Bullying Malady in a learning context: Developing intervention guidelines for social work practice.

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DECLARATION

I declare that **BULLYING MALADY IN LEARNING CONTEXT: DEVELOPING INTERVENTION GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE** is my own work and that all the sources and literature that have been used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and this work has not been submitted before for a degree at any other institution.

SIGNATURE   DATE: 10/01/2024

T SEKGOBELA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

Dedicated

to

My late father Mr Maropeng Harson Sekgobela, My late Nephew Ngwako Collen Lefophane,

My late friend and mentor, Professor Dumisani Gaylord Thabede, My late Mother in-law, Aunts and Uncles

and

to all social workers employed by the Department of Social Development and linked to schools, I want to express my appreciation for your professionalism in difficult situations.

ABSTRACT

Bullying is fundamentally the most common form of violence among peers during the school years. Perpetrators often display aggressive behavior towards their victims. Globally, bullying is seen as a complex social problem that can have serious consequences for the victims, including mental health issues and negative effects on schoolwork and family relationships. Bullying can take not only physical but also technological forms, with learners being bullied through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The aim of the study was to understand the role of social workers in a learning context and the impact of social workers on bullying with the objectives to explore and describe the issue of bullying in a learning context and develop guidelines for intervention in social work practice. This study was qualitative in nature, and the following designs were considered: exploratory, descriptive, and contextual strategies. Interpretivism was also used. Non-probability purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods were employed to select participants. Data was collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews with school-linked social workers, using an interview guide. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained participants' consent to participate in the study and to have the interviews audio-recorded.

Thematic content analysis was used to make sense of the collected data. Two theoretical frameworks were utilized: ecological social work theory and the strengths-based perspective. The researcher adhered to ethical requirements, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, avoiding harm, debriefing participants, and managing data. The study found that bullying has social, emotional and academic effects on learners and further found that recruitment of social workers in schools is key in ending bullying in schools. It concludes that preventatives or proactive programs are important in dealing with bullying. The study recommends that bullying should be made a standing program with resources to be effective.

Key words: Bullying, learning context, practice guidelines, school linked social worker and social work.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSW- Bachelor of Social Work

CPO- Child Protection Organization

CPSW- Child Protection Social Worker

CREC- College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee

DBE- Department of Basic Education

DSD- Department of Social Development

LPREC-Limpopo Province Research Ethics Committee

MPH- Master of Public Health

MDPM- Master of Development Planning and Management

NGO – Non-governmental organisation

SACSSP - South African Council for Social Service Professions

SLSW- School-linked Social Worker

SW- Social Worker

SWB – Subjective well-being

SWREC – Social Work Research Ethics Committee

TA – Thematic analysis

UN - United Nations

UNISA - University of South Africa

UNY - United Nations Youth

WHO - World Health Organisations

WWII- World War Two

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CHAPTER ONE

1. GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents a general overview of the study. It provides an outline of the research, describes the background to the research problem and its formulation and discusses the significance of the study. It also presents the research questions, aims, and objectives. Furthermore, this chapter comprehensively covers the limitations of the study, ethical considerations, clarification of concepts, and the structure of the research study.

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Bullying, which originated in Germany in 1538, refers to the act of physically beating a person and typically targets individuals who are perceived as weaker (Marini, Dane, & Volk, 2014; Book, Volk, & Hosker, 2015; Hymel, Swearer, McDoughal, Espelage and Bradshaw, 2013). Bullying is aggressive behavior intended to cause harm (Olweus, 2013), characterized by the deliberate misuse of power through repeated acts of physical, emotional, cyber, and verbal violence (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillencourt & Hymel, 2015). Physical bullying involves acts of violence and aggression, verbal bullying includes aggression, teasing, and insults, and cyberbullying occurs through the abuse of technology, such as texts, social media, and emails (Cornell & Bandyopadhyay, 2018).

Bullying among learners is a serious concern and poses a threat to mental health. It is viewed as a problem that requires urgent attention from the health, social, and education sectors. Moreover, school committees have consistently identified bullying as a phenomenon that necessitates legislation to address it (Stuart-Cassel, Bell & Springer, 2015; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). The focus of these committees and school management is primarily on school-going children, as they are heavily affected by bullying (Stuart-Cassel et al., 2015). There is a strong connection between bullying, anger, violence, abuse, and aggression (Swearer et al., 2015; Farrell, Della-Kloppa, Volk & Book, 2014).

The consequences of bullying include intrapersonal problems for the victims (Xu, Junn, Zhu & Bellmore, 2016). Traditionally, bullying has been associated with physical and

emotional forms of abuse, leading to mental health issues. However, electronic bullying, particularly cyberbullying, has emerged as a prevalent form of bullying, occurring online through various digital platforms (Fredstrom, Adams & Gilman, 2016). Children often require professional support to cope with the effects of bullying, as it can lead to suicidal thoughts and significant stress (Nelson & Sampilo, 2014). Perpetrators intentionally inflict harm on their victims, whether through physical or emotional means (James, 2017).

Bullying is a human rights issue that requires legislation to provide guidance in addressing such cases. The South African constitution protects against the violation of human dignity, guaranteeing safety and protection from violence and inhumane treatment (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa,1996 Section 12). Although bullying is not explicitly mentioned, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 prohibits elements of bullying. Section 10A of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 identifies humiliation and the undermining of rights as areas that require attention. The Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011 allows for the protection of victims through court orders, and the South African Child Justice Act 75 of 2005 outlines procedures for dealing with children involved in bullying incidents, emphasizing diversion programs as a means of addressing bullying behavior.

Globally, statistics indicate that children in various regions of the world are affected by bullying, primarily experiencing physical and emotional harm (United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations, 2018). In Europe and North America, bullying is prevalent among young people aged 11-15 in 42 countries (Global School Health Survey, 2015). Boys are more vulnerable to bullying than girls, with 32% of boys and 28% of girls experiencing bullying. However, in the 10 countries with the highest rates of bullying, girls make up 65% of victims and boys make up 62% (Health Behavior in School-Aged Children, 2014). Victimization among school learners aged 12-18 has increased in America, where bullying is particularly prevalent (Wang, Chen & Zhang, 2019).

In America, 20% of learners aged 12-18 have been bullied, with 19% experiencing bullying in school settings.

Cyberbullying is a leading form of bullying with 15% of learners being bullied online (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2019). Critical statistics reveal that 74% of learners in Samoa have experienced bullying, and globally, one-third of young people and learners have been bullied (UNESCO, 2018). The sources of bullying are diverse, including social problems such as inequality, social status, racial tensions, gender, and social identification, which inform the actions of bullies (Klein, 2015; O'malley Olsen et al., 2014). The United States (US) Department of Education's School Crime Supplement of the National Crime Victimization Survey indicates that 23% of learners have been bullied on school premises (Robers et al., 2013). Bullies often target overweight learners, and the perpetrators themselves often have substance abuse issues and a pattern of violence (Wang & Lannotti, 2014; Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015). A study on youth risk behavior among American high school students found that 15% had experienced cyberbullying, despite policies in place to address it (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2015).

The African continent has been experiencing a massive surge in incidents of bullying in schools in different countries. Kenyan youth experience bullying as the most common form of aggression and is characterized by continuous physical, social, and verbal abuse. Furthermore, a significant number of children in those schools are direct victims through physical assault and cyberbullying (Mucherah, Finch, White, & Thomas, 2018). The number of bullying cases and prevalence depends on the type of school, whether it is boarding or day school. The attitudes of teachers regarding bullying may influence the outcome or intervention strategies (Troop-Gordon & Ladd, 2015). Teachers mostly advise the victims to deal with bullying, avoid bullies, or independently handle the bullies because they believe bullying is normal (Macharia, 2016). They normalize bullying and do not have consequences or discipline for the perpetrators. Learners are less likely to report bullying incidents because of these attitudes of teachers (Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huitsing, Sainio, & Salmivalli, 2014). Females are mostly the most affected gender, with 51% being victims compared to their male counterparts, who make up 49% of reported victims of bullying. Fundamentally, 76.8% of bullying incidents take place in schools, while 23.2% occur at home or with friends (Jia & Mikami, 2014).

The prevalence of bullying in Nigeria has been established, with 85% of children in Nigeria reporting and admitting to having bullied other children. Four out of five children in the Nigeria City of Benin have reported being bullied (Fareo & Habila, 2018). Relational bullying has been prevalent in the Nigerian city of Benin, with 85% of children confirming and admitting to being bullied, while 31% of children were bullies themselves. About 64% of children were involved in relational bullying, with 49% being male and 51% being female (Omoteso, 2016).

Bullying in Zimbabwean schools has been reported to be problematic for the safety of students and affect their academic achievements. It is rife and targets younger and weaker children (Mugove, 2017). Furthermore it targets students who cannot defend themselves due to their small body size, poor strength, or being outnumbered (Kennedy, 2017). Boarding schools in Zimbabwe have experienced a high number of bullying cases, some victims tend to become bullies themselves. Moreover, victims do not consider the reasons for their bullying as important as they believe it is a normal way of life in boarding schools, and some never report bullying behavior to teachers (Arafat, 2017).

Public schools in Lesotho have been experiencing a surge in bullying incidents involving the tormenting of learners through physical and verbal harassment. In addition, mental health problems has been noted due to those incidents. 62% of boys and 28% of girls were reported to be involved in bullying incidents (Smith, 2014). There have been social and emotional consequences of bullying experienced by learners in Maseru public high schools (Isidiho, 2021). Teachers are important stakeholders and play a critical role in monitoring and controlling the behavior of students and addressing bullying incidents in schools in Maseru (Mosia, 2015). In the region of Manzini in Swaziland bullying has been found to have fundamental effects on vulnerable teenage girls. Different parenting styles play a significant role in the bullying of adolescent girls in the same area (Thwala, Okeke, & Tshotsho, 2018).

South Africa has experienced a high number of bullying incidents and it has became a critical problem in school. More than 58% of South African learners have been targeted

and bullied at school and on social media. Cyberbullying has been identified as on the rise and negatively contributing to the lives of the learners (Harrington-Johnson, 2021). South African schools account for more than 3.2 million bullying incidents despite the low reporting rate by learners. Over 67% of bullied children in South Africa do not ask for help from their teachers because they do not believe they can get help. More than 90% of learners are perpetrators of bullying in schools, and 8% has been attributed to bullying from teachers. In addition, more than 16% of learners in South African schools have indicated that they have been victims of cyberbullying (Harrington-Johnson, 2021). Social workers could take the lead in providing education to learners, both the bully and the victim, as well as the parents and the school. Furthermore, social workers effectively intervene in the cases of children who have been affected and are victims of bullying (Staples, 2016; Masilo, 2018).

Social workers globally provide services such as psychosocial services, educational programs, preventative and counseling services to learners who are experiencing bullying (National Association of Social Workers, 2015). Additionally, social workers have a fundamental role to play in addressing bullying at school. They provide counseling and debriefing to the victims, perpetrators, and the student community (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013). Social workers help correct repetitive behaviors by providing educational and preventative programs. Bullying is mostly associated with adolescence, and social workers address problems in schools and communities, along with many other social ills (Getz, 2013; Horton, 2016; National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2015; Chesborough, 2015; Wilkey, Lundgren, & Amodio, 2013). They have the competency, skills, methods, techniques, strategies, and interventions to assist learners (Kelly, Frey, Alvarez, Berzin, Shaffer, & O'Brien, 2014).

School social workers are an integral part of the education system, addressing the challenges experienced by students. The support of school social workers provides individual students with assistance in the prevention of bullying and other social ills (Peckover, Vasquez, Van Housen, Saunders, & Allen, 2013). They are important as they are present at school on a daily basis and provide services that address various

challenges, including bullying (Bye, Shepard, Prtridge, & Alvarez, 2013; Dominelli, 2015). School social workers not only assist in correcting learners' behavior but also help with the identification and resolution of behavioral problems that can disrupt stages of human development (Duman & Snoubar, 2016). They work with individual learners to find solutions to their behavioral issues. It is crucial for school social workers to possess in-depth knowledge and competency in dealing with the different forms of behavior exhibited by learners (Snoubar & Duman, 2015; Toros, 2013). Given the above background, our study was aimed at exploring and describing the phenomenon of bullying in a learning context, specifically focusing on developing intervention guidelines for social work practice. The participants in the study were employees of the Department of Social Development in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Cresswell (2016) explains that before engaging in a research study, one must have a clear understanding of the study and its direction. Schmidt & Brown (2015) suggest that the research problem needs to be precise and understandable, with an unambiguous statement. A research problem should be easy to talk and read about, and should accurately represent the problem (Ali & Pandya, 2021). The problem statement should be clear and not confusing, providing a comprehensive understanding of the problem (Abrahamson, 2015).

The problem statement, also known as the research problem, is a concise explanation and description of the observed challenge. It describes what the challenge is, why it is worth researching, and who is affected by it (Kush, 2015). A good problem statement should reflect an understanding of why and what the challenge is, the fundamental reason for the research, and the people affected by it. It should answer the questions of where, when, and who is affected.

The sources for the research problem are informed by life experiences, previously conducted research studies, theories, and daily issues (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The researcher has observed the research problem through engagement with print and

broadcasting news, the increasing cases of bullying in South Africa, and the lack of school-linked social workers. Moule & Goodman (2014) have provided analysis and found that a problem statement must be sound, direct, and unambiguous. Bullying is a social problem that has made and continues to make news headlines globally and in South African schools (Smith, 2016; Singh, 2017; Grobler, 2019). The gap in placing social workers, especially in public schools, was recently exposed by two bullying incidents in Limpopo and Eastern Cape Province. In one incident, a learner from Mbilwi High School in the Vhembe region committed suicide at home, while in another incident, a Grade 10 learner from Bhisho High School swallowed pesticide and died in the hospital (SABC, 2021). These incidents have highlighted the seriousness of bullying and the lack of services to address the challenge of bullying (News24, 2021). Cases like the one involving Moyahabo Mahomela in Motlalaohle Secondary School in Botlokwa, which led to her having suicidal thoughts, contribute significantly to the bullying numbers (The Citizen, 2022). Another case in Ga-Sekororo, where a learner at Moholohlapi High School committed suicide due to bullying, continues to highlight the bullying problem. Research shows that bullying is prevalent in schools and negatively affects learners, hindering their growth and success (Baadjies, 2015; Brandt, 2017; Singh, 2017; United nations educational, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO), 2020; South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), 2021).

South African schools, like schools globally, have experienced a high volume of bullying. Over 58% of learners in South African schools have been affected by bullying. Cyberbullying, which occurs through the internet, is a critical form of bullying affecting adolescents and learners at schools and at home (Smith, 2016). South African schools have reported over 3.2 million bullying incidents affecting learners. However, most learners do not report bullying incidents, with over 67% of bullied children not seeking help from teachers (Safer Schools, 2018; Liang, Flisher, & Lombard, 2018). As a practicing social worker, the researcher has observed an increase in bullying-related activities in schools. Bullying activities are on the rise in schools with no solution in sight. Bullying is emerging as one of the main social problems affecting learners and contributing to other social problems such as violence, aggression, suicide, and

substance abuse (Harrington-Johnson, 2021). The problem formulation for this study is based on the high number of bullying cases in South African schools.

1.3. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Providing a convincing rationale for a research study is a critical element of any research project, as it helps root the study in the context of existing evidence and identify potential applications of the study results (Rojon & Saunders, 2014: 55). This study is based on the idea that interventions to address bullying, a public problem in South Africa and around the world, can only bring about significant outcomes with competent and emotionally prepared social workers. In this study, emotionally prepared social workers are defined as those who can effectively function despite the challenges and stress of working with bullies and bullied children. Social work is a stressful profession, and it is acknowledged that social workers need internal and external resources to cope with the issue of bullying.

The researcher has worked as a social worker for several years and has observed numerous cases of bullying in educational settings. There have been limited interventions provided to both the victims and bullies, as schools struggle to address the problem due to a lack of competent professionals. Schools have relied on social workers from the Department of Social Development, but their availability has been inconsistent as they are responsible for multiple schools. This prompted the researcher to investigate the reasons for not having dedicated social workers in schools. The researcher has practiced as a social worker in Mookgophong, Waterberg District of Limpopo for over eleven years, working with children, families, and the elderly. During this time, the researcher observed ineffective services being provided for bullying due to a lack of dedicated and competent staff. These observations motivated the researcher to investigate bullying in educational settings and develop intervention guidelines for social work practice.

Understanding the strategies necessary to address bullying is significant. Social work services providing interventions in bullying incidents are important for several reasons. Firstly, they can provide proactive programs to address bullying for school children, teachers, and their families. They also establish stakeholders who are crucial in providing

holistic services related to the bullying problem. Social workers can offer psychosocial services, counseling, and therapy to both victims and perpetrators of bullying.

This dissertation suggests intervention guidelines to provide effective social work services to address bullying in educational settings. The strategies and methods developed will benefit those involved in bullying incidents. The guidelines include programs to address the problems associated with bullying. The victims of bullying, school stakeholders, the community, and parents will all benefit from the study's findings. The government will also benefit from the results.

The children who are victims of bullying, the Department of Education, and the South African government as a whole will benefit from the study's findings. The benefits will vary for different beneficiaries and will include the developed intervention guidelines. Social workers providing interventions for bullying incidents will also benefit from the study through the developed intervention strategies. The benefits will come in the form of strategies and knowledge that will assist in understanding how to address bullying challenges in educational settings. Social work employers in social development and education will benefit from the study through the provided strategies and guidelines for intervention. Academic institutions responsible for training social workers who address bullying will also benefit, as will future researchers. This will assist training institutions in improving their curriculum and necessary resources.

The focus of the study was further informed by the prevalence of bullying incidents and the impact they have on victims, society, schools, perpetrators, and other children. Bullying incidents continue to be reported throughout the country, with some children even committing suicide as a result. There has been an increase in bullying incidents in Limpopo, some of which have gained media attention. Limited studies have been conducted on bullying in educational settings, and there is limited literature on the topic in South African schools. The phenomenon has not been adequately explored. Bullying is not exclusive to South Africa, it is also prevalent in Europe, America, and other African countries. The social workers from the Department of Social Development in Limpopo have been targeted to participate in the study to gain insight into the programs they offer to address bullying as a phenomenon. It has been noted that social workers in South

Africa are not fully addressing the issue of bullying due to a lack of dedicated professionals in schools.

1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS/HYPOTHESIS

In every research study, the first step is to establish the research question, aim, and objectives (Parahoo, 2014; Doody & Bailey, 2016). In social work research, the research question seeks to answer the challenge through the collection, analysis, and interpretation of direct data (Engel & Schutt, 2013). Theoretical knowledge, previous studies, and experience can help in developing the research question (Doody & Bailey, 2016:19; Connelly, 2015:435).

Research questions are essential because they guide the discussion and choice of research methodology, methods, sample size, sample, data collection instrument, and data analysis techniques (Lipowski, 2016; Johnson & Christenson, 2014:143).

This study aimed to understand the role of social workers in a learning context and the impact of social workers on bullying. The main guiding question for the study was:

1. What role do school-linked social workers play in addressing bullying in a learning context?

1.4.1. Purpose of the study

Persuasive rationale is crucial in every research study as it provides a solid foundation for the research. Understanding the patterns of human behavior and attitudes is essential in the field of social work (Moule & Goodman, 2014). This study focuses on interventions to address bullying incidents, which are a public health and social concern. It is important for emotionally stable social workers to address this issue effectively. Social work aims to comprehend how individuals are affected by external factors beyond their control. Therefore, providing a convincing rationale for the study is vital in any research project (Rojon & Saunders, 2014).

2.   The purpose of this study was to investigate the issue of bullying in an educational setting. The goal was to address the challenges associated with bullying and develop intervention guidelines for social work practice.

1.4.2. Goal of the study

Maxwell (2013:14) indicates that a goal provides the rationale for understanding the study and the reasons that make it worthwhile. Issues which need clarification and guidelines, as well as policies that the researcher plans to influence, should be considered. Carey (2015:24) stresses that a clear and concise statement typically represents the research aim that is intended to be investigated. Furthermore, Cresswell (2016:97) proposes that the research question should ideally begin with questions relevant to qualitative research. These questions should include "how" and "what," but should never begin with "why" questions that are relevant in quantitative cause and effect discourse. Depending on the necessity, the research must include and identify the place where the study will take place. The following goal was planned and applied by the researcher:

To gain an in-depth understanding of social workers' role in addressing the bullying problem in a learning context, to develop intervention guidelines for social work practice.

1.4.3. Research objectives

The objectives of the research study are connected to the research goal and question (Doody & Bailey, 2016:22). The research objectives outline the specific procedures that need to be followed in order to achieve the goal of the study. These objectives include exploration, description, correlation, evaluation, intervention, and explanation (Maxwell, 2016). Research objectives are clearly defined as the expected achievements of the researcher at the end of the study (Flick, 2015:4). They are clear and specific statements of goals that are intended to be reached by the end of the study (Khan, 2016:9). These objectives are steps and specific statements that aim to achieve the goals of the study. They are the procedures followed by the researcher to ensure the achievement of the research study's goals. The researcher has planned with the expectation of achieving a

specific goal at the end of the study. In order to answer the aforementioned questions, the researcher met the following objectives:

• To explore and describe the issue of bullying in a learning context.
• To develop guidelines for intervention in social work practice.

1.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is crucial for researchers to maintain acceptable ethical standards in their research. Researchers studying animal and human behavior must ensure that recognized ethical standards are upheld (Harris & Atkinson, 2016:223). Additionally, researchers must adhere to national and international moral standards (Resnik, 2015:200). The rights of participants should always be respected above any other interest (Harris & Atkinson, 2016:1). In addition to treating participants with respect and ensuring their well-being, researchers must also consider accountability, honesty, and avoid plagiarism.

Researchers working with human subjects must adhere to and address the most important aspect of ethical standards (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Upholding acceptable standards is essential when it comes to research participants (Harris & Atkinson, 2015:223). Researchers also have the responsibility to uphold national and international laws, ensuring their adherence (Resnik, 2015:200). The focus should be on respecting the rights of participants above all else (Harris & Atkinson, 2016:1). In qualitative research, researchers need to prioritize ethical considerations before beginning the research. Managing the relationship between the researcher and participants is crucial (Miller, Mauthner, Birch, & Jessop, 2014:23). Moreover, ethics consist of norms, standards, and guidelines that assist in making moral decisions about our behavior and relationships with others. Qualitative research cannot fully predict what may happen in advance (Haahr, Norlyk, & Hall, 2014:8). The fundamental elements to consider regarding ethics in research include informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, beneficence, debriefing of participants, and avoiding harm.

During the research study, the researcher observed and complied with ethical considerations. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, confidentiality was maintained, and participants remained anonymous. The researcher also avoided questions that could cause harm and informed participants that there would be no monetary benefit from participating in the study. Participants whose emotions were triggered by the study were referred to a psychologist for debriefing. The ethical standards were followed throughout the research study. Ethical issues in qualitative research cannot be predicted well in advance (Norlyk & Hall, 2014:8). When participants raised new concerns during the interview, ethical issues were addressed to ensure the integrity of the research study. The following ethical issues were found to be relevant for this study:

1.5.1. Informed consent:

In qualitative research studies, it is important to observe prevailing ethical standards when obtaining consent from individuals who will participate in the research (Fortune, Reid, & Miller Jr, 2013:41). Issues such as integrity, human rights, and dignity are often legally binding and ethically best practice. Participants need to be informed about any issues related to their participation in the study (Nijhawan et al., 2013:134). Research studies involving humans require a high moral standard. Informed consent was introduced due to violations of human rights by medical doctors. Obtaining consent from participants and informing them about the study is crucial (Moreno, 2017:195). The fundamental ethical rule in social research is to collect data without causing harm to participants (Jones & Bartlett, 2014).

Informing participants about the study's issues is not only ethically best practice but often a legal requirement (Nijhawan et al., 2013:134). In 1947, when several doctors violated the human rights of study participants, informed consent gained prominence to address the identified gap in researching doctors. The violation led to the establishment of high ethical standards when involving human subjects in research (Moreno, 2017:195).

The researcher informed participants about the purpose of the study and relevant issues before collecting data. Participants were made aware that their participation was voluntary. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study and decline

to answer any questions they were uncomfortable with. The professional relationship between the researcher and participants governed the research study. Participation was a choice, and further details were provided to the participants. The data collected was used solely for research purposes. The researcher obtained permission to use an audio-recorder during the interviews, which was requested prior to the start of the study. Participants were informed that their participation would not be remunerated. In every research study, there is a highly regulated professional relationship between the researcher and participants. Participants were clearly informed about what they were consenting to (Matthews & Ross, 2015:73), and their participation was voluntary, without coercion, threats, or unnecessary pressure (Lapan, Quataroli, & Riemer, 2014:32). The researcher made it clear to participants that they could withdraw their participation at any time during the study.

1.5.2. Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to the agreement and commitment that the researcher will not disclose the information provided by the participants during the study. While it is difficult to guarantee absolute confidentiality in qualitative research, the researcher must always prioritize confidentiality (Morse & Richards, 2013:1004). Confidentiality ensures that all participants have the right to privacy and that their information is protected and not breached (Cresswell, 2016).

According to Morse & Richards (2013:1004), confidentiality means that every individual has the right to privacy. It requires the researcher to keep the shared information confidential and not disclose it (McLaughlin, 2017:61). Qualitative research cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, especially when participants' excerpts are included in the study results (Morse & Richards, 2013:1004). However, the researcher maintained confidentiality by securely storing the audio-recorded interviews in locked cupboards and informing the participants that only the research supervisor would have access to the recordings.

In this research study, the researcher ensured that the information remained confidential. Additionally, the audio-recordings of the interviews were kept safe in a locked cupboard. The participants were informed that only the research supervisor would have access to the recordings.

1.5.3. Anonymity

The researcher protected the identity of the participants to maintain anonymity. Anonymity means that the participants' names are not disclosed. It is important to safeguard information about the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2017). However, when participation in the study is arranged through a third person, anonymity may be compromised. It is challenging to guarantee complete anonymity for participants (Damianakis, Michael, & Woodford, 2015). By omitting the names of the participants in the profiles and the entire study, anonymity can be ensured. Assigning numbers to the participants also preserves their dignity (Mero-Jaffe, 2014).

Brink (2016) describes anonymity as the exclusion of participants' names in the research study. The researcher assigned numbers to the participants, maintaining their anonymity and protecting their human rights and dignity. The recordings of the interviews do not reveal the participants' identities. The researcher used codes and numbers to identify the participants without disclosing their identities.

Anonymity may be compromised when arrangements are made for participation in the study. Involving employers or third parties in the recruitment of participants can compromise anonymity. Structural linkages and third-party involvement do not guarantee anonymity (McLaughlin, 2017:61).

The researcher ensured the anonymity of the participants in the study. The names and other personal information of the participants were excluded throughout the research and data collection process. The researcher did not involve third parties or employers in the recruitment of participants.

1.5.4. Beneficence

Beneficence refers to the ethical obligation to minimize harm and maximize benefits in a research project. The effects and consequences of the research project must be carefully considered, balancing risks and benefits. The researcher must assess potential risks and their types (Greaney, 2017:40). Beneficence ensures that the potential benefits are maximized while minimizing harm to the participants (Cresswell, 2016).

The researcher honestly informed the participants that there would be no compensation for their participation in the study. Deception was avoided, and the participants were informed that the research project was solely for academic purposes. Deception can lead to inaccurate information from participants. The researcher provided complete and accurate information to the participants. The benefits of the study, particularly the development of intervention guidelines for social work practice in bullying, were explained to the participants, along with the potential for future research.

1.5.5. Debriefing

After participating in the research study, the participants should receive a debriefing. Debriefing should occur after the completion of data collection (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). Creswell (2016) also emphasizes the importance of restoring the participants' emotions and returning them to their initial emotional state before participating in the study. Negative emotions experienced during the study should be addressed after data collection (Picardi & Masick, 2014). Sensitive studies can trigger emotions in participants.

This study was particularly sensitive, and it could not be guaranteed that the participants would be in the same emotional state after the interviews. To avoid triggering negative emotions, the researcher carefully avoided questions that could elicit emotional responses from the participants. Any emotional difficulties experienced by the participants were addressed by referring them to a psychologist from the Department of Health and a social worker from the Department of Social Development. The researcher made

arrangements for participants who needed debriefing to receive support. The number of participants receiving debriefing was determined by the number of participants affected.

1.5.6. Avoidance of harm.

The researcher must avoid potential harm to the participants during the interview process. Research studies have the potential to be insensitive and stressful for participants (Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2013:19). The researcher must assess the risks that could harm the participants and have measures in place to address any harm that may arise from the study (Schmidt & Brown, 2015:60). Emotional stress and the identification of participants are potential issues that could cause harm, particularly in qualitative studies (Opsal et al, 2016:1145). It is important for the researcher to maintain a professional relationship with the participants and avoid any observations that could cause harm (Haahr et al, 2014:12).

The participants were informed by the researcher that they would not experience physical, emotional, social, or legal harm during the study. However, it was acknowledged that emotional harm was difficult to predict. The researcher checked in with the participants after their participation to assess their emotional well-being. The participants were also informed that they had the option to decline answering certain questions if they felt it would cause harm or violate their privacy. If the participants felt that their confidentiality and privacy were compromised and could cause harm, they were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

The researcher also prioritized the safety of the participants by adhering to Covid-19 regulations. Protocols were followed, and personal protective equipment was provided to ensure the participants' safety and protection. All Covid-19 regulations were observed and implemented.

1.6. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The following key concepts are central to the research topic and are defined to enhance understanding of the research process as a whole.

1.6.1. Social Work

Social work is both a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that aims to promote behavior and social change, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of individuals. It also plays a crucial role in advocating for the vulnerable in society. Social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are fundamental principles and values in social work (www.ifsw.org). In the South African context, a social worker refers to a person who is registered and authorized to practice social work under the Social Service Professions Act No 110 of 1978 (SACSSP, 2007). Social workers utilize specialized knowledge, expertise, and skills guided by professional values and principles to assist individuals, groups, and communities in enhancing or restoring their capacity for functioning and creating conducive environmental conditions (Rainford, 2006). In this study, the term "social workers" refers to social workers registered with the South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP) who are currently employed by the Limpopo Department of Social Development but are linked to schools.

1.6.2. Bullying

Bullying refers to repeated harm inflicted on a victim over a period of time with the intention of causing harm (Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olson, & Waterhouse, 2015). It encompasses physical, emotional, and cyber harm that can occur in various forms (Werner & Bumpus, 2015). Bullying is an ongoing abuse of power that involves the repetition of physical, emotional, cyber, and verbal violence (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillencourt, & Hymel, 2015). In this study, bullying includes all its forms occurring within a learning context.

1.6.3. School-linked Social Worker

School Social Workers serve as a vital link between schools, homes, and communities in supporting students' academic success, integrating services with school administrators, involving stakeholders such as parents and students, and establishing crisis management teams (National Association of Social Workers, 2021(2015). School social work is a specialized field of social work practice in other parts of the world yet not in South Africa. While South Africa does not have dedicated school social workers, some provinces and districts assign social workers to schools within their areas to address social issues in schools.

1.6.4. Guidelines

Guidelines are general rules that provide guidance and advice on the approach to be taken. They are principles that assist in determining the direction to be followed (Snyder, 2019). Guidelines offer general recommendations for performing a specific responsibility and provide advice on how to proceed or carry out a particular task (Alexander, Durham, Hooper, & Jeffries, 2015). They provide a framework for action in situations where there may be no specific direction, policy, or standards (Woolf, 2015). In this study, guidelines refer to the protocols and standards to be applied in addressing bullying within a learning context.

1.6.5. Learning Context

A learning context refers to an environment created to foster the development of a reading and writing culture (Chan, Walker-Gleaves, & Walker-Gleaves, 2015). It encompasses the environment that promotes literacy and encourages students to engage in reading and writing in meaningful ways. The learning context includes facilities, training, and equipment that support learning (Burkhuisen, 2015). It is characterized by teaching and learning activities aimed at providing and promoting effective teaching and learning and fostering literacy (Mortara & Catalano, 2018). In this study, the learning context refers to the school environment where teaching and learning take place.

