky physical or emotional harm that might befall them during the investigation; this is because the research directly involved all the participants. However, it appeared that most participants in this study would be children under the age of 18, as the investigation was taking place at a primary school. It also means that the adult participants would be advised to refrain from commenting publicly about bullying in the presence of the primary school learners. Furthermore, intrusive techniques, such as audio-visual recordings that may be sensitive and private, would also be employed during the investigation. Therefore, the researcher would saving the data on a One-drive cloud account to protect it.

All foreseeable risks of harm or discomfort were avoided, as well as questions that could cause discomfort during the interviews. No personal information was asked for data generation and analysis. Where it could have been interpreted as seeking personal information, the researcher rephrased the question. Furthermore, the participants were referred for further counselling by professional personnel depending on the kind of challenge they encountered.

- **Deception**

Deception usually happens when one deceives people to get something from them wrongfully. Before any action could happen, the researcher informed all participants of the study's purpose, including its objectives. In addition, the researcher also informed them about everything that they might encounter during the investigation. Richardson (2012:47) noted that deception could be used when a study is about a sensitive or dangerous investigation (e.g., a cannibalism case, gangster venue or drug lords' operational areas). In such an instance, the issue being investigated should be revealed to the participants after the interview. Thereafter, they must also be warned not to tell anyone because their lives may be jeopardised in future.

1.11 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1.11.1 Limitations

Murray and Beglare (2012:81) define limitations as an act that prevents something from happening in the way it should have happened. The study had the following limitations:

- The findings of this study could not be generalised beyond the target group as a qualitative approach uses smaller samples.
- The participants refused to be interviewed, although they had signed the informed consent forms.
- The participants would at times miss the interviews.
- The principals frequently postponed the interviews due to their busy schedules.
- During the printing of the questionnaires from the interview guide, a financial problem occurred.

Finally, the researcher ensured that all the limitations that emerged during the collection of data were attended to without any delay.

1.11.2 Delimitations

Gray (2013:57) stressed that to delimit any research study requires analytical thinking to produce seamless embedding. Thus, one's study should be planned in a manner that a researcher can cautiously delimit or limit their study areas (De Wet, 2016:65).

This study was conducted at the five purposefully selected primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District. These schools were not previously known to possess a high bullying rate than other primary schools at the same Circuit. Most importantly, the bullying actions being perpetuated by primary school learners were not reported, although occurring weekly. The reason for this is that the victims feared reprisal from the bullies. The researcher had visited the five sampled primary schools before the interviews to accumulate relevant information from the principals concerning the bullying crisis. Following the researcher's conversation with the principals, the five schools were selected.

1.12 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following key definitions of the study are defined:

1.12.1 Bullying

Downer (2012:18) defined bullying as an act of intention to harm the sufferer, and is a behaviour that repeats itself. There is usually no justification for such an action. Cowie and Hornby (2013:103) refer to bullying as the actions of any person who uses their strength or power to frighten or hurt a weaker person. In this study, bullying is regarded as a forceful conduct which is generally destructive and done intentionally to someone.

1.12.2 A bullying child

A bullying child is a person who uses forceful conducts or builds up strength over another child or children through rehashed demonstrations of animosity (Dupper, 2013:13). In this study, a bullying child could be a child who beats up or assaults primary school learners for no apparent reason.

1.12.3 Victim

A victim refers to a person who has been attacked, injured, or even killed due to a crime (Smith & Low, 2013:19). For this study, a victim refers to a bullied person.

1.12.4 Strategies

Strategies refer to many standards set forward to decide or graph a game plan (Lowens et al., 2012:6). Cowie and Hornby (2013:146) further define strategies as a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose. This study's purpose was to establish the strategies that might be used in reducing the rate of bullying instances at the affected schools under study. It also became clear that those actions are primarily aimed at hurting or assaulting learners; hence, they cannot defend themselves physically.

1.12.5 Effectively

The adverb effectively refers to a system or approach that is indeed being applied and is done successfully. In this study, effectively refers to the way that bullies succeed in their plans to bully learners.

1.12.6 Experiences

De Wet (2016:20) defines experiences as any occasion or event through which any individual has lived or acquired information of interest related to that occasion. Thus, experiences include individual information, individual contribution, direct information, and openness on gaining specific experiences in life. In this study, experiences refer to learners' bullying experiences.

1.13 CHAPTER DIVISION

The study was organised in the following way:

Chapter 1: Focused on the study's introduction, problem statement, research questions, and research methods.

Chapter 2: Reviewed literature pertaining to the study's topic.

Chapter 3: Discussed research design and methodology.

Chapter 4: Presented an analysis and interpretation of collected data with the goal of to produce the study's findings.

Chapter 5: Highlighted and discussed the study's findings in relation to the cited literature, as well as the study's theoretical framework.

1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the introduction and background of the study which was focused on learners' bullying in primary schools as an issue of concern to principals, teachers, parents, and the Limpopo Department of Education. The problem statement and rationale for conducting the study was that there has recently been outcries or complaints concerning factors influencing the high rate of bullying in primary schools at Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District. In some instances, parents approached the school principals. The aim and the primary goal of this research was

to investigate strategies that could be effectively used to mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District. Qualitative research approach and case study research design were used in this study. This is because a qualitative approach allows a researcher to use a case study research design during the data collection process. The researcher collected data using four approaches, namely semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observations, and documentary analysis. Purposive sampling was used in this study to help the researcher to use the judgement of an expert in selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind. Data analysis was conducted by means of an interpretative or constructivist model, using descriptive coding participants' responses, interview transcripts, and relevant documents.

1.15 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the introduction and background of the study, as well as the problem statement, rationale for conducting the study, aim and objectives, and the research methods used in the study. Moreover, the unit of analysis was presented, which included items such as population, sampling procedures, and the research instruments for data collection.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a discussion on the study's background, problem statement, study objectives, research questions, and significance. In addition, the theoretical framework, research design, methodology, sampling strategies, delimitation and limitations, and ethical considerations were all clearly explained. The researcher defined the key concepts of the study and provided the chapter divisions.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013), a literature review is an important opportunity to work through one's own interests and concerns in relation to the work of others. Babbie and Mouton (2012) defined a literature review as a thorough examination of all relevant sources of information (data). On the other hand, Neuman (2018) emphasised that the literature review offers the research framework and recognises the area of knowledge that the study aims to broaden. A literature review literally involves searching for, reading, watching, and summarising literature that relates directly and indirectly to your research (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014:15).

For the purpose of this study, only the topics based on the objectives and selected research questions were used. Kumar (2014:34) further cautioned that sub-topics could emerge; however, they must be relevant to the main topic, which is based on the study's objectives. Therefore, the study's literature review was constructed through the following topics:

2.2 THE KNOWLEDGE OF BULLYING AND ITS CONTENT ON LEARNERS IN SCHOOLS

Gonzalez and Deltas (2020:56) state that scholars conducted studies on bullying in the past but did not clarify the causes, although bullying negatively affected learners' academic performance (Department of Education, 2017). However, Mncube and Steinmann (2014:31) also emphasised that bullying had recently become a topic of interest in the South African literature on bullying. Additionally, Miller and Lowens (2012:4) defined bullying as the exploitation of imbalanced power. It is also a kind of aggression that may occur in various forms in schools, ranging from a physical, emotional, verbal, or electronic verbal exchange (cyberbullying); this usually occurs because the victims of bullying are not always willing to reveal it (McDonald, 2013:42).

Aulia (2016:62) also highlighted that bullying could be explained as the abuse of power that is systematic and repetitive of unpleasant behaviour that occurs from time to time; it can happen to either children or adults. On the other hand, bullying and victimisation sometimes occur concurrently, especially in schools. They are widespread

phenomena, and can take several forms, such as name calling, gossiping, exclusion, and hitting or pushing (Olwens, 2013:101). This suggests that bullying usually happens to children rather than adults in everyday life. This is because several examples of violent bullying actions are being inflicted upon learners in schools. Nonetheless, it also seems the main perpetrators of bullying actions are boys rather than girls; hence, only a few incidents of bullying that are reported are linked to girls (Strom et al., 2013:60).

Green, et.al,(2013 134)also stressed that bullying has continued to pose a significant social problem in learners from the primary school level to college students. However, these victims do not report the perpetrators in fear of reprisals from the bullies. In addition, suicides or murders have been reported among bullying victims. Based on the examples cited, it is suggested that preventive strategies are to be devised to put an end to bullying in schools. Another issue of concern is that bullying can lead to isolation or loneliness, difficulties in adjusting, insecurity, low self-esteem, depression, stress, and suicide (Morojele, 2013:23). Moreover, bullying is known as a global social problem due to its impact on its victims. For instance, one might learn of a foundation phase learner who has committed suicide after being bullied for a long time, but did not report the culprits in fear of reprisals from the bullies. Nevertheless, it is a known fact that learners (victims) are often afraid of speaking up against their bullies.

Based on the previous discussion, it is worth noting that bullying can be mitigated. Additionally, any attempts to control or mitigate bullies should involve learners who can share their first-hand experience to find a solution to this issue.

2.3 THE EFFECTS OF BULLYING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Best (2012:101) asserted that “whatever happens to any human being, whether secretly or in whatever form, has side-effects. However, it might take long before happening, but it will later show its effects.” For instance, if a primary school learner

starts abusing alcohol or dagga, it could affect their school performance, resulting in them dropping out of school at a young age.

Moreover, the most common types of bullies found in primary schools include victim bullies, popular bullies, relational bullies, serial bullies, and group bullies. The impact of school bullying at the primary school level can be monstrous, even leading to the victims contemplating suicide. A number of primary school learners have committed suicide over the years; this comes as no surprise considering the psychological and emotional effect of the bullying (Masakona, 2018:2). It is also of importance that learners should not be allowed to use cellphones while in school, as it might easily lead to cyberbullying.

Additionally, if a primary school learner were to come to school with a knife and uses it to threaten other learners, the victims would be comfortable for the rest of their day. It could even influence them to bunk classes in fear of being killed. As a result, this would negatively impact the learner's performance causing them to miss out on class content or even tests and exams. Again, this suggests that strategies for mitigating bullying should be initiated. The consequences of bullying cannot only be levelled against the school members (e.g., teachers, principals, SMTs, SGB, and the parental structure); the situation seems to have been worsened by the abolition of corporal punishment in schools. Learners have a right to do as they please because they know that nothing will be done to them. There is also a lack of discipline; learners come to school late, if at all. Moreover, the effects of bullying at the primary school level could also be discussed using the following sub-topics:

2.3.1 Physical perspective

The physical perspective about bullying often involves the so-called direct physical bullying in its true sense of the word. This typically includes physical bullying, where aspects like pushing, kicking, shoving, hitting and unnecessary tripping of an innocent

person are perpetrated against a minor learner by a senior in a school environment. Maphumulo (2012:94) highlights that even when we are in a school where bullying is practiced, we can sometimes not see it happening with our own eyes; hence, it is usually carried out discreetly to an extent that one cannot see it happening.

In an instance where a bully throws a stone at an innocent learner, hurting them, such types of bullying can be reported for prosecution purposes. Sometimes physical bullying occurs in the form of pushing or kicking without the victim's consent. In such an instance, the bullied learner, though they have been kicked from behind and cannot identify the perpetrator, could report it to the teachers and the culprit be punished. However, after being exposed, some bullies learn their lesson and refrain from such behaviour.

2.3.2 Psychological perspective

For example, a psychological perspective type of bullying could happen when a learner is robbed of their pocket money daily by a senior learner. In such an instance, a case of that nature is seldom reported since the victim fears the bully; the learner is aware that reporting the bully would aggravate them. Moreover, the psychological perspective form of bullying has some negative consequences, namely physical symptoms of emotional trauma such as headaches, backache, nail-biting, belly ailments, depression, trauma, suicidal thoughts, and feelings of hopelessness. In addition, psychological bullying could also affect the victim's educational performance; instead of concentrating on the lessons being offered, a depressed or traumatised learner would be absent-minded, which ultimately could result in them failing tests or examinations unnecessarily.

The above sentiments compel one to conclude that psychological bullying is one of the most significant contributors to learners' poor performance in schools (Harber,

2004:53). From the example cited above, the learner could remain stressed or depressed until such time that this is reported to the school teachers.

2.3.3 Emotional perspective

Emotional bullying in a school situation could occur in several ways, ranging from name calling, insulting, teasing or hurling hurtful racist remarks intentionally to another learner (Swearer, Wang, Berry & Myers, 2014:81). For example, suppose one of the bullies hurls a racist remark at an innocent victim in a class situation, and all learners laugh at him; this could hurt the learner emotionally (although they may not show that this affects them). In this regard, the emotional perspective may also sometimes occur in the form of mocking or teasing another learner. This explains why some learners drop out of school at a young age.

2.3.4 Spiritual perspective

There is a spiritual perspective on bullying in primary schools – in urban and rural areas (Winkler, 2012:67). From this perspective, there are forms of bullying that are collectively categorised as spiritual bullying. For example, spiritual bullying can happen when a learner gossips about a poor schoolmate with the aim of causing other learners to laugh at them. However, the teacher will naturally miss such incidents. The spiritual perspective type of bullying appears to be one of the cruelest types of bullying in primary schools. It poses a mammoth challenge to the affected schools on how to monitor it, ensuring that it does not negatively impact one's educational achievement. Spiritually bullied learners seldom perform well in school compared to their counterparts who are not bullied.

On the other hand, the spiritual perspective type of bullying could also be practised through teasing or laughing at a learner who belongs to a different religion from their classmates. In some instances, mocking a learner from a different religion could be

done intentionally during school break. Nonetheless, this could result in the victim suffering spiritually to the extent that they perform poorly in school.

2.3.5 Moral perspective

Cowie and Hornby (2012:805) define moral perspective as standards of behaviours or principles, or a right or wrong manner, whereby the correct or incorrect relationship between visible objects or things are shown. Furthermore, this type of bullying seems different from those already discussed above. In this instance, bullying of this type usually occurs when trying to help a victimised learner. For example, the moral perspective type of bullying might even take place in a classroom environment. This could happen when a learner starts making a noise in the classroom in the absence of a teacher. Another learner could use a type of bullying to keep the learner quiet. This is because such noise can disturb other learners who are attending to their class activities.

Moreover, Maphumulo (2012:61) highlighted the consequences of bullying on victims; nervousness, anxiety and low self-esteem are three examples that he cited. For example, a learner who has been bullied would struggle with proceeding with their studies due to nervousness or a severe low self-esteem issue. Bullying, particularly the moral kind of bullying, can impact a learners' decision to proceed with school.

2.3.6 Cognitive perspective

Cognitive bullying, especially in primary schools, negatively affects the victim's life (e.g., learner's performance in their further studies). The cognitive type of bullying happens when the child concerned will be growing up, and will be seeking strategies of acquiring knowledge at their disposal through reasoning using their senses. Another issue of concern is when this kind bullying takes a sexual form, such as when a male primary school learner makes sexual advances on a female learner and forces her

into having sexual intercourse, which constitutes rape. Kekana (2016:12) acknowledged that most learners, especially those accused of actual or intended rape charges, are caught within the action of trying to practice the cognitive perspective that they regard as not an offence, but a method through which they can acquire thorough knowledge pertaining to something strange to them.

After a female learner has been experienced such an ordeal (of being raped through the intention of practicing the cognitive bullying), she might think of committing suicide. This is because she would be thinking of what her peers are saying about her. However, through the intervention of social workers, such a victim could still survive regardless of what other learners say or do. What could aggravate her troubled mind is the issue of being labelled names as she would no longer be a virgin.

2.4 FACTORS LEADING TO BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

Teletshane (2017:18) acknowledges that the key factors that cause bullying in primary or high schools include the absence of parental guidance, a negative school environment, and a lack of exemplary teachers. Moreover, additional issues include racial conflicts, helpless legal authorities, joblessness, and HIV/AIDS infected parents. Miller-Jones (2014:113) also contends that parents are the role models children follow, whether in life or through school-related activities. The parental guidance, or its absence, can determine whether children will become good members of society later in adulthood. It does, however, seem that learners from broken families form part of the bully groups in schools.

In support of this view, Sybil (2012:37) notes that parents often act as positive and supportive role models that provide their children with good advice towards how they should behave. When parents separate, and learners are left in the responsibility of one parent, they start to misbehave at school and home, particularly in boy children. In addition, learners from such families are often rude or violent in their behaviour and often adopt behaviours that are uncalled for, such as bullying. Another factor also

causes bullying, especially in primary schools, is the negative school environment and lack of good exemplary teachers. On the contrary, there are schools where cases of fighting are reported almost daily. Therefore, a school environment also plays a key role in promoting or eradicating behaviours associated with bullying. In a school where the principal is a visionary, and a democratic leader who works with other schools also give their best. Thus, learners' may perform well in such an environment. On the other hand, a school environment that is not conducive to learning or does not have exemplary teachers may cause learners to perform poorly.

In addition, learners at a school where bullying occurs frequently may feel the need to adopt such behaviours too in order to be perceived as 'cool.' This raises issues of peer pressure. The Department of Education (2018:101) has also written extensively about the negative impact of bullying on education; thus, leading to poor academic performance. Moreover, the racial issues that lead to bullying cannot be ignored; the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, with its commitment to democracy and equality, irrespective of race, culture or creed, is a critical point of reference. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No. 84 of 1994 has helped to bring independence in South Africa; however, racial clashes are still prevalent in South African primary schools. The reason may be that primary school learners do not understand the Constitution or may have misinterpreted it to suit their own narrative.

Allisop and Van Zyl (2018:3) also reported many cases at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District of learners abusing each other verbally or physically due to racial clashes. For example, at the Mavunde primary school, learners could cyberbully a Tsonga-speaking learner by sending an emotionally disturbing message to a learner using a cellphone. One no longer expects these kinds of behaviours as South Africa is a democratic country. In other words, learners, particularly in primary schools, are still bullying each other due to racial clashes, which should have been abolished in schools. Racial bullying incidents remind elders of the apartheid regime (Tutu, 2019:14).

Another issue that is not spoken about enough is the lack of lodging (dwelling places). Jacobs (2018:4) reported not having a lodging place as an issue that negatively affects learners. This comes as no surprise if one considers the number of street kids in South Africa. Moreover, school children without dwelling places (homeless) or with inadequate dwelling places resort to bullying more affluent learners.

Other issues that contribute to bullying include joblessness, HIV/AIDS, and destitution. The Limpopo Department of Education (2017:18) reported that learners changed their behaviours after their parents revealed their HIV/AIDS status. Moreover, the issue of parents being jobless also appears to be one of the factors that add to school bullying. Chen (2018:38) also stressed that every child, whether a girl or boy, needs support from parents when growing up in order to do well at school. However, this is not necessarily true, as some children don't have parents yet perform better than those with parents. Mwamwenda (2012:29) also asserted that "hunger is one of the issues that hinder a person's progress. Even if one were to work, this wouldn't be possible because a hungry person is an angry person." In the case where parents are unemployed or have no means to generate funds, their children end up not performing well academically because they sometimes go to school hungry. During lessons, these learners will be thinking about ways to obtain food to eat after school instead of focusing on the content being taught. Therefore, this learner could suffer from low self-esteem and thus keep to themselves (De Wet, 2013a:181). Moreover, such a situation could lead to bullying to get food.

In some instances, issues of moral generation and inadequate regulation enforcement could end up being factors that encourage bullying in schools. In support of this view, Madonna and Murphy (2009:281) state that parents should devote most of their time to monitoring their children's regular attendance at school. On the other hand, those who are not monitored have a good opportunity to resort to bullying other learners during breaks. As discussed earlier, parents should form groups with other parents to monitor their children's school attendance and behaviour. Thus, parents and

community structures (e.g., Civic bodies and religious leaders) must ensure that their communities are well-monitored so that learners can also learn sound behaviours.

2.5 STRATEGIES THAT COULD BE USED TO MITIGATE BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

Bullying can be harmful to the victim (Cowie & Hornby, 2012:130). Downer (2012:21) also referred to a person who intentionally uses their strength, including the power to hurt a weaker person without reason. In this part of the study, the strategies that could be used to mitigate at the affected schools are discussed. It is important to note the South African School Act No. 84. 1994, which stipulates that it is in the jurisdiction of every school to see that provides a protective and harmonious school climate does in every school.

2.5.1 Use of social workers

Morojele (2012:56) noted that there should be structures that can be used to build up a school environment; this could facilitate the attitude of working in a comfortable atmosphere by both teachers and learners, resulting in learners' performing well at school. Social workers could be effective for mitigating bullying at schools as they are qualified and trained in counselling learners. Moreover, social workers would not require payment, except that they are liaised with via the appropriate school channels. To ensure effective sessions with the social worker, they should be provided with a venue in which they would consult learners. Moreover, learners' parents should be summoned to the school for consultation with both the learner and the Social worker to ensure that the parents are aware of the learner's behaviour at school. Moreover, many young people who have considered suicide have been helped by social workers.

2.5.2 Inviting motivational speakers

Motivating learners is not something that anyone can do, it requires talented individuals. For example, Nelson Mandela was an enthusiastic motivational speaker; a motivator who led the country to its attainment of democracy. Martin Luther King (1963:95) once stated, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character." Through his motivational speeches, he liberated fellow black Americans before being assassinated. For this research, motivational speakers who have helped people with bullying-related challenges could be invited to the affected schools to motivate learners.

2.5.3 Inviting religious leaders

The idea of religious leaders playing a positive role in addressing social issues such as bullying at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District is frowned upon. Religious leaders are seen as individuals who can assist communities and schools address some of the issues they are experiencing. What separates priests from other figures is that they impart knowledge based on what biblical scriptures say about the topic at hand. Moreover, priests are known for praying and in other instances fasting before discussing the issue that has been identified. Other prominent individuals in society who can play similar roles include doctors, social workers, and lawyers.

2.5.4 Inclusion of parental structures

In China, school bullying used to be at an all-time high; however, this is no longer the case (2013:106). The reason is that parents have formed a foundation called the Chinese Concerned Parents Forum (CCPF), whose aim was to monitor their children's daily school attendance. In addition, the parents would take turns to visit the learner's hiding place on the days they would bunk school. In this way, the CCPF put an end to learner bullying and other ill behaviours. Adopting the Chinese approach could result in the same results at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District.

From the local perspective, parents – irrespective of their educational qualifications – could also be used to monitor bullying in schools. If parents could form similar groups as the CCPF, they may also know the location of the “hidden” places where their children hang out while bunking classes. In this context, it should also be noted that running a school is not the responsibility of one individual, but a joint collaboration.

2.5.5 Teaching Life Skills or Life Orientation subjects

Van der Westhuizen (2014:39) argues that "all subjects in schools are important, irrespective of how learners or teachers consider them, and no one should be underestimated or ignored while being taught in schools. Ignoring any would then mean depriving learners of their opportunities to become successful, educated adults." Furthermore, it might also mean that schools that regard Life Skills or Life Orientation learning areas as relevant subjects are not imparting knowledge in the best possible way (Moloi, 2014:52).

From the above, it can be said that all subjects are significant and have a role to play in the learner’s lives. For example, Life Skills provides learners with the knowledge of controlling their feelings and behaviours, taking care of their health, emotional and physical factors, respecting elders, religious choices, and strategies to work towards achieving their educational goals. Therefore, Life Skills is just as important as Physical Science and Mathematics.

2.5.6 Development of learners' Code of Conduct

Burton (2012:34) states that schools should emphasise the learner’s Code of Conduct daily. The reason for this would be to remind learners about it and its importance. For example, at the start of each school year, the learner’s Code of Conduct should be read at assembly and clearly explained to learners. In addition, the Code of Conduct rules should be written on posters and put up all over the school for learners to read

them in their own time and be reminded of them at every chance. Furthermore, the Code of Conduct should be read to the learners at least once a week; this will provide learners with an opportunity to be reminded of the rules every week. Furthermore, motivational speakers should be invited to address learners on the importance of abiding by the Code of Conduct.

2.5.7 Enforcement of the disciplinary structures composed of the SMT and SGB

Jacobs (2014a:24) asserts that the existence of the well-functioning and effectively used SMT and SGB members could influence schools to perform well – be it from an academic or behaviour perspective. On the contrary, schools that undermine or ignore the role of the above-mentioned structures perform poorly. Thus, for example, the SMT has a duty to motivate teachers and learners to perform to their best ability. In most cases, when schools do not perform well, the principals and SMTs are blamed for not doing their duties well. Nonetheless, the SGB members should not be side-lined or neglected; hence, they also have a prominent role to play. However, it should also be said that the SGB members should be involved when new rules are implemented at schools.

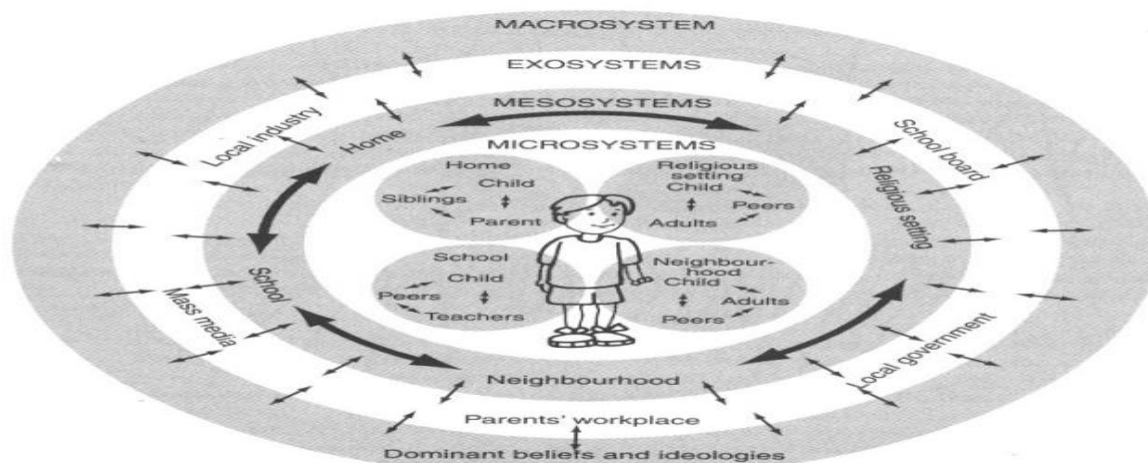
2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Neuman (2018:83) pointed out that a theoretical framework has implications for every decision made in the research process. Creswell and Creswell (2018:28) recognised that the enquirer might start generating a theory as a result of a study and place it after a project. Kerlings (1998), as cited in De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2013:140), emphasised that there is no correct or incorrect theoretical framework to use when undertaking any research study because each can be viewed from a different angle. On the other hand, Jolley (2013:53) argued that "until a researcher has established a theoretical framework, he or she cannot effectively revisit the literature properly." In fact, the true solution to any problem is to read some of the literature and

then try to develop a framework. The Ecological Systems Theory (EST) developed by Bronfenbrenner Urie in 1992 was used in this study. Its concept provides a framework within which the community and psychologists can examine individuals' interactions within communities and society as a whole. However, it also monitors how children grow from their home environment. On the other hand, how children behave may have been copied from either a school or home environment. For example, most bullies in schools could have inherited it from a violent family environment.

EST is one of the explanations regarding the influence of the social environment on the human environment. This theory further argues that the environment in which one grows up in affects every facet of their life. For instance, children who have grown up in families where fighting was regarded as a sign of being popular will become bullies in school (World Health Organisation, 2014:17). Consequently, the main emphasis of EST is the observation of how a child grows up until they become a member of society.

In support of the above, Espelage (2014:48) stated that interrelation between nature and the individual's multiple environments, and the engagement in bullying and victimisation come from the society where one grows up from. Bronfenbrenner's theory assimilates bullying and victimisation as the reciprocal issues influenced by the individual, family, school, peer group, community, and society. Essentially, it then becomes an established fact that when seeing learners being bullied or assaulted, we should not be surprised. Jacobs (2018b:4) caution that the prevention of bullying in schools requires an understanding of the multiple factors that influence the bully's behaviours. Moreover, EST appears suitable for this study; hence, it might encourage both teachers and learners to analyse the bullying actions perpetrated to the weaker or minor learners at the affected schools.



Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1992:65)

Figure 1.1: The Ecological Systems Theory approach in a person's growth

When a child meets other people (learners and teachers) while growing up, violent actions (teasing others, assaulting, threatening, victimising) happen. For example, the way in which some children walk might have been learnt from their parents. Some also talk like their parents after imitating their talking habits. In relation to this study, the chosen theory was discussed according to the following:

- **Microsystem**

When every child is confronted with a strange environment at any school, they become interested in it. On the other hand, the theory mentions school, and the study is about bullying in a school environment (suitability); it is at a well-managed school where a child learns their beliefs and behaviours (e.g., greeting, living well with other people, and religious choices).

- **Mesosystem**

Ideally, where such type of system is used, the relationship between a theory and the study emerges. For instance, a learner becomes used to other learners and teachers in the school they attend. This type of relationship does not end there; the same learner goes to the extent of going to church after seeing their neighbours doing so. Masakona

(2017:18) further highlighted that almost a quarter of bullies could have inherited this behaviour from their parents or neighbours. On the one hand, well-behaved or obedient learners could have also inherited their good conduct from their parents, church, or even the school.

- **The macro system**

The macro system is rated as one of the most outermost steps in a child's growth at school or at home). This type of a system is comprised of aspects such as cultural values, customs, and laws. For example, male learners (boys) may tease or fight a female teacher because they inherited the patriarchal ideology of men being in positions of power. This might even influence them to bully or fight women for no apparent reason due to their cultural customs and beliefs. Finally, the only difference between this section of the system and the previously-mentioned one becomes more apparent when the latter mentions the consequences of bullying and the strategies of mitigating it effectively amongst the Grade 7 learners in primary schools at the Circuit under study.

- **Ecosystem**

This is one of the largest systems in EST because it emphasises the development of every child. Moreover, it is also the type of system that entails the structure of the previously mentioned ecosystem. It is a system where a child, while growing up, is referred to meet the outside surroundings or being involved with other people in their environments or societies respectively. Additionally, EST shows an inextricable link with the study's topic.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed the literature related to the study about strategies that could be used to effectively mitigate bullying amongst primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District. Various strategies were discussed

regarding how the bullying crisis can be mitigated before it destroys the future of the learners at the affected schools under study.

Moreover, bullying was defined and discussed to ensure that its meaning and impact was clear; several researchers also defined bullying in a scientific manner permissible in the social research world. In addition, factors that influence bullying were discussed, followed by the effects of bullying, particularly in primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District. The discussion on the effects of bullying were also linked to teaching and learning so that the strategies for mitigating bullying could cover both aspects. Chapter 3 will discuss the study's research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed existing literature for the study. This chapter discusses the study's research design and methodology, including the paradigm adopted and the study's methodological approaches. The research objectives and research questions guided the selection of data collection and data analysis techniques, which sought to investigate strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school students at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District. This chapter also discussed the applicability of a qualitative research approach to this study. However, this chapter also addressed the issue of participant selection, data collection processes, and procedures. The previous chapter also reviewed literature relating to strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District. In an attempt to achieve trustworthiness or authenticity during

data analysis, the study's primary goal was considered the study's component, which should be strictly adhered to in this section of the study (Merriam & Greniar, 2018:43).

The following aims of the study guided the research:

- To examine why there is a high rate of bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District.
- To determine factors that influence bullying among primary school learners.
- To describe the effects of bullying on teaching and learning at the affected primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District.
- To devise strategies to mitigate bullying among primary school learners.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

An excellent research project begins with selecting the topic, problem, or area of interest, as well as the paradigm (Lee, 2019:6). The term paradigm is derived from the Greek word *paradeigma* which means "patterns and ways." It was first used by Kuhn (1962) to denote a conceptual framework shared by a community of scientists that provided them with a convenient model for examining the problem and finding solutions. On the other hand, the term paradigm refers to a research culture that includes a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions shared by a community of researchers about the nature and conduct of research. As a result, a paradigm denotes a trend, structure, and system of scientific theories, values, and assumptions. It is also a way of thinking about conducting research (Antwi & Hamza, 2015:218). Therefore, a paradigm is a loose grouping of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions for thinking and research. It is also the philosophical motivation for conducting research (Kumar, 2014:25). Struwig and Stead (2017:61) also stated that a paradigm is a process that describes a cluster of beliefs and dictates to the scientists in a discipline what influences should be studied, and how research should be interpreted. However, a paradigm can also be used in both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and it could also sometimes act as a method (Mandal, 2018:67).

In support of the above, Neuman (2018:28) also noted that a paradigm is an integrated set of assumptions, models of doing good research, and techniques for gathering and analysing data. In this regard, it helps to organise concepts, theoretical frameworks, and research methods; thus, it might also be referred to as a “method” (Mohd Arfin, 2018:59). On the other hand, Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., (2014:83) pointed out that a research paradigm could also serve as a lens of organising principles through which they are interpreted. It also helps a researcher tell a coherent story by depicting a meaningful and functional world when subjected to hesitations in life. Thus, there are three dominant research approaches that usually emerge when a paradigm is used, namely positivist, interpretivism, and critical realism approach.

In this study, an interpretivist approach was used; hence, it allows a researcher to study and describe the meaningful social action of the event under study. Apart from this, the interpretivist approach offers the researcher an opportunity to spend greater time with those being studied (participants). In this context, this type of approach allows research to be freely conducted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:92). Moreover, this could be possibly used; hence, the researcher used the pre-test stage to achieve all the requirements correctly. In addition, interpretivists believe in the truth, and are not interested in generalising results (Silva, 2018:83). From the researcher’s perspective, it then shows that the gathered data in this study would be trustworthy or authentic; hence, the truth was followed during the data collection processes.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Dudovskiy (2018:59) posits that the research approach should first be divided into two parts before being explained so that the readers can understand it, namely research and approach. Thereafter, one would find that research refers to a careful study of a subject, especially in seeking to discover new facts or information about something. On the other hand, approach means dealing with or thinking about something, such as a problem or a task aiming to find an answer. Additionally, a research approach

could also be used as a method in the research world (Regoniel, 2017:83). Nonetheless, the researcher examined strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District.

Canals (2017:37) also highlighted that the only difference between a paradigm and a research approach crops up in the way each of them is used in a story-telling format in the research world. According to De Vos et al., (2015:56), a research approach is a systematic, controlled, empirical, and critical investigation of natural phenomena guided by both theory and hypothesis about the relationships between such phenomena. Thus, a qualitative approach was used for this study. This is because a qualitative approach allows a researcher to use a case study research design during the data collection process (Kumar, 2014:33). Most importantly, Polit and Beck (2017:133) also stated that a qualitative approach aids in accurately interpreting or shedding light on the respondents' actions and/or responses to the posed questions. A qualitative approach also relies solely on the collected data's experiences, ingenuity, and/or previous study findings (Brink, et al., 2018:74). On the other hand, Freeman (2017:46) admitted that a qualitative approach can be used to make sense of a highly complex situation. The current study is an interpretive study, so it seeks to answer questions like who, what, when, and how.

In support of these claims, Harvey (2019:72) proposed conducting an interpretive study to determine how many interviews each participant wants to schedule, whether participants can schedule appointments with specific desirable organisations, and whether there would be any issues with the physical facilities. On the same note, a qualitative approach would be used because it allows the researcher to collect data through in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. Crossman (2018:81) also added that a research approach is a process that considers and explains the logic behind research methods and techniques.

Furthermore, Bhatia (2019:96) stated that a qualitative approach allows the researcher to approach reality from a constructive perspective, allowing for multiple meanings of

individual experiences. This approach also provides the researcher with ample opportunities to investigate and comprehend a central phenomenon, which is the concept or process investigated in a qualitative research approach. Cohen et al., (2018:57) also stated that in a qualitative approach, participants are encouraged to feel free while speaking to the reviewer and are permitted to consult with their co-interviewees before answering the posed questions.

A qualitative approach can be used to collect data by asking participants broad, open-ended questions and inviting them to share their perspectives on the phenomenon. Crossman (2018:143) also emphasised that a qualitative approach frequently encompasses a wide range of techniques, the core elements of which are observations, interviews, and document analysis to be used in various disciplines. Another advantage of a qualitative approach is that data is recorded by taking notes in interviews and observation protocols, and transcribing the text data for further analysis. However, it is worth noting that every action or event has advantages or disadvantages. The same applies to a qualitative approach; its disadvantage is that it uses smaller samples selected from individuals who have the most experience concerning the phenomenon under study. On the contrary, it would mean that its findings will not be widely accepted; hence, only a small size of the participants would have been used. In contrast, a quantitative approach uses larger samples (Cohen et al., 2018:94).

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Cuncic (2019:84), a research design is an overlapping plan for data collection, measurement, and analysis. A research design typically describes the purpose of the study and the types of questions to be asked, the techniques to be used for data collection, approaches for selecting samples, and how the data will be analysed. Hennink et al., (2020:34) agree that a research design is a conceptual structure within which research is conducted, as well as the blueprint for data collection, measurement, and analysis. According to Freeman (2017:63), a research

design is a strategic framework for an action that serves a purpose and an action that acts as a link between the research questions and research execution or implementation

Canals (2017:26) adds that a research design describes how the study was carried out. The same researcher (Canals, 2012:48) also maintained that a research design summarises study procedures, such as when, from whom, and under what conditions data will be collected. In addition, Daher et al., (2017:112) state that a research design is related to the testing of hypotheses in research. Malhotra (2012:70) further adds that a research design is a master plan specifying the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the required information. It is also a framework or blueprint that plans the action for the research project. Kivinja and Kuyini (2017:78) also emphasised that a research design is an empirical statement concerned with the relationship between two or more variables. Cypress (2017:86) also stressed that "research designs are tailored to address different kinds of questions. Therefore, when we try to classify different types of studies, different design types, it is not surprising that we do so according to the types of questions they can answer."

Thus, from the above statements, it can be suggested that every research approach has its own child (e.g., a research design) in the research world; therefore, in research, one's child is not the other's child, like what naturally happens in human beings. Qualitative research approach and case study research design were used in this study. If a novice researcher could use them interchangeably, it would be a costly mistake in the research world. Finally, Rehman and Alharth (2016:123) defined a research design as a plan or strategy that moves from the underlying assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, data gathering techniques, and data analysis.

3.4.1 Case study

This study used a case study research design; the researcher also chose a qualitative approach for data collection. The choice of a case study research design offered the researcher a chance of using in-depth and focus group interviews for collecting data in this study. Crossman (2018:67) stated that a case study is a particular programme, or an event studied in-depth for a defined period. For instance, finding strategies to effectively mitigate bullying amongst primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District could take a long time; however, this does not mean that they will not be discovered. In addition, a case study also enables the researcher to continue learning more about a situation that is not well known or that is poorly understood.

Moreover, Dudovskiy (2018:71) also stressed that a case study is useful for generating or providing preliminary support for hypotheses. On the other hand, Harvey (2019:151) states that a case study also enables the researcher to record details about the context surrounding the case being studied, including information about the physical environment and any historical, economic, and social factors that have a bearing on the situation.