1.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

1.7.1. Longer than anticipated data collection period

All the participants in the research project were full-time employees, which posed a challenge for the researcher in terms of accessing them during the week while maintaining ethical standards. To accommodate the participants' work commitments, all the interviews were scheduled for weekends. However, even on Sundays, access to the participants was limited because many of them attended church services and had limited availability. Consequently, adhering to the scheduled timeframe was difficult, and it took the researcher over four months to collect the necessary data.

1.7.2. Discomfort in participants

The research study was sensitive in nature, requiring the researcher to approach participants who were unfamiliar to them. The researcher had to ensure that the participants felt comfortable discussing the topics being studied and avoid triggering any emotional responses. It was important for the researcher to create an environment where the participants felt at ease, allowing for a thorough exploration of the subject matter and gathering the necessary data for the study. In compliance with research ethics, the researcher made sure to inform the participants once again that they had the right to choose not to answer certain questions if they made them uncomfortable, and they could withdraw from the study if they wished to do so.

1.7.3. Challenges in guaranteeing total anonymity

Participants ideally feel more comfortable participating in any research project when they know that their anonymity is guaranteed. However, qualitative research presents challenges in ensuring complete anonymity due to the sensitive nature of the data collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

1.7.4. Bias in interpreting responses

The findings of the study may have been influenced by the researcher's interests and subjectivity, as data was gathered through open-ended questions. This subjectivity and

personal bias could potentially affect the interpretation of the participants' responses. To minimize this, an independent coder was used and the research supervisor was consulted to eliminate errors in subjectivity.

1.8. SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the aims and objectives of the study, providing a fundamental understanding of the study's goals and research objectives. It also clarified key concepts and explained how the study was conducted. The background and rationale for the study were discussed in detail. Ethical considerations were thoroughly addressed, and the chapter also examined the theoretical framework and problem statement. Additionally, limitations and challenges encountered during the study were discussed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on bullying in a learning context, including the challenges faced by victims and perpetrators. It includes a detailed review of literature on bullying in a learning context, focusing on the challenges and intervention programs. Burns 7 Grove (2013) define a literature review as a scientific and systematic review of relevant articles, books, and publications for a research project. Bullying has devastating consequences for both victims and bullies in schools and learning environments (Madonna & Murphy, 2015:77). This chapter reviewed previous and current studies on bullying, including the challenges, effects, consequences, intervention programs, historical background, characteristics, perceptions, and intervention methods.

The literature on bullying behaviors and aggression is also important for this research study (Wang & Iannotti, 2014:101).

Bullying and other forms of violence and harassment are harmful to children in a learning context. They hinder academic and socio-emotional progress and affect the social order and school climate. Furthermore, bullying is considered a serious health concern and has various effects on bullies, victims, school stakeholders, teachers, and parents (Wang & Iannotti, 2014). It affects everyone involved, including victims, bullies, bystanders, teachers, administrative staff, students, and parents (Morojele, 2013). It is rooted in power imbalances between bullies and victims, often occurring when students seek to maintain hierarchical power relations. Bullying among students is a significant concern for the health, social, and education sectors. School committees have recognized the need for legislation to address bullying (Stuart-Cassel, Bell, & Springer, 2014; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). The focus is on school-going children because they are heavily impacted by bullying (Stuart-Cassel, Bell, & Springer, 2015:56). Bullying is linked to anger, violence, abuse, and aggression (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2015; Farrell, Della Cioppa, Volk, & Book, 2014). It remains a complex social and cultural phenomenon occurring in schools, various social contexts and relationships (Terry, 2013). Moreover, boys are more likely to be victims of bullying in a learning context than girls, with 32% of boys and 28% of girls experiencing bullying. However, global statistics show that bullying is more common among girls in most countries (Coyne & Monks, 2013). This is attributed to patriarchal systems that objectify women and focus on physical abilities.

The main purpose of this chapter is to provide a literature review on bullying in a learning context. While the study aims to explore bullying in a learning context and develop intervention guidelines for social work practice, the literature review will not focus solely on schools. This is because there is a relationship between the school environment and the broader social context in which students grow up.

The researcher reviewed academic books, published articles, policy documents, and dissertations (both published and unpublished) related to the research questions. This was done to review the available literature, corroborate the findings of the study, and supplement previous and current studies on bullying. Many studies have been conducted on bullying in learning contexts, but this study is unique in its focus on developing intervention guidelines for social work practice. The main goal is to develop these intervention guidelines.

Through the literature review, the researcher gained knowledge of the methodological approaches used in previous studies and the instruments used to examine bullying. This information helped the researcher understand what has been tried before and the challenges identified in previous and current research on addressing bullying in a learning context.

2.2. UNDERSTANDING BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

There are various ways that literature defines bullying. Bullying is aggressive behavior with the intention to cause harm (Olweus, 2013:76). It is an ongoing misuse of power that is deliberate through the repetition of physical, emotional, cyber, and verbal violence (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2015:175). Physical bullying refers to physical acts of violence and aggression. Verbal bullying involves aggression, teasing, and insults. Cyberbullying is committed through the abuse of technology, such as texts, social media, and emails (Cornell & Bandyopadhyay, 2018:143). It is a form of aggressive behavior that is usually harmful and consistent, often persisting for weeks, months, or even years. In most cases, bullying is influenced by the abuse of power and the desire to threaten and dominate peers. The various forms that shape bullying include physical, emotional, verbal, and cyberbullying (Cooper & Nickerson, 2013:213).

Verbal bullying includes name-calling, insults, repeated teasing, and racist remarks. It also includes gossip and other words that may exclude other students from activities (Mian, 2013:134). Indirect forms of bullying include spreading rumors, issuing threats, and saying or writing hurtful things. It involves actions that intend to lead to social and cultural

exclusion or inflict harm or damage to another child's reputation. This is done to discourage other children from associating with the victim of bullying (Coyne & Monks, 2013:133). In all forms of bullying, emotional abuse is often present as the learners who are being abused are frequently terrorized by the acts of bullying.

Coyne & Monks (2013) indicate that there are other forms of bullying that are motivated by race, as well as sexual bullying. Racial bullying involves making derogatory remarks based on the victim's race, racial slurs, making fun of or mocking the victim's culture, and offensive gestures (Coyne & Monks, 2013:55). Sexual bullying involves exchanging inappropriate notes, jokes, pictures, and spreading rumors of a sexual nature. Power differentials play a significant role in bullying, as individuals abuse their power (De Wet, 2014:76). Bullying involves more than just the bully and the victim; it also occurs within peer groups and on the playground (Whitted & Dupper, 2016:87). Meanwhile, cyberbullyinghas emerged with as reported in various literature, involving the harassment, humiliation, and intimidation of learners through the use of the internet and cell phones. This includes purposefully humiliating individuals by sending emails, texts, and pictures to the public with the intention of causing harm to the victim (Shariff, 2015:104).

According to Greeff & Grobler (2015), bullying involves the participation of two or more people using power. Studies have shown that boys are more likely to be involved in direct physical bullying, while both girls and boys are equally involved in direct verbal bullying. Boys are more often direct victims of bullying, while girls are more likely to be indirectly involved or victims of indirect bullying (Shariff, 2015:104). This may be due to societal expectations of masculinity, which includes aggressive behavior, physical power, and violent behavior, and how boys are socialized. Girls, on the other hand, are often raised to be soft, neat, and exhibit minimal aggression, which may explain why they are more likely to be victims of indirect bullying (Bhana, 2014:64). Teasing, beating, name-calling, and kicking are the most common forms of bullying across genders, including cyberbullying, verbal bullying, and physical bullying (Morojele, 2013:56).

2.3. FACTORS THAT AFFECT BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

There are various factors that contribute to and perpetuate bullying, as discussed in the local and international literature. Bullying in schools is part of a social and cultural phenomenon influenced by various factors, including the environment, families, and societal expectations (Terry, 2013:76). Coyne & Monks (2013:156) argue that children who witness abuse, violence, and aggression in the home environment or experience domestic violence between adults are more likely to engage in aggressive behavior and perpetrate bullying in a school environment. Children can easily learn bullying behavior from what they have observed or learned at home. Socialization and family and societal norms can produce children who become bullies at school (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156). Children who are bullies often come from families that use physical punishment to discipline them, and parents may have minimal involvement in raising and disciplining their children (Shariff, 2015:108).

Environmental factors play a fundamental role in shaping a child's behavior, whether it is positive or negative (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156). Children who come from dysfunctional family environments are more likely to become bullies due to a lack of good parenting, guidance, and support. Similarly, children from impoverished settlements often become bullies because these areas are characterized by crime and domestic violence (Van Schie, 2014:77). Domestic violence is another factor that perpetuates bullying in schools, as children learn and mimic this behavior from their home environment. The power imbalance within poor families also promotes bullying in various ways (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156). When children learn to dominate others, it can contribute to bullying behavior. Troubled families that use physical punishment and harsh discipline methods also contribute to the development of bullies (Shariff, 2015:105). Although bullying behavior is learned, the home environment plays a critical role in its development, affecting the way children think and feel. It can also be passed down from one generation to the next through role modeling and learned behavior (Van Schie, 2014:77).

Learners with a history of abuse are often the perpetrators of bullying in educational settings. When learners have been abused or bullied themselves, they may take that experience and use it on other children (Morojele, 2013:56). Learners who are unable to

cope with life challenges and lack a support system may also become bullies. These learners feel helpless and out of control, and bullying others may be a way for them to regain their self-confidence, success, and sense of worth (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156). Learners involved in bullying often desire to be in control and achieve a "winning mentality." They believe that by engaging in bullying behavior, they can gain a sense of control and overcome feelings of powerlessness (Van Schie, 2014:77).

Some adults were bullied when they were young due to their background and social standing within the community. Being unable to afford new clothes and instead wearing old ones due to economic limitations can lead to isolation (Neser, 2013:111). Learners who are overweight, isolated, or shy may also become targets of bullying. Bullying incidents often occur when learners do not conform to the dominant social groups within their community (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156). Learners whose characteristics do not align with the dominant social groups, due to their poor family background and inability to afford certain things, are more likely to be bullied. Bullies, who possess social power and control within a particular society, target those who are weak, unable to afford basic needs, lack self-confidence, and do not conform to in-group ideologies (Van Schie, 2014:77). Learners who do not conform and comply with these ideologies have a higher chance of being targeted and bullied. Bullies demonstrate their strength by targeting the weak and instilling fear in their targets to command respect within the community (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156).

Students involved in high-level crimes are often exposed to violence and aggression, which can contribute to them displaying victimizing behavior in schools. Their exposure to high levels of crime may lead to aggressive and violent behavior (Olweus, 2013:45). Homes that are violent are more likely to have learners at risk of developing antisocial behaviors, including bullying. The emotional attitudes of parents towards their children, especially during their early years, are crucial in preventing children from learning antisocial behavior from their family (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156). Parents need to be careful and responsible, avoiding tolerating aggressive behavior displayed by their children towards others. The punishment parents subject their children to, as well as their

own outbursts, contribute greatly to bullying behaviors. When children are exposed to physical punishment, they learn that violence and aggression are the only ways to solve problems (Masilo, 2018). Learners find themselves displaying violent behavior because of the attitudes they have learned and observed from their parents (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156). Some bullies are learners who experience difficulties at school, are unsuccessful, and may have learning problems. Although some bullies may be intelligent, popular, and successful, they use their popularity to control other children. Schools also contribute to the continuous prevalence of bullying by ignoring the incidents taking place (Fried & Sosland, 2013:67).

Research suggests that children who witness a lot of violence through various media sources, such as television, videos, cell phones, cinemas, and movies, are more likely to become bullies and display aggressive and empathetic behavior. The media's graphic portrayal of violence may increase the amount of bullying (Fried & Sosland, 2013:67). Children who spend a significant amount of time watching television are more likely to become bullies and exhibit aggressive and violent behavior. There is a link between the violence and aggression seen on television and the violence displayed by learners at school (Olweus, 2013:45). If children are exposed to violent and aggressive behavior, they are more likely to become bullies themselves. Children who observe and internalize violent behavior are more likely to imitate it and become violent and aggressive towards others in school (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156).

2.3.1. Effects of social identities on bullying

2.3.1.1. Gender

Literature suggests that gender is one of the factors that may relate to learners' experiences of bullying. Boys have been documented to report more cases of physical bullying than girls (Walter & Roberts, 2016:98). Boys are often exposed to direct bullying, which includes physical violence such as beating, kicking, and punching, while girls are more likely to experience indirect bullying, such as social exclusion (Olweus, 2013:102). Boys are more likely to report incidents of bullying and to be bullied by other boys, while

girls are more likely to be bullied by both boys and girls. It is uncommon for boys to report being bullied by girls. Additionally, cyberbullying is more commonly perpetrated by boys targeting girls (Adam, 2014:54). This may be because girls are perceived as weaker targets than boys.

Another important factor that impacts learners' experiences of bullying is sexual orientation. Lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual students often report incidents of victimization in schools, including physical harassment, assault, stigmatization, and isolation from social groups (Harber, 2014:88). In South African secondary schools, students are bullied because of their sexual orientation and are often isolated from society. This can lead to a high number of suicide attempts among victims struggling with their sexual identity (Walter & Roberts, 2016:98). Adolescents who identify as LGBTQ+ may attempt suicide multiple times due to lack of acceptance and the bullying they face (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156). Both boys and girls are at risk of suicidal thoughts and actions due to homophobic bullying (Harber, 2014:88).

Economic status is another factor that contributes to bullying. Children who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be victims of bullying due to their social and cultural standing in society (Walter & Roberts, 2016:98). Items such as clothing, cell phones, cars, and other technological possessions can trigger bullying, and children who cannot afford these items may be ridiculed and excluded from social groups (Harber, 2014:88).

Dr. Dan Olweus has made significant contributions to the study of bullying. He began writing about bullying in 1969 and has been widely cited for his work. He emphasized the importance of building positive environments at home and in schools to address bullying (Elweus, 1993:78). His strategies for addressing bullying are still relevant today and form the foundation of current literature on the subject. He also examined the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs (Elweus, 1993:79).

Bullying has negative effects on victims, both in the short term and long term. These effects include victimization, poor academic performance, difficulties with social and cultural adjustment, poor mental and psychosocial well-being, and even suicide (Mian, 2013:148). It is important to note that bullies themselves may also experience negative effects and should be provided with support and intervention to address their behavior (Harber, 2014:88). Unfortunately, many studies neglect to provide services and intervention for bullies.

2.3.1.2. Social life.

Studies conducted in the USA indicate that youth in grades six to ten who bully other children are involved in alcohol consumption, smoking, and the use of other substances. They are able to make friends easily and are not easily socially isolated from their social groups (Nansel, 2014:101). Bullying has been found to have negative effects into adulthood, including an increase in criminal behavior, involvement in gang-related activities, and participation in violent and aggressive behavior. There is a close link between victims of bullying and suicide, as well as isolation from society due to fear of bullying (Madonna & Murphy, 2015:77). Victims of bullying have less confidence and assertiveness, making them vulnerable to depression as it is a source of stress. Many of these victims suffer from mental health problems and struggle to cope with their challenges (Madonna & Murphy, 2015:77). They become introverted and lack assertiveness and confidence. Being a bully is associated with rejection by peers and social and cultural rejection. Various research studies have shown that children who have been bullied become passive and do not participate in social institutions, community organizations, or school (Masilo, 2018). They struggle to connect with other children and have difficulty starting conversations due to their bullying experiences (Nansel, 2014:101).

Bullied children often play by themselves, are shy, and tend to be very quiet. They have a sense of loneliness and do not seek companionship. When a child is known to be a victim of bullying, peers disassociate themselves from that child and keep their distance (Nansel, 2014:101). Bullied learners are isolated and excluded, thus lacking the

opportunity to make friends and have normal interactions in the school environment throughout the years. The relationship needs of these learners include love, social and cultural connections, and friendship. Bullied children have difficulty forming good relationships and struggle to lead successful lives (Madonna & Murphy, 2015:77). They live in fear of having conversations and avoid contact with other children due to their lack of self-confidence. They fear experiencing similar problems if they open up to people in their lives. Their isolation and social exclusion have lifelong effects on their mental health and negatively impact their lives (Nansel, 2014:101).

Girls who witness their mothers being abused, harassed, insulted, and beaten by their spouses may perceive violence as normal and expect it to happen to them as well. Boys who witness violence, abuse, insults, and beatings may view this as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts (Shariff, 2015:105). They may become aggressive and violent towards weaker targets or peers, believing that this is an appropriate way to deal with disagreements. The risk of alcohol abuse and engagement in criminal activities increases among high school learners. Schools with high levels of conflict often experience physical and verbal aggression, with teachers failing to maintain order and address unwarranted behavior (Nansel, 2014:101). Learners in these schools may experience mental health problems, poor academic performance, difficulty associating with other learners, isolation, and poor physical health. Peers sometimes reinforce bullying by giving attention and applause to the bullies (Madonna & Murphy, 2015:77).

2.3.1.3. Academic life

Many of these victims suffer from mental health problems and struggle to cope with their challenges, often unable to speak about their problems (Madonna & Murphy, 2015:77). This can lead to introversion and a lack of assertiveness and confidence. Bullies themselves often face rejection from their peers and experience social and cultural exclusion (Shariff, 2015:105). Research shows that children who have been bullied often become passive and avoid participating in social institutions, community organizations, and school activities. They struggle to connect with other children and have difficulty starting conversations due to their past experiences with bullying (Nansel, 2014:101).

Bullied learners fear that opening up to others in their lives will lead to similar experiences or problems due to their lack of self-confidence. Their isolation and social exclusion have lifelong effects on their mental health and have a negative impact on their lives (Nansel, 2014:101).

2.3.1.4. Psychological effects.

There is a lot of anxiety associated with bullying. Children and learners who have been bullied become anxious about various things, and this anxiety contributes to physical and emotional ailments. These ailments may include headaches, loss of appetite, back pain, inability to sleep, nail biting, stomach ailments, feeling depressed, fearful, anxious, and hopeless (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:73). Bullying is seen as a serious violation, aggressive behavior that can lead to engagement in criminal activities. There is a lot of criminal development resulting from violent and aggressive behavior. This indicates that there is a relationship between crime and bullying (Walter & Roberts, 2016:98). A number of bullies may have criminal records by the time they reach the age of 30, and some of them have been exposed to criminal processes at a young age. Bullied children are likely to become adults who are involved in criminal activities (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:73). They have the potential to be involved in gangs and gang-related activities, struggle with mental health problems, alcohol and substance abuse, employment challenges, and a higher rate of various social ills and undue pressure (Walter & Roberts, 2016:98).

The victims of bullying become unhappy, fearful, and develop low self-esteem as a result of the incidents of bullying. Bystanders also find themselves suffering from bullying, and it has negative effects on them. Bullying is seen as normal behavior when bystanders and victims continuously witness bullying without any consequences (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:101-110). They consider bullying as an accepted behavior that does not have consequences. Learners conform to bullying behavior because it is viewed as normal and accepted. Both bullies and those who have been bullied display poor psychological functioning. There is a demonstration of high levels of conduct problems and behavioral problems by youth who bully others (Walter & Roberts, 2016:98). The victims of bullying show the highest level of low self-esteem, physical and mental health problems and

symptoms, depression, insecurity, and loneliness. Boys who have been bullied tend to be physically and psychologically weak. They perceive the treatment they receive as evidence that they are insufficient, worthless, and useless, and this perception continues to be internalized (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:73).

Studies have found a close association between being bullied, stress and depression. Sinokowski & Kopasz (2015:73) mention that children who are frequently bullied at school have psychological problems and are more likely to wet their beds, have sleeping disorders, abdominal pains, and consistent headaches. There is a link between being bullied and mental disorders in adulthood, as well as an association of delinquency in childhood and adolescent bullying (Field, 2017:66). It is understood that depression occurs equally in both the bullies and the victims of bullying. This is because the victims of bullying also need attention due to their engagement in antisocial behavior that isolates and violates other children. It has been discovered that depression is common among the perpetrators of bullying themselves (Walters & Roberts, 2016:98).

Girls are frequently associated with suicide when they have been bullied. Murder and suicide are tragic consequences of bullying and often happen to girls who are bullied. Exposure to bullying incidents may lead to learners and victims of bullying becoming murderers and not only committing suicide (Walters & Roberts, 2016:98). Frequent bullying incidents give learners mental health problems and lead them to engage in criminal behaviors, which may result in violent crimes, aggression, and becoming murderers. It is reported that there is a development of feelings of emotional instability, misconduct, violence, depression, and impulsiveness (Field, 2017:66). Students who are bullied also report feelings of unhappiness and a desire to drop out of school. This indicates that the impact of bullying on learners in schools has devastating effects. The psychological harm done to children and adolescents who are bullied is immeasurable, especially when they are continually bullied (Madonna & Murphy, 2015:77). Victimization by peers results in long-term effects and the development of mental health issues, including generalized anxiety disorder and self-injurious behaviors. Victims of bullying develop fear of what may happen to them next, and helpless, hopeless, and low-

confidence learners become vulnerable to depression and potential candidates for depression (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:73). There are various psychological effects that result from bullying and put the lives of the bullies, the victims of bullying, and the entire school environment and stakeholders at risk. Children become vulnerable to mental health problems and find themselves experiencing stress, depression, and engaging in dangerous and harmful activities, including violence. Bullying also leads to children withdrawing from schools (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:73).

The learners who are victims of bullying try to hide their defeats, their inability to cope, their vulnerability to emotional challenges, mental health issues, and their failure to manage stress and depression (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:73). They display self-destructive behaviors, isolate themselves from society, engage in self-punishment, and exhibit passive-aggressive behaviors such as suicide and self-harm. They also have a strong desire for revenge for the bullying incidents and display a lot of anger. Their obsession with revenge is not only directed towards the perpetrators of their bullying but also towards the weak or less powerful, inflicting harm on them (Madonna & Murphy, 2015:77). The victims of bullying may have feelings of not enjoying life and not having good health, and they experience undue pressure on their mental health. They have a lot of emotions and psychological feelings such as sadness, feeling stupid, alienated, hurt, unsupported, trampled, and failed by the school management and stakeholders. These feelings may lead the victims of bullying to become bullies themselves, perpetuating and escalating bullying behavior in learning contexts such as schools and communities (Field, 2017:66).

Cyberbullying, which is the use or abuse of electronic media to harass others, can lead to suicide and the adoption of antisocial, violent, and aggressive behavior. Psychological bullying is an integral part of cyberbullying and involves inflicting harm on the mental health of victims. This can cause victims to fear for their safety and develop low self-esteem and self-confidence (Shariff, 2015:105). Victims of bullying often experience psychosomatic problems and may have more serious mental health issues than those who have not been exposed to bullying. Children and learners who are both victims and

perpetrators are at a higher risk than those who are only bullies or victims (Field, 2017:66). Victims of bullying often feel stuck, confused, and powerless, unsure of what to do. They often bottle up their challenges and, when they finally express themselves, do so in a rude and unacceptable manner. This can lead to them becoming rude, aggressive, hostile, and provocative. Some victims become sad, miserable, and depressed, internalizing their anger (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:73).

Maphumulo (2014:17) mentions that psychological bullying can cause long-term damage, including brain cell damage, memory impairment, and mental health issues. Although this discussion focuses on psychological bullying, bullying in general has serious health implications (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:73). Bullying can lead to sleeping disorders and the development of eating disorders in children. Some learners who have been violated, abused, and exposed to aggression take drastic measures, such as overdosing on medication, to commit suicide because of the harassment they experience in school (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:73). Interventions need to be provided for both victims and bullies to ensure that learners do not continue to suffer from the effects of bullying, as it can cause severe damage. When bullying goes unchecked, children may make poor decisions and even drop out of school (Maphumulo, 2014:136).

2.4. EFFECTS, IMPACT OF BULLYING AND AGRRESSION

The key feature of bullying is that it often occurs in the presence of other people. Bullying incidents affect bystanders who witness or observe the bullying behavior. Bullying is a social experience that can have long-term emotional, psychological, social, developmental, and academic implications for the victims, bullies, and bystanders (Maphumulo, 2014:136). These implications have far-reaching effects and negatively impact the lives of those involved in bullying incidents. Bullying is a risk factor that leads to behavioral problems, violent behavior, conduct problems, and aggressive behavior. This has been confirmed by longitudinal studies that have examined bullying comprehensively over a long period of time (Maphumulo, 2014:136).

The victims of bullying are at risk of developing stress, depression, anxiety, isolation, suicide, and other mental health issues. They may also develop psychosomatic disorders

and symptoms (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:73). These symptoms include stomach aches, headaches, loneliness, stress, and isolation. The victims also experience problems with school attendance and interacting with other learners and children at home and at school. There is a lack of interpersonal relationships for victims of bullying to develop a support system with other learners and children who have experienced bullying. Interpersonal skills and friendships can help learners develop coping skills and protect them from victimization (Maphumulo, 2014:136).

There are various ways in which bullying impacts the victims due to its repetitive nature. Bullying has a negative impact, leading to school dropouts, academic problems, and poor performance (Cooper & Nickerson, 2013:76). Bullying also causes adjustment problems, including symptoms of depression, social withdrawal, feelings of rejection, helplessness, loneliness, negative self-concept, and isolation. It instills in victims the belief that they deserve to be bullied and deserve all the negative consequences associated with bullying incidents (Mian, 2013:81). Furthermore, there is a significant association between physical and psychological problems and bullying. Changes in sleeping and eating patterns and physical injuries are part of the physical impact of bullying (Hemphill, Tollit, & Herrenkohl, 2014:125-145). The psychological impact of bullying includes isolation from others, suicide, anxiety, depression, loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities, reduced class attendance, school dropout, poor academic performance, and disassociation (Nordahl, Beran, & Dittrick, 2013:34). Adults who have been bullied also tend to raise children who are violent and aggressive, suggesting that bullying may contribute to elements of violence and aggression (Tanrikulu, 2014:91).

2.5. TYPES OF BULLYING.

There are various types of bullying that have been categorized by studies. Often, girls are more likely to engage in verbal and emotional bullying than boys. In fact, verbal and emotional bullying accounts for 70% of bullying incidents in the United States (United States Department of Education, 2013). This type of bullying includes insults, gossiping, name-calling, racial slurs, and sexual remarks. The main purpose of verbal and emotional bullying is to harm the victims' confidence, make them doubt themselves, and make them

feel worthless and incapable of achieving. When bullying continues over a long period of time, it becomes normalized behavior for the victims and has dehumanizing effects (Tanrikulu, 2014:91). If not addressed, verbal bullying can escalate to physical aggression.

On the other hand, boys are more likely to use physical violence as a form of bullying, taking advantage of their physical strength to target the weaker individuals. Examples of physical bullying include pushing, tripping, and shoving, which were frequently reported in American schools during the 2010-11 school year.

Physical aggression and violence involve causing harm to someone's body or property. Other examples of physical bullying include punching, slapping, hitting, choking, poking, twisting limbs, spitting, and destroying others' clothes, books, cell phones, papers, or any other property (United States Department of Education, 2013). When engaging in physical bullying, there is a power imbalance between the bully and the victim, with the bully possessing physical strength, weight, intelligence, involvement in gang activities, higher social status, and societal expectations that limit the victim's ability to defend themselves (Mian, 2013:81). While bullying is intentional, the consequences for the victims and bystanders are often not considered. Bullies may not realize that their actions can lead to self-harm, violence, aggression, or even suicide attempts by the victims (Mian, 2013:81). The damage caused by bullying may not be visible, as students may appear fine on the surface while enduring repeated acts of violence, aggression, and bullying. This creates a deeper sense of fear, intimidation, and ongoing threats for both the bully and the victims, who anticipate future incidents. While physical bullying is known to cause harm, there is another form of bullying that harms the target without physical violence or aggression, known as relational bullying (Tanrikulu, 2014:91).

Relational bullying is more commonly used by girls than boys. This form of bullying is prevalent among girls because they spend more time in smaller groups and with their friends. Gender and cultural influences also play a significant role in relational bullying within schools or local communities (Mian, 2013:82). It can be challenging to identify

relational bullying, as some patterns, such as conflicts within friendships, may be mistaken for bullying. Relational bullying occurs within friend groups and involves isolating members, exclusion, conflicts, and rejection. The primary goal of relational bullying is to destroy friendships and prevent them from continuing. Examples of relational bullying include spreading lies, rumors, threatening to end friendships, and using isolation tactics (Tanrikulu, 2014:91).

Cyberbullying is the harassment, threats, humiliation, and tormenting of individuals through the use of electronic devices and technology. It mainly aims to harm the targeted individuals. With the rise of the internet and technology, cyberbullying has become more prevalent. Cyberbullying involves sending secret messages and emails to humiliate the person publicly. It also includes online bullying, which is commonly referred to as cyberbullying (Fredstrom, Adams, & Gilman, 2016). Cyberbullying has been identified as a growing problem that negatively impacts the lives of students. In South African schools, more than 16% of students have reported being victims of cyberbullying (Harrinton-Johnson, 2021). It involves the use of sophisticated electronic devices such as cell phones, laptops, and tablets to embarrass, harass, and harm the victims. Examples of cyberbullying include name-calling, spreading rumors online, sharing inappropriate pictures, and making offensive remarks (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014:31).

2.6. CHARACTERISTICS OF BULLYING

Bullying has various characteristics that need closer examination in order to understand the aggressive and violent behavior associated with it. One characteristic of bullying is a lack of social skills, as bullies struggle to develop relationships with others (Harrinton-Johnson, 2021:132). They have difficulty showing empathy towards their victims and often demonstrate little to no sympathy. Bullies struggle to see situations from someone else's perspective and instead feel empowered when engaging in bullying or aggressive behavior. They take pleasure in tormenting, harassing, threatening, and intimidating others (Fredstrom, Adams, & Gilman, 2016). Additionally, bullies often refuse to take responsibility for their actions and instead blame their victims. They may make false

allegations to justify their violent and aggressive behavior. Bullies believe they are superior to their targets and demand respect from them. They seek attention from their victims or targets (Tanrikulu, 2014:91).

Students who engage in acts of violence and aggression do not possess easily identifiable, definitive characteristics. They have a broad range of traits that can make them difficult to identify. Bullies tend to have high self-confidence, desire respect from their targets, and may be popular among other students and teachers. They are often associated with gangs (Mian, 2013:81). Some characteristics of bullies include having positive attitudes towards violence and aggression, using violence against their peers, and sometimes even towards adults. They are impulsive, disregard the feelings of others, and derive pleasure from making others feel sad, hurt, and weak (Fredstrom, Adams, & Gilman, 2016). Their reactions to situations consistently involve aggression and violence. These reactions are influenced by a lack of empathy, compassion, understanding, warmth, and positive emotions. Students who engage in acts of aggression come in a wide variety of forms (Mian, 2013:81). Although it is difficult to identify the characteristics of bullies, one way they can be identified is through their behavior. The manner in which they relate to their peers and their social interaction gives insight into the aggressive patterns and nature they have been using on other children (Hemphill, Tollit, & Herrenkohl, 2014:103).

2.7. THE IMBALANCE OF POWER

The perpetrators of bullying always have the advantage of the imbalance of power. While the bully may appear to be physically bigger than the students they are bullying, it does not always have to be the case for the imbalance of power to be present. If the targets or victims of bullying do not believe in the use of aggression and violence, the bully experiences an increase in power imbalance (Mian, 2013:81). During childhood, most children have been exposed to the roles of committing acts of aggression towards other children, the weak learners who are the targets of the aggression, and the bystanders (Fredstrom, Adams, & Gilman, 2016). Bullying normally takes place in crowds due to the nature of bullies who want to show that they are powerful and want to expose their targets

in front of people. They always have the desire to humiliate, torment, and threaten their targets publicly as a show of force (Nordahl, Beran, & Dittrick, 2013:34).