For instance, through a case study, the concerned stakeholders at the affected schools under investigation may also learn where bullying occurs with the schools (e.g., the hiding places). Smulowitz (2017:132) highlighted that it is only through using a case study that the researcher can use the Hobson choice. For example, a researcher who has decided to focus on a single case, due to its uniqueness or exceptional qualities, can promote an understanding or inform practice for similar situations. Still, a case study could help a researcher study two or more cases, make comparisons, build theory, or purpose generalisations, such as an approach called a multiple or collective case study.

Based on the ideas cited by the different scholars, a case study is deemed appropriate for this research as it permits the researcher to make use of new ideas and hypotheses emerging from careful and detailed observations; in this study, this refers to the

strategies to mitigate bullying in primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Nayeem and Huma (2017:60) also maintained that data collection is a procedure to collect data painlessly (in other words, without unnecessary complication and laborious effort). On the one hand, Regoniel (2017:96) stressed that another form of classifying a research study, apart from the research design or even methodology, is to explore the technique of the data collection in it. After the University's UREHC had permitted the researcher to conduct the research study, the researcher consulted the participants' leaders to ensure whether all the participants had signed the informed consent forms. The completion of those forms serves as insurance of the participants' lives during the investigation. The researcher collected data using four approaches, namely semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observations, and documentary analysis. On the first day at a public primary school, the researcher talked to the principal, who acted as a gatekeeper and established good working relationships with everybody. Furthermore, the researcher explained the purpose of the visit and goals of the study, and then handed over the consent forms. The researcher had requested for a site where the researcher could talk to the group of learners. Thereafter, the researcher conducted a pre-test session with only half of the participants who would not be part of the main investigation (Silva, 2017:34). However, it was during this time, where the questions were corrected from the interview guide.

In the next stage, the researcher requested the participants to make use of the tape-recorder; hence, others might not be used to being recorded while speaking (Smulowitz, 2017:54). Apart from this, the researcher also firstly explained the questions from the interview guide in vernacular and later in English. In this regard, the participants were interviewed in the pre-arranged empty rooms (learners were in other empty classrooms, whereas teachers used empty staffrooms, and principals and HODs were in their respective offices). On the other hand, each participant was

allocated 25 minutes to respond to the posed questions. The responses were recorded and immediately transcribed; this avoids delaying the data analysis process (Paley, 2016:113).

3.5.1 Focus group interviews

Data collected by means of focus-groups interviews was recorded on a recording device and transcribed verbatim immediately thereafter. A focus group was conducted with learners as it was highlighted that it is one of the best ways of reducing their fear when sharing information with the researcher. COVID-19 health protocols were observed. Interview data were organised into units; however, the very units were derived from the questions themselves. The questions served as themes which would be used to organise the data collection process. This process also involved the coding of the data procedure; hence, coding refers to the naming of classifications used to classify data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:399). While data were organised according to the interview questions, some of the findings stood isolation in order to create further themes for classification. The focus group questions were handwritten on paper (Cohen et al., 2018:381). Harvey (2019:114) also suggested that the idea behind the use of focus group interviews is like that underlying a brainstorming session, the dynamics of interaction in the context of a small group helps stimulate thinking and creativity. For example, in a research world, if one is interested in how users experience a certain way of interacting with a system; one can gather a small group and get them to share their experiences. Seemingly, it is possible to gain insights that would not have been gained without the interaction of the group. The above-mentioned statements simply imply one that the use of a focus group, especially while collecting data in a qualitative approach, is of importance in a research study.

Furthermore, Bhatia (2018:117) defined focus group interview by as any semi-structured, unstructured conversation with a small number of people. On the other hand, Cohen, et al., (2018:123) also noted that a focus group interview is a rigidly

constructed question-and-answer session, exclusively while using open-ended questions in a qualitative approach. However, it should not just be through the other manner, but a format at a flexible discussion of, say, a labour issue, reactions to a political candidate, or a new product concept. In such an incident, there should be a group of participants who have met at a central location at a designated place.

Eight learner participated in focus group interviews in a small group of four. Learner were purposefully sampled from grade 4 to 7 in public primary school of Sambandou circuit in the Vhembe East district. It also means that focus group interviews do not just happen, they should first be arranged by an interviewer. The question to be asked could be like this: What do the invited participants usually do in such a meeting?. The correct answer to such a question, might be that it is at a focus group interview, the participants discuss their true feelings, anxieties, frustrations freely; in an attempt to express the depth of their convictions in their own words. Needless to say, the discussion proceeds mostly with the participants answering the posed questions through their group's initiatives. Most importantly, while using this type of interview, the participants have a chance of consulting the co-interviewees before answering the posed questions. In addition, there are also specific advantages of using the focus group interviews while collecting data, the group often produces a wide range of information, insights, and ideas than with the accumulation of the separately secured responses of several individuals.

Additionally, Hennik et al., (2020:65) stressed that good responses are obtained from several individuals in a group, more than via a group of individual interviews. Moreover, the focus group interviews allow for the development of an idea in full, as a result of the interpersonal, collective dynamics of a group situation. For instance, in a focus group interview, a comment by one individual often triggers a chain of responses from the other participants, usually after a brief introductory period. It is at this time, where the participants would then need to express their ideas and share their feelings at the general level from the other participants (Jolley, 2014:97). During the focus

group interview, the individual can find comfort since his or her feelings are similar to those of others in the group.

Additionally, the focus group interviews also afford more control than the individual interviews about the topics covered and the depth in which they are treated. On the other hand, Coyne & Monks, (2012:131) also highlighted that it is while using the focus group interviews, where the researcher could re-open topics that appeared too shallow for a discussion when initially presented. It is also in focus group interviews, where securing permission for a given number of views is obtained more quickly than is the case when interviewing the participants individually.

Similarly, Kivinja and Kuyini (2017:64) also argued that interviews conducted in small groups (focus group interviews) can also include different interviewing techniques and can take place in different settings. However, Cuncic (2019:73) also confirmed that focus group interviews have become popular in recent years because they help in providing data that are rich in ideas and provide opinions and attitudes from the subjects' point of view. Furthermore, and depending mainly on the objective(s) of the research study, focus group interviews can be combined with in-depth interviews, observations, surveys, and experimental designs (triangulation). The above provide good grounds for the researcher opting to use focus group interviews to collect data. Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2013:59) recommend that researchers use focus group interviews as they work exceptionally well in qualitative research (they often direct the researcher to use interactions or inquiry either through an approach that is structured, or one that is by comparison, much more unstructured).

3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used, Brink, Van der Walt and Van Rensbug (2018:144) noted that during the semi-structured interviews, the interviewer must ask a specified number of questions, but could also pose the additional ones.

Another matter of great concern, is that both the closed-ended and open-ended questions are liable to be included during such a process. On the other hand, Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2012:166) indicated that, in semi-structured interviews; the researcher should have a list of themes and questions to be covered, although these may vary from one interview schedule to another.

Still on the same note, semi-structured interviews also offer a versatile way of collecting data. For example, we can collect them with all age groups (.e.g. with young workers participating in ABET, who are still unable to read, as well as with elderly people with poor eye-sight). Besides this, the semi-structured interviews seemed to be the suitable ones for use in a qualitative approach, hence the collected data gathered through its use, could help to explain the phenomenon being studied clearly. Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews while being used in any study, yield a large amount of information regarding the participants' feelings, attitudes, behaviours (both present and past) and reasons for those actions of feelings (Maree, 2012:87).

To be more precise and sticking to the topic under study, the purposively-sampled participants, were comprised of: learners, teachers, the HODs and principals respectively. All these participants had voluntarily signed the informed consent forms in agreement that they were ready to be part and parcel of the investigation under way. In this context, there were: (10)-teachers, (5)-HODs, and (5)-principals. The total number of all the semi-structured interviewed participants, who were purposively-sampled, was **20**. These participants had either experienced bullying or were once the victims of bullying in their schools.

3.5.3 Observation

According to Mohapatra (2018:67), observation was structured when points or descriptions during the data collection process, were either considered or determined

beforehand in any research. For example, this could be well-achieved only if, those descriptions were used during a comprehensive observation. However, the researcher also employed a structured observation for the sake of guiding the data collection process for this study. In this context, the correctly use of the proposed grid could often lead to the emerging of some recognisable facts during the observation process. Regarding this study, the researcher observed: (8)-learners, (10)-teachers, (5)-HODs and (5)-principals respectively.

In an attempt of trying to keep a smart type of an observation on record, a researcher observed learners during the morning prayer assembly, while also returning to their classrooms and during all breaks. The researcher had also tried to spend all the selected days at the sampled schools, which enabled me to even observing them on their ways to their homes clearly. On the other hand, The researcher contacted teachers at their staffrooms and even during breaks. Furthermore, The researcher had even observed learners during the feeding periods that were mainly-controlled by the feeding scheme-workers. In addition to this, The researcher had even tried to work in compliance with the arranged time so that she should never disturb the participants' times. The researchner also definitely observed the HODs at their own offices which were separated from those of the principals.

In this instance, the researcher used time to observe the principals also at their own offices. In fact, the whole observation process had gone as expected, and the obtained data enabled the findings of the study to be trustworthy and authentic in nature. Needless to say that, the words used by the educators especially while talking to the learners, including those uttered by the principals while busy addressing the learners, were also noted. The reason behind this, being to ensure that there should be a link between the uttered words from the participants and the study's aim (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:63). Finally, the reflective notes were really taken while the observation processes had been in progress at least on every arranged day. The reason, thereof, was to draw a demarcation between the self-interest and reality with regard to the ollected data from the selected participants.

3.5.4 Document analysis

The following documents were analysed :i.e, learner attendance registers, minutes of disciplinary committee, learners' code of conduct, anti-bullying policies, behaviour record book.; these assisted in gathering the information from the documents to be further added to pre-determined themes, with descriptors serving as themes and learners' code of conduct. Anti-bullying policies helped the researcher to analyse the policy of bullying and how the learners are adhering to those policies. A behaviour record book for bullying helped the researcher to analyse the statistics of bullying that have happened at school. The code of conduct of learners helped to evaluate how learners were bounded by those rules. Minutes of disciplinary meetings helped the researcher to have evidence of whether the SGB and school management was discussing and resolving those incidents at school. The documents were analysed through the use of the thematic content data analysis method, which was based on the recommended steps. Notable and distinct facts were noted as themes so that the analysis could take place without challenges (Kumar, 2014:368). In addition, the facts were linked to one another. For example, procedures explained in the learners' Code of Conduct had been linked with procedures for handling bullying behaviours to determine the research's consistency and uniformity.

Where differences occur, the researcher analysed the impact that such differences could bring up. The researcher also requested the school documents related to school bullying from the school principals. The researcher then selected and identified documents closer to the school bullying, carefully reading and re-reading them multiple times, and checking the school stamp dates and the principal's signature. These actions act as legal documents that confirm that the documents belong to a school. Moreover, documents related to each theme were highlighted and coded according to their meaning, relevance, and context.

COVID-19 protocols were observed; participants wore face masks and were screened before all engagements. Moreover, hand sanitisers were provided, with participants encouraged to wash their hands regularly. During the data generation, the researcher upheld the safety precautions, and measures were followed and practised in the fieldwork. Such measures were exercised to combat the spread of COVID-19 due to

human interaction during data generation. The researcher observed UNISA's strict COVID-19 safety and protocol guidelines pertaining to human participants.

On the other hand, the qualitative researcher is often in the position of being a facilitator, and the fruitfulness of the inquiry as a product of the researcher's skill in engaging creatively with the participants and contexts. Kivinja and Kuyini (2017:133) also highlighted that documents provided advantages. For example, it enable a researcher to assess the language and words used by participants. In other words, it is an unobtrusive source of information. Moreover, it also has disadvantages in that they are not well articulated.

In attempting to find strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among the primary schools' learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District, the researcher studied the behaviour records books (documents) from the two purposively selected schools at the Sambandou Circuit. The school principals have access to the most reliable records of bullying in their schools; hence, each bullying incident is reported to them as soon as it happens. Crossman (2018:116) also cautioned that in the document analysis method, recording and transcribing of the recorded responses does not happen. This enables the researcher to obtain the participants' language and words pertaining to the posed questions practically. Moreover, the documents used in qualitative research are varied, covering a wide range of written documents, including oral testimonies and oral histories. The documents consulted by the researcher fall well within this range. Cohen et al., (2018:249) define a document as a record of an event or process. Thus, the analysis of documents – as found in qualitative research – is best characterised by Crossman (2018:123), who describes documentary analysis as an integrated and conceptually informed method, procedure, and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving and analysing documents for their relevance, significance, and meaning.

3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.6.1 Population

Neuman (2018:32) stated that a population is the larger pool from which sampling elements are drawn, and from which we want to generalise our findings. Du Plooy (2018:113) is of the view that a population refers to any complete group of people, companies, hospitals, stores, college students or people who share a set of characteristics. A population is a large pool that should have an important role to play during the sampling process. Similarly, Struwig and Stead (2017:99) noted a population is the entire set of objects or people which is the focus of the research, and about which/the researcher wants to determine some characteristics.

In this study, the population was comprised of eight learners, ten teachers, five principals, and five HODs. The researcher visited the two sampled rural primary schools to select the participants. The principals had also recorded learners (victims) who cannot read the language, and teachers had been faced with the task of teaching the learners how to read the language. In addition, HODs had records of learners from the schools, which suggests that they should always have records of everything happening at the schools.

3.6.2 Sampling

A sample is part of a whole or a subset of measurements drawn from the population (Hennink et al., 2020:19). Leedy and Ormrod (2013:24) also maintained that a sample refers to a unit of analysis drawn directly from a population, including all the cases the research is interested in studying. However, a sample should often be smaller than a population; hence, it usually comes from it. Monette et al., (2015:115) confirm that a sample refers to the collection of information or data from some people in a group in such a way that their responses and characteristics reflect the group from which they are drawn.

Before taking any step of collecting data, the researcher had firstly paid a visit to the five sampled public primary schools which are found in deep rural villages in Limpopo province under Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District, so that principals and the HODs could really assist in selecting the rightful participants for the study. Additionally, teachers had also helped hence they were having a thorough knowledge of learners who were the bullies or even bullied in schools. In this context, a purposive sample was used to select the sampled participants for this very study. Purposive sample seemed to have been the suitable choice to use in this study, hence the principals, HODs and teachers have more than 25 year experienced in teaching and have ability to solve learners problem because they where there for long time. When it comes to leadership experience , selected principals and HODs have more years in leadership roles and it helped the researcher to collect information from the experienced, ingenuity and/ or from the previous research findings. On the other hand, purposive sampling also occurs especially when a researcher intends to identify a particular type of a case for in-depth investigation (Jolley, 2014:37).

Nonetheless, purposive sampling, also helps a researcher to use the judgement of an expert in selecting cases or to select cases with a specific purpose in mind. Learners in the sampled schools were from Grade 4 to 7. The researcher varied the gender of the participants to avoid biases. Two male principals, three female principals, three female HODs, two male HODs, five male teachers, five female teachers, four male learners, and four female learners took part in the study. Thus, a total of 28 participants took part in the study.

Most importantly, participants in this study from the five selected public primary schools were not just chosen , but they had records of the highest bullying rates in their schools. In this regard, learners as participants had also been victims of bullying, or being bullies themselves. Ideally, teachers were the ones who usually witnessed bullying actions and reported them to either the HODs or principals. The HODs had definitely been selected, hence most bullying cases were reported to them by either learners or teachers in particular. Apart from this, they might also had previousy tried to solve some of those cases together with their SGBs in schools.

Therefore, the HODs had knowledge and leadership roles so they deserved to be sampled for this study. Had principals not been selected for this study, it would have been a great blunder?. The reason being that, all cases happening in schools have to be often reported to them about bullying. Furthermore, principals were also selected because they might also have assisted in solving some bullying problems in the past. In short, the Circuit, District and a Province, had been chosen; hence they are known to be the highly bullying-embroided places.

3.6.3 Purposive and convenient sampling

Struwig and Stead (2017:45) also stated that purposive sampling frequently ensures that each element of a sample assists in the research study, and thus each element should fit in with the study's population parameters. For example, an element that does not fit in can be ignored. Furthermore, Neuman (2018:63) confirmed that a purposive sample could easily provide the best information to achieve one's study's objectives. On the other hand, a purposive sample can be extremely useful when a researcher is conducting an investigation to build a historical reality, describe a phenomenon, or create something about which little is known (e.g., drug lords' place of operation and gangsters' venue). Floyd and Fowler (2014:32) highlighted that the other advantage of a purposive sample is that it allows a researcher to use it in selecting unique cases that are informative. It also gives the researcher a chance to select members of a difficult-to-reach specialised population for a study. Additionally, a purposive sample also allows a researcher to rely on experiences, ingenuity and/or the findings of the previous studies. In this regard, Struwig and Stead (2017:83) further noted that a purposive sample enables the researcher to collect data in such a way that the chosen sample can be considered representative of the relevant population.

The current study was conducted at five purposively sampled schools in the Vhembe District's Sambandou Circuit. It is also emphasised that an adequate sample is solely determined by how homogeneous or heterogeneous the population from which a sample is drawn is, or how similar or dissimilar its members are in terms of the characteristics of a research interest that have been correctly selected. Using purposive sampling, the following participants were chosen because they were

suspected of witnessing or being victims of bullying. Dimensions indicate the number of participants in a sample (e.g., number of principals, teachers, etc.)

- Five principals – one from each of the five sampled primary schools
- Five HODs – one from each of the five sampled primary schools
- Ten teachers – two from each of the five sampled primary schools
- Eight learners – two from the four samples primary schools

A total of 28 participants took part in the study.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Du Plooy (2018:83) noted that data analysis is the application of reasoning and interpretation of the collected data. Furthermore, Brink et al., (2018:67) also stressed that data analysis constitutes the final stage of hearing what the other participants have said in response to the posed questions during the interviews. Kumar (2014:58) also cautioned that the best way to carry out the data analysis approach is to first analyse its objectives. On the other hand, Zikmund (2012:29) is of the view that data analysis involves the application of reasoning towards understanding and interpreting the collected data.

The study's data analysis was conducted by means of an interpretative or constructivist model, using descriptive coding participants' responses, interview transcripts, and relevant documents (Brink et al., 2018:67). The study used focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis for data collection. Thematic content data analysis was used to analyse the data in this study. Punch (2013:16) also emphasised that for this process to be well-conducted, data should be collected through focus groups and semi-structured interviews should be recorded on a recording device and then transcribed verbatim. Interview data were organised into units, which had been derived from the questions themselves. The

questions served as themes that would be used to organise the data. Such a process involved the coding of data. Coding refers to the classification of data under specific themes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:399). While data would be organised according to the interview questions, some of the critical information might stand distinctly alone, which could create further themes for classification.

Data collected by means of observations were classified according to the pre-determined topics as they appear in the observation grid. Points and descriptors that appeared on the observation grid would serve as themes. Data from grids that were collected from the selected schools were merged to form a single informative grid. The benefit of observation was that it would take place in the natural setting where participants led a natural life, without intending to impress the observer (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:376).

Information gathered from the documents were added to pre-determined themes, with descriptors serving as themes. The documents were analysed through the thematic data analysis method so that notable and distinct facts would be noted as themes, and facts were also linked to one another. For example, procedures explained in the learners' Code of Conduct were also linked with procedures of handling violence to determine consistency and uniformity. Where differences occur, the researcher analysed the impact that could be brought on by such differences so that the analysis process should be done well.

To ensure a formal and organised approach to data analysis, documents, interviews, and observations were done according to five steps that are usually used in the thematic data content analysis method (Clarke & Braun, 2012:16).