2.8. STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION OF BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

Critical stakeholders that have opinions and inputs regarding bullying in the school environment are the learners/students themselves. The learners/students feel that the interventions being made by adults in response to bullying are ineffective, inadequate, and non-supportive (Hemphill, Tollit, & Herrenkohl, 2014:103). There is a common perception among the learners/students that adults will not be able to help with the problems they are experiencing. Additionally, learners/students believe that adult intervention leads to an increase in bullying incidents in schools. There is little discussion of bullying in schools (Mian, 2013:81). Learners/students decide not to report incidents of bullying taking place in the learning context because they believe it will not be effectively addressed and they lack motivation to bring it to the authorities. Moreover, this means that the stakeholders, which include school personnel and parents, will not have knowledge of the incidents happening within the school environment (Mian, 2013:81). This may lead the stakeholders to conclude that the phenomenon is not prevalent in their school and the environment within their school. Bullying continues to increase because of this perception, leading to social, emotional, and criminal issues (Tanrikulu, 2014:91).

There are various ways in which parents respond to the victimization of children through bullying. The parents' perception of bullying, the victimization of children, and the school have been discussed at length. The manner in which parents respond to the victimization of bullying varies. The perception of parents on the school environment and climate affects the way parents engage with school officials to discuss incidents of bullying (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Duong, 2015:56). Parents believe and understand that the school has the ability to deal with bullying and do not see the need for them to engage with their children about bullying. The perception of teachers in schools about bullying plays a significant role in intervening in bullying incidents. A fundamental number of teachers are unable to identify indirect forms of bullying, which include emotional, relational, cyberbullying, and social isolation (Maunder, Harrop, & Tattersall, 2014:71).

The inability of parents to identify these forms makes it difficult for them to intervene when the behavior occurs. School personnel may have views that indirect forms are normal, a rite of passage, and ignore the bullying behavior until it escalates into violent and physical aggression (Tanrikulu, 2014:91).

Children who lack understanding of indirect forms of bullying and its consequences become more comfortable with acts of bullying and committing offenses. Teachers have a key role to play in addressing bullying behavior in schools. Some teachers see nothing wrong with bullying behavior and address only a minimal number of reported cases or incidents of bullying (Tanrikulu, 2014:91). There is a huge gap in identifying and intervening in bullying incidents at schools. School social workers play a critical role as stakeholders in the fight against bullying. They involve various other stakeholders within the school community to find solutions to the phenomenon of bullying. This approach is influenced by the ecosystem perspective that looks at the bullying problem comprehensively and holistically (Masilo, 2018:15). Social workers are involved in interventions that incorporate teachers, principals, school administrators, and parents. Furthermore, professionals like psychologists, police officials, nurses, prosecutors, and magistrates are involved because they all have roles to play in incidents of bullying. Bullying is a criminal behavior that violates the rights of other children and has various consequences. Using various methods of social work intervention, social workers are able to reduce the prevalence of bullying and provide services to the victims and perpetrators of bullying (Masilo, 2018:15). Social workers believe that learners need to be protected for their mental health and for their academic performance to improve. Learners are the major stakeholders within the school environment because the phenomenon takes place around them. Parents are also important because they have a critical role to play in reducing bullying. They need to have knowledge and understanding of how bullying operates and be able to teach and support their children (Tanrikulu, 2014:94).

2.9. ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTION OF BULLYING

The school leadership must initiate school-based interventions to reduce bullying in schools. Some school principals view bullying as a normal part of a child's schooling

experience and do not take it seriously. The perception of bullying differs between school administrators and teachers (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2014:81). Administrators emphasize the importance of training teachers to intervene in bullying incidents. They believe that teachers should actively participate in prevention and awareness programs about bullying (Nordahl, Beran, & Dittrick, 2013:34). Principals categorize bullying behavior as a minor concern that does not require much attention. The attitudes of teachers and principals diminish the motivation of administrators to address bullying. Consequently, school administrators are burdened with the responsibility of dealing with bullying in the school environment (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Duong, 2015:56). Administrators perceive bullying as a minor problem but acknowledge that teachers need training to respond to it. Both principals and teachers view bullying as a minor issue and show little interest in developing programs to address it (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Duong, 2015:56). School administrators recognize verbal bullying as more problematic than physical and relational bullying, which is understood by only a few administrators. The attitudes of teachers and principals, who believe that bullying is a natural part of life that every child must endure, also influence the perception of school administrators regarding bullying (Nordahl, Beran, & Dittrick, 2013:34). Teachers often pass the responsibility of dealing with bullying behavior to school administrators who lack an understanding of it. The similar perceptions of school administrators, teachers, and principals make it difficult to address the issue (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2014:81). The school as a whole fail to appreciate the need to address the problem and instead views it as a rite of passage for teenage learners. However, the school plays a fundamental role in addressing bullying because a significant number of incidents occur in and around the school environment (Tanrikulu, 2014:91).

2.10. FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PEER BULLYING ACTIVITIES

2.10.1. Peer pressure.

Children spend most of their time with peers at school, creating friendships and finding their place within social groups. However, this can have negative consequences, as learners are easily influenced by their peers to engage in bullying behavior

(Bezuidenhout, 2013:116). Peer pressure often leads learners to participate in activities and adopt behavioral characteristics that are common in their circle and peer group, in order to feel a sense of belonging. Unfortunately, this can include bullying, violence, and aggression. The ecosystem perspective is the most suitable framework for understanding this interaction, as it considers the influence of both individuals and the school environment (Singh, 2017:78). Learners are particularly susceptible to influence within the school environment, especially those who lack understanding of right and wrong, as well as knowledge of their own abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. These learners are more likely to engage in bullying behavior in order to gain popularity, boost their self-esteem, and seek validation from their peers. Bullies often rely on other peers to join in their acts of bullying, and may even share their bullying experiences with others who follow them (Bezuidenhout, 2013:116).

2.10.2. Use of alcohol and other drugs.

It is a well-established fact that learners use alcohol and other drugs. There have been reports of learners attending school smelling of alcohol in certain areas. Learners who engage in alcohol and drug use are more likely to exhibit antisocial behaviors, including violence, theft, aggression, and bullying (Masilo, 2018:3). There is an argument that a relationship exists between bullying and alcohol/drug use, as some bullies may engage in bullying behavior in order to obtain money from their victims to purchase alcohol and drugs. Learners under the influence of alcohol often feel empowered to bully others and engage in acts of aggression and violence (Bezuidenhout, 2013:116). Unfortunately, some victims of bullying may turn to alcohol as a coping mechanism to deal with the phenomenon of bullying. The concerning issue is that learners may bring alcohol and drugs to school, or attend school while under the influence, as bullying often takes place within the school environment. These actions violate school rules and may result in disciplinary action by authorities (Masilo, 2018:3).

2.10.3. Domestic violence.

Children who have been exposed to domestic violence often imitate the behavior they have learned at home. These children may become aggressive towards both their peers and teachers at school as a way to cope with the challenges they face at home (Masilo, 2018:3). Many children involved in violence and bullying have learned these behaviors from their home environment, and believe that aggression and violence are the only means of resolving conflicts. Exposure to physical violence between parents has been found to be a significant factor in children engaging in physical violence themselves (Singh, 2017). Children who witness their parents using violence towards each other are more likely to engage in bullying behavior. This supports the notion of the ecosystem perspective, which argues that children's social behavior is shaped by their environment (Masilo, 2018:3).

2.10.4. Poverty.

Poverty is a significant contributing factor to violence, aggression, and antisocial behavior. Children from impoverished families often have to find ways to provide for themselves. Bullies from poverty-stricken families may rely on their victims for lunch boxes or instruct them to steal money from home in order to address their own poverty situation (Singh, 2017:78). Learners sometimes resort to violent behavior and aggression towards others in order to obtain their lunch boxes. Poverty-driven bullying may also involve targeting the clothes of victims, not just their lunch boxes. These bullies engage in violence to steal from other learners, as a means to alleviate their own poverty. This leads to involvement in behaviors that are inconsistent with both school and national laws (Bezuidenhout, 2013:116). As a result, these learners may engage in criminal activities and face consequences. They may be deemed in need of care and protection under Section 150 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, requiring intervention from a social worker (Children's Act 38 of, 2005). While it may be treated as a criminal matter under the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008, the probation officer is likely to transfer the case to the children's court in order to declare the child in need of care and protection. The social worker will then be responsible for addressing the child's behavior and working towards creating a violence-free school environment (Child Justice Act, 2008; Children's Act, 2005).

2.11. SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

Social workers have knowledge of evidence-based interventions that can help individuals, families, groups, and organizations achieve their goals. They work towards the goals of their clients, stakeholders, constituencies, and communities. There are programs available for social workers to address the issue of bullying in schools. Social workers have various intervention methods from their university curriculum that are relevant and effective in dealing with bullying (Zastrow, 2017:90). It is important for social workers to continuously update their knowledge in order to improve their interventions for the various social problems experienced by communities. Social work practitioners and educators must engage in ongoing discussions about current trends in the profession to improve practice and development. Social work practice utilizes various methods, such as casework, groupwork, community work, and research, to provide interventions for bullying and address the issue.

2.11.1. CASEWORK

Casework is a social work method that involves one-on-one engagement with clients to provide interventions. Social workers use this method to help individuals resolve personal, social, and cultural problems. The services provided through this method include counseling, empowerment services for bullying victims, and support (Zastrow, 2017:69). During the intervention process, social workers need to apply an ecosystem perspective to understand how bullying has affected the victims. This perspective also includes understanding the environment of the bully and the victim in order to provide effective intervention. The ecosystem perspective is fundamental in guiding and assisting social workers in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the situation (Zastrow, 2017:69). There are arguments that victims of bullying may develop aggressive, violent, and antisocial behavior if they do not receive assistance, which can lead to them becoming bullies themselves. In individual sessions, social workers may engage with the learner who is bullying others to address their behavior and help them change. The social worker must make it clear to the bullying learner that their actions are unacceptable, as they violate the rights of other learners to a violence-free learning environment. The learner

must also be made aware of the consequences, which could include expulsion from school and potential criminal charges (Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention and Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2014:19). Acts of violence and aggression are considered criminal and are dealt with according to the criminal procedure, including the Child Justice Act.

The social worker must be able to identify the root cause of the learner's bullying behavior through this one-on-one intervention method. They should also address the identified root cause of the behavior. If social workers do not implement the necessary intervention methods, it is likely that learners involved in bullying will continue their behavior. If necessary, the social worker can facilitate mediation between the victim and the bully as part of the intervention process. This process is crucial because bullying tends to escalate from minor incidents to more serious ones if not addressed (Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention and Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2014:19). Mediation can also help alleviate the victim's fear of future bullying incidents, which can lead to various issues including mental health problems. The social worker may involve teachers or parents in finding solutions to the problem (Zastrow, 2017:69).

2.11.2. GROUP WORK

Group work is another method of social work intervention that aims to help individuals and groups meet their needs, influence and change personal, organizational, group, and community problems. Social group work plays a major role in creating meaningful and growth-filled opportunities for group members (Lindsay & Orton, 2014:1). There are various disciplines within social work that can be used to address and prevent social problems, including bullying. These disciplines include support, socialization, education, growth, therapy, and self-help groups (Furman, Bender, & Rowan, 2016:5). Programs have been developed and implemented with school learners to address social problems and needs within the learning context. Social workers use group work as an intervention method with school learners to address their problems. Group work has been used by social workers to address issues such as teenage pregnancy prevention, life skills for

adolescents, and HIV/AIDS. The following types of groups are relevant in addressing the problem of bullying through group work intervention by social workers.

2.11.2.1. Socialization group

The socialization group steers the attitudes and behavior of its members towards socially acceptable norms. Its purpose is to provide direction for members' attitudes and behavior to ensure they display acceptable conduct. This group understands and believes that its members have a shortage and deficit in social skills (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2014:99). Low self-esteem and self-confidence have been associated with bullying behavior among learners in schools. Learners who display bullying behavior towards others often lack interpersonal skills. The main role of the social worker is to educate learners who are considered perpetrators of bullying and assist them in developing new socially accepted behaviors and skills to deal with bullying (Idemudia, 2013:5215). Life skills education, including problem-solving, conflict resolution, self-awareness, and critical thinking, would be fundamental and appropriate to address this purpose. The social worker should guide learners away from bullying behavior and it is important for social workers to adopt the remedial model to ensure the restoration and rehabilitation of learners (Toseland & Rivas, 2017:65).

2.11.2.2. Support groups

Support groups are a necessary method of intervention with the purpose of serving a specific goal. They assist group members in coping with life events, fostering mutual aid, and improving their coping skills and strategies. This prepares and equips them to cope with future stressful life events (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2014:99). Social workers conduct support group sessions with victims of bullying to empower them. Bullying commonly impacts victims by impairing their social functioning. They often struggle to cope with the school environment, and their academic performance is affected. Social workers facilitate groups to bring new hope, coping mechanisms, and encourage strength-based and positive sharing of problems, challenges, issues, concerns, and factors leading to failure to cope among victims of bullying (Toseland & Rivas, 2017:36).

2.11.2.3 Educational group

Educational groups are one type of group found within group work as a method of social work intervention. This type of group is fundamental because it provides education to its members about a specific topic. It consists of a group of people interested in learning or being educated about a particular topic. Social workers need to encourage parents to participate in groups that focus on bullying so they can be educated about the phenomenon, its effects, impacts, characteristics, consequences, and strategies to deal with it (Zastrow, 2015:376). This is because children are often unable to report bullying incidents to their parents. Social group work sessions are important to provide opportunities for learners to participate in educational groups about bullying. This will grant learners the knowledge required to deal with bullying, cope with the challenges it presents, and understand how to respond to bullying incidents (Zastrow, 2017:68).

2.11.3 COMMUNITY WORK

Community work is a method of social work intervention that focuses on the community system. It involves processes that help community systems, subsystems, and external resources bring about social change. Social workers can reach a larger number of people through community work (Gigaba, 2017:6). Schools, churches, and other institutions are considered communities by social workers, and the learners and members are part of these communities. This is important because bullying incidents mainly occur in school environments, and interventions need to be provided to the school community. The ecosystem perspective is important because it focuses on the environment, including the school environment, for the school social worker to provide intervention (Zastrows, 2017:55).

Community education is important because it provides knowledge about the impact of violence on victims, the consequences for perpetrators of bullying, and information on how bullies may be affected by their actions. Social workers provide education to the school community about what learners should do when they are being bullied or witness bullying. They need to know the importance of reporting bullying to teachers, principals,

administrative personnel, and parents. This education can be provided during school campaigns targeting bullying, assemblies, and life skills sessions (Gigaba, 2017:6). On May 4th, Anti-Bullying Day, community education, awareness, and campaigns can be held to share comprehensive information about bullying. The social worker needs to adopt various roles to provide intervention to the school as a community. They need to adopt an advocacy role when working with the community. Advocacy is a critical role for social workers when dealing with marginalized individuals or those whose rights have been violated, such as victims of bullying (Zastrows, 2017:56). Social workers can act on behalf of their clients using this advocacy role and advocate to authorities about the plight of bullying victims. They advocate for the involvement of parents of both victims and bullies and push for schools to address the plight of bullying victims effectively (Zastrows, 2017:56).

2.12. RESEARCH METHOD IN SOCIAL WORK

Social workers use research to gain understanding of human behavior and the social environment, relying on theoretical foundations. Social workers in school settings need to use research to develop a deep knowledge and understanding of bullying (DuBois & Miley, 2014:245). Intervention research is important for developing implementation programs, while evaluation research is necessary to assess the effectiveness of these programs in addressing bullying. School social workers intervene to address bullying and assess the impact of their interventions (Masilo, 2018:79). The assessment outcomes of these interventions help social workers understand the effectiveness of the programs, identify challenges, and determine how to improve them. This information assists in deciding whether the school authority should provide resources or if the program should continue (DuBois & Miley, 2014:240).

2.13. PARENTING PROGRAMS FOR BULLYING PREVENTION

Parents play a crucial role in preventing school-based bullying. School-based intervention programs have been found to effectively reduce peer victimization. Parenting programs that aim to improve parenting behaviors, parent-child interactions, problem-solving skills for children, and effective parenting have shown positive effects (Huang, Espelage,

polanin & Hong, 2019:5). Providing parents with information about bullying significantly contributes to its reduction, as children are less likely to engage in bullying when they know their parents will find out. Involving parents in addressing both perpetration and victimization of bullying is critical to reducing the problem (Harshman, 2014:16). Training parents about bullying has been effective in reducing both perpetration and victimization. Facilitating interaction between parents and the school is important in the fight against bullying.

Providing bullying prevention programs to parents equips them to handle complex issues, including children's use of technology (Hutson, 2016:5). Involving the entire school community, including students, parents, teachers, and administrators, is crucial for improving the mental health and well-being of students. Parent support and home visits are important elements of bullying prevention programs (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015:34). Parents are key stakeholders in the school community, influencing their children's emotions, socialization, and social skills (Cross & Barnes, 2014:15). Social workers involve parents and provide them with education to combat bullying. Studies have shown a significant reduction in reported bullying incidents when parents are involved. Social workers engage parents as part of their campaigns and educational efforts within the school community (Chen, Zhu & Chiu, 2020:43).

2.14. BULLYING AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Adolescents often experience bullying in their daily lives, and it is common in learning environments. There is a link between sexual violence and negative aspects of life, including mental health problems (Dodge, 2016:14). The negative consequences of mental health problems, sexual violence, and bullying include stress, isolation, depression, and suicide. Many students have been both perpetrators and victims of sexual violence, harassment, and bullying (Reysner, Greytak, Parsons & Ybarra, 2015:7). There is a close relationship between bullying and sexual violence, often facilitated through technology such as phones and social media platforms. While there are few studies linking cyberbullying to sexual violence, there is evidence of a correlation between the two (Gates, 2014:76). This has a negative impact on students' mental health, as

outlined by the consequences mentioned. Bullying and sexual violence have significant psychological impacts, leading to a loss of appetite for school, school dropout, social disassociation, poor academic performance (Bosse & Chiodo, 2016:65).

2.15. ACADEMIC IMPACT OF VICTIMIZATION

Victims of bullying suffer various psychological effects that negatively affect their academic performance. The negative impacts of bullying include negative attitudes towards school, social dissatisfaction, depression, anxiety, and substance use. Suicide, suicide attempts, and physical harm are common negative consequences associated with bullying, all of which contribute to poor academic performance (Bosse & Chiodo, 2016:63). Coping strategies of bullying victims in relation to academic performance have received little attention. Studies have shown that both victims and perpetrators of bullying have lower academic achievements (Alotaibi, 2019:3). Bullying has a negative impact on students' achievements, with victims struggling more academically. Cyberbullying has the greatest negative impact on students' academic performance, as it can occur anytime and anywhere through cell phones and other devices used to embarrass the victim (Bosse & Chiodo, 2016:62). The mental health of students can be affected by bullying incidents long after they occur, leading to negative impacts on self-esteem, confidence, social relationships, and anxiety. The long-term effects of bullying on victims include depression and other mental health problems. It is important to note that bullies themselves also suffer from mental health problems and depression when they do not receive help (Alotaibi, 2019:3).

2.16. EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS BULLYING

There has been a dramatic decrease in bullying at schools due to the effective implementation of bullying prevention programs (Bosse & Chiodo, 2016:62). Hotspots for bullying, such as restrooms, computer labs, cafeteria, and playgrounds, have been monitored by social workers, teachers, and parents, resulting in a decline in bullying behavior. Parents need to be more careful and play an active role in monitoring bullying (Alotaibi, 2019:3). Teachers, parents, and social workers must educate students about

the dangers and impact of bullying on all parties involved, including the bullies, victims, bystanders, and the entire school community. Immediate action must be taken when bullying occurs without compromise (Gates, 2014:76). Education should be provided on all types of bullying so that students are aware of their actions and do not act surprised when told that their behavior is considered bullying. Effective strategies such as education, campaigns, and information sharing are crucial in addressing bullying in a learning context. Teacher involvement is a strong element in effective anti-bullying programs (Chen, Zhu, & Chiu, 2020:43). If teachers can respond promptly to bullying problems and involve other relevant stakeholders in seeking intervention, there will be a significant reduction in bullying.

Social workers have the most effective ways of reducing bullying in a learning context. They do this by conducting awareness and prevention campaigns against bullying (Reysner, Greytak, Parsons, & Ybarra, 2015:7). They provide education to all relevant stakeholders involved in the issue of bullying. Educational sessions conducted by social workers for individuals, groups addressing bullying, and the community are fundamental and effective ways to deal with bullying (Reysner, Greytak, Parsons, & Ybarra, 2015:7). Bullying is not an isolated incident; it occurs within an environment where there are many people, including witnesses, bystanders, the teaching community, administrative staff, and parents. It is important for everyone to be involved in addressing the challenge of bullying for the benefit of the positive mental health of students and the community (Huang, Espelage, Polanin, & Hong, 2019:5). This will also help students develop self-esteem, self-confidence, and a desire to attend school and improve their academic work. Effective efforts also assist in reducing stress, depression, and suicide. Stress management, coping strategies, and resilience are important factors to consider when dealing with bullying incidents. Students need to have problem-solving techniques and be equipped with methodologies on how to approach bullying (Huang, Espelage, Polanin, & Hong, 2019:5).

2.17. OUTCOMES OF SCHOOL BULLYING

School bullying perpetration and victimization have a negative impact on the lives of those involved. The negative outcomes highlight the need for effective prevention programs, awareness, and intervention to reduce school bullying among students worldwide (Betts, 2016:23). There is a strong association between bullying perpetration and victimization and the experience of mental health issues such as isolation, depression, and suicide. Adolescent victims of school bullying often report social anxiety and depression (Gaffney, Farrington, & Ttofi, 2019:15). Bullies are more likely to carry dangerous weapons and engage in substance abuse. The outcomes of bullying not only affect students but also impact their adulthood. The effects of bullying can be felt in adulthood depending on an individual's ability to cope with violence, aggression, and threats (Ttofi, 2015:17). Individuals who were involved in bullying as students are more likely to exhibit violence as adults and may become aggressive if their behavior is not addressed. Experiences of bullying as students can lead to anti-social behavior and negative outcomes later in life. Bullying is not just a problem for parents and teachers; it is a public health concern that requires effective intervention and prevention programs (Masiello & Schroeder, 2013:7). The level of exposure to bullying is related to increased physical and psychological harm for both victims and perpetrators. There is a connection between bullying, absenteeism, school dropouts, and decreased academic performance (Smith, Kwak, & Toda, 2016:19).

2.18. EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL BULLYING INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

The school-based programs that address bullying and victimization among learners are crucial in reducing these issues in the school environment. Research has shown that anti-bullying interventions and prevention programs implemented in schools have been effective in addressing bullying (Chalamandaris & Piette, 2015:41). The involvement of various stakeholders such as social workers, learners, parents, teachers, administrative staff, and community members has contributed to the decline in school bullying and victimization. Effective bullying prevention programs include providing education and awareness to learners, victims, bullies, and parents (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016:61). One strength of school bullying interventions is their consideration of the ecosystem perspective, taking into account environmental factors that may influence a child's decision to engage in violent and aggressive behavior. Social work programs play a

significant role in addressing bullying by identifying the root causes and providing interventions based on those causes (Yang & Salmivalli, 2014:33). These programs offer individual and group counseling sessions, as well as community services. Individual services may include counseling, therapy, and education about bullying and its consequences. Education and awareness programs are important for parents, teachers, and learners to understand the different types of bullying, its effects, and prevalence (Rooney, Connolly, Hurley, Kirwan, & Power, 2015:18). This knowledge helps parents identify and address bullying, and it equips learners with coping strategies and resilience. Additionally, it promotes collaboration between parents and schools in addressing the issue (Hutchings & Clarkson, 2015:51).

2.19. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF BULLYING FOR SCHOOLS

Bullying has financial implications for schools that aim to address and prevent it. South African public schools lack social workers who can effectively provide social work services to prevent bullying (Masilo, 2018:35). The Department of Basic Education and National Treasury need to intervene and develop a plan to fund the recruitment of school social workers. However, this poses financial challenges for schools due to their inadequate budgets (Masilo, 2018:33). The funding from the national treasury should cover the salaries and transportation costs of school social workers. South Africa, like other developing countries, faces economic challenges, making it difficult to fully implement the recruitment of school social workers despite the prevalence of bullying in educational settings (Hutchings & Clarkson, 2015:51). The Department of Social Development and Department of Basic Education should collaborate to attach social workers to schools in order to address the ongoing problem of bullying. The appointment of social workers has significant financial implications for the Department of Education, the national treasury, and the schools themselves (Masilo, 2018:31).

However, it is crucial to provide social work services in schools to ensure effective interventions for victims and bullies. Comprehensive anti-bullying programs, which focus on education, campaigns, and awareness for learners, teachers, parents, and the school

community, also have financial implications (Gigaba, 2017:6). Despite financial challenges, it is essential to provide services to children who are victims of bullying and bullies to prevent further victimization and perpetration of bullying. While the government faces budgetary problems, school-linked social workers may be necessary to address the issue. Public schools in South Africa do not receive funding apart from the budget from the Department of Education (Rooney, Connolly, Hurley, Kirwan, & Power, 2015:18). This budget may not be sufficient to recruit social workers for prevention, education, and support. It is important to provide social work services that include various intervention methods, counseling, and therapy for victims and bullies (Hutchings & Clarkson, 2015:51).

2.20. BULLYING AS CAUSES OF VIOLENT CRIME IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

The bullying phenomenon is a serious contributor to violent crime in South Africa. This is due to the increase in bullying and its progression into adulthood. Bullying often instigates violence in schools and causes aggression and threats among children (Department of Education, Republic of South Africa, 2014:166). Bullying is a major cause of violent crime in schools and negatively impacts efforts to create a safe learning environment. It creates problems that hinder school safety and a healthy learning environment (Nthate, 2017:14). For instance, a 13-year-old student from Parrow West Primary School in Cape Town had to undergo facial surgery due to injuries sustained during a bullying attack by other students. This incident can be classified as a violent crime (Brandt, 2017:16). Some bullying cases also involve elements of gender-based violence, such as a video showing a male student violently abusing a female student. While not always attributed to gender-based violence, these actions can still be considered violent crimes committed by students (Mngandi & Tandwa, 2017:22).

The most noticeable and impactful form of bullying is physical and violent bullying. It undeniably and inhumanely affects the victim, resulting in various negative consequences for both the bully and the victim (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013:17). Victims of bullying often drop out of school, miss classes, and lose interest in attending school due to the nature of violent crime and physical violence. This violent behavior ruins the chances of students

enjoying their education, hinders their performance, and prevents them from achieving good results and qualifications. For example, a 17-year-old student in Cape Town hanged herself after being gang-bullied (Baadjies, 2015:23). Students who have been bullied often join gangs for protection against violence, threats, intimidation, and aggression. Those who refuse to join gangs risk being violated, threatened, and bullied with physical violence (Magidi, Schenk, & Erasmus, 2016:23). The risk is further increased when victims are unable to report bullying incidents to their educators, social workers, or parents at home. Victims feel threatened and fear further harm if they report the incidents to their caregivers, parents, or educators. Failure to report bullying incidents to authorities and stakeholders allows bullying to persist in the school environment (Baadjies, 2015:22). Bullying often takes place in areas with minimal observation and monitoring, such as corridors, toilets, and changing rooms, where teachers and adults have limited visibility.

Bullying behavior also has negative effects on the perpetrators. The MEC of Education in Gauteng, Mr. Panyaza Lesufi, clearly stated that children with the intention to bully others have no place in the education system of Gauteng. He emphasized that anyone intending to bully and harm other students will be removed from the school environment (Pijoos, 2017:7). The removal of these children from school will significantly impact their future job prospects. Bullying incidents resulting in assault and violence may lead to criminal charges, further hindering the child's employment opportunities (Smith, 2016:7290). Arrest and conviction may make it difficult for the child to secure employment in the future, both in the government and private sectors, due to their criminal record. The negative impact of bullying may seem lesser at an early age, but it has significant and direct consequences for both victims and perpetrators. Educating relevant stakeholders about bullying as a social problem and health issue is crucial to reducing this phenomenon (Pijoos, 2017:8).

2.21. THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE BULLYING PHENOMENON

Bullying in schools is a social issue that requires the attention of social workers. Social workers play a key role as important stakeholders in implementing anti-bullying programs,

interventions, and preventative measures to address violence, threats, aggression, and isolation (Smith, 2016:7291). They are well-equipped to implement policies aimed at tackling the problem of bullying and provide intervention for both victims and perpetrators. Social workers have the ability to address poor discipline and bullying among students (Earnshaw, Elliot, Reisner, Mrug, Windle, Emery, Peskin, & Schuster, 2017:31). Their services include counseling and support for both bullies and victims. When bullying results in assault, it becomes a case of a child in conflict with the law, and social workers are involved (Masilo, 2018:17). They provide counseling, home visitation, support, and empowerment for victims of bullying. Social workers also engage in prevention programs and provide education and empowerment programs to proactively address bullying. They involve stakeholders within the school environment, including students, educators, administrative staff, parents, and the school community (Smith, 2016:7290). Social workers bridge the gap between schools and communities, working with stakeholders to address the challenges posed by bullying. To effectively counter the bullying phenomenon, the government needs to fund the appointment of social workers in schools. It is beneficial to recruit school social workers who can identify challenges as they arise, treat them, and develop plans to prevent future occurrences (Masilo, 2018:18).

2.22. STRATETGIES FOR COMBATING BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

There are various strategies that are relevant and can be used in schools to combat the bullying problem. Continuous provision of education, training, and prevention programs, as well as awareness programs, are critical to addressing the problem of bullying experienced by many communities and schools (Terry, 2015:76). These programs are fundamental in helping teachers and administrative staff deal with the norm and culture of bullying in a learning context. Effective prevention programs are important to reduce the culture of harassment, threats, aggression, and bullying in the school environment. These programs ensure the safety of the learning environment for students, teachers, and the entire school community. However, teachers and parents often struggle to understand the challenges that come with bullying and the phenomenon itself. Social

workers need to provide education and training to stakeholders to ensure they have solutions to this challenge (Smith, 2016:7293).

One factor to consider when combating bullying is the rewards for non-bullying behavior. Promoting positive attitudes and behavior within the school environment, training teachers and administrators, involving parents in identifying bullying behavior and victims, are critical in reducing violent and aggressive behavior within the school. Awareness and prevention programs should always be planned and executed to maintain acceptable behavior (Earnshaw, Elliot, Reisner, Mrug, Windle, Emery, Peskin, & Schuster, 2017:31).

Awareness and prevention programs for bullying should involve educators, students, parents, school administrators, and the school community. This is important to raise awareness about bullying within the school environment (Earnshaw, Elliot, Reisner, Mrug, Windle, Emery, Peskin, & Schuster, 2017:31). The goal is to improve relationships between peers and students and to intervene to stop intimidation, threats, and violence. Clear guidelines, regulations, policies, and rules against bullying behavior should also be provided (Smith, 2016:7290). The school environment must be able to support and protect all students by developing anti-bullying behavior in a learning context. Prevention programs should intervene in the school community and classrooms to address the root causes of bullying. Social workers must provide empowerment programs, victim-offender mediation, conflict resolution, self-confidence, self-esteem, assertiveness, and counseling to victims of bullying (Masilo, 2018:18). The intervention techniques must involve bullies, victims, and the entire student population. This is a critical step in rooting out the prevalence of bullying in schools and ensuring the safety of all students, teachers, administrative staff, parents, and professionals dealing with bullying (Terry, 2015:77). Social workers and other professionals in the welfare sector play an important role in preventing bullying and providing intervention for both perpetrators and victims of bullying (Smith, 2016:7290). School advisors, counselors, and child protection organizations should work together with social workers to develop an integrated plan to prevent victimization and perpetration of bullying. Education in anger management, conflict resolution, and non-violent attitudes is important in preventing bullying.

The first important step in dealing with bullying is acknowledging its existence in schools. Stakeholders within the school environment need to be made aware of the bullying problem and develop strategies to combat it (Terry, 2015:77). They also need to be made aware of the harmful effects of bullying. Time should be allocated for staff to learn about bullying. Counseling is one strategy to deal with emotions and provide empowerment services to victims, helping them cope and build self-confidence, assertiveness, and self-esteem. Students who have been exposed to bullying need to be provided with debriefing, and social workers need to build resilience in students to help them return to normalcy (Smith, 2016:7290).