Step 1: Acquaintance and immersion

The researcher read through the descriptions from the participants' responses several times during this step. The researcher also had the opportunity to supplement her notes by drawing diagrams. The researcher also engaged in a brainstorming session

about what she had already done. In the interim, the researcher immersed herself in the world of the participants through face-to-face conversations. As the interviewer, the researcher would be able to recall their responses.

Step 2: Creating themes

It was during this stage that the researcher creates themes through answers from the participants interviews. Furthermore, themes were first clustered into themes in order for them to be well-coded during the data analysis process.

Step 3: Coding

The researcher then labelled the various data so that they were all relevant to one or more developed themes. This was followed by using the important statements by coding them in different colours (e.g., strategies to effectively mitigate bullying amongst primary school learners in the Vhembe District's Sambandou Circuit). The reason for this is that the important statements were identified while summarising the study's recommendations.

Step 4: Explanation

The researcher had also used this time to correct errors made during the coding process. During this time, the researcher would strictly investigate more themes in depth. In such a case, the way forward was open for the thematic content data analysis to be used for the analysis process.

Step 5: Interpretation and verification

Finally, in this step, the researcher combines all the interpretations. This aided the researcher in addressing the flaws in the written accounts after a thorough review.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Creswell and Creswell (2018), stated that in the research world, every method has its own criteria to ensure its quality measures while being used. For instance, while ensuring the quality measures in the quantitative research method, the relevant criteria to be used are validity and reliability. In this study, the suitable criteria to be used, were: dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability, hence the chosen approach for data collection, was qualitative method in nature. To ensure trustworthiness in this a qualitative study, the following criteria were used:

3.8.1 Credibility

Babbie and Mouton (2013:55) define credibility as the degree to which the researcher's findings could be considered dependable, believable, and factual. In an effort of enabling this study to achieve the credibility stage, it should have developed the findings carried out in accordance with the cannons of a good practice. On the other hand, it could happen after the readers of this very study, would have confirmed that the researcher had understood the social world in which the study was being conducted correctly (Mc Donald, 2013:68). Besides this, credibility has been achieved after conducting the study on: “ Strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary learners under Sambandou in the Vhembe East District,” that reders might say findings were credible. In this regard, it would then also mean that such a study had no biased features, and it had trustworthy or authentic criteria.

3.8.2 Transferability

Monette et al., (2013:44) noted that transferability means the ability to apply the findings of one's study in another study, particularly if they have the same topic. Furthermore, in a qualitative approach, as selected for data collection in this study, its findings have been oriented to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the phenomenon being studied in the social world. For instance, transferability could be really claimed to have been reached, if the findings obtained during the interviews on the topic under study, could be transferred for use by other researchers without any

baseness in them. In such a context, the findings would have indeed reached the stage of transferability, if they could be used by the other researchers at their institutions well in future.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the degree to which the social competence are reliant on the producer and could be repeatedly assessed, and will keep on showing the same results (Creswell, 2013:31). In a well-conducted research study, an auditing would have been embraced with anti-biasness characteristics so that the other researchers could use it without any difficulties at the other institutions. In case, where it could be established that most participants had given the same answers when questions were posed to them, it would then mean that the study conducted, had simply reached the dependability stage well. In this regard, it would also mean that, the findings of such a study might even be used by the other researchers who will be conducting the studies on the very same topic in future (Babbie & Mouton, 2013: 83).

3.8.4 Confirmability

Du Plooy (2018:79) also emphasised that confirmability refers to the correctness, relevance, or true meaning of data (information) collected in the research. Furthermore, Bhatia (2019:61) referred to confirmability as the way one implies anything correctly, in a true, accurate and definite way while conducting research. For example, after conducting a research study, it could only be declared to have reached the confirmability stage, if its findings had also been approved by the editors (e.g. internal and external), and recommended it to be confirmable and accurate in nature (Dornyei, 2008:49). The findings of the study could be confirmed to have reached confirmability, if they could reflect relevancy, accuracy, and credibility. In short, it then means that confirmability have been reached if the findings could in future be used from one generation to another by the researchers through displaying biasness or confusions while being used (Miles & Huberman, 2013:136).

3.9 RESEARCH ETHICS

Struwig and Stead (2017:58) emphasised that ethics entails the researcher's commitments to those who take part in the research, those who support it, and those who benefit from it. Moreover, Miles and Huberman (2013:82) warned that any qualitative researcher who is asleep while conducting a research study, should ponder the moral and ethical rules before starting research for whatever faculty at any educational institution. The reason behind this is that any social research, including education research, concerns people's lives in the social world and should therefore be regarded as very important; hence, it involves crucial ethical issues in research. In addition to this, Heale and Twycross (2017:13) also maintained that ethics are the cornerstones of research. Without them, the delicate or complex interweave of it, the researcher could fall apart in an undesirable manner in terms of conducting good research.

The four ethics criteria upheld in this study are discussed below:

3.9.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

After receiving ethical clearance from the University's REHC, the researcher consulted the leaders of the participants to ensure that they had all signed the informed consent forms. The reason was that these forms served as an insurance policy during the investigation on the participants' lives (Punch, 2013:57). The researcher also informed the participants not to tell anybody about the venue they were operating from. They were assured that neither their contributions nor their identities would be revealed to anyone during or after the investigation. However, it was done in such a way that the participants' dignity and integrity were not jeopardised (Jacobs, 2014a:62). Teachers, HODs, and key participants had all freely agreed to take part in the investigation. This means that consent to participate in the study had been firstly obtained. A consent letter was distributed to the prospective teachers, HODs, and principals. The letter covered the purpose of the research and the reason for requesting the participants' participation. Moreover, the benefits of the study were explained. The possible

negative consequences that the participants might experience were also covered in the letter. Furthermore, it was explained that participation would not be rewarded by means of incentives. To ascertain approval of the study, the letter would bear the supervisor's contact information in the form of an e-mail address and telephone number. Upon understanding the above terms, the letter required the prospective participant to sign it as an indication of voluntary participation.

It is very probable that some of these learners may be under the age of 18; therefore, parental or guardian consent is required to participate; thus, parental assent for learner participants was assured before proceeding with the investigation. The researcher interviewed the learners through focus group interviews. The researcher phoned each parent and/or guardian to ascertain whether they were willing to allow their children to participate in the study. The goal of the study was explained to the parents and/or guardians. The researcher also sent them a consent letter following the telephonic consent. The letter highlighted the possible harm and stigma that the participating learners might experience during the investigation. The letter also covered the learner's rights to withdraw participation at any time during the process of data collection if they wanted to. In addition, the letter stated that the learners were participating voluntarily without expectation of monetary benefits, only with the general benefits for every education stakeholder. The parents and/or guardians were required to sign the letter permitting the learner to participate in the study. The learner would also need to assent to participate as an individual. The learner was made aware that they should participate voluntarily, and that they could withdraw their participation at any time and that no subsequent penalty would follow. The parents and/or guardians were advised to keep a copy of the signed letter.

This investigation took place during the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, COVID-19 protocols were adhered to. Moreover, in cases where one of the participants become ill, the data collection proceedings would be stopped in order to adhere to UNISA's COVID-19 regulations and guidelines.

3.9.2 Harm and risk

The researcher assured the participants that they would be protected against any risky physical or emotional harm that might befall them during the investigation; this is because the research directly involved all the participants. However, it appeared that most participants in this study would be children under the age of 18, as the investigation was taking place at a primary school. It also means that the adult participants would be advised to refrain from commenting publicly about bullying in the presence of the primary school learners. Furthermore, intrusive techniques, such as audio-visual recordings was sensitive and private, has been employed during the investigation. Therefore, the researcher saved the data on a One-drive cloud account to protect it.

All foreseeable risks of harm or discomfort were avoided, as well as questions that could cause discomfort during the interviews. No personal information was asked for data generation and analysis. Where it could have been interpreted as seeking personal information, the researcher rephrased the question. Furthermore, the participants were referred for further counselling by professional personnel depending on the kind of challenge they encountered.

3.9.3 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

The participants were informed before the start of the primary investigation that their surnames and names would not be published in any media during or after the investigation, nor would their personal information be requested and simply offered (Clarke & Braun, 2013: 78). The issue of the participants' right to privacy was also addressed, so that they could feel free and welcomed. In addition, the research's findings would not be given in exchange for any gifts or money. During the investigation, the researcher also warned the participants to refrain from speaking to any reporters or journalists. The researcher also assured the participants that the study's records would not be given to anyone unless a written approval letter from the manager was obtained. On the other hand, the study's results and contributions, would not be exchanged with anybody (Malhotra, 2012:67)

3.9.4 Carefulness, honesty, and integrity (Deception)

Hennink et al., (2020:41) defined the term deception as an action that usually happens when one tries to deceive people in a cunning or trickery way so that they could get something from them wrongfully. Before any action could happen, the researcher informed all participants of the study's purpose, including its objectives. In addition, the researcher also informed them about everything that they might encounter during the investigation. Furthermore, Neuman,(2018:345) also acknowledged that deception could be made use of especially while conducting sensitive or dangerous cases (e.g., drug lords' operational places or a gangsters' dwelling place). After using a deception strategy in a research study, the issue being investigated should be revealed to the participants. Thereafter, they must also be warned not to tell anyone because their lives may be jeopardised in future.

3.10 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

3.10.1 Limitations

According to Murray and Beglar (2012:81), the term limitations refers to the act of preventing something from happening in the way that it should have happened. The study's limitations were discussed. However, during the printing of the questionnaires from the interview guide, it was difficult as the printing prices had been up by then. On the other hand, some participants even missed the interviews, and replacing them was indeed a difficult task. Furthermore, principals also kept on postponing the interviews due to their ever busy schedules in schools. Moreover, some participants had also refused to be voice-recorded, although they agreed to be prepared for everything pertaining to the proposed interviews while signing the informed consent forms. On the contrary, the study opted for a qualitative approach for data collection, therefore it then means that its findings would not be widely accepted due to the presence of the smaller samples in it. Besides this, all the limitations that emerged during the data collection process, were attended to, with immediate effect. The researcher ensured that all the limitations that emerged during the collection of data were attended to.

3.10.2 Delimitation

Gray (2013:57) stressed that to delimit a research study requires analytical thinking; it is not something that one can just attempt. Firstly, it requires certain aspects that are embedded in a seamless use of issues. This suggests that a researcher's study must demonstrate that they were able to demarcate or delimit their study areas carefully (De Wet, 2016b:65).

This study was conducted at the five purposively-selected primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District. These schools were selected as they were experiencing a high rate of bullying than other primary schools in the same circuit. Most importantly, the bullying actions perpetrated by primary school daily were not reported from those schools. The researcher had also visited the five sampled primary schools before the research to ascertain that these schools were appropriate for this study's purpose.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the study's research design and methodology. The researcher employed the interpretive paradigm; thus, it is recommended that the study employ a qualitative research method that focuses on the interpretive analysis of data rather than numbers. Following the selection of the qualitative approach, the researcher used semi-structured and focus group interviews, observations, and document analysis as data collection instruments. Therefore, five primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District were purposively selected to participate in the study. This study aimed to establish strategies to effectively mitigate the bullying of primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District. Finally, the study discussed strategies that could be used to reduce the bullying crisis at the affected primary schools at Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study's goal was to assess strategies that could be used to reduce bullying among primary school students at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District. The previous chapter outlined and discussed the research methodology, which contributed to the study's results and findings. Data were gathered from principals, HODs, teachers, and students at the various primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit, located in the Vhembe East District. This chapter used a thematic approach to analyse and present data in a narrative format. In some cases, participants' words are recorded and then transferred verbatim and italicised.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS FROM INTERVIEWS

The researcher used multiple data collection methods such as in-depth interviews, document analysis, and observations to collect data from principals, HODs, and teachers. The principal of each selected primary school was interviewed separately from the HODs and teachers (cf. 3.5.2). Learners were interviewed in a focus group as indicated in Chapter 3 of the study (cf. 3.5.1). Document analysis was used for triangulation and valuable for ensuring the trustworthiness of the study results. Documents outlined in the document analysis guide (Appendix P) assisted the researcher in filling in the gaps left by participants who were interviewed as individuals and in focus group as alluded to (Kivinja & Kuyini, 2017:133) in the previous chapter (cf. 3.5.4). The analysis of documents also made it possible for the researcher to validate the findings from in-depth- interviews and focus group interviews.

The researcher used the same questions to collect data from principals, HODs, and teachers. These questions were prepared in the in-depth interview guides attached in

(Appendices K, L and M). Focus group interview questions were different in some questions, the interview guides are also attached (Appendix I). The researcher employed a structured observation to guide the data collection. As a result, descriptors were populated into a comprehensive observation grid that provides for notable recognisable facts picked up during observation. The researcher observed the teachers, learners, HODs, and principals, using the observation grid. The researcher participated in special events such as the assembly of learners and sports events. The researcher observed and listened to teacher engagements with learners. The observation grid is attached (Appendix Q). Therefore, this prompted the researcher to analyse, present, and discuss data obtained from in-depth and focus group interviews conducted concurrently. In this way, the researcher was able to draw similarities and differences in the views and opinions shared by teachers, principals, HODs, and learners on the effectiveness of strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners in Vhembe District's Sambandou Circuit. To protect the identities of the schools and participants, the researcher used code names in accordance with ethical guidelines (cf. 3.9.3). A review of the literature in Chapters 1 and 2 was used to analyse and confirm the study's findings in the form of in-text referencing.

4.2.1 Coding of participants

The schools and participants that took part in the study were given code names as presented in the table below:

Table 4.1: Code names for schools and participants.

Schools	A	B	C	D	E
Principals who participated in the interviews	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3	Principal 4	Principal 5

HODs who participated in the interviews	HOD 1	HOD 2	HOD 3	HOD 4	HOD 5
Teachers who participated in the interviews	Teacher 1 Teacher 2	Teacher 3 Teacher 4	Teacher 5 Teacher 6	Teacher 7 Teacher 8	Teacher 9 Teacher 10
Learners who participated in the interviews	Learner 1 Learner 2	Learner 3 Learner 4	Learner 5 Learner 6	Learner 7 Learner 8	

Five schools participated in the study, as indicated in the table above. From these schools, five principals, five HODs, and two teachers from each school were interviewed separately. In addition, two students from four of the five participating schools took part in the focus group interviews. As a result, a total of 12 participants were able to generate detailed information on the rigid findings to reduce bullying actions at the affected primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District.

4.2.2 Emerging themes

Thematic and narrative frameworks were used to analyse and present data. During the thematic analysis process, the researcher organised data in accordance with the research questions. The raw data was transcribed and coded by the researcher. Similar codes were grouped together to form categories that transformed into themes that served as the framework for organising and reporting the findings of the study. Data was then presented narratively, and in some cases, participants' actual spoken words were presented to undilute their views and opinions (Struwig & Stead, 2017:41). Focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews, observations and

document analysis were used and in some cases, participants' actual words were used to ensure that readers clearly understood their views and opinions. The following themes emerged during the data collection process:

Table 4.2: Themes

Themes no.	Themes
Theme 1	Understanding the concept of bullying in the primary school context
Theme 2	Learner experience of bullying behaviour
Theme 3	Social identities in, gender,sexual orientation and home background.
Theme 4	Causes of bullying in primary schools
Theme 5	Places and spaces of bullying in schools
Theme 6	Supporting victims and perpetrators of bullying
Theme 7	Leadership responsibility towards the effectiveness of learner's discipline
Theme 8	The culture and climate of primary school regarding learner discipline
Theme 9	Factors influencing causes of bullying in schools
Theme 10	Learners' understanding of the bullying behaviours among each other
Theme 11	Programmes that are effective in the prevention of bullying in primary schools
Theme 12	Effectiveness of preventing bullying on teaching and learning in primary schools
Theme 13	Formulation of an anti-bullying policy
Theme 14	Strategies to effectively mitigate bullying amongst primary school learners

Classrooms, HODs' and principals' offices were used for data collection at the Sambandou primary schools. These venues were convenient and conducive to participants, the researcher, and data collection assistant. The data collection assistant assisted in recording and transcribing data during field visits. All the participants consented to use the voice recorder equipment to record their voices. COVID-19 protocols were adhered to in all the primary schools that participated in the study. The researcher, data collection assistant, and participants were screened and sanitized. The participants wore cloth and surgical masks covering their nose and mouth, and a distance of 2 metres was maintained as per the COVID-19 guidelines. Chairs and tables were disinfected before and after the interviews, and windows were opened to allow air circulation. It emerged from the findings of the study that teachers, learners, principals, and HODs are assessed in schools. However, it is worth noting that the study aims to develop strategies to mitigate bullying in primary schools. Principals, HODs, and teachers were involved in the prevention of bullying among learners at school. The principals and HODs from the Sambandou primary schools were important in the interviews about the bullying incidents because they are custodians of preventing learner bullying at the school premises. The generated findings were analysed, presented, and discussed in related themes.

4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Understanding the concept of bullying in the primary school context

The researcher posed the following question to a focus group; *"What do you understand by the concept of bullying?"* The purpose of the question was to find out if all the affected learners have the same views about the concept of bullying. The participants shared the following responses:

Learner 1: "I understand that the concept of bullying is when someone tries to hit you or to take your things when you did not do anything."

Learner 2: "I understand that bullying is when someone is forcing you to do something that you do not want to do, and someone is trying to mistreat you."

Learner 5: "Bulling is to force someone to do something, and it happens when a learner or group of learners takes advantage of their power and uses it to hurt or harm someone verbally, physically, socially, or emotionally."

Learners 1 and 2 share the same sentiment of bullying, which is hitting someone or taking their belongings without permission – it is a bad habit that should not be allowed in a school environment as it affects the victims' school performance. Moreover, Learner 5 shared the same sentiments on the understanding of the concept of bullying. Learners also construed bullying largely in terms of how they have experienced it, with most of them referring to the acts of bullying like kicking or displaying physical violence. The above illustrates that participants understood what bullying is. They further mentioned various actions which they associate with bullying. They explained bullying as a phenomenon occurring between two or among, or a group of learners. Learners' narratives also associated bullying with teasing, insulting and violent actions. It is comprised of direct behaviours such as threatening and stealing initiated by one or more learners against a victim (Clarke & Braun, 2016::61) (cf. 2.2). This shows how bullying for these learners was not just an idealised or imagined phenomenon, but a lived experience of their daily lives. The learners' reference to bullying as repeated form of aggression and oppression, which inflicts psychological and physical harm to the less powerful counterpart. Jolley (2014:37) denotes the centrality of power relations at the heart of the problem of bullying at schools.

The researcher posed the following question to three participants (principal, HOD and teachers); *"According to your understanding, how is bulling taking place at this school?"* The participants shared the following responses:

Principal 4 from School D: *"The bullying incidents at my school happen because of various things. Boys are mostly the perpetrators. The female bullies are vulnerable and cannot fight for themselves. If someone calls them by a terrible name, they won't respond in fear of reprisal."*

Principal 1 from School A: *"As I've said before, learners, mostly the boys, are the ones who usually bully the girls or other learners and call them all sorts of names. They also call other young boys names... verbal bullying is what mostly takes place."*

Principal 3 from School C: *“Bullying is minimal in our school because we have a team of teachers who implement the Code of Conduct. However, It depends on the situation at that time.”*

HOD 3 from School C: *“Bullying mostly takes place during breaks. The boys tend to take advantage of the girls who are powerless. However, the issue here is money; if a learner doesn’t have stationery, they are forced to take someone else’s through bullying.”*

Teacher 7 from School D: *“Bullying can take place anytime – during breaks, before or after school. They take advantage of the female learners... they even take they food, which is unnecessary.”*

Teacher 9 from School E: *“Bulling at school is a result of ill-discipline. Most cases have been reported to me because I manage learners’ discipline. I found out that most learners bully others over money or anything really. Sometimes they class because they bet money on a team, which losses.”*

Principal 7 from School D stated that the older boys are the main perpetrators of bullying in primary schools. Furthermore, HOD 3 from School C maintained that the older boys often bully the younger boys or girls during school breaks because the girls seem to be easy targets. Teacher 8 from School D and Teacher 9 from School E share the same sentiments about the older boys as they are the main perpetrators of bullying in primary schools.