Teachers need to listen to students when they report incidents that have taken place within the school environment. Records of bullying incidents need to be kept, and students need to know that this information will be recorded. This shows that the school takes incidents seriously and will take action against anyone involved in bullying (Earnshaw, Elliot, Reisner, Mrug, Windle, Emery, Peskin, & Schuster, 2017:31). Schools need to actively supervise and mentor student activities in the school environment. Parents and other stakeholders should also be ready to assist in intervening against bullying in schools. Schools need to develop and enforce rules agreed upon by teachers and students to create a good social climate that is anti-bullying. When bullying incidents occur, teachers should address the case immediately and involve the perpetrators, victims, and parents before involving social workers (Earnshaw, Elliot, Reisner, Mrug, Windle, Emery, Peskin, & Schuster, 2017:31). Parents also have an important role in advising their children that bullying behavior will not be tolerated and that punishment will be given to perpetrators in their households. Perpetrators of bullying need to receive counseling and education to take responsibility for their actions. Counseling should be structured with sessions. A strict message needs to be sent to bullies that their behavior will not be tolerated. Empowerment programs and support sessions need to be provided to victims of bullying to ensure they are coping and have effective strategies to address bullying (Smith, 2016:7290).

Counselling assists victims with anxiety, stress management, depression, and rebuilding lost confidence, assertiveness, and self-esteem. Schools need to create an antibullying stance and approach to effectively implement preventive programs that combat bullying in the school environment. When developing anti-bullying strategies, all stakeholders need to be involved and their roles clarified. If all relevant role players and stakeholders are involved in the development of these strategies, they will feel ownership over the program (Smith, 2016:7290). Social workers can help bullies address their violent and aggressive behavior. This assistance can help bullies understand that their behavior is wrong and violates the dignity of others. It will also make them aware that their conduct may result in criminal charges and a criminal record if convicted of violent and aggressive behavior (Earnshaw et al., 2017:31).

Counselling sessions with bullies may uncover environmental factors that contribute to their bullying behavior. By addressing these factors, incidents of bullying can be reduced. Bystanders can also play a crucial role in assisting victims and standing up against bullies, ensuring that bullying does not happen again and that victims maintain their self-confidence, self-esteem, and assertiveness (Smith, 2016:7291). Recognizing and appreciating students' positive behavior can encourage them to continue behaving well. When children feel praised, respected, and appreciated, they are more likely to accept criticism and try to change their behavior. They want to impress those who believe in them and become agents of change, breaking away from their notorious reputation (Earnshaw et al., 2017:31). These strategies show that if stakeholders fulfill their roles in prevention, intervention, and combating programs, bullying can be reduced. The development of rules and regulations by schools also plays a fundamental role in addressing bullying incidents (Smith, 2016:7290).

2.23. SUMMARY

This chapter provides an overview of the literature reviewed to address the research goals and objectives. The literature responds to the research questions developed for this study

and includes theories used to interpret and understand the phenomenon of bullying. The literature also confirms some of the findings generated by the study participants.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. INTRODUCTION

There are two words involved in the term "theoretical framework": "theory" and "framework." It is important to start by providing definitions of both terms and explaining their functions. According to Radhakrishna, Yoder, and Ewing (2014:94), a theory is "a set of connected constructs, explanations, definitions, and hypotheses that provide a systematic understanding of phenomena by detailing the relationships among variables. Its purpose is to explain and predict phenomena." A framework, on the other hand, is "a set of ideas used to make decisions and judgments" (Hornby, 2015:361). Imenda (2014:188) states that theories are successfully used to make predictions, which guide researchers in designing relevant research questions. Frameworks, on the other hand, provide a structure for explaining the relationships between variables and phenomena.

Theories are used differently in qualitative research by different researchers for various reasons and at different stages. The presentation of theories in the context of bullying involves defining the terms, discussing fundamental assumptions, critical features, and how theories are used to understand bullying. This research study does not cover all relevant theories, but the data collected provides guidance on which theory to apply. The exploratory nature of the research design may require the use of multiple theories to fully address the research questions. This is because phenomena may have different meanings in different communities or societies (Domingues-Folgueras & Castro-Martin,

2013:424). Theories play a significant role in guiding research and providing a foundation for understanding and predicting phenomena.

Theory plays a fundamental role in qualitative research by assisting in the design of research questions, guiding the selection of data collection methods, and providing explanations for observed influences or causes (Green, 2014:34). Theories offer complex and comprehensive understandings of difficult-to-pin-down concepts, such as how communities and organizations function, and why people interact in certain ways (Stryker, 2018:17). Researchers draw on different theories to gain insights into social issues and complex problems from different perspectives (Friedman & Allen, 2014:3). According to Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler (2016:36), the primary function of theory is to guide researchers. In the social sciences, a theoretical framework refers to a set of statements that describe and explain the relationship between human behavior and environmental factors (Liamputtong, Martin & Ezzy, 2015:308; Reybold, 2019:269; Green, 2014:34). Best and Khan (2016:10) describe a theory as an attempt to develop a general explanation for a phenomenon.

It is challenging for one theory to provide a comprehensive foundation for addressing all aspects of a phenomenon like bullying (Stryker, 2018:17). Due to the inquisitorial nature of qualitative research and the exploratory nature of this study, multiple theories may be necessary to uncover the required data and address the research questions. The use of theory in qualitative research is debated among authors, with some arguing that qualitative researchers should focus on generating data (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2015:190; Creswell, 2016:43), while others contend that disregarding existing theories may lead to reinventing the wheel (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2015:191).

3.2. THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section provides background information on the ecological approach and its relevance to the study. The ecological approach incorporates systems theory and the

person-in-environment (PIE) perspective (Friedman & Allen, 2014:3). Therefore, the discussion will cover these perspectives.

Ecology is the study of the interdependence and interaction between organisms and their environment (Gitterman, 2009:232). The ecological approach was introduced to social work by academics Gitterman and Germain in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Teater, 2010:17). Green (2008:199) reviewed the theoretical foundations of the ecological approach and outlined its primary assumptions, which include the application of selected concepts to individuals, groups, and communities.

According to Zastrow (2013:24), the ecological approach integrates both the treatment of social cases and the reform of dysfunctional transactions between people and their physical and social environments. It focuses on the person-in-environment and the ongoing interactions and transactions between individuals, families, communities, and their environments (Teater, 2010:24).

The ecological perspective also emphasizes the importance of the natural world in which human beings live and of which they are a part (Pawar, 2014:2). The physical environment includes the natural world, human-built structures, the spaces that support or contain these structures, and the rhythms of environmental and human biology (Gitterman & Germain, 2008:52). The social environment encompasses factors such as a person's home, occupation, financial resources, and the laws and social rules that govern their life (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:22).

Gitterman (2009:232) suggests that social workers, when implementing the ecological perspective, should use a life model that aims to improve the fit between individuals and their environment. The life model consists of four phases: preparing to enter the client's life, initiating work with the client, ongoing work towards goals, and ending or terminating services with the client (Gitterman, 2009:232).

The main contribution of the ecological perspective to social work is its integration of interpersonal interventions involving individuals, families, communities (both geographic

and functional), and other stakeholders. It focuses on the interaction between social and personal factors, helping people adapt to their social environment and react to it in a more harmonious way (Payne 2014:184). Zastrow (2013:24) demonstrates that human beings in the ecological model are seen as developing and adapting through connections with all elements of their environment.

The ecological approach requires an ecological assessment of service users' problems (Norman 2013:11). Derezotes (2013:407) argues that social workers traditionally apply the ecological person-in-environment perspective to assessment in social work practice. In the ecological approach, assessment considers all the interconnected aspects of the client system and its changing environment (Derezotes 2013:407).

According to Nash, Munford, & O'Donoghue (2022:32-41), the ecological approach consists of seven steps to assist in assessment. These steps are:

1.   Entering the system
2.   Mapping the ecology
3.   Assessing the ecology
4.   Creating the vision for change
5.   Coordinating and communicating
6.   Re-assessing
7.   Evaluating

The aforementioned steps can assist school-linked social workers in assessing learners who are at risk of being bullies or being bullied, in order to develop appropriate intervention strategies. Social workers have a professional and ethical responsibility to interact with clients and their environment (Teater 2020:4).

The researcher applied the ecological perspective by considering the fact that the main function of social work practice, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, is to assess individuals, including learners at risk. The extent to which the environment is considered

varies depending on the theoretical framework from which the social worker approaches a situation (Teater, 2020:16).

The ecological approach helps social workers make sense of interrelated phenomena and predict behaviors or attitudes that are likely to occur under certain conditions (Engel & Schutt, 2009:313). The approach assists in understanding and explaining situations or behaviors, and provides insight into what might have occurred in the past or might occur in the future (Teater 2020:03).

This approach was used to identify, explore, and describe the phenomenon under study. It also assisted in interpreting collected data to generate intervention guidelines for school-linked social workers on how to address bullying. Gitterman (2009:232) mentions four important principles that the ecological approach holds: the interdependence of networks, individuals striving for a good person-in-environment fit, the cyclical nature of the ecological process, and the non-linear nature of the ecological process. These principles are discussed as follows:

- **Interdependence of networks:**

Interdependence means a group of people relying on each other (Hornby 2010:812). The premise of the ecological perspective is that an individual and their environment are interrelated and conditional (Gitterman & Germain cited in Teater 2010:25). Essentially, this implies that the environment in which adolescents live and work on the streets is not conducive to their growth, development, and well-being. The person and environment can only be understood when the relationship between their physical, social, and cultural elements are examined.

- **Individuals strive for a person-in-environment fit:**

When there is a positive person-in-environment fit, individuals feel a sense of adaptation, which includes feelings of security and perceptions of themselves and their environment as holding resources necessary to support their human worth, growth, and potential (Teater 2010:27). Teater (2010:27) further adds that a negative person-in-environment fit is the result of individuals lacking personal and environmental resources.

Zastrow (2013:25) views the ecological approach as focusing on the person and seeking to develop their problem-solving, coping, and developmental capacities. Therefore, a negative person-in-environment fit may lead adolescents on the streets to feel insecure, experience stress, and become uncontrollable. The ecological approach in social work and stakeholders' interventions offers an effective method of intervening to address the needs of learners at risk.

- Cyclical nature of the ecological process:

The ecological approach requires ecological thinking, which examines the relationship and exchanges between two people (Teater 2010:26). Zastrow (2013:25) indicates that the ecological model focuses on the relationship between a person and the systems with which they interact, and that it links the person with fundamental resources, services, and opportunities. The relationship between adolescents and their families, in conjunction with the environment in which they grew up, may lead to children finding themselves being victims of bullying.

- Non-linear nature of the ecological process:

Non-linear means that the individual responds to an environment and the environment, in turn, changes and responds to an individual in complex ways that defy linearity (Teater 2010:26). According to Pawar (2014:54), the ecological approach is based on the logical importance of the context within which all human activity occurs and on the perceived crises threatening many aspects of that context.

The ecological approach provides the researcher with an opportunity to understand the participants and their environment. It also enables the exploration of the participants' relationships with their environment, how they respond to it, and how their transitioning learner in the middle of microsystems with which they have direct contact (Bengtsson 2011:15).

3.3. SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Bullying has effects and can be viewed through many models and perspectives applied in social learning theory. The view of the social learning theory is that children develop negative attitudes towards particular social groups based on influences and ideas expressed by the people or individuals around them (Anderson & Bushman, 2015:107). The social learning perspective provides that human beings are not born with aggression or with a predisposition for aggressive behavior. This behavior is learned through observations made from others or through direct behavior (Subbaraman and Barnett, 2016:249).

The concepts of the social learning theory assist researchers in understanding that aggressive behavior is learned through various ways, including observations. These concepts include how individuals view the social world, the change of individual expectations, and development (Yun & Kim, 2015:1169). The social learning theory stresses the frequency of the behavior and the consequences of the behavior (Tapper & Boulton, 2015:78). The relationship between internal cognitive processes and external individual behavior, as well as childhood relationships, form part of the theoretical information on aggression.

The social learning theory assists in understanding the performance of various roles, how roles can be acquired, and how they can be sustained. Role theory can also advance this position by examining how people behave based on individual social positions and the expectations of certain behaviors (Ogunfowora, 2014:1470). Peer mediator is one of the roles that relates to bullying and aggression. There has been significant focus and documentation of peer mediation within the school environment, and researchers have speculated that the effective influence on aggressive children was the result of assigning positive roles (Tapper & Boulton, 2015:78). The use of bullying prevention programs within the school environment assists learners in having resources to address their concerns and assists with the identification of such roles.

The social learning theory and role theory are helpful theories that assist researchers in understanding people in their environment. These theories have made significant

contributions to our understanding of people and their environment (Tapper & Boulton, 2015:78). The social interaction theory, as it relates to the social learning theory, provides an interpretation of aggression as socially influenced behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2015:107). According to the social interaction theory, acts of aggressive behavior are inspired and motivated by ultimate goals. Aggressive behavior may be driven by the desire to obtain something of value, the need to retaliate against injustice, or the pursuit of a certain social identity (Anderson & Bushman, 2015:107). Bullying behavior is often motivated by a desire for power and gaining something from others. Bullying programs aim to educate and provide knowledge to stakeholders in the school environment, including students, school personnel, and administrators.

The general aggression model offers comprehensive insights into aggressive behavior and bullying. It encompasses a broad range of theories and models of aggressive behavior, aiming to unify smaller theories into a cohesive framework (Anderson & Bushman, 2015:107). The advantages of the general aggression model are that it provides a better explanation of aggression than smaller theories, offers insights into child development and child rearing, and informs interventions designed to address bullying and aggressive behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2015:107). It compiles knowledge and information to effectively intervene and address the issue.

The social learning theory, developed by cognitive psychologist Bandura in 1977 and 1986, aims to understand human nature by examining how people observe and model their experiences, attitudes, emotions, and behaviors within a social context (Yun & Kim, 2015:1169; Merrill, Subbaraman & Barnett, 2016:249). This theory is particularly relevant in explaining the phenomenon of bullying within a learning context. It provides insight into how individuals learn

 from significant others, such as parents and siblings, as well as their observations of others (Weiser et al., 2015:3). Individuals' behaviors are influenced by their family experiences and important others who play a role in their lives (Weiser et al., 2015:5).

Individuals learn behaviors by observing the actions and behaviors of others, rather than solely relying on their own experiences and actions. However, the theory acknowledges

that individuals do not automatically adopt behavior based on their observations, as they have a need to maintain their personal identity, which distinguishes them from others (Ogunfowora, 2014:1470). This is evident when children learn bullying at home and school and engage in these activities despite parents downplaying it and communities and governments ignoring its existence.

Researchers use social learning theory to investigate the challenges of bullying and understand the phenomenon within a learning context. This includes examining the prevalence of bullying and its various types. Social learning theory explains the dramatic increase in bullying cases within a learning context as a result of influence from significant others (Merrill, Subbaraman & Barnett, 2016:249).

3.4. DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION THEORY

The differential association theory suggests that the phenomenon of bullying is more likely to be influenced by children's association with a delinquent environment and influential factors within that environment (Rigby, 2014:115). While this theory has not been fully accepted as a theoretical framework for explaining bullying, many studies have found a relationship between aggressive behavior, delinquent peer association, attitudes towards violence, and bullying behavior. Children associate themselves with environments that influence their behavior and conform to what the environment requires of them (Rigby, 2014:115).

According to the differential association theory, learners are strongly influenced by their association with a smaller group of peers. The association with smaller groups plays a fundamental role in shaping children's aggressive and violent behavior (Craig & Pepler, 2014). When children associate with peers who display antisocial behavior and frequently violate the law, they are more likely to adopt delinquent and criminal behavior. They learn the motives, attitudes, and behaviors associated with criminal and antisocial behavior (Rigby, 2014:115). Studies on juvenile criminals have shown that those who associate with delinquent peers are more likely to engage in antisocial and delinquent behavior. Peers who associate with bullies are also more likely to engage in violent, aggressive, antisocial, and delinquent behavior (Craig & Pepler, 2014). Bullies influence their peers

by exposing them to aggressive behavior. If bullies are not punished for their actions, they continue engaging in antisocial behavior without fear of consequences (Rigby, 2014:115). The bystanders and association are more likely to become bullies because they have observed that no action is being taken against the bullies for their actions (Craig & Pepler, 2014).

3.5. SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

This theory explains the decisions, choices, and behaviors that are consistent with people's intrinsic needs, which include the need to manage their own behavior, the significance of effective communication with the environment, and the need to feel a sense of belonging to others (Knee, Harden, Porter, & Rodriguez, 2013:307). The development of motivation to meet these needs is provided in the guidelines of this theory. The theory assumes that people have intrinsic needs that must be fulfilled in order for them to reach their optimum level. Human beings strive to meet these needs throughout their lives by engaging in activities that support their fulfillment (Gottlieb and Sevigny, 2016:337). Individuals have various choices in how they construct their lives and identities, rather than relying solely on prescribed social norms (Hughes, 2015:707).

The self-determination theory also focuses on situational factors that ensure comprehensive self-fulfillment (Knee, Harden, Porter & Rodriguez, 2013:307). It is important to note that a conducive social context may ensure the fulfillment of individuals' intrinsic needs. The social learning theory accepts that not all choices made by individuals are self-regulated or sourced from within a person (Knee et al, 2013:307). Autonomous intentions motivate individuals' behavior, although they still need to satisfy internal and external expectations (Seiffge-Krenke, 2013:116). The self-determination theory provides an explanation for bullying behavior and the challenges experienced as a result of this phenomenon.

The self-determination theory endorses individuals' full involvement in bullying as influenced by the environment, rather than feeling coerced, guilty, or not understanding the reasons for their involvement (Knee et al, 2013:307). Self-determination theorists indicate that people have moved away from traditional norms, customs, and expectations

when it comes to bullying. Learners are involved in bullying by their own choice without any obligations imposed on them (Smith, 2014:3). The autonomous behavior of the self-determination theory can only thrive in social contexts that provide support and accommodation (Koehn, Gillison, Standage, & Bailey, 2016:1086).

3.6 SUMMARY

This chapter interpreted theories that are relevant to provide a foundation for understanding the phenomenon of bullying in a learning context. The reviewed theories are fundamental to better understanding learners' behavior. The chapter presents a comprehensive discussion and linkage of how the theories are applied in the study. It includes an in-depth analysis of the ecological approach, social learning theory, differential association theory, and self-determination theory. The researcher links these theories to the study and the findings developed during the data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Research methodology is the mechanism through which a research study obtains answers to the research question (Hood, 2016:160). This chapter will cover and provide a comprehensive description of the research methodology that was adopted to guide this study. It aims to orient the reader to the research paradigm chosen for the study and demonstrate the coherence of the entire study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:7). The research methodology is justified by its alignment with the research question, aim, goal, and objectives. Sigh (2015:122-146) emphasizes the importance of coherence across the entire study. The researcher demonstrates this coherence in this chapter by applying relevant literature to justify the choice of the qualitative research approach or methodology.

4.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the techniques, strategies, decisions, and procedures that guide researchers in conducting a study (Carter & Little, 2007:1317). It provides guidance to ensure that relevant procedures are applied and justifies the methods chosen for the research project. The research methodology is based on the research question and follows the research approach and design (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2015:72).

In this study, the researcher has chosen a qualitative research approach. The qualitative research paradigm is discussed, including a comprehensive justification and application process. The research design adopted is exploratory, descriptive, contextual, and phenomenological. The researcher also explains the selection of the population, sample, sampling methods, participant preparation for data collection, data collection tool, pilot testing, data analysis, and trustworthiness of the study. The methodology and techniques applied are justified based on the research goals and objectives.

4.2.1. Research paradigm

A research paradigm, also known as a worldview is "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990:17). The dominant paradigms that are often discussed include post positivism, constructivism, transformative and pragmatism (Creswell, 2018). The focus of this discussion will be on the interpretivism or constructivism paradigm, which is a research paradigm centered around the study and interpretation of human behavior and actions. The interpretivism/constructivist approach acknowledges the dynamic and ever changing nature of society, rejecting the idea of a single reality truth. Instead, it emphasizes the need to interpret reality. To understand and describe the meaningful social actions and experiences, qualitative methods are employed to uncover multiple realities. According to Creswell, (2018:46), the goal of constructivist research is to rely heavily on the participants' prespective of the situation being studied. Guided by this paradigm, attention will be directed towards the following theoretical perspectives:

The ontological position with regards to the nature of reality in this paradigm is that reality is multiple and subjective and it is constructed mentally by human interactions.

The epistemological position on how the inquiry relates to those that are being researched is that the researcher interacts with the participants and the findings are the creation of an interactive process (Creswell, 2018). The methodological position is the system or techniques that will be applied to conduct the research, which is subjective, qualitative methods. The axiological position deals with the role of values in the inquiry, whether values can be suspended to understand the study or whether they mediate and shape what is being understood. The uniqueness is valued (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2015:72). The metatheoretical position helps us to look into the underlying assumptions and implications of particular theories and refines the researcher's thinking to come up with sophisticated ways to describe and explain the phenomena (Whittaker, 2016:03). For this study, the researcher employed the interpetivism and constructivism approaches to examine social reality and the interpretation of human behavior and actions.

4.2.2. Research approach

The research study has chosen a qualitative research approach because of its rich history in the field of social sciences. The choice of this approach was motivated by the researcher's interest in studying human behavior, feelings, and attitudes within their natural settings, as supported by Creswell (2016). The research approach refers to the divide between qualitative and quantitative traditions in research, encompassing traditional divisions (Whittaker, 2016:03). Qualitative research approach has a wealth of experience within the social sciences field, providing an environment for exploring human experiences and behavior (Holland & Rees, 2014:17). Qualitative research approach has established its own identity by embracing various approaches that aim to explore and understand human behaviors and perceptions (Maxwell, 2013:26). However, qualitative research has been criticized by quantitative researchers who argue that it is not scientifically rigorous (Singh, 2015:367). Scientific credentials have been presented to defend the research approach, emphasizing its significance and justification, contrasting with the views of the quantitative research approach (Hood, 2016:160).

Research approach refers to the plans, techniques, and procedures for the research that illustrate the steps from comprehensive assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher finds the qualitative research approach pertinent primarily because there is a need to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of bullying (Whittaker, 2016).

The qualitative research approach gives the researcher an inside perspective on social phenomena. Additionally, the qualitative research approach aligns with the researcher's aim of ensuring a sense of the study (Maxwell, 2013). The focus of this study was based on the processes followed to arrive at the findings and outcomes. This approach has generated responses from the participants, as the researcher engaged them to gain an understanding of their lived experiences, recognizing that there is no single truth (Mouse & Goodman, 2014:173). The qualitative research approach is adopted when research

questions do not simply provide an indication of the data required to provide an answer (Ganong & Coleman, 2014:455).

The researcher has allowed the participants to create their social reality in the environment they live in and share their insights into their experiences and knowledge of bullying. Furthermore, the qualitative research approach is considered appropriate because of its capacity to recognize fundamental aspects of bullying that would not be considered in a quantitative research approach (Schmidt and Brown, 2015:229). In qualitative studies, the researcher also participates in the identification and understanding of the phenomenon within the study (Holland & Rees, 2014:165). For the purpose of this study, the researcher has engaged with the participants in data collection, ensuring a good working relationship (Mack, Woodsongs, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2015:493). The participants were respected throughout the study.

Personal beliefs and cultural backgrounds have been given special attention, with the researcher being thoughtful about the personal history of the participants. Qualitative research has assisted the researcher in reporting on the participants' accounts and experiences, providing insight and perceptions regarding bullying in a learning context. The researcher received responses from the participants (Creswell, 2016:6). Of particular interest is how the participants were able to report on their insights and experiences. Qualitative research is relevant for exploratory research when there is no adequate and verifiable data about a phenomenon (Holland & Rees, 2014:17). The research approach explores the phenomenon being studied in a similar manner to exploring the unknown (Holland & Rees, 2014:71). The perspectives and views of the participants are fundamental for consideration in the qualitative research approach. Qualitative research seeks to understand the world and approach of the participants (Sano, Manoogian & Ontai, 2015:947). Qualitative research allows for participants' views and perspectives because it allows participants to freely express themselves and not just respond to predetermined questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2015:73). The participants share their insights and understanding of bullying in South African schools (Benjamin & Haze, 2014:795).

The interest of a qualitative researcher was on meaning - how people make meaningful sense of their lives, experiences, and structures of the world. The researcher was continuously interested in the meaning that social workers attach to their involvement and understanding in working with students engaging in bullying activities. In this study, the researcher was interested in the meaning that makes sense of experiences and what participants attach to their work with the interest group engaged in bullying. The qualitative researcher was the key instrument for data collection and analysis. The researcher was the key instrument in this study, collecting data through semi-structured face-to-face interviews using an interview guide and an audio recorder with the participants' voluntary consent for the study.

Qualitative research involves natural settings. A qualitative researcher usually collects data from an environment where the participants experience a problem. This implies that data collection is done where the participants are facing a problem. The major characteristics of qualitative research include gathering information directly from people and being able to see their reactions within the context. In this study, the researcher had face-to-face engagement with the participants, using their preferred places for interviews. The researcher discouraged the participants from using their employers' time.

Emergent design: The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent. This implies that the initial research plan was not tightly determined and some stages of the process changed or shifted after the researcher went to the field for data collection. When there were modifications to the sites visited by the researcher, the researcher ensured that a new design is produced before implementing such changes.

Reflexivity: In qualitative research, it is important to reflect on the role of the researcher in the study. The researcher reflected on their personal background, ethnicity, culture, and experiences. They ensured that their personal experiences, feelings, and background did not influence the findings of the study. The environment in which the researcher had experience did not influence the conclusions of the study. The researcher constantly

reminded himself that the participants are not their clients as a social worker. During interviews, the researcher needed to wear the hat of a researcher rather than that of a social worker.

Holistic account: Qualitative researchers strive to develop a comprehensive picture of the challenge or issue under study. This involves reporting various perspectives. The inclusion of multiple aspects aids in establishing a holistic approach. This study was conducted using a holistic approach, ensuring that all aspects are taken into consideration.

4.2.3. Research design

The qualitative research approach was relevant for the purpose of this study because it assisted the researcher in understanding diverse phenomena, such as the bullying problem in South African schools. The researcher directly interacted with the participants in a conducive and accommodative environment, using a conversational manner (Creswell, 2014:8).

Research design is the foundation of a research study (Green & Thorogood, 2013:42). It consists of a set of strategies, techniques, measures, procedures, and questions that play a significant role in data collection. It illustrates the structure and plan of inquiry, providing a compass for uncharted territory (Yin, 2015:75). The research design focuses on the aims, objectives, and research question, making it an important part of the study (Schostak & Schostak, 2014:9; Yin, 2015:75).

The research included a comprehensive account of the sampling procedure, data collection methods, and data analysis (Charlesworth & Foex, 2016:148). The research design provides a logical approach and helps position the sample (David and Sutton, 2014:204). It is critical for the researcher to ensure that the professional scientific community accepts the results as reliable evidence that reflects a persistent, logical, and systematic research design (Yanow, 2015:16).

In every qualitative research project, the research study is likely to have a different research design. In this study, the research project employed an exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research design to gain in-depth knowledge of the bullying problem in a learning context in South African schools. This was done to establish and develop evidence-based social work interventions. The research design considered the challenges of data collection methods, participant selection, research location, and data analysis and dissemination. By utilizing the research design outlined above, the researcher obtained a better understanding of social workers' perspectives on the bullying problem in a learning context.

4.2.3.1. Exploratory Research Design

The exploratory research design was utilized in this study to gain an understanding of the concept. This design is recommended for studies where there is minimal understanding and insufficient previous research on the phenomena (Gray, 2013:36; Dudley, 2016:107). It is traditionally applied when there is little scientific information or literature available to review (Stetka and Ornebring, 2013:418; Hay and Chaudhur, 2015:678). The purpose of this design is to examine topics that have never been studied before (Marshall and Rossman, 2016:78).

The exploratory research design allows for the use of open-ended questions to gain more insight (Chaudhury, 2015:678). Researchers in qualitative research choose this design when there is little information or knowledge available. It is applied when there is no existing literature or a gap in the literature about a phenomenon (Townsend and De la rey in O'neill, 2015:39; Singleton and Straits, 2014:107). In this study, a small sample of 28 participants was used to explore the topic in depth. The chosen sample provided responses that reached a point of data saturation, meaning that no new information emerged after the interviews. Open-ended questions were relied upon to explore the bullying problem in a learning context and develop intervention guidelines for social work practice.

This study was exploratory in nature, which is why semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted. The interview schedule was used to gain in-depth knowledge and explore social workers' understanding of the bullying problem in a learning context. The researcher responded to participants' answers to ensure clarification of the reported information.

4.2.3.2. Descriptive research design

Descriptive research design is a broad description that distinguishes the population group being studied and reviewed (Rubbin and Babbie, 2013:51). It describes the situation and quantifies the phenomenon (Moule and Goodman, 2014; Mathew and Ross, 2018:57). This research design continues the exploratory research design with the significant purpose of documenting participants' experiences and views (Hennik, Hutter and Bailey, 2015:289). It describes the situation and quantifies the issue, including who the participants are and the reason for their participation in the study (Marshall and Rossman, 2015:69). The intentions behind the "why" questions are not immediately known, and there are no immediate intentions to understand the circumstances surrounding them (Dudley, 2019:106). The researcher had the opportunity to study the understanding of social workers who are exposed to bullying in a school context, with a focus on developing guidelines for social work practice. The researcher had time to gain knowledge of the phenomenon with a detailed account of the context.

After exploring participants' understanding of bullying in a learning context and with the idea of developing intervention guidelines for social work practice, the researcher provided a detailed description of what was explored during the interviews. The researcher was able to connect and make sense of what was presented and shared by the participants through the use of qualitative descriptions.

4.2.3.3. Contextual Research Design

Qualitative research design applies to the contextual research design to seek the meaning of participants' perceptions, experiences, and feelings. The participants express

their feelings about the phenomenon (Corbin and Strauss, 2015:155). The social and institutional conditions of people's lives affect their behavior (Yin, 2015:8). The contextual research design is fundamental, and qualitative research pursues it to gain insight and in-depth information and knowledge of the context in which participants' experiences are generated (Cannell, 2015:595). The contextual research design avoids imposing the individual views of participants. Qualitative researchers should always avoid imposing their own views of the phenomenon on the participants (Grossman, Tracy, Richer, and Erkut, 2015:34). Contextual research design refers to the understanding of experiences, actions, and procedures within the localized context of the participants (Noor, 2015:1603; Randles, 2017:11). In this study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the participants in their preferred location primarily because contextual research design involves the knowledge of the participants in the study (Hennink, Hunter, and Bailey, 2015).

The researcher invested a lot of focus on describing the contexts of the research project and providing a theoretical framework/context for the study. This included a description of the comprehensive socio-cultural context of the population and the physical context of the study area. This was done to provide background information for audiences to understand the study findings. The findings are then presented through thick descriptions. This study was conducted in Limpopo Province.

4.2.3.4. Phenomenological research inquiry

Phenomenology is a research design and branch of qualitative research rooted in psychology and philosophy (Moule & Goodman, 2014:176), based on the assumption that meaning and truth can be drawn from people's lived experiences (Moule & Goodman, 2014:176). Phenomenological research is concerned with how individuals view the world and live their lives from within that world. While many research approaches look for commonalities in human experience, phenomenological research considers what it may be like for a person to live their life in their specific circumstances (Holland & Rees, 2015:75).

This research design is also referred to as "the arena where people build their own reality" (Onwuegbuzie, 2015:92; Marshall & Rossman, 2016:17). The researcher provided a description of the lived experiences of participants, including their feelings and how they make sense of those experiences. Phenomenological research design allowed the researcher to present many details about the subjective experiences of the participants. There is a complement between this design and the other three research designs, namely exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research designs. The combination of these research designs allowed the researcher to have a comprehensive understanding of the participants in this study.

4.2.4. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The study population refers to the whole set of individuals or institutions from which the study findings or results will be drawn. It is the entire set of individuals from which the study findings are generated. This includes families, individuals, groups, communities, and organizations that contributed to the research study (Leedy & Ormorod, 2013;152). The study population is the set of individuals in the world who have particular characteristics or a set of community entities that represent all the required characteristics and interests to the researcher (Creswell, 2016). Population refers to the objects of the study, including individuals, groups, organizations, human products, and events (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015:92). A research population is composed of the institutions and individuals to be studied (Babbie & Benaguisto, 2015:188).

Social workers employed by the Department of Social Development in the Limpopo province of South Africa were considered to participate in the study. This population was chosen because they respond to incidents of bullying in educational settings and have an understanding of the challenges and interventions available to address bullying. Limpopo has experienced a high number of bullying incidents in schools, some of which have gained international attention through media and social media reports. Notably, there have been cases in the Vhembe region, including the well-publicized case of Lufuno, who tragically took her own life as a result of bullying at school. Recent incidents in Limpopo

and the Eastern Cape Province have exposed the gap in placing social workers, particularly in public schools, and have highlighted the seriousness of bullying and the lack of services to address it. The incident involving Moyahabo Mahomela in Motlalaohle Secondary School in Botlokwa, which led to her having suicidal thoughts, is another example of the high number of bullying cases. These incidents have sparked the researcher's interest in exploring the phenomenon of bullying in the Limpopo province. Permission was granted by the provincial head of the Department of Social Development to conduct the study, and the necessary ethical approvals were obtained from the College of Human Science Research Ethics Committee. The provincial government has a committee that reviews requests from researchers conducting studies involving members of the departments in the province.

The researcher determined the sample size based on data saturation, which is the point at which the information or data began to repeat itself. Data collection was terminated when there was repetition of data and no new information was emerging (Liamputtong, 2019).

Sampling involves selecting a small group of people from the entire population targeted for data collection. It is the process of choosing individuals, groups, or community circumstances to be studied. When the population is manageable, sampling may not be necessary (Maxwell, 2013).

Qualitative studies typically use small samples due to data saturation during the data collection process. In this study, the researcher targeted 30 participants for data collection based on data saturation. The sample size was not determined at the beginning of the study, but rather as the data continued to repeat itself with no new information (Schmidt Brown, 2015:243 and 231; Aurini, Heath & Howells, 2016:58).

Sampling is the process of selecting various individuals, institutions, and communities from the larger population. In this study, the sample was selected from the entire population of social workers employed by the Limpopo Department of Social

Development. The choice of this area was influenced by the growing number of bullying incidents in Limpopo schools, including the case of Lufuno Mavhunga, which gained international attention. Purposive sampling was used in this study because the researcher had knowledge of the population and its characteristics, and the research objective required a specific sample. The choice of sampling type was also informed by the researcher's contact with the Limpopo Provincial Department of Social Development and the permission granted to conduct the study. The participants in the study were recruited as respondents.

The inclusion criteria for participants in the study were as follows:

1. They should have an above-average command of English, as the semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted in English. This was chosen because the study area is populated by people with diverse cultures and languages, and the researcher did not have the resources to engage data collectors proficient in multiple languages.
2. They must be school-linked social workers employed by the Limpopo Province Department of Social Development.
3. They must be registered with the South African Council for Social Services Professions.
4. They must have at least three years of experience as a school-linked social worker.

Exclusion criteria

1. Unemployed social workers and retired Social Workers.
2. Social workers who are employed in DSD but not providing services to schools.
3. Social workers who are hospitalized during data collection period. This refers to the social workers who initially consented to take part in the study.
4. Social workers who are working in specialized field such as adoption, foster care and forensic.

The researcher would have avoided compromising the health of the participants. Insisting on including hospitalized participants may cause more harm to them and compromise ethical considerations. The exclusion of this category is not discrimination; continuous inclusion may harm the participants and not significantly contribute to the study. Social workers from other departments and specialized fields are also excluded. The research study must not cause any harm to the participants. According to Gray (2014), purposive sampling is cost-effective and time-saving. Establishing rapport with the participants will positively influence the face-to-face semi-structured interview. The researcher has informed the participants about the study's purpose and expectations. Prior to consenting to participate, the participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the research project at any time if needed.

4.2.5. DATA COLLECTION.

4.2.5.1. Preparing participants for data collection

The collection of data requires researchers to consider the individuals from whom they are gathering information and how to effectively engage with them (Creswell, 2014:147). Data collection began after obtaining approval from the UNISA Ethics Research Committee of the Department of Social Work. This committee, comprised of independent experts, is responsible for protecting the rights and well-being of research participants and ensuring ethical practices are followed to prevent harm. The committee provides guidance to researchers on potential consequences and how to address them in a timely manner.

The researcher did not encounter difficulties in recruiting participants for the study. The process involved contacting the Department of Social Development for permission and reaching out to potential participants at various working stations in the Limpopo province. The researcher explained their identity, the purpose of the study, and the eligibility criteria to prospective participants. It was emphasized that participation was voluntary and would not jeopardize their rights. The contents of the consent form were explained to those who

agreed to participate, and they were asked to sign informed consent forms once they demonstrated understanding and willingness to participate.

4.2.5.2. Method used for data collection

Data collection is a crucial aspect of any research study and must be carefully considered for the study to be comprehensive. It provides guidance on the procedures to follow when collecting, analyzing, and verifying data. A clear procedure is necessary to ensure credibility during data collection. Various procedures and techniques are employed to collect data from participants, with the aim of obtaining reliable data to address the research question (Creswell, 2014:147). Data collection is a structured approach to gathering relevant information for the study's purpose (Burns & Grove, 2013:44).

The researcher prepared a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions for data collection. Compliance with COVID-19 guidelines from UNISA and the government, such as social distancing and provision of masks and sanitizers, was ensured. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and their rights were respected. They were asked to sign consent forms. Pilot testing of the researcher's interview skills and the data collection tool was conducted, as it is a crucial instrument in data collection.

1. For this study, the researcher conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This type of interview involves a planned inquiry with a systematic order of questions, allowing for flexibility to ask additional relevant questions during each interview (Babbie 7 Mouton, 2017:289). Mathews and Ross (2018:221) state that semi-structured interviews follow a set of inquiries for each interview and may introduce new questions as needed. Additionally, data collection is seen as a structured approach to collecting data that aligns with the research study and purpose (Burns & Grove, 2013:44). The researcher chose the semi-structured face-to-face interview method based on considerations outlined by Creswell below:

    ➢ The participants had ample time and scope for the expression of their views in a semi-structured interview and it provided the researcher with

an opportunity for an input, make a follow up and probe on emerging ideas.

➢ The results of the semi-structured interviews were compared amongst all the participants because they were expected to express their diverse views about the same question.

➢ The participants were allowed to freely express their experiences through open-ended questions. It provided minimal opportunity for the researcher to influence previous findings.

➢ The researcher had ensured that anonymity was guaranteed to enable participants to freely express their views and motivate them to address issues which are delicate.

The semi-structured interview guide used in this study was conducted in English. The researcher obtained permission from participants to audio-record the interviews in order to capture the information shared. The audio-recorder was only used when participants had given consent by signing the consent form.

During the one-on-one interviews, the researcher employed communication techniques described by De Vos et al. (2011:330-331). These techniques included paraphrasing, timing, clarification, tracking, use of silence, and probing.

➢ Paraphrasing is applied in confirming what the participants are saying. The researcher has done this through repeating the description of the participants in a simple way but using fewer words. The researcher gave participants time to share their perceptions and did not interrupt before finishing what was intended to be communicated.

➢ The researcher showed respect by repeating what has been said by the participants in a manner which is understandable about the responses of the participants.

➢ Tracking as a skill was applied by the researcher to show the participants that he has interest in their views and encourage free communications

from the participants about the implications of their verbal and non-verbal conversation.

> The participants were allowed to think through the usage of silence and it has encouraged the participants to talk and share perceptions.

> Probing is fundamental in stimulating the participants to give more information to clarify the responses that have been misunderstood.

The researcher has outlined the questions that were asked in the semi-structured interview schedule. The participants were motivated to provide answers that reflect their experiences. The interviewing skills of the researcher have an important influence on the richness of the data provided by the participants (Doody & Nooman, 2013:13). During the interviews, the researcher provided a platform for the participants to express themselves and elaborate on their answers without showing approval, disapproval, judgment, or bias. The researcher continuously kept track of the questions but allowed the conversations to develop naturally without disruptions. Whittaker (2014:39) warns that researchers need to be careful not to show any verbal or nonverbal expression of approval or disapproval of the views expressed by research participants. The researcher applied the following interviewing skills:

Listening skills: According to Yin (2014:26), significant qualitative data comes from good listening. This means that listening in qualitative research requires intensive listening and a systematic effort to understand what the participant is saying (Yin, 2014:27). It is critical to note that listening is not just hearing but goes beyond the sense of hearing. The researcher paid attention to verbal and nonverbal behavior, as well as any form of expression and voice-related behavior. The researcher did not only listen to the words expressed by the participants. A wide range of interview questions was used in this study, including introductory questions, follow-up questions, and probing questions. Follow-up questions were asked to encourage participants to provide more detailed narratives, while probing questions were used to gather further information without directing participants' responses. The semi-structured questions were fundamental in ensuring thorough

exploration of each topic before moving on to the next. All the interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes to an hour.

Maintaining rapport: It was important for the researcher to establish rapport with the participants in the study. This was done to ensure that the participants felt relaxed when providing answers and sharing their experiences and perceptions. The researcher was sensitive and considered the emotions of the participants. Adequate time was given to the participants to fully answer the open-ended questions. The researcher also avoided questions that could provoke the participants (Doody & Nooman, 2013:13). Blaming questions, such as "why" questions, were avoided in this research study. The semi-structured face-to-face interview schedule, with all the questions answered by the participants, is presented below:

INTERVIEW GUIDE: BULLYING MALADY IN A LEARNING CONTEXT: DEVELOPING INTERVENTION GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Section A: Biographical Information for research participants
1.   How old are you?
2.   What is your level of education?
3.   What is your occupation?
4.   How long have you been practising as a social worker?
5.   How long have you been working with bullying incidents at school?

Section B: Topical questions for research participants

1. What is your understanding of the term "bullying"?

2. Please narrate to me about the types of bullying you have dealt with in a learning context.

3. What form of training/s have you undergone to be able to deal with bullying in schools?

4. Tell me about the challenges you experience while executing your duties as a social worker linked to schools?

5. Share with me how you deal with bullying incidents at schools?

6. What resources do you need as a school linked social worker to effectively address this bullying malady in a school context? Share with me how you have been addressing the bullying in learning context?

7. What effects does bullying have on learners?

8. What is the roles and responsibilities of school linked social worker?

9. What kind of support has been offered to you to help you deal with the bullying?

10. Which relevant stakeholders do you think have a critical role to play?

11. What strategies do you think could be used to reduce bullying?

12. Thank you for the valuable information. Is there anything else you would like to add before we end?

4.2.6. PILOT TESTING

Pilot testing implies a limited understanding of the full study in order to test the data collection instrument, such as an interview schedule, before the main study (Gumbo, 2014:327; Hazzi & Maldaon, 2015:53). It is important to pilot test the research questions because it is difficult to anticipate how research participants will understand the questions in the interview guide. The researcher ensures that their chosen techniques are appropriate, valid, reliable, and error-free (Nunes, Martins, Zhou, Alajamy, 7 Almamari, 2014:73-84). The fundamental purpose of pilot testing is to ensure that participants understand the questions. In the design of a research study, there is provision for pilot

testing, which involves a trial with a few participants to observe the research questions (Raviten & Carl, 2016:90).

According to (Hennink-Kaminski, Willoughby, & McMahan, 2014:37; Walker, 2015:871), the purpose of a pilot test in research is to assess various significant aspects of the interview guide, including content validity, effectiveness, relevance, reliability, usability, applicability, and adequacy. The pilot study provides the researcher with an impression and indication of the participants' responses to the research questions and their ability to understand the questions (Al-Mamari, 2014:4).

The researcher is able to detect flaws, weaknesses, and the readiness of the research study questions, objectives, and methodologies. This assists the researcher in making adjustments and modifications to the questions that are necessary for the main study (Al-Mamari, 2014:4). Since the pilot test is not intended to produce results, the data gathered from the three interviews is not included in the data gathered for the main study.

The researcher involved three school-linked social workers who have similar traits to those included in the study to pre-test the interview schedule. The participants in the study were expected and requested to be honest during the interview. Pilot testing helped determine the time to be spent with each participant and identify questions that needed amendments, inclusion, or exclusion. This was done to ensure that the research questions are clear to the participants. After considering the pilot testing, unnecessary information was deleted and relevant information was added to the interview schedule. This was done to ensure that the semi-structured interview tool is accommodating to the participants. The data obtained from the pilot study was part of the main study data.

4.2.7. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

In qualitative research, data analysis refers to the process of organizing and questioning data in a way that allows the researcher to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, make interpretations, critique, develop explanations, and generate theories

(Charlesworth & Foex, 2016:150). Data analysis is a time-consuming and complex process that requires the researcher to go back and forth due to the volume of information that needs to be analyzed (Moule & Goodman, 2014:137). It is an ongoing process that involves dividing data and examining them to make meaningful parts (Savin-Badden and Major, 2013:434). In qualitative research, data analysis is rigorous and involves organizing and developing themes from the data (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015:9).

The researcher used thematic analysis to analyze the data obtained from the research study. The thematic content analysis, as described by Babbie and Mouton, was used for this purpose. The audio-recorded data was transcribed and interpreted by the researcher. Making sense of the text and image of the data is necessary for the process of data analysis. It involves preparing the data for analysis, understanding the data, representing the data, and interpreting the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009:186). The researcher maintained a working relationship with the independent coder throughout the data analysis process. The independent coder coded the information independently and then had agreement and discussion with the research supervisor. A confidentiality agreement was signed with the independent coder to ensure that the data would be protected. The discussion focused on the themes, categories, and co-themes presented as the research findings. Creswell (2014:198) proposes eight steps for data analysis, which the researcher adopted for this study. The researcher made notes of ideas that came to mind after carefully reading through the transcriptions. The researcher read all the collected data and made sense of it through careful reading.

There are various qualitative data analysis techniques (Holland & Rees, 2015:93; Sassler & Miller, 2014:436). Some researchers apply generic data analysis strategies, while others use less structured and more creative approaches (Moule & Goodman, 2014:137). In this study, the researcher followed the eight steps of qualitative data analysis proposed by Tesch (cited by Creswell, 2009:186).

1. The researcher has transcribed the 21 audio-recorded interviews in a verbatim format and the process of transcribing took a period of over two months to complete. There was avoidance by the researcher to use other services providers to transcribe the data basically because he wanted to fully engage himself in the process and this helped in establishment of themes. The researcher has done reading on each transcript to get the general impression of the interview. He read through the entire transcripts carefully, making notes of ideas. Schmidt & Brown (2015:231); Barnsley (2016:113) has provided emphasis that researchers should guard against mistakes during transcription because mistakes involuntarily alter the meaning of a phrase.

2. The researcher has provided interrogation of transcribed interview and was done randomly and asked the underlying meaning that it is conveying? This process means the exploration of the data for main ideas and themes by ascertaining the main idea behind the participants' narratives (Saldana, 2015:34).

3. The researcher has clustered topics that are similar together after considering several interviewsr. The topics were then divided into columns that were considered as major topics. The themes must not be imposed before the transcription of data (Lesch & Furphy, 2013:7; Sniezek, 2013:24).

4. There has been establishment of the descriptive wording for topics and application of such for themes, subthemes and categories.

5. The researcher made a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetised these codes.

6. The researcher assembled the data material belonging to each theme or category in one place and performed a preliminary analysis.

7. The researcher was satisfied with the themes, subthemes, categories and subcategories and thereafter proceeded with compiling the report.

8. The researcher, where necessary, recoded the data.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose to analyze one specific interview, specifically the shortest interview, which contained interesting ideas. All thoughts from the interview were noted in the interview transcript.

The researcher used codes to abbreviate topics and wrote down these codes next to the relevant segments of the text. They observed the arrangement and organization of the data to identify any new categories or codes that emerged. The researcher organized the categories and codes alphabetically and made decisions on abbreviations and categories. Data was then categoried according to their similarities analyzed it. The researcher used a book for verification to make sense of the recorded data.

4.2.8. METHOD OF DATA VERIFICATION

Traditionally, trustworthiness is judged in qualitative studies based on the validity of the study, drawing from the natural and experimental sciences (Marshall & Rossman, 2014:39). Critics of qualitative research often question the validity of the findings, suggesting that qualitative researchers may be subjective in data collection and analysis. There is a concern that the findings may simply reflect the researcher's own subjective opinions. As a result, quantitative articles with statistical findings are often given more importance (Charlesworth & Foex, 2016:146).

Due to the different nature and purposes of quantitative and qualitative traditions, some authors argue that there should be a different language that is consistent with qualitative research (Chen, 2016:73). The model used in this study is based on four aspects of trustworthiness: data verification, credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. These aspects will be discussed in detail as follows:

4.2.8.1. Data verification/trustworthiness

Research suggests that commitments to verification require confidence in the information used for analysis and interpretation (Polit & Beck, 2017:570). Researchers make data verification possible by instituting a self-correction procedure throughout the entire study (Polit 7 Beck, 2017:570). Alternative models need to be outlined and appropriate for qualitative research designs to ensure rigor without compromising the importance of qualitative research (Krefting, 1991:215). Rigor refers to the standard and quality of qualitative research and is used to assess its validity (Liamputtong, 2019:20). Trustworthiness and rigor imply the extent to which data, methods, and interpretations are believed to ensure the quality of the research study (Polit & Beck in Connelly, 2016:435). This study used the four methods proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) to ensure trustworthiness in data collection: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

4.2.8.1.1. Credibility/truth-value

Credibility and truth-value refer to the belief in the truth-value of the information and the interpretation of data (Polit & Beck, 2017:323). It is a term used to describe activities that make data more credible and show that the results were derived from the data (Wagner, Kawalich & Garner, 2014:243). Credibility is the level of agreement between the views of participants and the description and interpretations of the researcher (Padgette, 2016). It refers to the extent to which the participants' perceptions of the settings or event match the views of the researcher in the research report (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtie, 2015:169). Peer examiners are involved in verifying credibility, ensuring that the data presented align with the respondents' views rather than the researcher's (Creswell, 2014:202). In this study, the researcher contacted an experienced researcher in social work research supervision, with the support of their own research supervisor, to evaluate the analyzed data and findings.

4.2.8.1.2. Transferability

Transferability was applied in this study. It does not refer to the sample size in quantitative terms, but rather to the generalizability of the study findings (Padgette, 2016:181). Qualitative findings can be transferred and applied to other groups to ensure applicability. Transferability refers to the level of commonalities between the research site and other sites, as determined by the reader (Lodico et al, 2015:173). To effectively accomplish transferability, the researcher used a detailed and described research methodology during data collection (Polit & Beck, 2017:164).

4.2.8.1.3. Dependability

The researcher has ensured dependability in this proposed research study. Dependability refers to the methodology and procedures that are documented and can be traced. It does not arrive at similar conclusions (Padgette, 2016:181). Additionally, dependability means stable data over time and across study conditions (Polit & Beck, 2014:323). Moreover, dependability refers to the ability to track the procedures, protocols, and processes used to collect and interpret data (Lodico et al, 2015:172). It is fundamental for the researcher to use an independent coder for this study. This was done to assess the consistency of the recorded data and results. The independent coder was used to verify the recorded information and ensure that all relevant information was included.

4.2.8.1.4. Confirmability

The researcher has ensured that confirmability is observed in this study. This means that the findings were not derived from the researcher's views, but rather rooted in the information and data collected to assess the level of prejudice. This demonstrates that the information was obtained directly from the events and not imagined or designed (Padgette, 2016:181). Furthermore, confirmability involves objectivity and employs an independent approach for accuracy. It seeks independent individuals to ensure data accuracy, relevance, and meaning (Polit & Beck, 2014:323). To ensure confirmability in this study, the researcher followed the steps suggested by Gibbs in Creswell (2014):

1. Reviewed the transcription of data to ensure no mistakes were present after the transcription process.

2. Ensured the definition of codes remained consistent and there was no drift in the process. Compared data with codes and wrote about the codes and definitions.

3. Further coded the information.

The researcher also used an audio-recorder for confirmability. This allowed for review of the recording when necessary and provided the research supervisor with an opportunity to verify the information.

4.3. SUMMARY.

This chapter discussed the methodology applied in this study, which used a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The research methodology and techniques were explained in detail, and a systematic process was followed to ensure validity, reliability, and trustworthiness. The chapter covered methods of data collection, analysis, verification, population and sampling, and pilot study. The researcher found the qualitative research approach relevant due to its focus on natural settings and the feelings of the participants. It provided a scientifically approved methodology that considered ethics in research.

CHAPTER 5
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents the findings on the phenomenon studied, specifically the issue of bullying in a learning context. This chapter is crucial as it presents the data that was collected and analysed from a qualitative perspective. The findings are presented through themes and sub-themes that were generated during the data analysis process. The researcher followed the Tesch's eight steps of qualitative data analysis as explained by Creswell (2014:196). The chapter begins with a description of the profile of the research participants', including the presentation of the samples in a tabular form.

The researcher used verbatim quotations from statements made by participants to confirm their statements about the phenomenon being investigated. The researcher also conducted a literature review to verify the study findings (Creswell, 2014:196). This was done to enhance understanding of the issue of bullying in a learning context and to develop the intervention guidelines for social work practice in chapter 6. Additionally, it ensures that all the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 are addressed.

5.2. PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

A total of 21 research participants were interviewed through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The participants were social workers employed by the Department of social development and linked to schools. They were from all five districts of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The purpose of including participants from all districts was to ensure representation from the entire province. The researcher was familiar with all the spoken languages in Limpopo province, so the participants were allowed to respond in their language of choice: Sepedi, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. However, despite the participants being from different ethnic groups, almost all of them chose to respond in English. The researcher had opted to include participants from other races, such as whites, Indians and coloureds, but they were not willing to participate even though they met the criteria of inclusion.

Other characteristics considered in selecting of the participants included their years of experience as social workers, and their connection to a school in their area of operation. The participants' ages ranged from 28 to 40 years old. The Bapedi ethnic group had a

larger representation compared to Vhavenda and VaTsonga. Two of the participants had master's degrees, one in development planning and management and the other in Public health.

Participants' decision to use English in the study was effective in avoiding the need for interpretation and translation, as well as the financial implications of accommodating multiple languages. The participants had exposure to other programs within the Department of Social Development, as they were not specialized or focused on a particular program. The information above is presented in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1 Biographical information

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Highest Qualification	Social work experience in years	experience of working with schools

Participant A	M	34	BSW	11	11
Participant B	F	32	BSW	10	10
Participant C	M	36	BSW	10	10
Participant D	M	30	BSW	12	7
Participant E	F	30	BSW	10	10
Participant F	F	31	BSW	5	5
Participant G	M	37	BSW	4	4
Participant H	F	36	BSW	8	7
Participant I	F	40	BSW	18	18
Participant J	F	32	BSW, MDPD	12	12
Participant K	F	35	BSW, MPH	13	5
Participant L	M	33	BSW	9	9
Participant M	F	36	BSW	13	13
Participant N	F	34	BSW	11	8
Participant O	M	31	BSW	9	9

Participant P	F	29	BSW	5	5
Participant Q	M	34	BSW	11	6
Participant R	F	34	BSW	8	8
Participant S	F	37	BSW	12	12
Participant T	M	29	BSW	5	4
Participant U	Male	28	BSW	5	4

5.3   THEMES, SUB-THEMES AND CATEGORIES

After collecting the data, the researcher transcribed it verbatim. The researcher also enlisted the help of an independent coder to compare the themes generated by the coder with those generated by the researcher. The researcher used an interview guide to develop themes, sub-themes and categories. There was agreement between the researcher and the independent coder. All the themes, sub-themes and categories were then discussed with the supervisor and the final ones were recorded in table 2 below. The data yielded a total of five themes, fourteen sub-themes and seventy-eight categories.

TABLE 2: Themes & Sub-Themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
THEME 1: PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING OF BULLYING.	SUBTHEME 1: DESCRIPTION OF BULLYING SUBTHEME 2: TYPES OF BULLYING
THEME 2: THE IMPACT OF BULLYING ON LEARNERS IN A LEARNING INSTITUTION	SUBTHEME 1: SOCIALLY SUBTHEME 2: EMOTIONALLY SUBTHEME 3: PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY

THEME 3: BULLYING ADDRESSED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN A LEARNING INSTITUTION	SUBTHEME 1: THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER
	SUBTHEME 2: WAYS IN WHICH SOCIAL WORKERS ADDRESS BULLYING
	SUBTHEME 3: CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN ADDRESSING BULLYING
	SUBTHEME 4: TRAINING RECEIVED BY SOCIAL WORKERS TO ADDRESS BULLYING
	SUBTHEME 5: SUPPORT RECEIVED BY SOCIAL WORKERS TO ADDRESS BULLYING
THEME 4: STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN ADDRESSING BULLYING IN A LEARNING INSTITUTION	SUB-THEME 1: PROFESSIONAL PERSONS
	SUB-THEME 2: PARENTS AND SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES
	SUB-THEME 3: LAW ENFORCEMENT
	SUB-THEME 4: DEPARTMENTS
THEME 5: SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING BULLYING IN A LEARNING INSTITUTION MORE EFFECTIVELY	

5.3.1 THEME 1: PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING OF BULLYING

The researcher aimed to investigate the participants' comprehension and perception of the concept of "bullying". Two sub-themes were identified within theme 1 and are discussed in sections 5.3.1.1 and 5.3.1.2. The researcher strongly believes that comprehending the participants' understanding of the phenomenon being studied is crucial.

5.3.1.1 SUBTHEME 1.1: Description of bullying

The study findings reveal that bullying is not a new phenomenon for social workers in schools. The participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the concept, incorporating important elements such as intentional harm (physical, emotional), instilling fear, defamation of character through derogatory words, threatening, and abuse of power.

Olweus (2013:76)'s definition of bullying which involves "the use of force, threats, and intimidation to intentionally cause harm", further supports the participants understanding. Some participants even included "forcefully taking someone's belongings and demanding food as forms of bullying". The research findings also indicate that bullying can take on emotional, physical and psychological forms, and is an ongoing issue.

''I think bullying is when a learner, is when a learner has power over the other err like err how can I put it? The other learner's intention is to intentionally causing harm to the other and then that is done to the learner knows that they have power over the other one and then they co they use that cause distress on them. (Participant A)''

Participant B added threats, intimidation, forcefully taking belongings, and tarnishing someone's image to their definition.

"Errr bullying I understand it as a way of threatening. It may be beating physically or spoken language that is intimidating to somebody else and it also include taking something from somebody forcefully of course and also it may include errr what do I say ….. tarnishing somebody's image. Influencing somebody to believe in something about somebody. That's how I understand bullying. (Participant B)"

Participant E focused on bullying within the school or learning context, describing it as the unfair treatment of others through physical and emotional aggression.

''(movement of chair) uhhm I believe bullying is unfairly treatment of (…) other,ehh mostly we talk about ehh children within a learning context that they unfairly treated umm ehh aggressively or physically emotionally, that's how I understand bullying. (Participant E)''

Participant H shared similar sentiments, explaining that bullying in a school setting involved one learner using force to harm another emotionally or physically, such as

through insulting words or physical violence. Cyberbullying, which involves using digital technology to bully others was also mentioned.

> '' *My understanding of the term bullying is that bullying is when uh someone, in the context of school setting is when another learner uh forcefully uh uses force to harm another person be it emotionally or physically, emotionally in a sense that uh when uh another learners uses insultive words to hurt another one. So it is amongst the term bullying and then in terms of the physical uh uh aspect it can be when another learner forces the other to, I mean in terms of I've explained emotional neh [hm] then it terms of physical is when it can involves uh another learner clapping the other, there is also cyberbullying which involves the use of digital technology to uh bully the others in this instance is where uh for example when they send you the threatening messages or when they threatens to publicly uh publish your information without your consent. (Participant H)''*

Overall, the participants' understanding of bullying aligns with Olweus (2013:76)'s definition of aggressive behaviour with the intention to cause harm. It is also consistent with the definition provided by Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt & Hymel, (2015:175) which describes bullying as an on-going misuse of power through physical, emotional, cyber and verbal violence. Bullying is often influenced by the abuse of power and the willingness to threaten and dominate peers. It can take various forms, including physical, emotional, Verbal and cyberbullying (Cooper & Nickerson, 2013:213).

Based on the literature and the study findings, the researcher concludes that the definition of bullying should encompass behaviour and conduct that deviate from acceptable societal norms and makes others uncomfortable. This includes the use of violence, and aggression, through words, technology and media.

The researcher proposes a definition of bullying as a deliberate and continuous misuse of power by an individual towards another, involving physical, emotional, cyber and verbal actions with the intention to hurt the victim.

5.3.1.2 SUBTHEME 1.2: Types of bullying

The study findings show that bullying has various types that are used to harm victims. The social workers in the study demonstrated a clear understanding of these types. They mentioned important elements such as physical, emotional, verbal, and cyberbullying. These concepts include actions like beating, pushing, swearing, and the use of pictures, text and videos. The study also revealed that sexual and psychological bullying are other types that need to be considered. It is clear that there are various concepts involved in different types of bullying.

According to Mian (2013:121-131), the types of bullying include physical, emotional, verbal and cyberbullying. The study found bullying includes verbal, cyber and emotional. It also includes physical, non-verbal and psychological. The use of technology is a crucial type of bullying. Sexual bullying was also identified in this study. The participants indicated the following about the types of bullying:

> *'' Err there's verbal bullying, physical bullying and cyberbullying. Verbal bullying includes insulting the victim, hurting the victim by words maybe mocking them about their body, their look or their whole circumstances. Theres physical bullying which includes beating the victim, hitting, kicking, pinching or pulling them by hair and cyber-bullying hm since most kids have got cellphones this days, harassing or posting bad things about the victim on social media. (Participant H)''*

Participant J supported the aforementioned assertion and provided the following statement regarding the different types of bullying:

'' Err we have dealt with physical bullying which included the hitting or attacking or pushing or beating of someone else or taking their possessions forcefully so. Err we dealt with cyber bullying err which include the using of mobile phones or distribution of someones pictures and with a, a negative caption on the lines of internet or social media err verbal bullying. The insulting, the threatening the name calling of someone else with the intention of harming them or degrading them or humiliating them and social bullying as well which is more of gossiping or spreading rumours about someone else jah. (Participant J)''

Similarly, participant O provided an understanding that supports the views expressed in the above excerpts about the types of bullying. He made the following statement:

'' I have dealt with various types of bullying in my working days with bullying in schools. I have been able to provide the services to victims and perpetrators of physical bullying, verbal or emotional bullying and the cyberbullying. There has been a mixture of the types of bullying that has been taking place within the area of my work especially at school. (Participant O)''

Correspondingly, Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt & Hymel (2015:175) agree that bullying takes various form or has various types which involve physical, emotional, cyber and verbal bullying. About 10% of learners in South African schools have reported experiencing cyberbullying in their lives. It encompasses the use of sophisticated electronic devices and digital technologies like cell phones, laptops and tablets (Harrington-Johnson, 2021). Tanrikulu, (2014:91) alludes that the most common types of bullying are physical, verbal, emotional and cyberbullying. These assertions concur with the findings of the study on the understanding of the types of bullying participants know or have dealt with.

It is evident that there are fundamental similarities between the understanding of the participants and the provisions of literature regarding the types of bullying. Interestingly, the study has unearthed a new dimension that includes sexual and psychological bullying. It is important to consider and include sexual and psychological types of bullying in the different types of bullying.

The perception and understanding of bullying are articulated better through categories. The findings of the study have revealed that bullying can be categorised into three forms outlined below:

CATEGORIES:

- **PHYSICAL**

The findings of the study emphasized that physical bullying incorporates beating, pushing, and pinching of the victim. This is done with the intention of instilling fear in the victim and showcasing the physical strength possessed by the bully. The participants throughout the study have consistently mentioned the various characteristics included in the concept of physical bullying, such as hitting, pulling hair and pinching. These actions are used to demonstrate the power imbalance and strength difference between the victim and the bully. Additionally, the study has highlighted the consequences that accompany physical bullying.