Moreover, Teacher 6 from School C admitted that boys are the worst bullies in primary schools and they also enjoy calling girls by terrible nicknames or even insulting the younger boys during breaks for no apparent reasons. Gordon and Moron (2019:111) also indicated other forms of bullying that older boys usually practise, which includes verbal bullying (often insulting and using funny nicknames), cyberbullying, and sexual bullying (cf. 2.3.1). This is because they know such victims would never report them; hence, they don’t fear reprisals.

The above illustrates that participants understood what bullying is. Furthermore, the literature reveals that bullying is a process involving power relations, reducing other

learners to powerlessness as a means of displaying might. Morley (2014:56) (cf. 2.3.1) emphasises that there should be an imbalance in strength for the term bullying to be used. This is illustrated in learners' excerpts above, which also indicate that bullying is construed as hurtful actions carried out by learners on other learners. These actions could hurting them physically, emotionally, and psychologically (cf. 2.3.1).

Carney et al., (2018:48) also defined bullying as exploitation of imbalanced power. It is also a kind of aggression that may occur in various forms in schools, ranging from being physical, emotional, psychological, or verbal. It may even take long before being done by a person or, it could lead to an electronic, verbal exchange (i.e. cyberbullying). Although the above definition highlights the use of bullying power in school, this doesn't encourage the victims to speak out against the perpetrators. In fact, most victims are not willing to speak up until they experience physical injuries (Allisop & Van Zyl, 2018:42 cf. 2.3).

4.2.2.2 Theme 2: Learner experience of the bullying behaviour

In this theme, the posed question; *"What are your experiences regarding bullying amongst learners at your school?"* with intension to examine the participants' experiences pertaining to how bullying is taking in the primary schools. The participants shared the following responses:

Principal 2 from School B: *"My experience about bullying behaviour is that a some of the learners they're jealous of other learners because they don't have what other learners have or sometimes it happened because you found that the younger ones, they are brighter in the classroom than the bigger one. They're not like them, so they're jealous of them when their answering or getting good results or being appreciated, so that causes some of the bullying school."*

Principal 1 from School A: *"The bullying incidents at my school happen because of a different things. As I've said before, boys are the ones who are mostly the perpetrators. So they bully girls just because, like they are vulnerable, they cannot fight for*

themselves. If they are calling them with bad names. They cannot respond sometimes because they fear that they will beat them. So yeah, that's what I can say."

HOD 3 from School C: *"I found that the older learners or boys do not have money or food, so they sometimes ask those the young ones to collect money from others so that they may use it together as a group. After that, they rob. If a learner reports this to the teacher, they threaten him with a beating after school."*

Teacher 9 from School E: *"Learners see my experience shows that the valuable. The small ones, those who are very weak. They are the ones who are being bullied. Those who are coming from good families and those sometimes can find out even those who are bright in the class. They feel bullied because of that."*

Learner 2: *"After being bullied, I would feel sad, angry and embarrassed by myself because other learners will be teasing me. Yeah, and I would feel very bad. It is bad to live in fear that I won't be able to control my fear and I will be afraid to come to school every day because everyone will be teasing me. They will be making fun of me.."*

Principal 2 from School B; Principal 1 from School A; HOD 3 from School C; Teacher 9 from School E; and Learner 7, seemed to have the same perceptions concerning the posed question; hence, they all mentioned that the older boys bully the younger boys and girls. In addition to this, Principal 1 from School A further stressed that the older boys even go to an extent of calling girls by names or insulting them unnecessarily."

In support of the above participant views as expressed by the interviewed participants, Storm, et al (2013:60), also emphasised that actions are often levelled against girls in most primary schools, rather boys. Jacobs (2018:62) also highlighted that 'bullying' could be simply explained, as the abuse of power that is systematic and repetitive of unpleasant behaviour, that keeps on occurring from time to time; can happen to either children or adults. On the other hand, bullying and victimisation sometimes occur concurrently with the victims, especially in schools. They are a widespread phenomenon in childhood and can take several forms, such as name-calling, gossiping exclusion, and hitting or pushing (Fink et al., 2018:101) (cf. 2.2.1). From the statements so far mentioned, it compels one to easily conclude that bullying usually

happens to children rather than adults in every day's life. The reason behind this, being that several examples of violent bullying actions are being referred to, learners in schools.

4.2.2.3 Theme 3: Social identities in, gender, home background, and sexual orientations

In an attempt of answering the question; *“Explain how the following affect learners, experience of bullying; one’s gender, one’s background, and sexual orientation?”*

Learner 4: *“It’s the elder boys because the young children can’t fight; so, they bully young children.”*

Teacher 3 from School B: *“With regards to gender, boys bully girls because they refer to them as weak. Learners from poor backgrounds bully rich learners by taking them their belongings and. because of jealous and vice versa. The rich bullied the poor one emotional by laughing at them when they wore torn and dirty clothes. Ahh... puberty, boys, harass and raped others in order to orientate or practise their feelings. “*

Teacher 8 from School D: *“Once gender, gender is when they big boys started to bully the, the girls, the young girls. But in one’s background when the child is coming from a good family always have pocket money. Nice food. And that can influence the kids to bully or him, because here for something that they don't have. And sexually is not normally happening mostly here in primary schools. But what I know is the hhhh.... When? Boys started to bully the girls. Sexually, when they were meant. Maybe when they go home. But I didn't see experience that yeah, here at school.”*

HOD 6 from School C: *“The first item is gender. Girls are weak and boys are stronger, so girls cannot do anything to them. To defend themselves, they come to us as teachers so that that is the one thing that called me. Number two. Once background, those children. Those children who are coming from poor family they do not have money so when they do not have money. Those who have no money with money. So, the fight against this yes, sexual orientation. Sexual orientation you are talking gender yes so. Already mentioned there. Female or girls who are at our schools have got a lot of problems. Because although some girls are powerful, the boys are more powerful than them.”*

Principal 1 from School A: *“Mostly, learners that experience bullying are girls than boys. Then based on background, those are coming from poor family experience, bullying and even those who bully. Especially decided on days in class or at home. And then sexual orientation. Now we don't have such cause. All of them are not yet chosen. Other sexual orientation that boys and girls as the way they look.”*

HOD 6 from School C and Learner 4 maintained that girls often fall victim to the bullies in most primary schools' hence, they are regarded as powerless. Sexual orientation by itself opens gates for girls to be bullied, due to their lack of power efforts. Besides this, Teacher 3 from School B agree with Teacher 8 from School D because girls are targeted for bullying, knowing that they would not report them, owing to the fear of the reprisals that could be levelled against them by the peer bullies. In response to the posed question, Principal 1 from School A, also said that the majority of girls at his school, are the victims of bullying actions. Concerning the background issue, he blamed learners from the rich families as oppositely being the culprits of those from the poor families; hence, they are jealous of them. He also furthermore, referred to girls as the sexually-disputed persons, because they are sometimes labelled as, gays, lesbians and homosexuals at the targeted places or spaces during breaks in schools. According to Gordon and Moron (2019:111), most bullies come from violent families and inherit their violent behaviours or actions from their parents, and practise on other learners at school (cf. 2.3).

The conclusion drawn from the above statements is that both participants acknowledge that social identities contribute to school bullying behaviour. Mncube and Steinmann (2014:31) indicted that girls are sexually-bullied but they usually do not report such cases fearing for the reprisals from the peer bullies in schools. The findings thereof showed that the young learners there, seem to be interested in fighting others or school mates. The reason behind this was that most of them are from single-parental families and had grown up in small families. On the other hand, when meeting learners of their ages, they don't think of anything else but to fight them. Thus, from what has been discussed in this section, it compels one to conclude that social identity bullying is one of the most contributing factors to the high failure rate in primary schools (Harber, 2004:53) (cf. 2.3.2).

4.2.2.4 Theme 4: Causes of bullying in primary schools

The following question was posed; *“What are the causes of bullying in your school?”*

The participants shared the following responses:

Learner 3 precisely: *“Bullies are troublesome and can’t control their anger and emotions.”*

Teacher 4 from School B: *“The causes of bullying in our school are mainly learners who fail certain classes. They take advantage of the younger ones.”*

HOD 3 from School C: *“Bullying is caused by learners who are jealous of others, May be the other people's learner has got good things, or they have got belongings that others are not able to get. So, they try to take those things from the owners and take them or their own.”*

Principal 4 from School D: *“Anger, drugs, and child-headed families, those are some of the things that contribute to bullying in my school.”*

Based on the comments, the participants shared same sentiments. Learner 3; Teacher 4 from School B; HOD 3 from School C; and Principal 4 from school from School D cited different causes of bullying at their schools. Learner 3 referred to incidents like snatching or robbing other minor learners ‘properties, as also the causes of bullying specifically when those learners sometimes resisted. In this context, teacher 2, from School A also pointed out to the repeater-learners as the main bullies in schools hence they bullied the other learners in order to save due to the inferiority complex feelings they had from their poor families. In addition to this, HOD 1, from School A, noted that those older boys have the notion that girls are naturally weaker, and keep on bullying them for no apparent reasons. In pursuance of answering the posed question well, Principal 4 from School D mentioned aspects, such as anger, jealousy, and the inferior complex tendency, especially by learners coming from the poor backgrounds as the main influence of resorting to applying the bullying actions against the other learners in schools

In support of the afore-said views, De Wet (2016b:45) also highlighted that gender is one of the factors that could unexpectedly influence bullying in boys more than girls. It is also reported that 51% of school children in South Africa started bullying at earlier

ages (Moloi, 2015:56). The way in which learners wear clothes in schools or the vehicles from their homes, bringing them to schools could trigger some bullying actions to learners in most primary schools. In support of the previously-mentioned views, Morojele (2013:23) acknowledged that features, like: isolation, lower esteem, insecurity, depression and stress, could influence one to turn into the bullying tendencies while in a school (cf. 1.7.2).

4.2.2.5 Theme 5: Places and spaces of bullying in schools

In the light of the above sub-topic, it implies that bullying does not just happen, but there is an environment where it is being performed (e.g., a school or home). Furthermore, the researcher posed the following question; *“Which are the places within your school where bullying takes place?”* The participants shared the following responses:

Learner 1: “In the classes, playgrounds, and in the toilets.”

Learner 2: “At the playground while playing and in class when you are eating.”

Learner 5: “It most cases, it happen in the classroom when teachers are not around.”

Learner 6: “On the soccer field.”

Learner 7: “both inside and outside the class.”

Statements elucidated above revealed that the places of bullying were not organised, it can happened everywhere. Learner 1 stated that it happened in the playground and toilets. Learner 1, learner 2, learner 5, learner 6 and learner 7 share the same impression of where bullying takes place in classroom in the absent of teachers and in the playground.

Downer (2012:21) also noted that in most cases, bullying occurs in the school premises, hence the doers would be in need of gaining popularity or praises from their peers. (cf. 2.3).

Furthermore, the researcher posed the following question; *“Can you narrate a story of where you have witnessed a bullying incident in your school or causes of bullying?”*

Learner 2: *"I witnessed the incidents in our school. It is it always happened in the ground because we almost with the, and the other and last time there was the girl she was eating a thing and a boy just come and ask that, can you give me this and then a boy said the girl said no I can't give you. This is my lunch, and I don't have another lunch then the boy started forcing her to give him to give him and the girl was very scared. She started feel shy because he was shouting at him, and the boy started hitting him In front of all the children."*

Teacher 4 from School B: *"Bullying can take place during break, after school, and before school. They take advantage of women – they take their food away from them."*

HOD 4 from School D: *"Yes, I have come across an adult or an overage girl who usually beat other learners while on their way home after school. So that is what I usually witnessed. Just because most learners reported this incident when they come to school the following day that they are being bullied on their way home."*

Principal 3 from School C: *"Indeed. I didn't witness the cause of bullying because as a principal it will be reported to me after it has been done."*

Learner 2 explained that he had firstly personally witnessed a bullying incident at the school premises where one older boy asked food from a minor girl who refused, hence it was prepared for only one person. The older boy started beating an innocent little girl for no understandable reason. On the one hand, Teacher 4 from School B said that she had one day just arrived at the class for a prepared lesson, and witnessed an older boy beating a minor learner from refusing to offer him a given homework by the very teacher, who was about to start a lesson. Nonetheless, bullying actions do happen at whatever place in the school premises differently, especially those perpetuated by learners from the poor families, who intended to save face concerning the ill-feeling of the inferiority complex attitudes troubling them while at their homes.

HOD 4 from School D and Principal 3 from School C asked question as if they had firstly held a 'secret meeting' before being interviewed, hence they all said that they had never seen a bullying action happening, but usually received only reports from either learners or teachers at their schools.

Serious bullying actions do happen in school scenarios but teachers or any other concerned stakeholder fails to can recognise them, owing to the way it is done. In this

regard, very serious cases like physical or sexual bullying do occur in primary schools, but they could only be known after being reported to us. The other important issue in this instance is that even the victim although feeling stressed or depressed could hardly report it to either teachers or parents; fearing the consequences that could be done to him or her after it has become known by the peer leaders.

Downer (2012:21) also noted that most of the times, bullying occurs in the school premises; hence, the doers would be in need of gaining popularity or praises from their peers. On the other hand, bullying and victimisation sometimes occur concurrently with the victims, especially in schools during breaks. They are widespread phenomenon in childhood and can take several forms, such as name-calling, gossiping exclusion, and hitting or pushing (Fink et al., 2018:101).

From the statements provided, it compels one to conclude that bullying usually happens to children rather than adults in every. The reason behind this, being that several examples of violent bullying actions are being referred to, learners in schools. It also seems the main perpetrators of bullying actions are boys rather than girls; hence, only a few incidents of bullying have been reported from being committed by boys rather than girls (Khuzwayo et al., 2016:60 cf. 2.2).

4.2.2.6 Theme 6: Supporting victims and perpetrators of bullying

The following question was posed; *“How do you react towards incidents of bullying behaviour? “The victims of bullying and the perpetrators of bullying.* The participants shared the following responses:

Learner 3: *“We mostly report it to the teacher, who resolves the issue for us. The principal calls my parents in to discuss it.”*

Teacher 6 from School D: *“If there is a problem of bullying, we called the one will come and report him. Then the one we call that one who is the perpetrator and then we'll ask them questions, and which can lead to us to even to cancel them and calling the parents so that they have to come. Sometimes if the matter is very much big, but we*

just call them to notify them. Add their child is being bullied and or the one who is a perpetrator is being bullying others so that they have to cancel him at home.”

HOD 4 from School D: *“Teachers just try by all means to help those victims who are bullied. We try to console them. We try to make sure that these learners feel safe at school. By supporting them whenever they are bullied and that perpetrators of bullying are usually disciplined by the disciplinary committee. Usually, we even tried to call their parents so that we may solve the problem. Because this causes the school not to run smoothly. Because of bullying.”*

Principal 3 from School C: *“The victims of bullying. They tried to help those victims by attending to the matter. If it is, if it happens that they fail to solve it, they proceed to the disciplinary committee where in the perpetrators of bullying. Mostly perpetrators are the ones who we help because they are the ones who make the bullying.”*

Learner 3; HOD 4 from School D; and Principal 3 from School C appeared to from the same family; hence, they all emphasised that the perpetrators need to be brought before the disciplinary committee in the presence of their parents, so that if found guilty, punishment could be applied to them. Apart from this, their cases should be recorded so that they should be referred to, in case they could commit the same offences in future. On the contrary, Teacher 6, from School D, only stressed the issue of consoling or counselling the victims, and surprisingly said nothing about the perpetrators who also deserved a comment about bullying while answering the question.

The overall comments from the above participants supported by Aulia (2016:62), who asserts that “parents know their children’ weaknesses more than nobody else. Therefore, parents have to be summoned to schools in case of offence, and the learners also punished as a sign of showing that how serious those cases might be” (cf. 2.3). In an effort to control bullying in schools, it is important that learners should be forced to reveal their perpetrators to their teachers, immediately after being bullied, or even before being bullied. It could assist in reducing the rate of bullying in primary schools, because it has some negative outcomes concerning the victims (learners), both socially and academically (Fink et al., 2018:39). Apart from this, some of the side-

effects that could have a serious impact on learners, could be mental health, substance use and the committing of suicides.

4.2.2.7 Theme 7: Leadership responsibility towards the effectiveness of learner's discipline

The following question was posed; *"In what specific areas do you think your leadership contribute towards the effectiveness of learner discipline?"* The participants shared the following responses:

Teacher 3 from School B: *"We tried to implement programmes to enforce learner discipline."*

HOD 4 from School D: *"As a leader, I tried to enforce the programmes or to implement programmes that enforce learner discipline, we have to make sure that everyone Within the school yard is safe so I have to make sure that even the teachers If it cases reported they must attend to eat, just because by neglecting any learner who reports bullying, they can make, cause the learner not to have faith in them, so it's important for. Everyone within the school community. To make sure that all cases of bullying that are reported must be attended to."*

Principal 3 from School C: *"As a school, we introduce anti-bullying programmes and as a principal I failed to back up teachers to reduce bullying due to lack of law enforcement and lack of evidence."*

The participants statements elucidated above revealed that the leadership of the school tried to introduce programmes to prevent bullying at school. HOD 4 from School D and principal 3 from School C share the same sentiment with teacher 3 from School B, with the emphasis of making school a safe environment to all learners and they have to implement disciplinary measures through those anti-bullying programmes. Some of the teacher participants reiterated that to reduce bullying in schools, punitive measures must be implemented.

4.2.2.8 Theme 8: The culture and climate of primary school regarding learner discipline

The following question was posed; *“What are the culture and climate of your school regarding learners’ discipline?”* Participants shared the following views:

Teacher 7 from School D: *“The culture means good behaviour. Each and every one the teachers is the part and parcel of it. The member of disciplinary thing sometimes we Influence each other so that even if we are in the class in year to tell learners not to beat others. And not, to take things from others and sometimes even. Making those small campaigns we influence each other to do that so that our culture is that each and every child must not beat another one they have to report.”*

HOD 5 from School E: *“As already indicated, our school culture is good regarding bullying behaviour because every time there is a problem, we attend to it.so I foresee future in this school.”*

Principal 4 from School D: *“We have a positive culture of learning and not challenging environment. Teachers and HODs love their learners.”*

Statements elucidated above reveal that the culture and climate of a school is conducive for learning. Teacher 7 from School D attest that members of disciplinary committee sometimes they influenced each other not to discipline learners while doing bad things. While HOD 5 from School E and Principal 4 from School D have the same opinion regarding the importance of good culture and good behaviour at school. These make it easier to monitor how children grow from the home environment until they grew up. On the other hand, how the children behave wherever they are, and may have been copied from either a school climate or home environment. For example, most bullying learners found in schools could have inherited it from the violent family environment. Besides this, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is one of the most explanations regarding the influence of social environment on the human environment (cf. 2.6.2).

In support of the afore mentioned statements, Smith et al., (2015:48) stated that interrelation between nature and the individual's multiple environments and the

engagement in bullying and victimisation comes exactly from the society where one grows up from (cf. 2.6).