According to Tanrikulu (2014:91) physical bullying is more prevalent among learners in schools, and includes actions such as pushing, tripping, shoving, beating and injuring other students. The evidence from the study indicates that physical bullying occurs when the bully kicks, pulls and beats their victim. It also involves hitting, pinching and pulling victims' hair in order to instil fear. Furthermore, the study found that the bully inflicts harm and uses violence against the victim, referring to it as physical assault and violation of the victim.

'' physical bullying which included the hitting or attacking or pushing or beating of someone else or taking their possessions forcefully so. (Participant H)''

Participant L agrees with participant H's understanding of the description of physical bullying and states the following:

''I think physical bullying is when someone inflict injuries to one another. I mean the learners physically violate, injure, push and beat their victims to instil fears. It has the inclusion of physically attacking and harassing victims to show their powers. (Participant L)''.

The use of physical violence and bullying was further supported by participant P's assertion in the study. The participant alluded to the following about physical bullying:

''uhh physical bullying involve violence, beating up children, fighting, beating other children. Physical bullying is the main one around the community where in the children at school and the other child is bright or the other child is coming from well off family ehh they are being cornered after school and then why didn't you give me your food, why didn't you give me your money today, your lunch box and all these things. They are getting beaten most of the time and they are threatened with physical violence. (Participant P)''

Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt & Hymel (2015:175) agree in their study that physical bullying is aggressive behavior intended to cause physical harm. It involves acts of violence and aggression such as hitting, pushing and stabbing the victims with objects. Additionally, Olweus (2013) concurs that physical violence is common among school learners and include the use of violence, threats and intimidation to instil fear in victims. It is a deliberate misuse of power through repeated physical violence. Furthermore, literature supports the findings of the study and explains that physical bullying includes

actions such as punching, slapping, choking, and destroying others' property (United States Department of Education, 2013). When engaging in physical aggression or bullying, there is a power imbalance between the bully, who commits the acts of aggression and the bullied who is the victim of the bullying. This power imbalance can be seen in physical stamina, weight, difference in weight differences, intelligence, involvement in gang activities, social status, societal and peer expectations, all of which limit the ability of individuals to defend themselves (Mian, 2013:81).

The literature supports the findings of the study as discussed above. The researcher agrees with the definition and elements of physical bullying as identified in the study and the reviewed literature.

• **VERBAL**

The study findings have highlighted that verbal bullying is one of the most common form of bullying experienced among school learners. Verbal bullying is a concept that is well understood by social workers who work with bullying in a learning context. It is a relevant and growing concept. It has been revealed that this form of bullying is prevalent and has numerous consequences. The significant effects of verbal bullying include insults, the destruction of confidence and self-esteem, and the creation of an environment where victims feels useless. The study found that verbal bullying is one of the main types of bullying with a critical impact on victims in a learning context.

Tanrikulu (2014) asserts that verbal and emotional bullying cause injury and harm to the confidence of victims, leading them to doubt themselves and feel useless. Importantly, the study found agreement with his research and indicates that verbal bullying involves the use of violent words, insults, and spreading rumors that tarnish the image of the victim. Moreover, the study understands that verbal bullying focuses on suppressing victims based on their appearance and background. It uses insulting words to inflict pain and mocks victims about their bodies. Additionally, the most common forms of verbal bullying were found to be gossiping, humiliation, body shaming, and teasing with the intention of

destroying the confidence and self-esteem of the victim. Below are excerpts from the participants:

'' Ok in the learning contexts the uh the obvious one would be the verbal warning, the the verbal bullying sorry. I meant that bullying which would be eeh an example would be calling people by names that are not there uuh to try and make them feel less of themselves or something as I've mentioned to the definition. They body shame people, tease them and humiliate their victims. (Participant F)''

Participant I, in his response to verbal bullying, supports the views of participant F, as alluded to in the excerpt above.

'' Verbal bullying whereby one may be making jokes of another learner making jokes or harassing other learners. Verbal bullying is where one bully another verbally by uttering words that make one feel sad or emotionally sad. The above are the core elements of bullying. aah bullying is a form of violence which is done most by children at school where in the child will maltreat the other. Ummmm taking their things without their consent, shaming them, name calling them in many different ways. calling other people and naming other people with funny pictures and naming giving them names which is in appropriate. (Participant N)''

There is a common understanding of what verbal bullying consists of among the participants in the study. Participant P said the following about verbal bullying:

''Am the recent type of bullying that I experienced at a certain school ah it was two girls whom they are in their teens whereby… there is a boy who went and proposed the two of them so the other went to the other girl to say no you cannot have my boyfriend because he came to me first, after that they started quarreling and then the the first girl went to the second girl

saying that we know in your family, like you, your parents are prostitutes so probably le wena you are a prostitute and if you are dating my boyfriend probably which means you might be sick and then you might be infected and then he comes and infect me with Hiv, yes and then it happened to be known by everybody at school so the girl decided not to come to school because of such incidents. (Participant P)"

Correspondingly, literature supports the assertion made by the participants in the findings of this study. Studies reveal that verbal bullying contributes to 70% of bullying cases in the United States of America (United States Department of Education, 2013). Verbal and emotional bullying includes insults, gossiping, name-calling, racial slurs, and sexual remarks (United States Department of Education, 2013). Furthermore, literature reveals that verbal bullying is characterized by aggression, teasing, and insults. It includes name-calling, insulting, repeated teasing, racist remarks, gossip, and other words that may exclude students from activities (Mian, 2013:134). There are also indirect forms of bullying, which involve spreading rumors, issuing threats, and saying or writing hurtful things. Indirect bullying aims to socially and culturally exclude or harm another child's reputation, discouraging others from associating with the victim (Coyne & Monks, 2013:133). In all forms of bullying, emotional abuse is prevalent, as most victims of bullying are terrorized by these acts.

The researcher adopts the views expressed by the participants as the findings of the study, representing elements of verbal bullying. There is a common understanding between the findings of the study and the literature regarding the category of verbal bullying and its components.

- **CYBER**

The study has found that the use of technology to victimize others is increasing in the learning context. Social media has also been revealed to be a significant contributory factor to bullying. Cyberbullying is one of the types of bullying that participants have identified as increasing pressure on the victims. This is because it is easily accessible to

many children who have access to technology and social media platforms. Inappropriate pictures, videos, and other materials have been found to be consequences of cyberbullying. The use of various technological devices has been the key driver of cyberbullying in the learning context.

According to Whitted & Dupper (2016:87), cyberbullying is on the rise in schools and communities. They suggest that the use of technology, such as phones, text messages, and emails, to harm victims is a key element of cyberbullying. Similarly, the study found that cyberbullying involves the publication of inappropriate pictures and pornographic photographs through technology, text messages, and Facebook. Additionally, the study found that it involves threats to publish pictures, and victims often succumb to pressure because they do not want their pictures to go viral. Cyberbullying uses digital technology to send threatening messages and uses phones to spread negative information about the victim on social media. Furthermore, it is characterized by the use of social media platforms to post inappropriate and humorous materials.

> '' *Err cyberbullying err which include the using of mobile phones or distribution of someones pictures and with a, a negative caption on the lines of internet or social media. negative caption, you know when somebody posts err another learners picture and akere (when) on top they will say something about maybe how they look or how they do things. Err describing them in a humiliating way, or in a funny way or in a, in a harmful way to make them maybe popular in the negative way. (Participant G)''*

> *"The use of technology and various other tools to degrade victims was found to be fundamental aspects of cyberbullying. bullying I think is uhh when a learner abusing another learner maybe through the use of technology, phones, laptops and the social media platforms. When you talk about cyberbullying you need to realize that you are talking about the use of any platform that include the use of emails, technology, pictures, videos and materials. Cyberbullying involves the use power, the use of violence errr*

bullying someone on the internet that is called cyberbullying errr it also involves intentionally hurting someone to have power over them. (Participant M)''

Similarly, participant O support the views of participants M and G and indicate the use of technology in cyberbullying:

'' cyber-bullying hm since most kids have got cellphones this days, they use these devices for harassing or posting bad things about the victim on social media. cyberbullying involves the use of digital technology to uh bully the others in this instance is where uh for example when they send you the threatening messages or when they threaten to publicly uh publish your information without your consent. Ive had a few cases wherein the children have been threatened for publica public for their photos being published on social media. Err you have somebody dating and after sometimes when there are in disagreement or breaking you have somebody who is threatening to post those pictures on facebook and usually to have these children succumbing to abuse and all sorts of errr agreeing to all sort of things because they do not want their pictures to go viral. So they end up having to deal with events that are happening on their own and not seeking help because they fear if they ask for assistance the other person will know that they are requesting for such assistance. Then they will let go of the information and the pictures usually involves nude pictures. (Participant O)''

Shariff (2015) defines cyberbullying as a form of bullying that has emerged with the internet. It involves the harassment, humiliation, and intimidation of individuals through the use of internet and cell phones. This includes purposely humiliating people by sending emails, texts, and pictures to the public with the intention of causing harm to the victim. Cornell & Bandyopadhyay (2018:143) support this definition by stating that cyberbullying occurs through the abuse of technology, such as texts, social media, and emails. Cyberbullying is on the rise and is having negative impacts on the lives of learners

(Harrington-Johnson, 2021). It involves the use of sophisticated electronic devices and digital technologies, such as cell phones, laptops, and tablets, to embarrass, harass, and harm the victims. Offenses committed against victims through the use of technology include name calling, spreading online rumors, publishing inappropriate pictures, and making offensive remarks (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014:31).

Shariff (2015) indicate that Cyberbullying is one of the forms of bullying that has been mentioned in various literature and it has been indicated that it has emerged with the internet. It is the harassment of learners, humiliation and intimidation of learners through the usage of internet and cell phone. It includes the humiliation of people on purpose by sending the emails, text, pictures to the public with the intention of causing harm to the victim. Similarly, Cornell & Bandyopadhyay (2018:143) support the study by alluding that Cyberbullying is committed through abuse of technology. It happens through texts, social media and emails. Cyberbullying has been identified to be on the rise and contributing negatively to the lives of the learners (Harrinton-Johnson, 2021). Moreover, it encompasses the use of sophisticated electronic devices and the digital technologies like the cell phones, laptops and tablets. These are used to embarrass the targets or the victims of bullying, to harass them and cause undue pressure and harm to the victims. Name calling, spread of online rumours, publications of inappropriate pictures, insertion of remarks which are offensive are some of the offense made to the victims through the use of technologies (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder & Lattanner, 2014:31).

The researcher has noted an important similarity between the participants' understanding of cyberbullying, as outlined in the findings. The literature also supports the findings of the study, as described in the previous paragraphs. The researcher adopts the participants' definition and understanding of cyberbullying, as well as what the literature says about the phenomenon.

Interestingly, sexual bullying and psychological bullying are mentioned in the study. The participants consistently mentioned these two forms of bullying, highlighting their

importance. It would be inclusive to mention both types of bullying identified in the study's findings.

5.3.2 THEME 2.2: THE IMPACT OF BULLYING ON LEARNERS IN A LEARNING INSTITUTION

The research study aimed to investigate and comprehend the effects of bullying on students in different educational institutions. Within this study, three subthemes were identified under theme 2. These subthemes are discussed in sections 5.3.2.1, 5.3.2.2, and 5.3.2.3. The researcher acknowledges the significance of bullying's impact on students' overall development.

5.3.2.1 SUBTHEME 2.1: Social effects

The findings of the study revealed that bullying has a significant impact on the lives of students in educational institutions. The study found that victims of bullying often become isolated and may resort to criminal behavior in an attempt to protect themselves. Participants were able to describe the social effects of bullying that they observed during the time they were working with victims of bullying. Several key elements and concepts were identified in relation to these social effects, including bullying itself, absenteeism, and school dropout. These elements were recognized as part of the overall social impact that bullying has on students. Both victims and bullies experience high rates of absenteeism and are more likely to drop out of school, illustrating some of the consequences of social bullying.

According to Madonna & Murphy (2015), students who are bullied often feel isolated and excluded, which prevents them from forming friendships and engaging in normal interactions within the school environment. The study also found that the social effects of bullying can result in low self-confidence, a lack of self-esteem, and potential mental health issues. The following excerpts from participant B further explain these findings:

"*They they they may not have trust in themselves to say I can I can do this I can seek for assistance I can I can get assistance how, with regards to this problem that they may be passing through and it also affects their their lifestyle, this child is an active child the you may actually find that they are isolating themselves they end up not doing the things they usually do because they are being stressed. They are going through something and they wouldn't want other people to know about it at the time because they are being threatened about it.*''

Participant E has expressed his views regarding the social effects of bullying, and this is what he said:

''*Uh the social effects of bulliyng, remember for a person who is used to being a bully in a society will not relate well with other, it might affect your relationship with uh other people in the community, be it in the family or in the community or elsewhere. For example, I have mentioned on the characteristics to say that the person whose bullying others are actually characterized by their inability to control their anger, their relationship with others.*''

Participant J has highlighted the social effects of bullying in a learning institution:

'' *Ohh on social effects that may result in if is a girl it may result in teenage pregnancy and then poverty, end up using drugs you know when you are at home. When you are a drop out there is nothing you can do at home so they end up thinking of doing some bad things or having criminal behaviors umm.*''

Sinokowski & Kopasz (2015:73) suggest that isolation is one of the consequences of the social effects of bullying. The literature partially agrees with the participants' understanding of the social effects of bullying. Bullying has negative social effects on both

the victims of bullying and the bullies themselves (Madonna & Murphy, 2015). Nansel (2014) points out that victims of bullying are unable to discuss the challenges they are facing and become isolated from community activities, friends, and the norms and customs within their communities.

The researcher has discovered an interesting understanding of the social effects of bullying in educational institutions. The researcher also adds that the effects of bullying include poverty, teenage pregnancy, excessive substance use, and poor relationships with the community and its activities.

The social effects of bullying can be better explained through the established categories within this theme. The research findings suggest that the social effects can be succinctly articulated through the six identified categories, which are discussed below.

CATEGORIES:

• **Isolation**

The research study found that isolation is one of the primary social effects of bullying in learning institutions. It also revealed that the isolation of bullying victims leads to various emotional and psychological effects. These effects include poor confidence, decreased academic performance, and even attempted suicides. Additionally, victims of bullying often engage in anti-social behavior and become involved in gang-related activities as a result of their isolation. They may also resort to violence to defend themselves when they feel isolated from their communities and the school environment.

According to Shariff (2015), learners who are bullied experience isolation and exclusion, which prevents them from making friends and engaging in normal interactions within the school environment. These children tend to withdraw from the general student population and isolate themselves. During school breaks, they often find themselves sitting alone in corners as a result of the bullying they have experienced. The study discovered that victims of bullying lose friends and become more inclined to act alone, both inside and

outside the classroom. As a result, their focus on learning diminishes and they become unwilling to engage in conversations with others.

> '' *Hm some they are agree the the they decline, they lose friends, they want to isolate themselves and then they start to act alone, and most of them. They disassociate themselves from the community and school community and this affect their school performance (Participant Q)*''

Participant R agrees with the assertion made by literature and the other participants. Below is what they had to say about the social effects of bullying, particularly on isolation:

> '' *Those who are victims of bullying may end up being shy even withdraw socially because they are scared. They are they also show same treatment they have received from those who bullied them when they interact with others*''

Similarly, Participant T corroborates the understanding of both Participants Q and R about the isolation as a social effect of bullying:

> ''*If they're being bullied somebody would have then no self-esteem because don't feel helpless and some of them isolate themselves uh because they feel like they there's no help that I can I can get and in isolating themselves. (Participant T)*''

Nansel (2014) indicates that isolation of victims is one of the fundamental social effects of bullying. Learners have fears that they might have a similar experience or problems if they open up to people in their lives because of a lack of self-confidence. Their isolation and social exclusion have lifelong effects on their mental health and negatively impact their lives. Madonna & Murphy (2015) suggest that learners develop an inability to associate with other learners within the school community. They withdraw from participating in any event or activity to avoid being with other people. The victims socially

isolate themselves from social groupings and society as a whole, fearing bullying (Shariff, 2015).

The elements incorporated into the isolation as effects of bullying include social withdrawal from society due to anxiety. Victims of bullying struggle with social functioning and resort to activities that made them victims.

- **School drop out**

The findings of the study reveal that learners who have been victims of bullying fear going back to school. Learners drop out of school after being exposed to bullying incidents, and some lose their appetite for going to school. Furthermore, the study found that learners who drop out of school experience mental health problems such as stress, depression, and some even end up committing suicide. There is a high number of school dropouts due to exposure to bullying and a low level of self-esteem and self-confidence. The learners lose interest in attending school because they believe they will be subjected to the same events of bullying, harassment, and embarrassment by their fellow learners who have power over them. There are elements of school dropout that are part of the social effects of bullying, including abuse, feelings of suicide, and loss of confidence.

A study conducted by Arafat in (2017) revealed that learners who have been exposed to bullying tend to experience difficulties with academic performance, and some end up dropping out of school. The devastation caused by exposure to bullying is immense and leads learners to withdraw from attending school. This, in turn, leads to learners engaging in anti-social behavior and even criminal activities, resulting in their arrests. Some of the victims themselves become bullies and criminals and drop out of school as a result of bullying.

> *'' I'd rather bank school why should I go to a place where I would be mocked every day I'd be laughed at so these are the effects of bulying there's a very negative effect on on on on the children. (Participant R)''*

Participant S concurs that learners who are exposed to bullying may decide to drop out of school. He further indicates that this decision can have various negative effects, including social, emotional, and psychological consequences.

> '' Err obviously is having a negative effect of which bullying might lead to learners to become drop outs some attempts to commit suicide some engage on substances, various substances because of bullying because once this learners lost their confidence because of bullying obviously they are going to do whatever that will make them not to think much about what happened, so all in all it's a negative effect. (Participant S)''

Participant P indicates that learners lose their interest and freedom due to bullying, causing them to quit school as they see no reason to continue attending.

> '' The school dropout, some may loose freedom to extent of not going to school umm lack of progress in terms of passing from one grade to another. (Participant P)''

Shariff (2015) concurs with the findings of the study and reveals that in high school, victims become scared and fearful, leading them to feel unsafe and ultimately skip school. Field (2017:66) points out that bullied learners also report feelings of unhappiness and a desire to drop out of school. This indicates that bullying has devastating effects on learners in schools. Children become vulnerable to mental health problems, experiencing stress, depression, and engaging in dangerous and harmful activities, even leading to violence. It also causes children to withdraw from school (Sinokowski and Kopasz, 2015:73). Learners in educational institutions make poor decisions about their future and quit school when bullying continues without consequences for the bullies (Maphumulo, 2014:136).

Dropping out of school is one of the social effects of bullying. This is a result of the embarrassment, attacks, and violence experienced by bullying victims. Dropping out of

school occurs due to consistent anti-social behavior directed at helpless learners, causing them to lose confidence and have their academic performance affected. The category of dropouts leads to significant negative effects on bullying victims.

• Becoming bullies

The study findings have revealed that learners who have been exposed to bullying become bullies themselves as adults or while still in school. The participants clearly understood becoming bullies as a social effect and the triggers for this situation. They become bullies because they believe there is nothing wrong with their actions, as they often see others doing the same to them. Becoming bullies is one of the ways victims cope with the exposure to bullying. Learners engage in bullying behavior to defend themselves from bullies. The study has found that this behavior is learned, as victims believe it is not punished by the school or the law. Furthermore, when bullying behavior is allowed to continue without consequences, victims become bullies themselves. Victims develop anger problems and do not care about the effects of bullying.

Coyne & Monks (2013) understand that when learners have been exposed to violent behavior, aggression, and abuse at home, they become bullies with their peers at school. The study has found that learners/children easily learn behavior from their role models. Victims become bullies due to pressure and a desire to belong to a certain group. Innocent learners become violent because they want to fit in and use it as a coping strategy.

> '' Some may, might even develop some suicidal thoughts because of bullying and then you might find that the other children might even become violent or develop violent behavior. Some might even try to to fight back, this innocent child might turn violent because of this bullying behavior. (Participant D)''

Similarly, participant G corroborated the discovery that victims of bullying often become bullies themselves as a defense mechanism.

> *'' victim turns out to be a bully yer I agree. Some kids as a different mechanism the child can decide to be to join the bullies when they have been set up for being bullies I agree with it. (Participant G)''*

Additionally, participant G confirmed the findings of the study and provided the following insights about the victims becoming bullies as a result of the social effects of bullying: *''sometimes when you are consistently abused without consequences, as I was saying that if, lets say you're you have been bullied by one of the learners you can even want to bully other ones when you grow up. You will unintentionally become a bully and engage in criminal behavior (Participant G)''*

Literature concurs with the findings of the study regarding the victim of bullying becoming a bully as a result of the social effects of bullying. Children can easily learn bullying behavior after being exposed to and subjected to bullying. Factors such as socialization, family dynamics, and societal norms can contribute to the development of bullying behavior in children (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156). When learners have been abused or bullied, they may adopt those experiences and use them on other children (Morojele, 2013:56). Learners who are unable to cope with life challenges and lack a support system may resort to bullying as a means of coping. When learners feel helpless, out of control, and have experienced difficult life situations, they often become bullies. These children and learners who have felt a sense of helplessness may engage in bullying activities as a way to compensate for their feelings of despair, worthlessness, and to regain their self-confidence, success, competence, and sense of worth (Coyne & Monks, 2013:156).

Interestingly, victims of bullying may resort to bullying as a coping mechanism. Becoming bullies is a fundamental consequence and element that is associated with the social effects of bullying. This occurs when victims are left to deal with the effects of bullying on their own, without any intervention for the bullies.

The findings of the study also indicate that victims of bullying may become involved in criminal activities as a result of the abuse they have endured. It was further found that

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both victims and bullies engage in criminal behavior as they grow older, as the issue of bullying has not been adequately addressed during their upbringing. The participants in the study understand the social effects of bullying and recognize that becoming criminals, becoming bullies, isolation, and school dropouts are all consequences of bullying. Through their explanations and descriptions of becoming criminals, they demonstrate a clear understanding of the negative effects of bullying on victims and how this can lead to criminal behavior. Anti-social behavior, withdrawal, school dropouts, aggression, and violent behavior are all characteristics of the social effects of bullying.

Harber (2014) also acknowledges the connection between bullying and criminal behavior as a consequence of the social effects of bullying. He points out that bullying increases the likelihood of criminal engagement and involvement in gang-related activities. Both victims of bullying and the bullies themselves have the potential to become criminals later in life due to their exposure to violent behavior, aggressive behavior, and engagement in anti-social behavior.

> '' Yes, some of them they end up being criminals because nothing happens to then as bullies and victims observe that there is nothing that happen to the bullies. They engage in criminal behavior, violent behavior and agression. bullies end up being criminals because in most cases we do not attend to them. (Participant H)''

Furthermore, participant J share the sentiments with Participant H relating to the bullies and the victims becoming criminals. They become criminals as learners in learning institutions and as adults as they grow up.

> '' another thing for the bullies themselves you will end up in prison because bullying is a crime due to its nature and violence. When you are involved in crime you would end up arrested and ends up in prison and will have the fingerprints taken. They involve in crime and graduate into criminals. They

will take the fingerprints the fingerprints will be taken, it will be very difficult for him to get the job. (Participant J)"

Participant O supports the views of participant H and J regarding the victims and the bullies becoming criminals. She suggests that the victims learn their behavior from the bullies, while the bullies assume that their actions are condoned due to the lack of consequences.

> *'' The learner will just adopt that and say this is a normal way of living he is being bullied himself then once that particular bully is not being punished also that one might adopt and say let me practice what this person is doing to me and sometimes it can go to an extent of that the person become more violent and start maybe bullying. He become more violent or ended up being a criminal himself the way the studies are saying that one is true I can agree with that but if the behaviour is being punished they will refrain from it. (Participant 0)"*

Harber (2014) supports the understanding of the participants and indicates that a lack of intervention and provision of programs for both victims and bullies leads to involvement in criminal behavior. The negative effects lead to devastation and frustrations, resulting in anger, lack of self-control, and becoming violent and criminals (Walter & Roberts, 2016:98). Bullying is seen as a serious violation, aggressive behavior that leads to engagement in criminal activities. There is a lot of criminal development resulting from violent and aggressive behavior. This provides an indication that there is a relationship between crime and bullying (Sinokowski 7 Kopasz, 2015:73). Most bullies have criminal records by the time they reach the age of 30. This may be because some of their actions are not corrected, and they continue with criminal behavior and involve themselves in antisocial gang-related activities (Walter 7 Roberts, 2016:98).

• **Absenteeism**

The study reveals that bullying victims often have high rates of absenteeism from school. The study discovered that these students are scared of encountering and spending time

with the same individuals who have abused them, been aggressive towards them, and used violence. Additionally, students come up with excuses to skip school, such as pretending to be sick, in order to avoid going. Furthermore, students who fear bullying will skip school out of concern for their safety and the possibility of facing aggression and abuse from the bullies. They lose interest in attending school and develop a pattern of absenteeism due to their fear of being targeted by bullies. The participants in the study have a clear understanding of how bullying can lead to absenteeism and the social consequences it brings.

According to Maphumulo (2014), students who have been bullied experience difficulties with attending school, interacting with their peers, and forming friendships. They struggle with interpersonal and social skills and tend to isolate themselves from other students. These learners become disinterested in attending school and start skipping classes as a result of the bullying they experience. They are afraid of facing violence and encountering their bullies on a daily basis when they go to school.

> ''Hm like I said most of them, some of them they their school performance declines and the eh some they eh eh eh even a point where they the they no longer go to school and by not going to school which means it's affect negatively your school work. (Participant Q)"

Participant Q was supported by participant S when making a submission about absenteeism as a social effect of bullying.

> ''absenteeism is one of the key element of the social effect of bullying. Learners avoid going to learning institutions because they do not want to mix with the bullies, do not want to see the bullies again to avoid recurrence of bullying. This will certainly affect the performance of the learner from school because of the absenteeism. (Participant S)'

The excerpts from the participant U indicate that absenteeism is common as a social effect of bullying. Learners begin to avoid school out of fear of abuse.

> *''Parents would know their children went to school but when you think of entering the yard and you know you are not going to get any protection from the teachers they view this bullying as as a norm. I'd rather bank school why should I go to a place where I would be mocked every day I'd be laughed at so these are are the effects of bulying there's a very negative effect on on on on the children. (Participant U)''.*

Learners who have experienced bullying often struggle to reintegrate into school, leading to absenteeism. They isolate themselves from the school community due to fears of violence, aggression, and abuse (Madonna & Murphy, 2015). Literature supports the idea that absenteeism is a social consequence of bullying. These learners disengage from school and community activities and perceive the community as lacking social functioning (Shariff, 2015). They feel unsafe in the school environment and avoid interacting with other students. They believe their absence is justified because the school protects the bullies (Maphumulo, 2014).

Absenteeism is a recognized social effect of bullying. There is a need to fill the gap in providing protection for bullied learners at school. Schools must take more action to safeguard the victims of bullying within their premises. Learners' absenteeism is, in part, a result of the school, teachers, and fellow students failing to provide adequate protection.

- **Carry knife**

The study findings revealed that learners who are being bullied bring knives to school. They use these knives to defend themselves when confronted by bullies and scare them away, ensuring that they are not troubled further. The study also found that bullies themselves carry knives, which they use to stab or threaten their victims in order to instill fear. Throughout the study, participants indicated an understanding of why learners bring weapons to school, either for self-defense or to threaten others.

Furthermore, the study found that victims continue to carry knives as a defense mechanism. Learners develop these defense mechanisms in response to bullying, as a way to protect themselves from further incidents of violence, aggression, and bullying. They feel that they are not adequately protected by the school, teachers, and other individuals involved in the school environment.

The participants had the following observations to share about the victims of bullying and the bullies who carry knives to school, respectively:

> *"the learners takes weapons to the school in self defense and use this weapons against anyone who threaten them and wants to bully them. This is because of the conclusion that the schools does nothing to address the bullying problems even when reported. The learners come with a knife to the school environment to avoid dropping out of school. when the victims are carrying knifes to school, they are in a much better position to be safe from the bullies in school. (Participant N)"*

The use of weapons, particularly knives, has been described as a means for victims to fight back against those perpetrating violence. Victims or learners carry these knives because there is no protection within the school environment. Literature has not explored the idea of victims carrying knives as a means of self-defense. There is minimal information on victims using knives for self-defense. It is important to note that victims of bullying carry knives for their own protection.

This revelation is interesting as it shows that victims of bullying resort to carrying knives as tools and weapons for self-defense. This is done by learners who have previously been bullied without any consequences for the bullies, and without receiving protection from teachers or the school. Bullies also carry knives to instill fear in their targets, ensuring submission whenever they bully them.

5.3.2.2 SUBTHEME 2.2: Emotional effects

It has been established that bullying affects learners emotionally. A study has found that emotional effects are one of the effects that impact learners in schools. It has also found that bullying has a significant emotional impact on learners. Throughout the explanation, participants were able to indicate the emotional effects of bullying and how it affects learners in school. Furthermore, the study revealed that the emotional effects of bullying include anxiety, fears, depression, anger, and low self-esteem. It was found that emotional effects are one of the key negative effects that affect learners, with various consequences. Bullying can lead to low self-esteem, contemplation of suicide, stress, and depression.

Some important elements of the emotional effects of bullying are trauma, anxiety, fears, stress, depression, and anger. These affect the emotional well-being of learners in schools. Sinokowski & Kopasz (2015:73) point out that learners who have been exposed to bullying become anxious about various issues, and this anxiety contributes to emotional problems. This, in turn, leads to stress and anger for the learners. Many learners who have been bullied have anger problems and have experienced trauma. The participants provided the following excerpts regarding their exposure to trauma, anxiety, fears, stress, depression, anger, low self-esteem, and low self-confidence:

> *"At some point uh the the child whose subjected to bullying might fear coming to school so when not coming to school it therefore tells us that this child remains behind in terms of schools work. The learners develop fear, anxiety and decide not to go to school. they are stressed because of the bullying incidents. (Participant E)"*

Participant H included trauma and depression as part of the emotional effects that occur during bullying. He indicates that learners become traumatized by the incidents they witness because of bullying, and some even experience depression.

> *"some of the emotional effects of bullying is the trauma that learners are exposed to. These incidents of bullying are happening for the first time to the learners, they are violated, there is a use of aggression, and physical assault. Learners turn to be traumatized and fail to handle the situation better and some are even depressed. It is a terrible situation that learners are exposed to and they have minimal support. "participant H)"*

Similarly, participant J and M agree with participant H's views and also acknowledge anger as a component of the emotional effects of bullying. Victims of bullying experience anger due to the difficulties they face as a result of being bullied.

> *"Learners develop lots of uncontrollable anger because of bullying. They adopt a behavior that is not in keeping with their norms, customs and culture. They fail to deal with their anger because they might not have received help or protection to deal with bullying. Some want to revenge for being subject to violence and carry knifes and other weapons to bring harm to the bullies. Learners engage in anti-social behavior and other behaviors which does not enhance social functioning within learning institutions and communities. (Participant J and M)"*

Learners who are exposed to bullying find themselves traumatized. Bullying is one of the effects that leads to trauma in learners at educational institutions, and it further leads to anxiety, fear, and stress (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015). Learners who have been exposed to bullying become anxious, and this anxiety brings about various ailments and effects. These emotional ailments include loss of appetite, fearfulness, hopelessness, stomach ailments, and inability to sleep (Walter & Roberts, 2016). Learners also become depressed as a result of bullying, which is one of the emotional effects. The stress associated with the exposure can escalate to depression for some learners, depending on their ability to cope with adversity (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015). Studies indicate a close association between bullying, stress, and depression. Learners who are bullied often suffer from stress and depression, in addition to developing fears, anxiety, and

trauma. There is further indication of a link between bullying and mental health problems or disorders (Fields, 2017:77).