4.2.2.9 Theme 9: Factors influencing causes of bullying in schools

The following question was posed; *"What factors influence bullying causes in your school?"*? The participants shared the following responses:

Learner 2: *"Factors that causes bullying in our school is when you don't want to give the person what to have and the teachers like you did you do something that the teachers don't like."*

Teacher 4 from School B: *"The factors that causes of bullying in our school is mainly those learners who are a fail some certain classes. They used to grow bigger and take advantage of those younger ones."*

HOD 3 from School C: *"Causes of bullying already mentioned boys feel that they are powerful. And Girls can do nothing so that is why they bully girls."*

Principal 5 from School E: *"It's a child-headed family, anger, gender and emotional issue, and drug abuse."*

As evidenced in the comments from the participants, there are numerous components of factors that cause a crisis of school bullying. Learner 2 said that another factor was an anger after the perpetrator was denied access to a victim's food parcel. Teacher 4 from School B stressed that repeaters and overage learners are the causative factors of bullying. In addition to that HOD 3 from School C and principal 5 from School E had the same sentiments as they articulate that overpowering of girls by boys, child headed family and drugs at early age were the most influential factor that cause bullying.

These include so many factors excluding those happening from home, school, and public places, as could be thought of in our daily thinking (Kekana, 2019:3). To be precise and sticking to the topic under study, the factors or causes of the bullying pandemic embroiling primary school learners should be firstly found before the final mitigation of the terrible or nasty crisis of "bullying" would be totally eradicated at all the affected primary schools. From my point of view, it also means the factors that

influencing an action or circumstance, should beforehand be found prior remedy thereof might be used (cf. 1.7.2).

From the afore-going views, regarding the factors that influence bullying exclusively in the affected primary schools underway, Gonzalez-DeHass (2020:18) acknowledged that some of the factors that cause bullying, either primary or high schools could be classified as an absence of parental directions broken families, dangerous factors, negative school environment and deficiency of good exemplary teachers. Other things such as racial conflict, failures in the legal and policing system, as well as joblessness and HIV/ AIDS infected parents, also cause bullying in schools (cf. 2.5).

4.2.2.10 Theme 10: Learners' understanding of bullying behaviours amongst each other

The following question was posed; *"Who are the perpetrators in your school?"* The participants shared the following responses:

Learner 3: *"Older boys (laughing) Like you, yeah boy that bullying because there are big in grade because they are bigger, they get up and beating everyone because they are big."*

Teacher 10 from School 5: *"Mostly older boys."*

HOD 5 from School E: *"In our school, perpetrators are boys, not girls."*

Principal 4 from School D: *"In accordance with the survey that I conducted boys are the ones who are found to be the perpetrators of the bullying incidents in this school."*

Therefore, Learner 3 from School B, answered that the older boys are the main perpetrators when it comes to bullying minor learners, knowing that they would not be able to defend themselves. In trying to answer the posed question, teacher 10, from School E, emphasised that at his school, the worst perpetrators of bullying are learners coming from the rich families. He even also further stated that those bullies appear to look down upon those learners hailing from the poor families. While offered a chance to answer the asked question, the HOD 5, from School E, seemed to concur with the previous participant (e.g., teacher), through also saying that the worst perpetrators

known to him, are the older boys, hence they know the minor learners could never challenge them. Finally, Principal 4, from School D, agreed that older boys are the main bullies even at his own school.

In support of the afore-going views as expressed by the interviewed participants, Storm, et al., (2013:60) also indicated that bullying either in primary or secondary schools, is usually levelled against minor boys and girls, knowing that they would never report them in fear of the reprisals that could be imposed to them by the peer perpetrators (cf. 1.7.4).

4.2.2.11 Theme 11: Programmes that are effective in the preventing of bullying in primary schools

The following question was posed; *Has your school ever conducted a survey to find out about bullying behaviours that take place in the school?* If, yes, who did that, when and how? Ideally, some readers might now be asking a question in their minds, like: "Why had some questions recently be asked without learner-participants being included?" The correct answer, might be that, while running a school, there are aspects that concern only the school leaders but not learners per se. The participants shared the following responses:

Teacher 3 from School B: *"Our school did not conduct that survey."*

HOD 4 from School D: *"No! I have not conducted any survey about bullying at this school because it doesn't happen frequently."*

Principal 4 from School D: *"Yes, there are surveys that we conduct concerning bullying. The one that I can mention or the last one, I think was five years ago, I conducted a survey where I wanted to check if the incidents of bullying are still taking place in my school."*

Teacher 3 from School B, freely replied that he had never done any survey of whatever kind, aiming at preventing the bullying actions from happening at his own school. On the other hand, HOD 4 from School D, seemed to have misunderstood the question, hence he had replied it irrelevantly by giving the wrong examples pertaining to it.

Moreover, Principal 5 from School E, while answering the asked question, confirmed that he had done the survey on the bullying crisis some five years ago. In this instance, it then implies that a survey made by the principal convened would be of no use as it is dated, and thus unable to provide any help in addressing the bullying actions occurring presently in schools.

From the above statements, it may drive one to conclude that no surveys were done at the schools in question. De Vos et al., (2013:140) highlighted that there is no right or wrong theoretical framework to use when undertaking any survey, because each one can be viewed from different angles. Jolley (20013:53), on the other hand, argued that "until a researcher has established a theoretical framework, he or she cannot successfully review the literature (cf. 2.6).

4.2.2.12 Theme 12: Effectiveness of preventing bullying on teaching and learning in primary schools

The following question was posed: *"How do you perceive the effectiveness of preventing bullying in this primary?"*

Teacher 4 from School B: *"In this primary school, I think many more structures must be in charge of. For example, we must engage the churches, their community leaders and, as well as though they did very structures who are working with the people around there to discourage bullying at all."*

HOD 4 from School D: *"As a school. We have anti-bullying programmes that are in place so that we make sure that bullying does not happen, or bullying does not disturb learners from the learning experiences. So If I can say I can comment further, I can say that bullying is done by those who want to show authority. And learners neglected at home sometimes those will bully others. And that is what is usually common in our school."*

Principal 3 from School C: *“As a school, we introduce anti bullying programmes and as a principal I failed to back up teachers to reduce bullying due to lack of law enforcement and lack of evidence.”*

Teacher 4 from School B emphasised that more structures have been formed in order to prevent bullying. For example, they have engaged the churches and community leaders. HOD 4 from School D had similar viewpoints with Principal 3 from School C of introducing anti-bullying programmes that ensured that bullying does not happen, or bullying does not disturb learners from learning. Principal 3 from School C further explain that he failed the teachers by not introducing anti-bullying programmes in time.

Burton (2012:34) states that in every effectively and efficiently run school, the learners' Code of Conduct must at least be emphasised on daily basis. The reason would be making it a point that it is not quickly forgotten or ignored. For example, when the school year begins, the learner's Code of Conduct should be read at prayer assembly and be fully explained. Posters with the Code of Conduct rules written on them, should be pasted at every school corner. Furthermore, at least one day per week, the rules of the Code of Conduct should be read to the learners, and they should be strictly followed.

In such an instance, it would be the right way of enabling the learners to abide by them at least in schools. Besides this, when any learners could commit any offence against agreed-upon rules, the rules will then be used to prosecute him or her for such offences. Ideally, motivational speakers should be invited to address the learners towards obeying the recommended rules in the best ways. In short, regularly reminding learners about the Code of Conduct may assist in making learners abide by its rules. Still, on the same note, it would mean that the rate of bullying at the schools where much emphasis is regularly made, towards the adherence to those rules, bullying or whatever type of violence in those schools will have been significantly reduced (cf. 2.5.4.3).

4.2.2.13 Theme 13: Formulation of an anti-bullying policy

The following question was posed; *“Who are responsible for the discipline of learners in your school?”* The participants shared the following responses:

Teacher 3 from School B: *“We do have a disciplinary committee made from teachers from foundation phase and teachers from intersen.”*

HOD 2 from School B: *“We have a committee, unfortunately I can't mention their name, but we use the safety and Security Committee, so it is the one that deals with all these problems. But in that committee, myself as the HOD I am also ex-officio of that committee.”*

Principal 4 from School D: *“The people who are responsible for discipline in my school is the disciplinary committee that we have in school.”*

The overall comments from the above participants showed that the disciplinary committee that was at the school had formulated anti-bullying policy because they were using those policies to discipline the perpetrators. Contrary to the above statement, Teacher 3 from School B said that they do have a disciplinary committee made up of teachers from the foundation phase and teachers from the Intermediate Phase. HOD 2 from School B and Principal 4 from School D shared the same sentiment of having the safety and Security Committee, which deals with formulation of anti-bullying policies and all bullying problems. However, in those committees, the principal and HOD were ex-officio members.

Hood and Duffy (2017:52) cautioned that the prevention of bullying in schools requires an understanding of the multiple factors that influence the "bullies," behaviours. EST) appears to be suitable for this study, since it encourages both teachers and learners to seriously self-analyse in approaching the 'bullying' actions being inflicted on the weaker minor learners in schools (cf. 2.5).

The Disciplinary Committee would need to emphasise the learner's Code of Conduct, which should be read in the prayer's assembly place, and adequately explained. Posters with the Code of Conduct rules written on them, should be pasted at every school corner. This would enable every learner to easily access and read them, and thus be able to follow the rules stipulated. Furthermore, at least one day per week, the Code of Conduct rules should be read to the learners, and they should be strongly urged to strictly adhere to them.

Jacobs (2014a:24) once asserted that: "The existence of the well-functioning and effectively used SMT and SGB-members and disciplinary committee could influence any school to implement anti-bullying policies well in every educational sphere, be in the form of results or behaviours in schools." Furthermore, most of the best results or good-mannered learners in schools, are those using structures, like the SMT and SGB-members about matters about the better running of schools. On the contrary, schools that undermine or ignore the existence of the above-mentioned structures are always associated with below-average performances in their Circuits. For example, the SMTs have the duty to motivate both teachers and learners to perform to their maximum levels while in schools. Most of the time, when seeing schools not performing well, we usually blame both principals and the SMTs for not doing their duties properly, before lastly coming to the teachers. Suffice it to seriously say that the SGB-members in schools should not be side-lined or neglected, when implementing anti-bullying policies hence they have also a prominent role to play concerning how schools are to be properly run. It also sounds more likely than true evident that both the SGB and SMT-members should be involved whenever every schoolwork or the enforcement of the rules are implemented in schools. In short, it also seems if the two school structures mentioned above, have been properly involved, the rate of bullying reported from the rurally primary schools, should have long been reduced (cf. 2.5).

4.2.2.14. Theme 14: Strategies' to effectively mitigate bullying amongst primary school learners.

The following question was posed; *"Which strategies can be used to mitigate bullying behaviour in your school?"* The participants shared the following responses:

Teacher 5 from School C: *"More educational progressed are aimed at addressing bullying optional are address by professionals and physiologist on the Impact of bullying."*

Teacher 3 from School B: *"We normally invite the motivational speakers at our school. We sometimes intervenes intervention of religious leaders to address bullies in our school. With sometimes invite parental structures that we do have around our school to come and address bulling in our school."*

HOD 3 from School C: *“Strategies that we can use among them all is when SGB meeting with parents. School meeting with teachers. And other stakeholders such as the police policeman, here, they also come at a school. Every quarter to find out what is happening here they give an ideas so. Those are the strategies to inviting a police and some parents. Because we cannot solve this problem alone as teachers, principals and SGB alone.”*

Principal 3 from School C: *“The strategy we are working with are social workers they do come to school and talk to learners, police officers they do come to school to talk to learners about the bullying incidents so that learners cannot continue to bully others.”*

Principal 5 from School E: *“Uh, we introduced the campaign, which is composed of the pastors, the traditional leaders, the policeman, the social workers so that they will come to school and help those learners through speeches and entertainments and all different activities so that we can give those learners the lesson that bullying is not good. It must not happen inside the school because it can end the life of another learner.”*

Teacher 5 from School C; HOD 3 from School C; and Principal 3 from School C all appeared to have the same sentiments; hence, they all cited stakeholders, such as parents, community structures, social workers, teachers, and local policemen to be involved in terms of mitigating the bullying crisis at the affected schools. Principal 5 proposed different suggestions of having a campaign, which comprised the pastors, traditional leaders, police officers, and the social workers, so that they can help learners with speeches, entertainment, and other different activities.

Sybil (2012:37) also highlighted that parents know their children’s weaknesses. Thus, if involved in seeking ways to mitigate bullying in schools, they could contribute significantly towards such a venture. Wolke and Lereya (2015:56) noted that in any school environment, there should be structures that can build up a protected environment in which teachers and learners are able to (and should) work freely and comfortably. Here, social workers can play a positive role in helping schools and learners to deal with the bullying issues.

4.3 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Lastly, the documents mentioned above were analysed. Information gathered from the documents was added to pre-determined themes, with descriptors serving as themes. The documents were analysed through thematic analysis. Notable and distinct facts were noted as themes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:368). Facts were linked to one another. These included, for example, procedures explained in the learners' Code of Conduct linked with procedures of handling bullying behaviour to determine consistency and uniformity. The researcher collected records such as the Code of Conduct reports, attendance registers, recent bullying case reports, and anti-bullying policy record books. The researcher requested the school documents related to school bullying from the school principals. The researcher selected and identified documents that were germane to the issue of school bullying careful reading and re-reading them multiple times, checking the school stamp dates and the principal's signature, which confirms that the document belongs to a school as legal documents. Documents relevant to each theme were highlighted and coded based on an individual document's analysis and meaning, relevance and context. The researcher omitted useless documents that were not aligned with the research topic.

In addition, the researcher also requested the recent bullying meetings record files from the administrators. The researcher also correlated the information collected through the interviews with those from the observation and document analysis so that the collected data could result in trustworthy findings (Bryman, 2008:94).

Where differences occur, the researcher analysed the impact brought on by such differences. COVID-19 protocols were adhered to in all the primary schools that participated in the study. The researcher, data collection assistant, and participants were screened and sanitized. The participants wore cloth and surgical masks covering their nose and mouth, and a distance of 2 metres was maintained as per the COVID-19 guidelines. During the data generation, the researcher was aware of safety precautions and measures to be followed and practised in the fieldwork. Such precautions and measures had been exercised to combat the spread of COVID-19

due to human interaction during data generation. The researcher adhered to the University of South Africa's (UNISA) strict COVID-19 safety and protocol guidelines with human participant contact.

The documentary materials appear to be suitable for constructionist analysis because they are constructed in nature and served as a means of disseminating ideas and discourse in society. On the other hand, the qualitative researcher was frequently in the position of being a facilitator, and the fruitfulness of the inquiry was a product of the researcher's skill in engaging creatively with the participants and contexts. Kivinja and Kuyini (2017:133) highlighted that while using a public or private document has advantages, such as enabling the researcher to obtain the language and words of participants, and could be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher as an unobtrusive source of information. On the contrary, they have disadvantages too; they are not equally articulated and are perceptive.

In addition, the researcher studied behavioural records books (documents) from the five purposively selected schools under the same Circuit as these were considered reliable information. Crossman (2018:116) cautioned that in the document analysis method, no steps, recording or transcribing of the recorded responses were possible. Information used in a qualitative research method, was categorised as public documents also in possession of items such as letters, wills, receipts, maps, newspapers, meeting minutes, journals, and court records. On the other hand, private records ranging from past events or records of the spoken word, such as oral testimonies or oral history provided valuable information in helping researchers to understand the central phenomenon in qualitative studies. In this regard, Cohen, et al., (2018:249) also defined a document as a record of an event or process. Moreover, Crossman (2018:123) described a documentary analysis as an integrated and conceptually informed method, procedure, and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving and analysing documents for their relevance, significance, and meaning (cf. 3.5.4)

4.4 OBSERVATION ANALYSIS

Maree (2012:83) notes that an observation is defined as a systematic process of recording behavioural patterns, objects, and instances without necessarily questioning

or communicating with them. In addition, an observation is an activity in which we use our senses (e.g., seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, etc.) with the intent of gathering data. In support of this view, Leedy and Ormrod (2013:114) also referred to observation as a process in which one simply observes the ongoing behaviours of people. For instance, in this study, the researcher opted to observe the strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, in Vhembe East District. Furthermore, Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2012:73) also highlighted that participant observation refers to a process whereby a researcher joins and becomes involved with the group being observed.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher observed the learners at the prayer meeting place, watched them while leaving the prayer assembly venue, and even observed them during the feeding periods by the feeding-scheme workers, who feed learners at school daily (cf. 3.6.2). In this regard, the researcher also watched the learners during breaks and experienced one minor girl being bullied by an older boy. The researcher also observed learners coming back to class after break. In the interim, the researcher recorded everything they observed, and also requested the teachers or administrators to provide answers for some recorded old bullying cases. In an effort to gain a deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon being observed, the researcher tried to immerse herself in the research situation being observed. By so doing, she gained in-depth knowledge pertaining to bullying in schools after approaching some learners during breaks (e.g., conducting the extra-observation). The other primary advantage of using an observational method is that the researcher does not need to worry about the limitations of self-report bias, social desirability or response set, and the information is not limited to what can be recalled accurately by the participants. In support of these views, McMillan and Schumacher (2012:213) also stressed that the other advantage of the observational method is that it is relatively easy and straightforward to record some simple behaviours that are difficult to define and access enough observations (cf. 3.3.2).

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented data utilising focus groups and semi-structured interviews, as well as observations and document analysis procedures aimed at gathering data from the 28 purposively sampled participants. The selected participants were comprised of learners, teachers, HODs, and principals, who amongst them had witnessed, experienced, and even read reports pertaining to bullying at their schools (e.g., principals). Apart from this, the data analysis had been done through the thematic content data analysis method and; thus, facilitated the development of themes to be utilised during the interpretation of the developed data. Additionally, a discussion of the themes, including the sampled participants' excerpts, were shown and clearly explained. In the next chapter, the summary of the findings, and the conclusions and recommendations are put forward.

CHAPTER 5:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter analysed, conferred, and discussed the study's findings. The study's goal was to look into strategies that could be used to effectively reduce bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District. The study's participants included school principals, HODs, teachers, and students who took part in the investigation of factors that cause bullying among primary school learners. Using a thematic approach, data were presented narratively. The literature reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2 confirmed and validated the study's findings. This chapter summarises the research from Chapters 1 to 4. The study's findings were derived based on the findings that the study produced. Finally, this chapter generated

recommendations and areas for further research. The following research questions guided the study's findings and recommendations:

Primary research question

- What strategies can be used to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District?

Sub-research questions

- How can bullying be defined in the primary school context?
- Why was bullying taking place in primary schools of Sambandou Circuit?
- How does bullying affect teaching and learning in primary schools?

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This section briefly discusses the main concepts covered in Chapters 1 – 4. The first chapter introduced the study and served as a framework for the study. Moreover, the background of the study was discussed, as well the study's' main aim, which is to devise strategies to effectively mitigate bullying amongst primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District. In this context, only five schools in the Vhembe East District were purposefully sampled in order to get the views of participants who have witnessed or experienced bullying by the perpetrators (e.g., Learners) at the schools under study.

Furthermore, the method employed allowed the researcher to analyze and interpret the data acquired, resulting in accurate and dependable conclusions (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2013:51).

The second chapter reviewed literature in line with the research questions. The chapter began by outlining the hypotheses that informed the research, including the goal-setting hypothesis established by Edwin Locke in 1968. The factors that influence bullying in primary schools were discussed in detail to provide the readers with a thorough knowledge of why bullying was taking place at the primary schools under study (cf. 2.2). The conceptual framework revealed extensive literature that covered strategies that mitigate bullying in primary schools.

Burton (2012:45) conducted a study in Lesotho examining how bullying could be mitigated in primary schools. Burton was said to have initiated such a study with the aim of trying to examine why there is a high rate of bullying in primary schools. The findings, therefore, indicate that the young learners seem interested in fighting fellow school mates. The reasoning behind this was that most of them are from single-parent families and had grown up in small families. On the other hand, when meeting learners of their ages, they only thing that would cross their minds was being involved in physical fights. Moloa (2016: 63) also conducted a study in Botswana, revealing that 49% of primary school learners are bullies. Parents had met and formed a structure called Parents Preventing Bullying in Schools (PPBS), aiming at controlling bullying, but the situation remained the same (cf. 2.3.1).

Chapter 3 focused on the research methodology for this study. The interpretivism research paradigm was used to guide the study. This paradigm allowed the researcher to employ a qualitative approach and multiple case study design, which made it possible to go to the field and collect data directly from participants. In-depth interviews and focus group interviews were used to collect first-hand information from participants who included key stakeholders that were school-based, namely learners, teachers, HODs, and principals. Such data was gathered through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, which led to implementation of the thematic content method of data analysis. Furthermore, using such a method for data

analysis develops the themes on which most topics discussed in the study are based. Triangulation of data ensured the trustworthiness of findings. The selection criteria were based on the detailed knowledge that participants had experiences with bullying in primary schools. To uphold ethical principles, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the UNISA Research Ethics Committee. Interview guides and participant consent forms were prepared.

The fourth Chapter analysed, presented, and discussed data collected from selected primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit in Vhembe East District. Permission to conduct the study in the circuit primary was granted by the Limpopo Department of Education and participating schools. The selected participants signed consent forms before taking part in the study. COVID-19 protocols and guidelines were strictly followed and adhered to during field visits in selected Sambandou Circuit primary schools. Five schools and 28 participants contributed to the data generation of this study. Documents related to learner discipline and records of bullying incidents made it possible to triangulate data collected from interviews. During data analysis and presentation, related themes emerged. The main themes are discussed below:

1. Understanding the concept of bullying in the primary school context

The participants illustrated that they need to understand what the word bullying means and what constitutes bullying behaviour. Boys are typically engaged in physical types of bullying, and girls are principally engaged in indirect or verbal bullying. Physical forms of bullying includes punching, kicking, hitting, stabbing, slapping, and pinching. Verbal or indirect bullying is comprised of teasing, name calling, and the spreading of rumours. The learners mentioned numerous actions that they associate with bullying. The participants displayed an honest understanding of bullying in the focussed cluster discussions and individual interviews (cf. 4.2.2.1).

2. Learner experience of bullying behaviour

Participants stated unequivocally that victims of bullying are typically learners who were physically weak, vulnerable, and young in age. This demonstrates that the study discovered that bullying manifests in power, powerlessness, aggression, dominance, and oppression. Learners also defined bullying primarily in terms of how they had experienced it. The majority of them referred to bullying acts such as kicking, displaying physical violence, and so on as what bullying entails. This demonstrates how bullying was a lived experience of these learners' everyday lives rather than an idealised or imagined phenomenon. The learners described bullying as a recurring form of aggression and oppression (cf.4.2.2.2).

3. Social identities in gender, sexual orientation, and home background

Participants clearly stated that learners' sexual orientation was sometimes used as a target for bullying. The findings of this study confirm the high rate of bullying in schools based on gender, sexual orientation, and family background. Bullying has made learners feel unsafe in school, and it has destroyed their confidence and self-esteem. The data also shows that even if people were unsure of a person's sexual orientation, they make assumptions based on who they hang out with or the types of games and sports they play and the types of chores they do. This was a clear example of how gender, sexual orientation, sporting games, and chores that children perform influence their behaviour (cf. 4.2.2.3).

4. Causes of bullying in primary schools

Participants identified the causes of bullying as follows: lack of discipline, anger, jealousy, and the inferior complex tendency, especially by learners from poor backgrounds. In support of the above views, the findings highlighted that gender was one of the factors that could unexpectedly influence bullying in boys more than girls. Most importantly, children from violent or single-headed families are not only called by their real names at home, but are also called by nicknames in order to influence them to do bad things (cf. 4.2.2.4).

5. Places and spaces of bullying in schools

The study also clarifies that the school playground was a common hotspot for the occurrence of bullying. This demonstrates a lack of learner supervision during school breaks. Some incidents were reported, while others were not. Learners do not report because they are afraid that it will happen again. These findings suggest that school learners were more likely to bully other learners in the absence of teachers or supervision. The absence of teachers appears to be a factor in the occurrence of bullying in the school. This was the time when some learners had the opportunity to assert their dominance over those who were weak (cf. 4.2.2.5).

6. Supporting victims and perpetrators of bullying

According to the study findings, victims need to be consoled and comforted so that they can feel loved and important. They require counselling to encourage them to continue with their studies. They must be taught to tell the people they trust about what has happened to them. They must be taught the importance of reporting bullying so that it can be dealt with. Parents must be summoned to schools in case of an offence. The perpetrators will be first brought before the disciplinary committee in the presence of their parents, so that if found guilty, punishment will be applied to them. Additionally, their cases must be recorded so that they should be referred to if they could commit the same offences in the future (cf. 4.2.2.6).

7. Leadership responsibility towards the effectiveness of learner's discipline

The participant's statements revealed that the leadership of the school (principals and the SMT) introduced programmes to prevent bullying at school, emphasising making school a safe environment for all learners. The SMT may also be school counsellors, help professionals in the school with leadership issues, and assist with establishing bullying prevention approaches (cf. 4.2.2.7).

8. The culture and climate of primary schools regarding learner discipline

Most participants revealed that a positive culture and climate at school was conducive for learning and teaching. Such a culture and climate implies that learners and teachers share values and beliefs. Learners deserve school environments that are safe and supportive. Participants further emphasise that teachers should pay attention to the social, emotional, and behavioural needs of learners in order to discipline learners. Learners need to be encouraged to be respectful and show concern for others and learn how to solve problems. Most learners behave however they like, something they might have learnt from the school or home environment (cf. 4.2.2.8).

9. Factors influencing causes of bullying in schools

The study discovered that there are other factors that contribute to bullying in the schools, namely parental discipline, economic status, academic performance, health status, domestic violence, broken families, a terrible school atmosphere, a lack of good teachers, and a lack of a meaningful social life. The lack of parental guidance in respect of dysfunctional families ultimately causes bullying. Families headed by children and the use of drugs at an early age were the most influential factors in bullying. In addition, racial clashes exacerbated by a racial conflict between learners from different nationalities (cf. 4.2.2.9).

10. Learners' understanding of the bullying behaviours they perform or experience

Most of the participants revealed that the worst perpetrators of bullying were learners from affluent families. This implies that learners from wealthy families and those grades were the perpetrators of bullying in primary schools. This is based on the notion that these learners did not receive parental guidance from home (cf. 4.2.2.10).

11. Programmes that are effective in the prevention of bullying in primary schools

Most participants revealed programmes that are effective in preventing bullying, namely building a positive school climate, which suggests that all primary learners must feel safe at school. Social and emotional learning has been introduced and is well-known to primary learners; it involves teaching self-awareness skills, self-management, social awareness, and responsible decision making. The disciplinary committee should use anti-bullying policies when dealing with a perpetrator. The anti-bullying initiative was a long intervention programme that aimed to minimise both bullying and victimisation of primary school learners. Teachers must increase co-operative activities that build friendships and social skills. Moreover, school stakeholders must work together towards building a classroom climate that embraces inclusion and kindness at the primary school level (cf. 4.2.2.11).

12. Effectiveness of preventing bullying on teaching and learning in primary schools

Most of the participants emphasised that more structures have been formed to prevent bullying. Structures like parents, community members, pastors, police officers, traditional leaders, social workers, and motivational speakers are to be involved in maintaining bullying in schools. For any school to be able to control bullying, it should try to involve the above-concerned stakeholders in its school activities; ignoring or leaving out these structures would be tantamount to the schools' performance and learners' futures (cf.4.2.2.12).

13. Formulation of an anti-bullying policy

Participants agreed that the disciplinary committee should develop an anti-bullying policy to protect learners. Teachers and non-teaching staff, parents, SMT, SGB, and other stakeholders as determined by the school, should have an input into the policy. People with relevant skills, such as counsellors, police officers, and so on, can also be appointed to the committee. The policy should be designed to be ongoing and apply

to all grades in the primary schools, learners, teachers, and non-teaching staff. Policy implementation and monitoring policies should teach learners not to bully, encourage co-operative behaviour, reward good behaviour, improve climate, and encourage creativity (cf. 4.2.2.13).

14. Strategies to effectively mitigate bullying amongst primary school learners

The following strategies can be used effectively to mitigate bullying: inviting social workers to schools to speak to learners about the different types of bullying and their impact on other people. Learners will be taught to report bullying to both parents and teachers, well-known motivational speakers, and religious leaders will be invited to schools to motivate learners. Lastly, learners should be taught about having a moral and spiritual authority to speak out against bullying at schools. Other positive activities would include devising a parental structure to combat bullying in schools. Furthermore, experts from Love Life and the South African Police Services may also be invited to the schools to speak to the perpetrators and victims of bullying. Social workers should be invited to schools to address learners on the different kinds of bullying and their impact on their lives. Furthermore, teaching Life Skills or Life Orientation subjects in schools will benefit learners because the inculcation of the positive values that counteract bullying could become part of the daily lesson. In addition, a learner's Code of Conduct should be developed to guide learners on how to behave at school (cf. 4.2.2.14).

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study aimed to reduce bullying that among primary school learners. Following an analysis of the sub-questions on how bullying can be defined in the context of primary schools (e.g., why bullying occurs in primary schools and the effects of bullying on teaching and learning in primary schools), specific findings were reached. These findings provided a framework for postulating specific recommendations based on the research findings. As a result, the following recommendations were put forward based

on the study's research questions, findings, summary, conclusion, and literature review:

5.3.1 Recommendations to schools

- There should be a clear bullying policy that clearly explains how repeat offenders should behave before their re-admission to the school is approved.
- Learners should transfer their conduct profile from School A to School B for historical background.
- Learners should be encouraged to report bullying incidents that occur after school hours.
- Teachers should not reframe the disrespectful tradition illustrated in the classroom.
- Teachers must emphasise the importance of responsibilities and create a Code of Conduct for learners to strengthen the culture of learning and teaching.
- Teachers should take action against learners who bully others and encourage healthy relations among all learners.
- School leaders should introduce a well-constituted disciplinary committee to address bullying cases in a more fair and professional manner, with the aim to stop bullying schools.
- The disciplinary committee should involve all stakeholders during learner disciplining.
- Schools should have policies in place that are reviewed regularly and should have detailed procedures concerning punitive measures for bullies and preventative and educational strategies regarding bullying.
- School principals should invite experts from different departments, including police officers, psychologists, and social workers to guide learners.
- Parents should be encouraged to take part in their children's education and behaviour at home.
- They should endeavour to get their children to attend Church regularly.

5.3.2 Recommendation to the Department of Education

- Circuit managers should serve as external monitors by monitoring schools in their circuit, compiling bullying statistics, and reporting discrepancies or inaccurate information.
- Circuit managers should assist principals, SMT, and SGB in developing anti-bullying policies in schools.
- Department of Education should conduct research on bullying in schools, which should develop clear, accurate and coherent acts and laws to implement disciplinary measures at schools.
- Department of Education should capacitate schools with the necessary resources and skills for proper implementation of disciplinary procedures to prevent bullying incidents in schools.

5.4 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study focused on the mitigation of bullying at schools, therefore, further research may be conducted on the following topics:

- The role of the SMT in the management of learner discipline in primary schools.
- The impact of bullying on learners' academic performance.
- The role of education stakeholders in primary schools.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research was conducted during COVID-19, when human interaction was limited. Thus, a limited time was spent on focus group discussions and interviews in an effort to comply with COVID-19 rules and regulations that limited the gathering of people in a place for more than two hours. Some participants were reluctant to participate due to time constraints and trying to cover up for the time lost during lockdown when

learners did not attend lessons as schools were closed. Limitations emerged in this study. Some of the limitations included common research studies being conducted globally and the participants' last-minute withdrawal from the study. Finding new participants to replace them was a difficult task, but the researcher eventually succeeded in doing so by appointing schools principals to replace them. The study cannot be transferred or generalised to the wider population because it was conducted in a rural setting with factors that may not be similar to schools in urban settings. The research used a qualitative approach, and some statistical information may have influenced the research's outcomes and suggestions.

5.6 CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded with the discussion of ideas or suggestions pertaining to the in-depth knowledge concerning the bullying crisis in primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District. Most importantly, bullying was a global phenomenon rather than a local one. Furthermore, the implementation of successful programmes may aid in the prevention of negative behaviours at a young age, which may reduce the emotional consequences for both the bully and the victim. The literature review and empirical investigation revealed that the collaboration between the SMT, parents, SGB, and various stakeholders has reduced bullying in primary schools due to the implementation of various programmes and an anti-bullying policy. The study was concerned with the interpretive analysis of data rather than numbers; it used the interpretive paradigm and a qualitative research method. A qualitative approach comprising face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, observations, and document analysis were used as data collection instruments. Bullying is prevalent in schools, according to the findings of this study.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM UNISA

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/06/09

Ref: **2021/06/09/30071895/21/AM**

Name: Mrs AG Nembahle

Student No.: 30071895

Dear Mrs AG Nembahle

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2021/06/09 to 2024/06/09

Researcher(s): Name: Mrs AG Nembahle
E-mail address: 30071895@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 072 307 2745

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr N Ndou
E-mail address: ndou@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 429 4468

Title of research:

**STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY MITIGATE BULLYING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL
LEARNERS AT THE SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT IN THE VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT**

Qualification: MEd EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2021/06/09 to 2024/06/09.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/06/09 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 will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

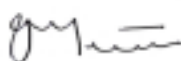


3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. 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 requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2024/06/09**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2021/06/09/30071895/21/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof AT Motihabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motihat@unisa.ac.za



Prof PM Sebata
EXECUTIVE DEAN
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za



Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX B: CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CONFIDENTIAL



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

Office of the Premier

Research and Development Directorate

Private Bag X5483, Polokwane, 0700, South Africa

Tel: (015) 230 9910, Email: molobj@premier.limpopo.gov.za

LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Review Date: 31st August 2021

Project Number: LPREC/70/2021: PG

Subject: Strategies to Effectively Mitigate Bullying among Primary Schools Learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe East District.

Researcher: Nembahe AG

Dr Theminkosi Mabila

Chairperson: Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee

The Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC) is registered with National Health Research Council (NHREC) Registration Number REC-111513-038.

Note:

- i. This study is categorized as a Low Risk Level in accordance with risk level descriptors as enshrined in LPREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- ii. Should there be any amendment to the approved research proposal; the researcher(s) must re-submit the proposal to the ethics committee for review prior data collection.
- iii. The researcher(s) must provide annual reporting to the committee as well as the relevant department and also provide the department with the final report/thesis.
- iv. The ethical clearance certificate is valid for 12 months. Should the need to extend the period for data collection arise then the researcher should renew the certificate through LPREC secretariat. PLEASE QUOTE THE PROJECT NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

**APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN
VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT**



TITLE: STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY MITIGATE BULLYING AMONG PRIMARY
SCHOOL LEARNERS AT THE SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT.

Date: 22 June 2021

District Senior Manager

Vhembe East District

Limpopo Department of Education

Cell: 0828811863, E-mail: RambiyanaNGedu.limpopo.gov.za

Dear Sir/Madam,

I, Azwimmbavhi Grace Nembahe, am doing research under the supervision of Dr N. Ndou, a Senior Lecturer in the College of Education. I am studying towards an MEd degree at the University of South Africa. I am requesting permission to conduct research in the Vhembe East District entitled: STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY MITIGATE BULLYING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AT THE SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT.

The aim of the study is to explore strategies that could be effectively used to mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe District. Your district has been selected because it is suitable for the research that I want to conduct regarding the above-mentioned topic.

The study will mainly entail strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District. The Limpopo Department of Education issued a report stating that most schools in the Vhembe District, especially those under the Sambandou Circuit, are deeply embroiled in the bullying between learners and



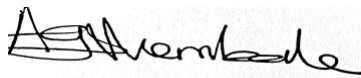
teachers. Outcries and complaints are being sent repeatedly to the Department seeking assistance in this concern, but so far no help seems to have been given.

The benefit of conducting this study is that participants will be assisted in their daily lives to learn how to handle bullying, and learners will be able to communicate their experiences on the strategies to mitigate bullying in their daily lives.

I will assure the participants that they will be protected against any physical or emotional harm. I will also encourage them to report any illness directly to me, should this illness occur as a result of this study. As a matter of concern, this investigation is taking place during the COVID-19 era. Therefore, the participants would also be advised to follow all the necessary protocols carefully, such as washing their hands with soap and water, wearing their masks at all times, and having their temperatures taken at the entrance of the office daily before the investigation starts.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Only five (5) schools will be chosen to partake in this research, and a summary of the findings and recommendations will be available at their school library.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Azwimmbavhi Grace Nembahe', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Azwimmbavhi Grace Nembahe
The Researcher

APPENDIX D: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITHIN THE SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT



TITLE: STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY MITIGATE BULLYING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AT SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT.

Date: 22 June 2021

The Circuit Manager

Sambandou Circuit

Department of Education

Cell: 0716752202.... E-mail: ljphophi@gmail.com

Dear Sir,

I, Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe, am doing research under the supervision of Dr N. Ndou, a Senior Lecturer in the College of Education. I am studying towards an MEd degree at the University of South Africa. I am requesting permission to conduct research in the Vhembe East District entitled: STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY MITIGATE BULLYING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AT THE SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT.

The aim of the study is to explore strategies that could be effectively used to mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe District, Limpopo province. Your school has been selected because it is suitable for the research that I want to conduct regarding the above-mentioned topic.

The study will mainly entail strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District. The Limpopo Department of Education issued a report stating that most schools in the Vhembe District, especially those under the Sambandou Circuit, are deeply embroiled in the bullying between learners and teachers. Outcries and complaints are being sent repeatedly to the Department, seeking assistance in this concern, but so far no help seems to have been given.

The benefit of conducting this study is that participants will be assisted in their daily lives to learn how to handle bullying, and learners will be able to communicate their experiences on the strategies to mitigate bullying in their daily lives.

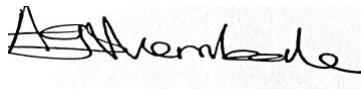


I will assure the participants that they will be protected against any physical or emotional harm. I will also encourage them to report any illness directly to me, should this illness occur as a result of this study. As a matter of concern, this investigation is taking place during the COVID-19 era. Therefore, the participants would also be advised to follow all the necessary protocols carefully, such as washing their hands with soap and water, wearing their masks at all times, and having their temperatures taken at the entrance of the office daily before the investigation starts.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Only two schools will be chosen to partake in this research, and a summary of the findings and recommendations will be available at their school library.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Azwimmbavhi Grace Nembah', written over a light blue grid background.

Azwimmbavhi Grace Nembah

The Researcher

APPENDIX E: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS



Topic: Strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.

The Principal, Primary School

Limpopo Department of Education

Date:

Cell: E-mail:

Dear Mr/Mrs.....

I, Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe, am doing research under the supervision of Dr N. Ndou, a Senior Lecturer in the College of Education. I am studying towards an MEd degree at the University of South Africa. I am requesting permission to conduct research in the Vhembe East District entitled: STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY MITIGATE BULLYING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AT THE SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT.

The aim of the study is to explore strategies that could be effectively used to mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe District, Limpopo province. Your school has been selected because it is suitable for the research that I want to conduct regarding the above-mentioned topic.

The study will mainly entail strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit in the Vhembe District. The Limpopo Department of Education issued a report stating that most schools in the Vhembe District, especially those under the Sambandou Circuit, are deeply embroiled in the bullying between learners and teachers. Outcries and complaints are being sent repeatedly to the Department, seeking assistance in this concern, but so far no help seems to have been given.