The emotional effects of bullying have the potential to damage all aspects of learners' development. This is because it can lead to contemplation of suicide and ultimately suicide. It is important to consider the emotional damage that bullying has on learners, their peers, their families, and the community. Based on the literature, it is evident that anxiety, stress, fear, trauma, anger, and depression are the fundamental consequences of the emotional aspect of bullying. This is further supported by the experiences shared by participants in the study.

The emotional effects of bullying can be better explained through the established categories from the study. The study has revealed two categories that will help provide an in-depth explanation of the emotional aspects.

CATEGORIES:

• **Low self-esteem or self-confidence**

The research study has discovered that the emotional effects of bullying include low self-esteem and low self-confidence. The study revealed that victims of bullying have self-doubts and lack belief in themselves, which are elements and consequences attached to the emotional effects of bullying. The emotional effects have been found to create anger and negative emotions on the part of the victims. Victims start to look down on themselves, develop sadness, and this leads to learners skipping school, a drop in school performance, and contemplating suicide. It has further revealed that learners lose trust in themselves around others because they have been assaulted or shamed. Learners no longer participate in class and other activities at school because they have been humiliated and their confidence has been tested. Moreover, victims of bullying are affected by how they view and value themselves in learning institutions and they have a decrease in self-belief about their competency and ability. They also fail to associate with other learners within the learning environment.

Sinokowski & Kopasz (2015:73) concur with the findings of the study and indicate that victims of bullying display the highest level of low confidence and self-esteem, insecurity, and loneliness. It has been established that the mental effects of bullying have a negative impact on the lives of the victims and lead to enormous consequences. The study revealed that learners who are victims of bullying in learning institutions suffer from a lack of confidence, think and feel low about themselves and their abilities to do better in school and all aspects of their lives. The victims question their abilities to perform activities that they competently performed prior to their exposure to bullying. The participants had the following to say about the effects of bullying on the self-confidence and self-esteem of the victims of bullying:

> "*it develop sense of low self esteem and self confidence because in most of the cases the verbal bullies will tell the other ones how ugly they look. Err how untidy and you know all all this negative things now now they will create self, low self esteem and low self confidence and err others would then start banking school because they don't want to experience all this things at school at the same time those who don't bank from school they they deteriorate of their performance in in school because they turn to spend most of the time thinking of how they can protect themselves than learning what they are actually at school to do. (Participant I)*"

Correspondingly, there is a common understanding among the participants regarding self-confidence and self-esteem. Participants L and I agree on the effects of bullying on victims, particularly the emotional effects. Participant L expressed the following:

> "*It has a lot of effects they lose their their esteem sometimes they have a low self esteem because they are being bullied. Eerr they lose focus eerr as such and their performance usually drops sometimes the learner will be very much brilliant then after being bullied now the levels of his marks or his*

performance start dropping and some of them even commit suicide. (Participant L)"

Low self-esteem and confidence are the most common forms and effects of bullying on emotional well-being. Many victims of bullying experience these consequences and elements as part of the mental effects of bullying. Participant S has provided the following excerpts about this category of self-confidence and self-esteem:

> *"Hm some they bunk school, some they lose their confidence inside the classroom and outside, some learners who are victims they become perpetrators themselves to those that they know that this one I can bully because they have been bullied by somebody else. Hm some they are agree the the they decline, they lose friends, they want to isolate themselves and then they start to act alone, and most of them. (Participant S)"*

Participant V indicates that the confidence of bullying victims is destroyed, leaving them unable to stand up for themselves.

> *"Bullying has complex effects because mostly when kids are bullied at school, they don't perform in in school. When they are when they go or when they are at home they are always afraid. They are always looking back at their shoulders thinking maybe someone might follow them maybe someone might do one two three and some for some it kills their confidence and when you don't have confidence at school it becomes a problem. It means you wont stand up for yourself. (Participant V)"*

Sinokowski & Kopasz (2015) point out that the emotional effects of bullying have a negative impact on the lives of learners, particularly on their emotional well-being. This can lead to a range of consequences, including suicide. Victims of bullying often experience a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem due to the humiliation they endure, leading to a lack of trust in themselves (Walter & Roberts, 2016). The emotional effects of low self-esteem and low self-confidence include stress, depression, anxiety, fear,

loneliness, suicidal thoughts, and suicide itself. Bullying also has significant psychological effects on the victims, affecting their developmental stages as they isolate themselves from the learning institution and its community (Field, 2017:66). The literature supports the findings of this study regarding the mental effects of bullying on victims.

In order to address the challenges associated with bullying, social workers need to be more actively involved with both the victims and the bullies on a daily basis. It is essential to involve stakeholders within the learning institution, including teachers, principals, the School Governing Body (SGB), parents, and the learners themselves, in order to effectively combat the ongoing prevalence of bullying. The emotional effects of bullying have a profound impact and consequences on the victims, compromising their well-being and mental health. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the developmental needs of bullying victims in order to prevent them from making life-threatening decisions as a result of their experiences.

- **Contemplates suicide**

The study has established that many victims of bullying contemplate suicide due to the embarrassment, humiliation, and exposure of their inappropriate pictures and videos. It has further discovered that victims who have experienced bullying often become sad, develop fears, anxiety, and depression, isolate themselves, and have low self-confidence and self-esteem, leading them to consider suicide. The contemplation of suicide occurs when the victim's mental health is affected and their overall well-being is compromised.

Additionally, the study found that victims think about overdosing on tablets or consuming poisonous substances because they do not want to face the world anymore. The study also revealed that learners contemplate suicide when they discover that their images are being shared on social media platforms and their peers are laughing at them in school. They are unable to find refuge to cope with the humiliation and being the subject of ridicule. They contemplate suicide as a way to escape the difficult situations they face in class and at school.

According to Shariff (2015:105), learners consider suicide due to their fears of violation, insults, aggression, and isolation. Bullying can lead to depression and further contribute to suicidal thoughts. The contemplation of suicide arises as a means to avoid the humiliation and exposure to violence that victims of bullying experience. The high number of suicide attempts can be attributed to the consequences associated with bullying. Learners contemplate suicide to avoid embarrassment from their peers, to avoid being laughed at, and to prevent further bullying. They view suicide as an appropriate solution to their problems.

The participants in the study shared their thoughts on the contemplation of suicide by victims of bullying.

> *"It took time for the learner to come back to school since the incident because she was all crying and also threatening to take her life, to commit suicide and then the parents were…… she wanted and was talking about committing suicide because she did not how to deal with her because everytime when we went to her home, she didn't want to talk to anyone until one social worker was able to reach reach out to her. She was eventually assisted one on one counseling but it was hard. (Participant A)"*

Participant B agrees with participant A about contemplating suicide and takes it further to explain their experience with attempted suicide and overdose of medication as a means to end their life. The participant had the following to say:

> *"victims of bullying always entertain the suicide thoughts, always think about suicide as the solution to the problem they are experiencing with regards to bullying. They believe that if they action suicide they will rest and be safe from embarrassments and humiliations.Mmm I have had cases of attempted suicide where in a child tries to overdose medication or a child err drinks err hazadours substances such as paraffin err spirit so that err they they they they they die and no longer get to be bullied. (Participant B)"*

Participant D concurs with participants A and B, further indicating that victims turn to violence and experience suicidal thoughts:

> "*Some may, might even develop some suicidal thoughts because of bullying and then you might find that the other children might even become violent or develop violent behavior. They always invite the suicidal thoughts and entertain the thoughts wanting to action the thoughts. Some might even try to to fight back, this innocent child might turn violent because of this bullying behavior. (Participant D)*"

Studies confirm the findings that learners struggle with academic work due to bullying and often consider suicide. The pressure from dealing with bullies, bystanders, and the school community makes it difficult for them to cope at school (Shariff, 2015). The emotional effects of bullying, such as trauma, anxiety, and stress, contribute to the depression that learners experience, leading to suicidal thoughts (Madonna & Murphy, 2015:77). Bullies and bystanders exclude, isolate, and tease the victims, causing devastating effects that make them want to avoid school or perform poorly (Field, 2017:66).

There is a strong connection between contemplating suicide and the elements and consequences of bullying. The elements of bullying greatly influence learners' thoughts of suicide. The pressure and mental health issues contribute to these thoughts and also lead to various social consequences. Cyberbullying has a deep impact on victims, often causing them to consider suicide. The sharing of inappropriate pictures of the victim through technology and social media leads to isolation and ultimately the development of suicidal thoughts.

5.3.2.3 SUBTHEME 2.3: PHYSICAL AND MENTAL EFFECTS

The study has revealed significant physical and mental effects of bullying on learners in educational institutions. Learners are physically attacked, have their pictures distributed, develop fears, anxiety, stress, trauma, and even contemplate suicide. The study found that learners are physically assaulted and may engage in self-harm and self-mutilation.

Additionally, the physical effects of bullying can lead to teenage pregnancy and substance abuse, which are also mental effects of bullying. Learners may become isolated and turn to substances as a way to cope with the pressure associated with bullying. The mental effects of bullying include an inability to participate in classes, depression, contemplation of suicide, and actual suicide. The participants in the study outlined the physical and mental effects of bullying and emphasized the consequences in these areas.

According to Cornell & Bandyopadhyay (2018:143), physical bullying has various consequences and effects that impact the victims both physically and emotionally. The physical effects involve violence and aggression, which can be extremely harmful to the victims. Emotional effects, such as stress, trauma, and depression, also have a significant impact on the lives of bullying victims. The study also highlighted that bullies themselves can be affected by their actions and become victims in their own right. The participants shared their perspectives on the physical and emotional effects of bullying, and the following are their statements.

> *"Cutting themselves, uh so that they can direct the pain somewhere else other than feeling the pain of being bullied then they will feel the physical pain everytime when the child get trauma after being bullied. They would find something and cut themselves concentrating on the physical pain than the pain of being bullied. (Participant C)"*

Participants E agreed with the views of participant C regarding physical bullying and expanded upon it by including the mental effects of bullying. They have highlighted the following points:

> *"victim of bullying develop mental effects of bullying which includes the trauma resulting from the exposure to bullying incident, the anxiety and they develop fears around themselves and also having change in sleeping patterns. some may suffer from stress which may also lead to depression because of this bullying. The emotional effects have much deeper and*

further effects which at times leads to loss of life and serious mental health

problems (Participant E)"

CATEGORIES:

• **Suicide**

Suicide rates among students in educational institutions have been found to be increasing. Participants in a study understood the impact of bullying and acknowledged that some victims contemplate suicide, while others actually follow through with it. The study revealed that students who struggle to cope with embarrassment, humiliation, and exposure to bullying may turn to suicide as a means to avoid becoming the subject of jokes, laughter, and gossip at school. When students do not receive the necessary support, help, and guidance, they become vulnerable and view suicide as a solution to their problems. Furthermore, the study found that students often lack problem-solving skills, resilience strategies, and the ability to cope with peer pressure, leading them to resort to suicide through the overdose of medication or hanging.

According to Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel (2015:175), the mental effects of bullying have several consequences, including isolation, mental health problems, and depression. These factors contribute to students making the decision to take their own lives because they feel unprotected by the school and the surrounding environment. They commit suicide because they are ignored and dismissed by those who should be providing them with attention and assistance. They lose their ability to think positively about life and lack the support necessary to address issues like bullying. Participants in the study expressed the following regarding suicide as one of the consequences of bullying, specifically focusing on its mental effects:

> *"Uhhuu it has a huge huge effect. They are a lot of cases wherein kids are killing themselves at the end of the day. So eish is so bad (uhmm) ya very bad. I don't know how much more I can say coz bullying is bad. Kids are killing themselves. Suicide is seen as the solution because they will no longer be bullied, be stressed and be subjected to laughing at school.*

learners resort to the immediate lasting solution and unfortunately that solution is to commit suicide. (Participant R)"

Participant T further indicated that learners first contemplate suicide and when they do not receive attention they ultimately commit suicide. They commit suicide to avoid returning to the bullies, the bystanders and all those who witnessed it.

"Some may, might even develop some suicidal thoughts because of bullying. When they are isolated, stressed and depressed, they develop suicidal thoughts and decide to act of the thoughts. The learners who find themselves under enormous pressure take their lives. This is seen as a technique to solve their problems. one of the effect is that the person who is being bullied can also die as a result of bullying. A good example was the incident of Mbilwi High School wherein a learner committed suicide as a result of being bullied by a fellow learners so that is one of the effect. (Participant T)"

The lack of protection and support system for learners leaves them with no option but to consider suicide. They feel defenseless and do not want to return to school or face the bullies again. The following is participant W's perspective:

"physical injuries to some and also to psychological end up banale (having) suicidal thoughts. There are cases where learners witten some suicidal notes or parents just come across err a childs diary okraya a ngwadile (you find the child written) how tired they are of being bullied at school and all these kind of things and in terms of cyber bullying the the remember something that is posted remain permanentely ko di (in the) website. So bana babangwe (some children) might be haunted by that fact that they have been posed online and they don't know where that video and who is having access to it how far its spreaing and how it might affect them in future jah. (Participant W)"

There is a general understanding that bullying is a global problem that can lead to suicide. The availability of poisonous substances makes it easier for victims to take their own lives in order to escape the problem (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2015:175). Cyberbullying, in particular, contributes to a high number of suicides due to its widespread nature. People all over the world can access and use technology to bully others (Cornell & Bandyopadhyay, 2018:143). Exposure to bullying can cause stress, anxiety, and mental health issues, ultimately leading to suicide (Cooper & Nickerson, 2013:213).

Suicide is a serious concern for students who experience bullying at school. This not only affects the students themselves, but also the entire school community. It is crucial to recruit professionals who are skilled in dealing with bullying to address the issue on a preventative level and develop strategies to combat it. Policies should be created and enforced to punish those involved in bullying, and programs should be implemented to help bullies modify their behavior.

- **DROP IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

A drop in school performance has been found to be the most common and immediate consequence of bullying. The study revealed that learners no longer attend school daily, participate in class, or engage with the school community. Their failure to attend classes and concentrate in class hinders their ability to perform as they used to. These learners experience anxiety, constantly feeling that they may be targeted by bullies and constantly looking over their shoulders. They struggle to seek support for their protection so that they can focus on their schoolwork and academic activities. Additionally, the study found that bullying diminishes their confidence, making it difficult for them to perform well in school. Furthermore, the study found that if a learner is performing well in the first quarter and then gets bullied, it will negatively impact their performance in the second quarter. Moreover, the study has found that the grades of bullying victims drop after being exposed to the trauma resulting from bullying.

According to Cooper & Nickerson (2013:213), learners spend most of their time worrying about how to protect themselves from bullies, neglecting their schoolwork in the process, which leads to a drop in school performance. These learners lack concentration in school, feel isolated, and develop fears, resulting in a decline in their performance. It affects their social functioning, self-esteem, and confidence, ultimately leading to poor grades or performance at school. The minds of bullying victims are often absent from class as they constantly think about the bullies and what may happen next, which greatly affects their performance.

> *"it affects their performance if they were performing well in term 1 and bullying is is done in term 2 then their performance turns to go low. They focus more on the action that will be happening after school than the current action in class that they need to be focusing on, which may be a classwork or something then secondly that childs self esteem will be will be very low. (Participant B)"*

Similarly, Participant H supports the views of Participant B and takes it further to indicate that it leads to school drop outs due to poor school performance. The failure to concentrate and perform as well as previous terms affects the overall performance of learners at school:

> *"negatively so then ehh is also affecting the performance. The school performance you find that learners is not performing like he or she used to performed some learners may even drop out of schools because of bullying, some may suffer from stress which may also lead to depression because of this bullying. (Participant H).*

Participant L agrees with both participant B and H regarding the impact of bullying on school performance. He further explained that bullying results in a decline in the grades of the victims.

"Yer there are challenges of dropping of school performance, you may find out that the child before being bullied he was perfoming very well but after become a victim of bullying the their marks dropped, the performance drops [ohk]. Those are the challenges and also the child tend to isolate themselves and not participate in any activities at school and within the community. (Participant P)".

Learners who are victims of bullying spend a significant amount of their time worrying about bullies. They are constantly concerned about what may happen next and what the bullies are planning. This preoccupation with bullying affects their concentration levels and their ability to commit to their academic work, ultimately impacting their grades (Cooper & Nickerson, 2013:213). Literature supports these findings, highlighting the negative effects of bullying on the performance of its victims. The thinking patterns of victims become consumed by bullying, leaving little mental space for completing assigned tasks. As a result, learners struggle to submit expected assessments, which ultimately affects their academic performance (Whitter & Dupper, 2016:87).

Victims of bullying also have serious concerns regarding their safety and the lack of protection provided by the school and its stakeholders. They worry that teachers and administrative staff do not offer adequate support when a child has been bullied, leading to a lack of focus on schoolwork (Bhana, 2014:64).

A drop in school performance is one of the many effects of bullying that can have long-term consequences for learners and their future careers. It is crucial for professionals to provide support to these victims in order to minimize the impact of bullying on their academic activities. Protecting learners is key to addressing the mental health of bullying victims. This issue is of growing concern both locally and internationally, as it consistently leads to poor school performance, increased school dropouts, and even contemplation of suicide, with some victims tragically following through (Cooper & Nickerson, 2013:213).

5.3.3 THEME 3.1: BULLYING ADDRESSED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN A LEARNING INSTITUTION.

The study has found that social workers have numerous methods of addressing bullying in learning institutions. The study sought to reveal the role played by social workers in addressing bullying in learning institutions. There has been an emergence of five subthemes to be discussed in sections 5.3.3.1, 5.3.3.2, 5.3.3.3, 5.3.3.4 and 5.3.3.5.

5.3.3.1 SUBTHEME 3.1: THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER

The current study has established that social workers provide various programs to address and intervene in bullying in learning institutions. It further revealed that social workers assist learners by providing counseling, therapy, and awareness to learners, parents, and the community. Social workers play a critical role in educating learners about the effects, consequences, and dangers of bullying on the victims, bullies, bystanders, parents, and the community. They involve different stakeholders to reduce bullying and combat its existence in the school environment. Social workers also assist with psychosocial services to learners and help resolve challenges experienced in the learning environment. Furthermore, they provide prevention programs to learners, conducting awareness campaigns that describe and explain different types of bullying, as well as the effects and consequences.

Social workers conduct awareness campaigns in schools and provide programs aimed at empowering bullying victims. They also conduct victim-offender mediation and resolve conflicts among peers. Additionally, social workers assist with low self-esteem, self-confidence, assertiveness, and provide counseling services to learners who are victims or perpetrators of bullying, as well as the school community. They also play a role in preventing bullying in learning institutions by educating the school community about the importance of addressing bullying and how it can impact school and individual performance.

"ohk the role of social worker at school is to provide learners with psychosocial support, and also to motivate them and also to make to to make err provide the learners with programmes awareness campaign. Like awareness I think that are err the role that a social worker should be to ensure that there is reduction of undue pressure from the students and the teachers. The social workers need to ensure that they establish stakeholders committee that will assist with addressing the problem of bullying. (Participant D)"

Social workers also offer problem solving skills to both the victims and perpetrators of bullying. Participant F emphasizes that they provide a comprehensive understanding of short and long term effects of bullying on all parties involved including the victims, bullies, bystanders and the school community.

"The services we provide to the to the victims err, to the victim we we try to err render counselling services where we we focus mainly on the effect of bullying on them and how and we assist them in to trying to to to help them not to to allow bullying to affect their self esteem. Err err we also try to assist them to change their behavior to make them aware that err bullying is is unacceptable and and try to empower them with problem solving skills and alert them of the consequences of their behavior on the short terms and the long term effects of bullying on the victim and on bona (them) as the perpetrators. (Participant F)"

Participant I emphasizes that social workers deal with bullying on a daily basis and concentrate on addressing anti-social behavior, violence, and aggression in schools. They offer preventive programs that emphasize the significance of avoiding the utilization of power, violence, and aggression.

"social workers have a critical role of identifying the root cause of bullying and address the main problem in bullying. The manifestation of the problem

may not be the real problem and this require the social worker to provide education, anti-bullying programs, behavior modification and gangsterism. These programs are important to address the problem that cause bullying. (Participant J)"

Social workers provide various programs and services to address the issue of bullying in educational institutions. These programs include education, psychosocial services, counseling, and prevention methods (National Association of Social Workers, 2015). They help address the repetitive behavior and offer debriefing services to those affected by bullying (Chesborough, 2015). Literature supports the findings of the study on how social workers tackle bullying in educational institutions.

The study's findings emphasize the significance of social workers in addressing bullying. The role of social workers is further explained in the identified categories.

CATEGORIES:
• **Involve parents/family and stakeholders**
The study has revealed that social workers involve parents of both the victim and perpetrator of bullying in providing intervention. They also include critical stakeholders to address the phenomenon of bullying holistically. The involvement of parents, families and stakeholders in intervention has been found to be effective in addressing bullying. The study found that stakeholders are fundamental to performing their roles with the aim of addressing the problem of bullying. The study revealed that the involvement of parents is important because they need to understand the behavior of their children in learning institutions and can assist in disciplining them. Parents and families also understand that a child with behavioral problems may be expelled from school. Participants have highlighted that parents sometimes contribute to bullying behavior because they expose children to violence and aggression. Learners learn some of these behaviors from parents and families making it important to involve them in the fight against bullying.

Earnshaw, Elliot, Reisner, Mrug, Windle, Emery, Peskin & Schuster (2017:31) suggest that parents and stakeholders have a critical role to play in addressing bullying. Parents need to advise their children about the consequences and effects of bullying on themselves, other learners, the school and the community. Stakeholders need to be ready to assist in incidents of bullying to ensure that it is addressed and provide safer schooling environments. Social workers do not need to work in isolation when providing bullying services because it is a societal problem that affects everyone and requires the commitment of all affected people.

> *"Social workers involve parents of the victim of bullying and the bullies when providing intervention. As social workers, we do this to ensure that parents play their role at home in assisting with rooting out the factors that contribute to bullying. Parents are important stakeholders and we provide the parenting programs and family preservation programs. The family members also are involved in the intervention through the family group conference. (Participant, B)"*

The involvement of stakeholders is one of the important ways to address bullying. Social workers involve different stakeholders with various skills and expertise to assist in reducing, treating and managing bullying. The following excerpt was provided as part of an intervention by social workers.

> *"Social workers involve various stakeholders to ensure a better approach to bullying. They involve the stakeholders when conducting preventative programs, education and providing intervention. They use psychologist, teachers and the school governing body to holistically provide interventions to the learners and families affected by bullying. The police, nurses, prosecutors are also involved to play a fundamental role in addressing the violent behavior. (Participant H)"*

5.3.3.2 SUBTHEME 3.2: WAYS IN WHICH SOCIAL WORKERS ADDRESS BULLYING

CATEGORIES:

• **Parenting programmes, family preservation and assisting learners.**

The study has revealed that parenting programs are critical in addressing bullying in schools. It has highlighted that poor parenting programs may contribute to the high number of bullying incidents experienced in schools. The violent behaviors of parents may also influence children to be aggressive and violent because they assume it is the only way to resolve problems. The study further emphasized the importance of preserving families. Family preservation programs are important for keeping families together and maintaining discipline among children. Additionally, social workers provide individual sessions to learners to help them deal with the problem of bullying. It was found that social workers offer counseling, psychosocial services, and education to learners. They also provide debriefing services to victims of bullying, the bullies themselves, and bystanders. They assist learners in resolving problems that affect their social functioning, which can lead to bullying behavior. Social workers identify learners who have factors stressing them and try to address these factors to deal with the root cause of bullying.

> *"Parenting programs are important to ensure that parents are able to provide leadership to children who might have behavioral problems. Parents needs to avoid the violent behavior or gender based violence because children adopts this behavior at school with their fellow learners. The children understand this to be the only way to resolve conflicts when there is dispute. These programs make parents to understand the influence they have on the children and what the children may learn from them. (Participant K)."*

Participant P further discussed the importance of assisting learners who are exposed to bullying as well as those who perpetuate bullying. He emphasized that children need support when they are involved in bullying situations.

"social workers provide psychosocial support services to the victim of bullying and the perpetrators of bullying. They further render counseling services, debriefing to the bystanders, school community and also the teachers. They provide counseling and therapy services to the victims of bullying and the bullies to avoid mental health problems and disruption of social functioning. Learners receive the services to ensure that they are able to cope with the challenges that may come with bullying phenomenon. Family group conference are also important to understand better the upbringing of the bully. (Participant P)"

Parents are critical stakeholders who must be involved in efforts to reduce and prevent school-based bullying. Parenting programs aim to improve poor parenting and the interaction between child and parent (Harshman, 2014:16). This helps learners have open conversations with their parents and equips them with problem-solving techniques (Huang, Espelage, Polanin, & Hong, 2019:5).

Interestingly, the study's findings revealed that dysfunctional families without family preservation become violent and bully other learners at school. Family preservation programs are critical in managing bullying from an early age. This important discovery emphasizes the need for special focus and attention on significant stakeholders. The family serves as a starting point in any attempt to reduce and alleviate bullying. However, literature is silent on the use of family preservation to deal with bullying. Family preservation should be implemented as an intervention program to address bullying.

- **Awaeress campaigns, life skills and behavior modification**

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> *"As social workers, we conduct the awareness campaigns aimed at preventing the continuous occurrence of bullying among learners in schools. We educate the learners about the dangers of bullying and their involvement in bullying. We conduct the preventative programs to show learners the impact that bullying and what it may lead to. Awareness campaigns are important because they aim to root out the phenomenon and address the factors that contribute to bullying. In the process of campaigns, we also provide the life skills programs to skill the learners about life challenges and how to deal with them. Life skills programs assist learners to understand how to deal with challenges, improve self-confidence, esteem (Participant L)."*

Behavior modification has been found to be a fundamental program utilised by social workers. Participant R emphasized the significant role of behavior modification.

> *"behavior modification is the important program used in social work to deal with children who have behavioral problems. It assists them to work on behaviors that may lead to criminality, violence and aggressiveness. This program is normally provided to learners and children that already have been found to have problems with conduct, behavior and discipline. It is rendered to learners that have been referred for behavioral problems or in*

conflict with the law. The program is effective to ensure that it address what brings problems. It offered on a one-to-one sessions and also through the use of groups and community work which include awareness. (Participant R)".

The awareness and preventative programs are effective tools utilized by social workers to reduce bullying in educational institutions (Reysner, Greytak, Parsons, & Ybarra, 2015:7). These programs offer educational sessions to individuals, groups, and communities, and involve relevant stakeholders in the fight against bullying (Huang, Espelage, Polanin, & Hong, 2019:5). Additionally, these programs help students improve their self-esteem, self-confidence, and academic performance (Gaffney, Farrington, & Ttofi, 2019:15). The literature gathered in this study supports the findings regarding the effectiveness of awareness and preventative programs.

Many participants in the study expressed that behavior modification is an effective approach to addressing bullying. It is crucial to include behavior modification programs in interventions aimed at addressing bullying. These programs focus on correcting behaviors that contribute to bullying and provide life skills training to empower students. However, the literature does not currently include behavior modification as a recommended program for addressing bullying in educational institutions.

5.3.3.3 SUBTHEME 3.3: CHALLENGES EXPERIENED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN ADDRESSING BULLYING

Findings of the study revealed that social workers experience enormous challenges in their duties as they provide services related to bullying. They encounter challenges in their relationships with employers, colleagues, learners, schools, parents, stakeholders, logistics, and resources. Lack of transportation, cellphones, and office space have been identified as specific challenges for social workers who offer bullying services. The challenges can be further explained in the following categories:

CATEGORIES:

- **Uncooperative learners, uncooperative parents, uncooperative stakeholders**

The study found that learners are not cooperative with social workers when bullying services are provided. The study emphasizes the importance of obtaining cooperation from learners when implementing intervention programs, as this is in their best interest. Additionally, the study highlights the crucial role parents play in addressing bullying. However, it becomes challenging when some parents are uncooperative in addressing bullying and are defensive about their children's behavior at school, which can lead to arrogance. When parents are defensive, they enable their children's behavior to continue by not condemning it. The study suggests that parents should serve as role models and possess good parenting skills to promote positive behavior at school and discourage unruly conduct. Uncooperative parents make it difficult for social workers to rehabilitate and correct the behavior of the children, as they fail to recognize the wrongfulness of their actions. Furthermore, the study reveals that there are other stakeholders who are uncooperative, including teachers, principals, administration staff, and the school governing body. Some stakeholders refuse to allow social workers to conduct preventative and awareness programs during learning hours.

> *"learners are not cooperative when you are rendering programs to assist reducing and addressing bullying. When you have had a session with the learners and scheduling another session, learners do not attend the scheduled sessions and this makes it difficult for the social worker to complete the effective service to the victim and the bully. Learners also display behavioral problems when we provide the awareness and preventative programs. They make it difficult for the social worker to render effective and complete rehabilitation programs. Some learners are affiliated to gangs, some use substances and some have behavioral problems and always want to violate other children. (Participant E)."*

Parents at times make it difficult for social workers to assist learners in a bullying environment. I allude to the fact that some parents are overly defensive and protective of

their children, without realizing the problem they are creating in the child's behavioral patterns.

> *"some parents think they are doing us a favor as social workers especially when we try to render holistic service to the children. Bullying requires inclusive service and need the involvement of the family members and the parents. Parents become protective when we discuss their child and too defensive thinking they are preserving and protecting the child. This behavior make the child to think they are not wrong and dispute everything under discussion because they know that they have support of the parents. Sometimes you invite parents to form part of sessions aimed at modifying the behavior of their children and they do not attend. These are some of the problems social workers experience which make it difficult to correct the behavior of the children. (Participant I)."*

Participant R indicates that they also experience challenges with the stakeholders who are involved in dealing with bullying, education about bullying and management of bullying cases.

> *"social workers experience challenges with principals who does not give us space to render services to the learners. We always emphasize that prevention is better than cure and need time to provide education to the learners about social ills and the consequences but we are refused access. If we are to win a battle about bullying, we need to work as a team with all the stakeholders. Sometimes you invite the police, nurses, psychologist, National Prosecuting Authority and SGB and they do not show up. You end up running the program alone and it would have been more effective if you had other stakeholders. (Participant R)."*

Social workers need the cooperation of learners, parents, and stakeholders in order to effectively address the issue of bullying. It is important to emphasize that although there is limited or no literature on non-cooperating learners and parents, it is crucial to develop programs that promote cooperation. Social workers can only assist learners who are

willing to seek help and participate in the programs. Some learners may cooperate due to a court order that requires them to attend social workers' programs aimed at addressing their behavioral issues. It is important to acknowledge that non-cooperating learners and parents present challenges for social workers when providing services related to the bullying phenomenon.

- **Lack of workshop material, high workload and poverty**

The study has revealed that social workers experience challenges with materials when conducting workshops and awareness campaigns. These materials, such as pictures, videos, and pamphlets, are used to illustrate the topics being discussed. They also encounter difficulties with documents and projectors when trying to display the consequences of bullying. Additionally, the study found that social workers face challenges due to their high workload. Since most social workers are not assigned to a specific program, they end up focusing more on foster care and neglecting other programs like bullying. This heavy workload negatively impacts efforts to address bullying, as it is not given priority. The study highlights that bullying is not considered a priority compared to other programs such as HIV/AIDS and disability. Social workers only respond to bullying cases when they are required to do so, and the quality of service suffers as a result. Furthermore, the study reveals that poverty plays a critical role in bullying and presents a challenge for social workers. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds often resort to taking other students' lunch boxes and money in order to have something to eat. This increase in bullying cases further complicates the work of social workers.

> *"we conduct trainings, workshops and awareness campaigns without the materials relevant to display during the sessions. We are unable to show pictures, videos and pamphlets for the learners to have a better understanding. Materials makes it easy for learners to have understanding of what professionals are presenting about. The presentation of the consequences of bullying needs to be projected for better understanding and appreciation. (Participant O)."*

Participant Q went on to say that workload is one of the challenges that social workers face when providing services for the bullying phenomenon. He pointed out that social workers who offer bullying services also have other programs that make their workload overwhelming.