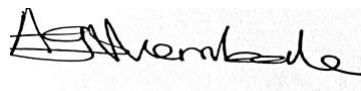
The benefit of conducting this study is that participants will be assisted in their daily lives to learn how to handle the bullying situation, and learners will be able to communicate their experiences on the strategies to mitigate bullying in their daily lives.

I will assure the participants that they will be protected against any physical or emotional harm. I will also encourage them to report any illness directly to me, should this illness occur as a result of this study. As a matter of concern, this investigation is taking place during the COVID-19 era. Therefore, the participants would also be advised to follow all the necessary protocols carefully, such as washing their hands with soap and water, wearing their masks at all times, and having their temperatures taken at the entrance of the office daily before the investigation starts.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Only two schools will be chosen to partake in this research, and a summary of the findings and recommendations will be available at their school library.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Azwimmbavhi Grace Nembah', written over a light blue grid background.

Azwimmbavhi Grace Nembah
The Researcher

APPENDIX F: A LETTER REQUESTING PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINORS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Dear Parent,

Your son/daughter/child is invited to participate in a study entitled: **Strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.**

I am undertaking this study as part of my Master's research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is to prevent or limit bullying among learners at the Sambandou Circuit. The possible benefits of the study are the improvement of good behaviour among learners. I am requesting your permission to include your child in this study. I expect to have three other children in this school participating in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, I will request him/her to:

- Take part in an interview. He/she will be interviewed face-to-face. The interview will take place after school to avoid disturb the school programme; the venue will be at school. It will only take 20 to 30 minutes.
- By taking part in a group interview, the learner will also be involved in a focus group of four people, which will also take place at school, after school. The time allocation for the focus group will be 45 minutes.
- In-depth interviewing allows one to ask a participant to clarify a point that she/he is making and provides a more detailed explanation, for example, his/her view of a specific question that one has asked. As a researcher, I will ask more in-depth questions about the aspects that interest them, which allows for more flexibility in the research process. During the in-depth interviews (unstructured interviews), it also means that one could then be able to ask questions to the participants, who will be respond to the questions posed to them freely and providing clarifications. In such an instance, one will obtain information on the state of bullying at the affected schools under study. I also request your permission to use an audio-recorder during the interview.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her

responses will not be linked to his/her name, your name, or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study. Your child will also receive no direct benefit from participating in the study. However, the possible benefits to education are better knowledge on how to overcome bullying when it happens to him/her. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not affect him/her in any way. Similarly, you can agree to allow your child to participate in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

The study will take place after regular classroom activities with the prior approval of the school and your child's teacher. In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study. Both you and your child will be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter. If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he/she will not be included, and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password-locked computer in my locked office for five years after the study. Thereafter, records will be erased.

The benefits of this study are to educate and give better knowledge to the learner on how to overcome bullying when it happens to him/her.

There are no foreseeable potential risks for your child by participating in the study.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

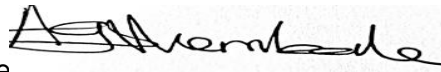
If you have questions about this study, please contact me or my study supervisor, Dr N. Ndou at the Department of Early Childhood, College of Education, University of South Africa. My contact number is 0723072745 and my e-mail address is 30071895@mylife.unisa.ac.za. My supervisor's e-mail address is ndoun@unisa.ac.za. Permission for the study has already been given by the DET principal and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him/her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Name of child:

Yours sincerely,

Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe



Researcher's name (print)

Researcher's signature

Date: 20 May 2021

ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant's name), confirm that the person requesting my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and the possible inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or it has been explained to me) and understand 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 focus group interview, which is a semi-structured interview (face-to-face).

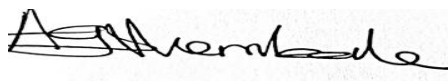
I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print): _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print): Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Researcher's signature

Date

APPENDIX G: CONSENT TO PARTICIPANT IN AN INTERVIEW: PRINCIPAL

Date:

TITLE: STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY MITIGATE BULLYING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AT THE SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT.

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT,

My name is Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe, and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr N. Ndou, a Senior Lecturer in the College of Education. I am studying towards an MEd degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: **Strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that could facilitate school principals and teachers to develop classroom rules, principles, and SGBs, in developing a learner Code of Conduct. It would also involve the disciplinary committee in managing ill-discipline at school. The potential benefit of my research is that participants will be assisted in their daily lives, and will learn how to handle bullying. The study will augment the prevailing body of knowledge regarding the skills needed to facilitate effective learning.

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because the researcher wants to investigate bullying in your school where learners, teachers, and principals are aware of bullying taking place.

I obtained your contact details from the Sambandou Circuit manager. (*The Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013*, necessitates the disclosure of how access was gained to the personal information of prospective participants). I require four learners, two teachers, and a principal from each school.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves audio-taping, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. Interview questions will be attached in Appendix N. It will take two weeks to complete the focus groups and interviews. It will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to conduct the interviews.

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

Participating in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to give your consent to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent (adult)/assent (participant younger than 18 years old) form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Participation is strictly free and voluntary, and you are under no obligation to take part in the study. You may withdraw your consent to take part or to stop your participation at any time and without penalty or negative consequences or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The benefit of this study is that participants will be assisted in their daily lives and learn how to handle bullying.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR YOU IF YOU PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

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WILL THE INFORMATION THAT YOU CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND YOUR IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

You have the right to insist that your name is not recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research. Before the main investigation starts, the participants will be informed that their surnames and names will not be published in any media during or after the investigation. Conversely, the findings of the study, including their contributions, would also not be exchanged with anybody for money or gifts. They will also be informed to not talk to any reporter or journalist during the investigation. Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers that you gave. Your responses will be given a code number or a pseudonym, and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

If relevant, you may identify who will have access to the data (transcriber/external coder) and how these individuals will maintain confidentiality (e.g., by signing a confidentiality agreement). Please note that confidentiality agreements should be submitted to the Research Ethics Review Committee for consideration. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for ensuring that research is done correctly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission to other people to see the records.

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

The researcher will store hard copies of your answers for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet *at the* school library and University library for future research or academic purposes. Electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Any future use of the stored data will be subject to a further research ethics review and approval if applicable.

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

No payment or reward will be offered, financial or otherwise since participation is voluntary. Any costs incurred by the participant should be explained and justified in adherence to the principle of fair procedures (justice).

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

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

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

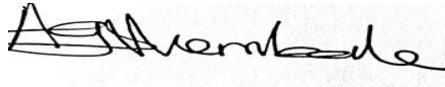
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Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr N. Ndou at 0713063651 or e-mail ndoun@unisa.ac.za.

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

Yours faithfully.



Nembahe Azwimbavhi Grace

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

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

I have read (or it has been explained to me) and understand 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 document analysis and semi-structured interview (face-to-face interview).

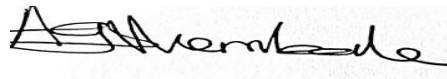
I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print): _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print): Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe', is shown on a light-colored background.

Researcher's signature

Date

APPENDIX H: CONSENT TO PARTICIPANT IN AN INTERVIEW: TEACHER

Date:

TITLE: STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY MITIGATE BULLYING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AT THE SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT.

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT,

My name is Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe, and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr N. Ndou, a Senior Lecturer in the College of Education. I am studying towards an MEd degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: **Strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that could facilitate school principals and teachers to develop classroom rules, principles, and SGBs, in developing a learner Code of Conduct. It would also involve the disciplinary committee in managing ill-discipline at school. The potential benefit of my research is that participants will be assisted in their daily lives, and will learn how to handle bullying. The study will augment the prevailing body of knowledge regarding the skills needed to facilitate effective learning.

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because the researcher wants to investigate bullying in your school where learners, teachers, and principals are aware of bullying taking place.

I obtained your contact details from the Sambandou Circuit manager. (*The Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013*, necessitates the disclosure of how access was gained to the personal information of prospective participants). I require four learners, two teachers, and a principal from each school.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves audio-taping, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. Interview questions will be attached in Appendix L. It will take two weeks to complete the focus groups and interviews. It will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to conduct the interviews.

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

Participating in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to give your consent to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent (adult)/assent (participant younger than 18 years old) form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Participation is strictly free and voluntary, and you are under no obligation to take part in the study. You may withdraw your consent to take part or to stop your participation at any time and without penalty or negative consequences or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The benefit of this study is that participants will be assisted in their daily lives and learn how to handle bullying.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR YOU IF YOU PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

I will assure the participants that they would be protected against any risky physical or emotional harm that might befall them during the investigation. This would assist them in staying alert during the investigation. I will also warn them not to accept food from anyone else than the official caterer introduced to them on the first day of the investigation. They will also be informed that if one participant falls ill, it should be reported to the manager immediately. This investigation occurs during the COVID 19 era; thus, participants will be reminded of COVID protocols.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT YOU CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND YOUR IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

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

The researcher will store hard copies of your answers for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet *at the* school library and University library for future research or academic purposes. Electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Any future use of the stored data will be subject to a further research ethics review and approval if applicable.

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

No payment or reward will be offered, financial or otherwise since participation is. Any costs incurred by the participant should be explained and justified in adherence to the principle of fair procedures (justice).

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

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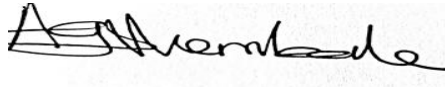
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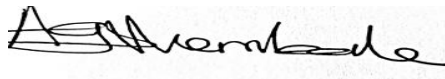
I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print): _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print): Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe

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Researcher's signature

Date

APPENDIX I: CONSENT TO PARTICIPANT IN AN INTERVIEW: HODs

Date:

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

Yours faithfully.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nembahe Azwimbavhi Grace', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Nembahe Azwimbavhi Grace

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

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

I have read (or it has been explained to me) and understand 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).

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I agree to the recording of the document analysis and semi-structured interview (face-to-face interview).

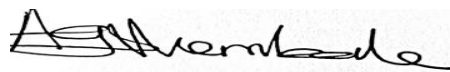
I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print): _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print): Azwimbavhi Grace Nembah

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Azwimbavhi Grace Nembah', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Researcher's signature

Date

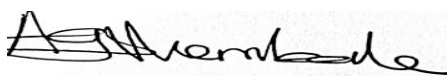
APPENDIX J: FOCUS GROUP ASSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I _____ grant assent that the information I share during the focus group may be used by **Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe** for research purposes. I am aware that the group discussions will be digitally recorded and grant assent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to divulge any information that is shared in the group discussions to any person outside the group in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's Name (Please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Researcher's Name: (Please print): Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe



Researcher's Signature:

Date: _____

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

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

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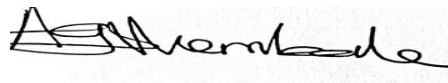
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Participant Name & Surname (please print): _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print): Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahle



Researcher's signature

Date

APPENDIX K: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS FOR LEARNERS

1. What do you understand by the concept of bullying?
2. Did you ever experience bullying in your school?
3. Which are the places within your school where bullying takes place?
4. Why do you think bullying takes place in those places?
5. What factors do you think cause bullying in your school?
6. Who are usually the perpetrators of bullying in your school?
7. Who are usually the victims of bullying in your school?
8. Could you narrate a story where you:
 - Witnessed a bullying incident in your school
 - Were told about a bullying incident within your school
9. Give examples of how teachers in your school react to:
 - Incidents of bullying
 - Victims of bullying
 - Perpetrators of bullying
10. Explain how you feel after being exposed to a bullying experience, for example:
 - After being bullied
 - After bullying someone else
 - After hearing about a bullying incident

APPENDIX L: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

Title: Strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.

Instructions

The questions asked have no right or wrong answer. You are encouraged to answer the questions according to your experience, understanding, and knowledge. All the responses will be treated with the highest confidentiality, and your name and that of your school will not be mentioned in the final report.

Introduction

This semi-structured, face-to-face interview schedule is designed to explore **strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.**

The main purpose of this interview is to encourage public primary school principals and teachers to explore strategies that could be effectively used to mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit. COVID-19 protocols will be observed before and after the interviews.

Participant No School (A, B, C, D, E, or F)
Date:

The semi-structured interview will be held on (date) in the selected public primary schools at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.

Questions of the study

1. Has your school ever conducted a survey to find out about bullying behaviours that take place in the school? If yes, who did that, when, and how?
2. Who are the perpetrators of bullying in your school?
3. Can you narrate a story where you have:
 - Witnessed a bullying incident in your school
 - Witnessed causes of bullying

4. Explain how the following affect a learner's experience of bullying.
 - One's gender
 - One's background
 - One's sexual orientation

5. How do you react towards incidents of bullying behaviour such as:
 - The victims of bullying
 - The perpetrators of bullying

6. How do you solve incidents in your school?

Target Audience

The target audience is teachers.

Timing

The semi-structured interview will take about 60 to 90 minutes. Details are given in the table below:

Table X:

Topic	Minutes
Introductions and welcoming the participant	5
Explaining the purpose of the interviews to the participant	10
Main discussion: The participant has to answer the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How long have you been teaching at this school? 2. What is your occupational rank at this school? 3. Which grade are you teaching at this school? 4. According to your understanding, how is bullying taking place at this school? 5. How do you perceive the effectiveness of preventing bullying in this primary school? 6. What are your experiences regarding bullying behaviours amongst learners at your school? 7. Who is responsible for the learner's discipline in the school? 8. What is the culture and climate of your school regarding learner discipline? 	30

9. What are the causes of bullying in your school?	
10. In what specific areas do you think your leadership contributes towards the effectiveness of the learner's discipline?	
11. Which strategies can be used to mitigate bullying behaviour in your school?	
Semi-structured interviews based on questions and issues arising from the participant	3
Concluding remarks	2
Total time	60

Conclusion

The facilitator will conclude by asking participants the following questions:

- Is there anything else that you would like to mention?
- What are the most critical points that we have discussed?
- Are there any additional questions arising from what we discussed?

At the end, the researcher will thank the participants for taking part in the semi-structured interviews.

APPENDIX M: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HODs

Title: Strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.

Instructions

The questions asked have no right or wrong answer. You are encouraged to answer the questions according to your experience, understanding, and knowledge. All the responses will be treated with the highest confidentiality, and your name and that of your school will not be mentioned in the final report.

Introduction

This semi-structured, face-to-face interview schedule is designed to explore **strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.**

The main purpose of this interview is to encourage public primary school principals and teachers to explore strategies that could be effectively used to mitigate bullying among primary school learners in the Sambandou Circuit. COVID-19 protocols will be observed before and after the interviews.

Participant No School (A, B, C, D, E, or F)
Date:

The semi-structured interview will be held on (date) in the selected public primary schools in the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.

Questions of the study

1. As an HOD, have you ever conducted a survey to find out about bullying behaviours that take place in the school? If yes, when and how?
2. Who are the perpetrators of bullying in your school?
3. Can you narrate a story where you:
 - Witnessed a bullying incident in your school
 - Witnessed causes of bullying

4. Explain how the following affect a learner's experience of bullying?
 - One's gender
 - One's background
 - One's sexual orientation.

5. Provide examples of how teachers in your school react to incidents of bullying:
 - The victims of bullying
 - The perpetrators of bullying

6. Do you take statistics of bullying incidents in your school? Provide evidence.
If not, why not?

Target Audience

The target audience is HODs.

Timing

The semi-structured interview will take about 60 to 90 minutes. Details of the interview are provided in the table below:

Topic	Minutes
Introductions and welcoming the participant	5
Explaining the purpose of the interviews to the participant	10
Main discussion: The participant has to answer the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How long have you been teaching at this school? 2. What is your occupational rank at this school? 3. Which grade are you teaching at this school? 4. According to your understanding, how is bullying taking place at this school? 5. How do you perceive the effectiveness of preventing bullying in this primary school? 6. What are your experiences regarding bullying behaviours amongst learners at your school? 7. Who is responsible for the learner's discipline in the school? 	30

8. What is the culture and climate of your school regarding learner discipline? 9. What are the causes of bullying in your school? 10. In what specific areas do you think your leadership contributes towards the effectiveness of the learner's discipline? 11. Which strategies can be used to mitigate bullying behaviour in your school?	
Semi-structured interviews based on questions and issues arising from the participant	3
Concluding remarks	2
Total time	60

Conclusion

The facilitator will conclude by asking participants the following questions:

- Is there anything else that you would like to mention?
- What are the most critical points that we have discussed?
- Are there any additional questions arising from what we discussed?

At the end, the researcher will thank the participants for taking part in the semi-structured interviews.

APPENDIX N: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

Title: Strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District

Instructions

The questions asked have no right or wrong answer. You are encouraged to answer the questions according to your experience, understanding, and knowledge. All the responses will be treated with the highest confidentiality, and your name and that of your school will not be mentioned in the final report.

Introduction

This semi-structured, face-to-face interview schedule is designed to explore **strategies to effectively mitigate bullying among primary school learners at the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.**

The main purpose of this interview is to encourage public primary school principals and teachers to explore strategies that could be effectively used to mitigate bullying among primary school learners in the Sambandou Circuit. COVID-19 protocols will be observed before and after the interviews.

Participant No School (A, B, C, D, E or F)
Date:

The semi-structured interview will be held on (date) in the selected public primary schools in the Sambandou Circuit, Vhembe East District.

Questions of the study

1. As a principal, have you ever conducted a survey to find out about bullying behaviours that take place in the school? If yes, when and how?
2. Who are the perpetrators of bullying in your school?
3. Can you narrate a story where you:
 - Witnessed a bullying incident in your school
 - Witnessed causes of bullying

4. Explain how the following affect a learner's experience of bullying?
 - One's gender
 - One's background
 - One's sexual orientation

5. Provide examples of how teachers in your school react to incidents of bullying:
 - The victims of bullying
 - The perpetrators of bullying

6. Do you take statistics of bullying incidents in your school? Provide evidence.
If not, why not?

Target Audience

The target audience is primary school principals.

Timing

The semi-structured interview will take about 60 to 90 minutes. Details of the interview are provided in the table below:

Table X:

Topic	Minutes
Introductions and welcoming the participant	5
Explaining the purpose of the interviews to the participant	10
Main discussion: The participant has to answer the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How long have you been teaching at this school? 2. What is your occupational rank at this school? 3. Which grade are you teaching at this school? 4. According to your understanding, how is bullying taking place at this school? 5. How do you perceive the effectiveness of preventing bullying in this primary school? 6. What are your experiences regarding bullying behaviours amongst learners at your school? 7. Who is responsible for the learner's discipline in the school? 	30

8. What is the culture and climate of your school regarding learner discipline? 9. What are the causes of bullying in your school? 10. In what specific areas do you think your leadership contributes towards the effectiveness of the learner's discipline? 11. Which strategies can be used to mitigate bullying behaviour in your school?	
Semi-structured interviews based on questions and issues arising from the participant	3
Concluding remarks	2
Total time	60

Conclusion

The facilitator will conclude by asking participants the following questions:

- Is there anything else that you would like to mention?
- What are the most critical points that we have discussed?
- Are there any additional questions arising from what we discussed?

At the end, the researcher will thank the participants for taking part in the semi-structured interviews.

NIM Editorial
Midrand, Gauteng, 1685
Cell: +27 82 567 4489
Email: info@nimeditorial.co.za
www.nimeditorial.co.za

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Editorial Certificate

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter certifies that the dissertation entitled; **STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVELY MITIGATE BULLYING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AT THE SAMBANDOU CIRCUIT IN THE VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT** by Azwimbavhi Grace Nembahe, was proofread for language, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and overall style by NIM Editorial.

Signed on behalf of NIM Editorial by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N.I. Mabidi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

.....
Dr N.I Mabidi
Founder & Chief Editor