> *"honestly we have a lot of work that make it difficult for us to focus on bullying. Bullying is not one of the priority programs and not in the operational plan. I do not have to report about it and I will always prioritize the program that will be reported at the end of financial year. We hardly provide bullying services until an incident is reported to our office. This is because of the amount of work that we have, it is really difficult for one to cope with programs like bullying when we have a lot. Bullying need to be made a standing program for it to get attention and not be disturbed by other programs. (Participant Q)."*

Social workers need to have all the resources required to provide effective bullying services, including pictures, videos, projectors, pamphlets, and documents. This will help learners understand the impact of their actions when engaging in violence and aggressive behavior. It is important for employers to support social workers by providing these resources to ensure effective programs and prevent this from becoming a problem for them. The workload of social workers must be addressed and a ratio should be developed to prioritize programs. Social workers should focus on specific programs to provide competent services and not be overwhelmed by their workload. There should be regulations and implementation of the amount of work assigned to social workers to avoid workload issues.

5.3.3.4 SUBTHEME 3.4: TRAINING RECEIVED BY SOCIAL WORKERS TO ADDRESS BULLYING

The study has identified that there are trainings provided to social workers to deal with bullying. However, some of these programs are said to be ineffective in reducing or addressing bullying. Some social workers, including probation officers, receive specific

bullying training because they work directly with violent children in schools and communities. It was revealed that there are various programs available designed to train and empower social workers to be competent in dealing with bullying. These include risk assessment workshops, gender-based violence programs, parenting programs, and family preservation programs, all offered to help address bullying.

CATEGORIES:

• **Training from university, training on bullying and bullying related training or workshops**

Social workers have reported receiving training in anti-bullying, behavior modification, substance abuse, social crime prevention, and life skills programs. These programs are essential in helping social workers effectively provide services that directly address bullying. The anti-bullying program is particularly important in preventing bullying behavior from occurring. Additionally, it was found that the training social workers receive in school plays a significant role in assisting them in their work. These trainings encompass counseling, therapy, family group conferences, building self-confidence and self-esteem, and providing services to individuals, families, groups, and communities. Social crime prevention training is important in focusing on learners and children within the community, helping them avoid engaging in criminal activities such as bullying. Substance abuse training is crucial as many learners resort to violence due to substance use and abuse. Furthermore, the study revealed that behavior modification training is essential in correcting anti-social behavior.

> *"we receive anti-bullying training and anti-social behavior training which assist us to be able to plan a strategy to be used to reduce and manage the bullying phenomenon. These are mainly preventative programs to ensure that learners understand the impact of bullying on the victim, the bully and the school community. Behavior modification is one of the most important programs that assist in modifying the behavior of the learners to behave in an acceptable manner. We also receive trainings about gender based*

violence that take place at home which has influence on the learners (Participant J)."

Participant L alludes to the importance of having social crime prevention programs that provide assistance to learners or children who are in conflict with the law. This is because bullying often leads to criminal cases, which then involve social workers.

> *"we receive trainings about the social crime prevention programs that focus of violent behavior and ensuring that learners do not engage in unacceptable behavior. We are trained about focusing on strength of the learners that can assist to avoid engagement in criminal behavior. Social workers needs to identify schools that are hotspots with bullying and violence as well as aggression to provide programs that are going to assist reducing the bullying phenomenon. This program targets the social ills that are reported to be prevalent in the particular school and render preventative programs against violence and aggression. (Participant L)."*

Participant S further included training on substance abuse and gangsterism as important factors in bullying.

> *"we receive gangsterism trainings that equip us to be able to deal with gangs identified in schools. This training is significant because violence, aggression and bullying has elements of gangsterism. Many learners who are involved in bullying are affiliated to gangs that terrorize the school community. Anti-gangsterism is important to reduce and manage bullying within the school environment. Substance abuse is associated with gangsterism and we receive training about substance use and abuse. Many gang members in schools use substances and need social workers who have been trained about gangsterism and substance to be able to provide good services to bullying incidents. (Participant S)."*

Learners who engage in substance abuse have the potential to exhibit anti-social behavior, as well as violence and aggression. They often participate in gangsterism and use alcohol and other substances (Masilo, 2018). There is a connection between bullying behavior, alcohol, and other substances within educational institutions. Learners who are under the influence of substances feel compelled to be violent and exert power over their peers (Bezuidenhout, 2013).

It is worth noting that training on gangsterism and anti-bullying behavior has not been emphasized as important in addressing bullying. There is limited data on anti-bullying training to support social workers in dealing with and addressing bullying in educational settings. It is crucial to ensure that social workers receive training on programs such as anti-bullying. Additionally, social crime prevention training should be provided to social workers so that they are better equipped to tackle the issue of bullying in schools.

5.3.3.5 SUBTHEME 3.5: SUPPORT RECEIVED BY SOCIAL WORKERS TO ADDRESS BULLYING

Social workers have been found to receive support in providing services for reported incidents of bullying. The study highlighted that social workers are supported in attending trainings and workshops, which helps them stay updated on developments in the bullying phenomenon and remain relevant in their interventions. A significant number of social workers disclosed that they receive support, although some expressed concerns about the adequacy of the support provided to equip them with the necessary skills to address bullying. The study also found that certain schools and personnel provide support to ensure that social workers can carry out their duties without disruptions. These schools recognize the crucial role that social workers play in preventing and managing bullying, as well as other social problems. While there is some support for resources to fulfill their functions, it is not sufficient. Nonetheless, this existing support helps address bullying and reduce the growing number of cases in this phenomenon.

CATEGORIES:
• **Support from colleagues and supervisors support**

The participants have reported that colleagues serve as an important support system for them in coping with the challenges they face when dealing with bullying incidents. The findings of the study revealed that colleagues are always available to assist with case discussions, transportation, advice, and debriefing. They also provide guidance in writing quality reports and preparing for counseling and other sessions. Additionally, the study found that social workers receive support from their supervisors, who offer educational support and guidance on policies and legislation related to the issue being discussed. Supervisors are always available for individual and group supervision to ensure a proper understanding of how to handle bullying incidents. Although social work supervisors may have limited resources, they do their best to provide support by listening to social workers, offering guidance, and arranging case discussions to address difficult cases.

> *"Uh, I have support from my coolleagues, they accompany me. We accompany each other when we go for campaigns to support and also the schools they are welcoming as long as you use the sport that they have given you maybe if they say we conduct campaign at assembly at seven o'oclock and use the time for assembly and you are available to use the assembly time then there is no problem and also when conduct campaign with SAPS officials they will invite me. I also invite them when we have campaigns. (Participant D)."*

Participant N highlighted that supervisors also assist with personal and professional development. They assist in identifying and addressing the training needs of individual employees, enabling them to perform their functions with competence and understanding.

> *"Ohk, err hm supervisors are also supportive to us with err with a trainings also the institution we also have psychologist which helps us with the the stresses that we are dealing with and the bullying. okay the support that I I get mostly is from my first line supervisor to try to make it possible for me to be in a better position to can address the cases that are reported to me*

that are related to bullying at school other than that ahhh no. (Participant N)."

Kirst-Ashman & Hull (2014:99) emphasize the importance of supporting and enhancing coping strategies. Supervision sessions are a necessary form of support to provide guidance for social workers (Toseland & Rivas, 2017:36). The existing literature agrees with the study's findings that supervision support is crucial in addressing stressful bullying incidents. It is a necessary form of support that plays a critical role in providing effective interventions that address the root cause of the problem.

5.3.4 THEME 4: STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN ADDRESSING BULLYING IN A LEARNING INSTITUTION

The study has revealed that there are numerous stakeholders involved in addressing bullying in learning institutions. The study aimed to outline the involvement of stakeholders in addressing bullying and understand the roles they play. Four subthemes emerged from the study and will be discussed in sections 5.3.4.1, 5.3.4.2, 5.3.4.3, and 5.3.4.4.

5.3.4.1 SUB-THEME 4.1: PROFESSIONAL PERSONS

The study found that social workers need to involve stakeholders when providing interventions for the bullying phenomenon. Stakeholders with different expertise are essential in the fight against bullying. It has been revealed that the police have a fundamental role to play and need to be involved in conducting awareness and preventative programs. Similarly, prosecutors need to be involved to explain what may happen to bullies when they continue their involvement in bullying. Nurses, medical officers, and magistrates are other stakeholders that have a critical role to play in bullying and will have a significant influence in the fight against this phenomenon. These stakeholders bring different expertise that provides alternatives to combat bullying. The study reveals that nurses are important as some victims and bullies get hurt in the

process. Furthermore, the study argues that the police provide information about law enforcement, prosecutors educate about the role they will play, and magistrates as well.

CATEGORIES:

• **Teachers, social workers and psychologists as professional stakeholders in bullying.**

The study has identified teachers, social workers, and psychologists as the primary service providers in addressing bullying. This is because they play an active role from the initial reports of bullying incidents until intervention is provided to all parties involved. Teachers are the first to report instances of bullying as they are able to identify and witness these incidents within educational institutions. They ensure that these incidents are reported to social workers so that appropriate intervention, support, and guidance can be provided. Social workers are responsible for offering psychosocial services to all individuals affected by bullying. They provide debriefing sessions for those impacted by the incident and offer one-on-one counseling for both the victim and the bully. Social workers also enroll the parties involved in programs aimed at modifying their behavior, helping them understand and acknowledge the wrongfulness of their actions. For bullies who have been arrested due to bullying incidents, social workers conduct diversion programs. Additionally, they run rehabilitation programs to assist students in refraining from engaging in bullying behavior, which could potentially result in criminal charges if a case is opened with the police. Psychologists play a critical role in addressing the psychological effects caused by bullying on all individuals involved. They are able to diagnose and treat any underlying issues that may be contributing to these incidents. Furthermore, psychologists provide counseling services to victims of bullying.

> *"Educators are the first stakeholders to identify any elements and incident of bullying in the school environment. They communicate with the social workers to address the case or reported incident. Educators sometimes are calling parents of the children who are treating others bad even though its difficult for an educator because now they you know parents nowadays they*

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don't understand they usually stigimatize teachers as people as hates their children outside. They are just hating my child because he is from a poor background so I am never gonna allow that never I'm gonna stand up for my child. The fact that my child is beating others what is the other one the one who started so they come up with all these reasoning in order to try and defend so if you are an effective teacher, you should be able to reach out to the parents and be able to communicate with them so that is very crucial as well. (Participant M)."

Participant T pointed out the important of having social workers as stakeholders in dealing with bullying.

"Okay ehh us as social workers working at social development we have our own roles ehhhhour own first role is to prevent bullying and we have to prevent bullying through doing awareness campaigns eeeh number two we have to provide early intervention ehh early intervention to assist the child who have committed bullying. We have to assist him or her so that so that he can not be bullying others in future he can cease what ever he is doing. We provide counseling to both the victim and the bully, the bystanders, school community and the families of both parties involved in the incident. We subject learners to program that will assist them depending on their needs. we also include parenting and behavior modification. Behavioral programs and also teach behavior modification and then there is a parenting ummm they way we educate parent about proper parenting styles where parents need to understand their children and also counseling to those who has been bullied and behavior modification to the bullies. (Participant T)."

Moreover, participant U included the importance of the involvement of psychologist when providing services to bullying. This was said to be fundamental to focus on the psychological aspects of bullying.

"For now psychologists as well can come because they can even diagnose because somehow the learners they have eerrr disorders. That's why they are not even concentrating at school some sometimes instead of them concentrating they turn to bully the other one the psychologist as well they can come forth and diagnose those particular learners I think it can also help. They are able to deal with psychological problems which the learners experience to avoid mental health and suicides as they are prevalent. (Participant U)."

Professional stakeholders are crucial in addressing bullying in educational institutions. It is imperative that we adopt a professional approach to effectively combat bullying (Masilo, 2018). Social workers offer empowerment programs that focus on enhancing the self-esteem and self-confidence of both the victim and the bully. They also address the environmental factors that contribute to bullying in educational settings and conduct awareness campaigns to highlight its consequences (Smith, 2016). Social workers, along with teachers and psychologists, play a pivotal role in addressing bullying. This perspective aligns with the findings of the study regarding the involvement of professional stakeholders.

5.3.4.2 SUB-THEME 4.2: PARENTS AND SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

Parents and the school governing body have been found to be key stakeholders in the fight against bullying in learning institutions. The study revealed that parents are among the environmental factors that perpetuate or contribute to bullying due to their conduct at home. Furthermore, parents play a role in instilling discipline in their children and can shape their behavior by paying attention to their conduct. Parents who are violent or expose their children to gender-based violence influence the behavior of learners at school. When parents resort to violence to resolve everything, they give learners the mentality that force, violence, and aggression are necessary to solve problems. The study found that children perceive violence as the only way to resolve conflicts.

The school governing body is also crucial because they develop rules, policies, and anti-bullying policies that help deter unacceptable conduct. They discipline learners who display prohibited conduct and behavior within the school. Additionally, they ensure the implementation of policies and procedures that address violent behavior within the learning institution. Moreover, the school governing body communicates with parents as representatives of the parents within the school. The study suggests that the school governing body works with the teaching staff, management, and administrative staff to identify, treat, and manage bullying within the school environment.

> *"Umm eish I think for parent they are one of the stakeholders even though I didn't mention them but I think they are very important even the neighbors/ members of the community but not all of them but you can identify some of the group leaders at school. Parents through their effective parenting style they can also help with addressing the issues of bullying at school. effective parenting assist with the fight against bullying and parents needs to understand that they are the role model to some of their children. Parents who cooperate with the teachers, social workers and the school governing body monitor the behavior of their children at school in consultation with the other stakeholders. (Participant B)."*

Participant F further indicated that the school governing body is a critical stakeholder that assists in addressing bullying within learning institutions.

> *"Umm I think they can also put in place some rules and those rules needs to be followed by learners and known by parents. The SGB are the bridge between the school and the parents which make them important. The represent school governing body they are representing the parents they are the parents they also have a role to play in fighting with bullying they are the ones that can gather the parents on the school of the children who are attending in a certain school. They can be able to gather them in one place and they can also if necessary they can also invite us or invite me as a*

social worker to come and address the parents on this issue and how serious is it to the future of the child. (Participant F)."

The involvement of parents in promoting positive and good behavior is fundamental in addressing bullying. Parents teach children acceptable conduct and behavior, and discipline them for displaying violent behavior at school (Smith, 2016). Parents are involved in proactive programs aimed at reducing and addressing bullying. They also participate in anti-bullying programs that help ensure children display good conduct (Masilo, 2018). Parents are important stakeholders in efforts to prevent school-based bullying. School-based intervention programs have been viewed as more effective in reducing peer victimization. Parenting programs aimed at improving and enhancing parenting behaviors, parent-child interactions, problem-solving abilities for children, and effective parenting skills have been found to have a positive effect (Huang, Espelage, Polanin, & Hong, 2019:5). Educating parents about bullying awareness is an effective way to deal with bullying. School governing bodies are also important stakeholders in the bullying phenomenon. They develop anti-social, anti-bullying policies and ensure that parents encourage their children to comply with school policies (Smith, 2016).

5.3.4.3 SUB-THEME 4.3: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement agencies have a crucial role to play as stakeholders in the fight against bullying in learning institutions. The study found that law enforcement conducts educational sessions, preventative campaigns and awareness programs alongside social workers, nurses and other stakeholders. The social crime prevention units of the Department of Social Development and the South African Police Service conduct campaigns against violence and aggression targeting schools and the entire community.

CATEGORIES:

•   South African Police Service **and courts as stakeholders involved in addressing bullying**

The South African Police Service (SAPS) plays a crucial role in reducing, preventing, and educating learners, youth, and the community about bullying in educational institutions. The study has found that the police educate learners about the dangers of bullying, its consequences, and the potential for a criminal record. Additionally, the study found that the police collaborate with probation officers who explain that bullying is a violent crime that can lead to arrest and criminal charges. The National Prosecuting Authority and the Judiciary also participate in preventative campaigns to discuss the prosecution process when learners are charged with violence and aggression that amount to a crime. The Judiciary also aims to discourage learners from further engaging in bullying within educational institutions and communities. The study emphasizes the importance of involving these stakeholders in the fight against bullying, as they have the potential to help learners understand the impact on their future. The SAPS, along with probation officers, arrest learners involved in bullying, while probation officers assess learners under the age of 18.

> *"SAPS (uhm) must be part and must also go to school and encourage the kids to go to school and not bully each other, let them know that is a crime, ya ya. They must talk to learners and explain that bullying can lead to their arrest which may lead to criminal record that will ultimately ruin their lives. They explain that they may be removed from their home environment to a place that accommodate children that conduct themselves in a violent and aggressive manner. The crime prevention unit of SAPS work with the probation officers and the other stakeholders involved to ensure that learners do not engage in bullying and violent behavior at school. (Participant L)."*

Participant P further alluded to the importance of the court, National Prosecuting Authority and the Presiding Officers in addressing bullying in learning institutions.

"the courts play an important role in deterring the phenomenon of bullying. This is because the prosecutors and the magistrates play an important role when a learner/child is charged with crime. They have a role to participate in the education, awareness and preventative of bullying in learning institutions. They are better positioned or better stakeholders to provide information about what will happen when the learners continuously involve themselves with bullying. These are part of law enforcement organizations that are tasked with the responsibility to address violent crime including bullying. (Participant P)."

Bullying is viewed as a serious violation, involving aggressive behavior that can lead to engagement in criminal activities. There is a significant amount of criminal development that results from this violent and aggressive behavior. This suggests that there is a connection between crime and bullying (Walter & Roberts, 2016:98). Many bullies may have criminal records by the time they reach the age of 30, and some of them have been exposed to criminal processes at a young age. Children who bully are likely to become adults involved in criminal activities (Sinokowski & Kopasz, 2015:73).

It is important to note that the police have a crucial role to play in combating bullying. Studies show that violent and aggressive behavior can lead to criminal behavior and a criminal record. Although it does not explicitly discuss the role of the police, prosecution, and the judiciary, it is important to highlight the importance of these institutions in addressing bullying. The stakeholders responsible for educating learners about bullying must always involve the police, prosecutors, magistrates, probation officers, nurses, and correctional services. These are critical stakeholders within law enforcement who ensure that the law is upheld when addressing bullying.

5.3.4.4 SUB-THEME 4.4: DEPARTMENTS
CATEGORIES:

•   **Department of education and department of social development**

The government Department of Social Development and Education has a critical role to play in the fight against bullying. The study found that Social Development provides both proactive and reactive programs to address the challenge of bullying. It has been found that social workers from the Department of Social Development attend to cases of bullying in schools, providing psychosocial services, education, preventative programs, and counseling. The Department of Education observes instances of bullying within learning institutions and reports them to the school-linked social workers for intervention. The schools have policies that prohibit learners from engaging in violent and aggressive behavior towards any child. Clearly, the study has found that these two departments are key in addressing the challenges of bullying experienced within a learning environment.

> *"err the department of social development is one important department that play a critical role in addressing bullying in learning institutions. As social workers we respond to cases of bullying and other social issues in schools and provide interventions. We also have plans to visit schools, conduct awareness campaigns, provide education on a quarterly basis. This is not adequate but we try to do our best to address the growing problem of bullying. The department of social development is tasked with the responsibility to deal with bullying as a social problem. (Participant E)."*

Importantly, participant J included the Department of Education as one of the stakeholders that play a fundamental role in the bullying phenomenon.

> *"bullying occurs within the school environment and this make the department of education to be central in this. In my view the department of education play a critical role in the phenomenon of bullying and work closely with the department of social development. the department of education through the teachers or the welfare committees within the school report incidents of bullying at schools to the social workers for intervention. The department has protocols for disciplining learners that become violent at*

schools. This is an important stakeholder to address the problem of bullying. (Participant J)."

The role played by the Department of Social Development and Education as stakeholders is immeasurable. Although there is minimal literature about their role, it is evident that these institutions have a huge responsibility in the fight against bullying. The stakeholders actively participate in bullying incidents on a daily basis and interact with both the victims and perpetrators of bullying.

5.3.5 THEME 5: SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING BULLYING IN A LEARNING INSTITUTION MORE EFFECTIVELY

The researcher needed to provide strategies that are critical in addressing bullying within learning institutions. These strategies are important for effectively reduction and dealing with the phenomenon of bullying. The study aimed to develop strategies to address the ongoing problem of bullying experienced by learners in a learning context. The theme has emerged with three categories which are discussed below:

CATEGORIES:
• **Employment of full-time social workers at schools**

The study has revealed that employing full-time social workers at schools is a key strategy for dealing with the phenomenon of bullying. It has highlighted that social workers have various roles and effective programs that can address bullying when they focus on social problems within the school. The study has further revealed that full-time social workers who prioritize learners have minimal responsibilities and can provide effective proactive and reactive programs to address bullying. Social workers can educate about bullying, its consequences, and implement preventative programs, while also raising awareness and involving stakeholders in efforts to address bullying. Additionally, the study found that social workers offer support groups for families and learners who experience bullying.

"I think social workers are a key strategy if used properly in the fights against bullying in learning institutions. This is because social workers are trained to deal with behavioral problems of children, provide behavior modification programs and render counseling services to both the victim and the bully. Social workers have a number of skills to address this problem provided they are full-time focused on the social problems experienced within the school environment. The recruitment of social workers to be based in school and address all problems arising in schools will be fundamental in the fights against bullying. (Participant I)"

Participant M agreed with participant I and emphasized the significance of consistent awareness campaigns against bullying. They also mentioned the importance of providing education to learners about the consequences and effects of bullying.

"social workers have targeted awareness campaigns in the school environment. They will normally look at the issue that is becoming a problem and address it through awareness and education. Social problems will be reported to the social worker who is based at school full-time and this will make it easy to be conscious of the challenges that needs to be addressed. They also provide therapeutic services to the victim of bullying, perpetrators and the debriefing services to the bystanders. Placed in school on a full-time basis focused on social problems from the school and the environmental factors that also involve families will address the problem of bullying. (Participant M)"

Participant P agrees with the views of both participants I and M. He further highlights that social workers at schools must have a scope that includes the families of the learners, teachers, administrative staff, and the community.

"social workers must be aware of the ecological factors that may contribute to bullying. The gangsterism at schools, violence within families and

communities needs to be addressed. Social workers provide education to school community including the teachers, administrative staff, school governing body and the parents about bullying and the dangers of bullying. Violent behavior within the family environment makes children to think conflict is resolved through violence and this is why bullying continues. The full-time presence of social workers will be able to address these challenges and make school a safe environment for learners and teachers. (Participant P)".

Social workers around the world provide various services to victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and the school community in response to bullying (NASW, 2015). They offer counseling, educational programs, preventative measures, debriefing, and therapeutic services. By utilizing counseling, education, and preventative programs, social workers address the repetitive offending behavior within the school environment (Horton, 2016). The skills, knowledge, and expertise of social workers make them significant in addressing social problems like bullying (Chesborough, 2015).

It is worth noting that participants in the study identified the need for full-time social workers in schools, with a reduced workload that focuses on issues affecting students, as a key solution to address bullying. Schools without social workers face undue pressure related to bullying and other social problems. Social workers would be able to address bullying and other social issues within the school environment.

• **Development of policies and bullying specific programmes.**

The study emphasized the importance of developing bullying-specific programs. These programs should be stand-alone and have standard operating procedures and guidelines for intervening in bullying incidents. Effective programs for dealing with bullying should have materials and resources. Bullying-specific policies were found to be essential in deterring potential perpetrators within the learning environment. These policies provide guidance and guidelines for addressing incidents of bullying. Bullying-specific programs

should include materials such as pamphlets, booklets, and videos that promote understanding of bullying and its effects.

> "development of policies that are going to provide guidance about bullying is important in social work. This policies will assist with understanding about the challenges of bullying and guidelines on how to deal with bullying. The bullying specific policies are fundamental to address the phenomenon on a preventative level, reactive level and therapeutic level. (Participant O)."

Specific programs need to be in place that focus on bullying as a phenomenon. Participant S argues that social workers need to have a focused program that address all the challenges relating to bullying.

> "bullying is a serious social problem that has various consequences for its victims, perpetrators, bystanders, the school personnel, school governing body, parents and the community at large. I therefore think this need to be prioritized and be made a program with its budget, targets and expectations. In a specific program, social workers need to have guidelines for running the program and intervening. It should be treated like programs such as HIV/AIDS, substance abuse and disability. This is because it has become a threat to the lives of learners in learning environment and need to be addressed before it gets out of hand. (Participant O)."

Participants U has indicated the importance of having resources and materials that will assist in showing the learners about the effects of bullying on both the victim and the perpetrator.

> "ehhh bullying is a big issue and need careful approach and treatment. Learners prefer reading, listening and watching a particular program. It is important that there development of bullying materials like pamphlets, youtube programs, videos and pictures that talk about bullying. This will be used during the preventative and awareness campaigns to deter learners

from engaging in such behavior. Some learners are unaware of the consequences of their actions and will need to be shown and reminded.(Participant U)."

It is interesting to note that creativity and innovation play a crucial role in addressing the issue of bullying. The study suggests that the social work profession should establish a specialized directorate focused on bullying, equipped with necessary resources and materials. Although there is limited literature supporting this view, it is important to recognize its significance in combating bullying. The researcher sees this as a significant step towards creating schools and society free from bullying and violence. The development of specific policies will shape the directorate and provide guidance. The researcher believes that bullying should be treated as its own program, with dedicated resources and materials. Furthermore, specific policies should be developed to support effective interventions by the directorate.

• **Provide updated awareness programmes and cooperation with stakeholders**
The research study also highlights the importance of updated awareness programs and collaboration with stakeholders. Awareness campaigns are crucial in preventing bullying, violence, and aggression in educational institutions. The strengths-based approach, which helps students focus on their strengths, was found to be significant in this study. The findings suggest that social workers need to have updated programs that directly address bullying. Evaluating the effectiveness of these programs is also important. Updated programs are critical in addressing the ongoing issue of bullying in educational institutions. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of working closely with stakeholders who have insights into bullying, such as students, parents, teachers, administrative personnel, and school governing bodies. Learners themselves play a significant role in shaping the approach and improving awareness programs. Taking an integrated perspective on bullying is essential in effectively addressing its root causes, prevalence, and consequences.

"It is important that we review our programs frequently to ensure effectiveness and impacts of the services we provide to the bullying phenomenon. Continuous evaluations of the awareness programs will assist with the reduction of new cases of bullying. This is because awareness is aimed at preventing learners from engaging in such behavior and deter learners from being involved in violence. Once the awareness programs responds to the challenges experienced in bullying and appeal to the learners, it will have a fundamental impacts in the numbers of cases reported. (Participant D)."

Participant G took it further to say stakeholders must be involved in updating the awareness programs to respond to the trends around bullying.

"learners are smarts and invent new things on a daily basis. The use of cyberbullying is critically affecting the learners and need continuous review of the offering within the program. Stakeholders which include learners need to be involved in ensuring that social workers render effective programs that are relevant and respond to the changing trends about bullying. (Participant G)."

"The school governing body need to be supportive to the developed plans for intervention in bullying program. I think the parents are also important stakeholders that needs to be involved because some of the behavior of learners in from the family environment. This requires the intervention to be holistic and include the ecological perspective to also look at the environmental factors that contributes to bullying as a phenomenon. (Participant K)."

Awareness is globally recognized as the proactive program in social work that seek to prevent social problems from occurring. It is a strength for the social work profession to prevent rather than be reactive and provide therapeutic services to clients (Chesborough,

2015). Social work considers the environment's effects on learners' behaviour to identify the root cause of the problem (Horton, 2016). The involvement of different stakeholders in addressing bullying remains paramount and effective especially when learners, parents, teachers and the school governing body are involved. This provides a holistic approach to bullying and will yield desired results in addressing the challenges of bullying (Toros, 2013).

- **Database for bully offenders and teaching morals**

The database of perpetrators of bullying is critical for deterring learners from engaging in violent and aggressive behavior in learning institutions. The study found that learners need to understand that their actions will result in being listed in the register of bullying offenders. Although there are concerns about potential discrimination, it has been emphasized that this measure will help reduce the number of bullying incidents in schools. The development of the database should be similar to the child protection register, which identifies individuals who have violated children and have been deemed unfit to work with them by a court. This database will list bullies who perpetuate violence and aggression towards other learners in both the school environment and society as a whole.

Furthermore, the study revealed that learners need to be taught morals both at home and in schools. These teachings should incorporate the Ubuntu approach, which promotes principles of humility, respect, and honesty.

> *"I think in my view, we need to establish legislations, policies and the standard operating procedure that will develop a database for learners who are identified as bullies within the school environment. This can be argued to be discriminative but it is not and will assist to deal decisively with the bullies. Children will have understanding that their names will be listed if they engage in such activities and may be subject of discrimination and stop engaging in violence and aggression. The custodian of the legislation must take responsibility for the education of learners about the purpose of the*

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Act, standard operating procedure and policies, what the consequences may be. (Participant I)".

"The Department of Education and Social Development should develop a guidelines, curriculum to include the teachings of morals and Ubuntu to learners from primary schooling to high school. I believe Universities should develop a module about bullying as well but primary and high schools are key because this is more prevalent at this level. The life skills program should include the lessons about bullying that will ensure that the incidents are addressed. (Participant K)".

Interestingly, the study found that a database is one strategy that can be applied to deal with bullying. The development of a database will restrict learners from engaging in violent and aggressive behavior. This finding is intriguing because there is no literature that addresses this aspect as a tool to address bullying. Additionally, the inclusion of bullying in education was found to be significant in ensuring that learners understand what bullying is, its consequences, and how to address it. This is important because education is key in reducing the spread of this phenomenon within learning institutions. Learners will be scared to commit bullying because they will be scared that they will be listed in the bullying register. The register will be known as a register for the bullies and it will be including the bullies only. This is similar to the child protection register and sexual offences register. Learners will not want to be included in the register because they will think they are labeled.

5.4. SUMMARY

This chapter discusses the findings of the study that focused on the analysis and interpretation of data collected from social workers connected to schools that address bullying incidents. The study revealed that bullying has various consequences on social, emotional, academic, and psychological aspects. It also identified several strategies to address bullying, such as hiring full-time social workers in schools, implementing policies,

and establishing a dedicated and well-funded bullying directorate. Additionally, the study emphasized the importance of awareness programs in preventing bullying in educational institutions.

The next chapter will provide guidelines for social work practice to support interventions regarding bullying incidents.

CHAPTER 6

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERVENTION GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides guidelines for social work interventions regarding bullying as a phenomenon. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2014), guidelines are documents that have been developed to provide recommendations for practice. The researcher begins by explaining the process that has been followed for the development of guidelines for social work practice. These guidelines are specifically for addressing bullying among learners within the South African learning context. The researcher utilized the Delphi method in developing these guidelines explaining each step, paying attention to the methodology used, the participants involved, data collection, and the study results.

These guidelines are not meant to replace any existing services that address bullying. Rather, they are intended to complement the available professional services that aim to tackle bullying in the learning context. These guidelines are an important resource for addressing the issue of bullying and should be considered to assist social workers in

providing effective interventions for this phenomenon. The theoretical framework supported the development of these guidelines. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the development of guidelines for social work practice and a summary to close the chapter.

6.2. PROCEDURE FOR DEVELOPING GUIDELINES.

The methods developed by Delphi provide an opportunity for the development of guidelines. These guidelines will be presented to the stakeholders and professionals involved, and recommendations will be provided based on the final guidelines. The purpose and objectives of the guidelines will also be explained, along with the expected outcomes.

The Delphi technique was used in this research study to guide the development of guidelines. The technique aims to achieve consensus among experts, so social workers who are experts in the issue of bullying in a learning context were asked questions to gain understanding and consensus. The goal was to develop guidelines for social work practice.

Using the Delphi technique, the researcher asked questions, recorded responses, and consolidated and transmitted the feedback received from the expert panels to reach consensus. In this study, the technique involved one stage of face-to-face interviews with social workers who respond to incidents of bullying in schools.

The first stage of the Delphi technique involved recruiting participants who are experts in the field. Selecting participants with expertise was a crucial aspect of this stage. The participants were social workers who have at least three years of experience in dealing with bullying and are registered as social workers.

6.3. REASON/PURPOSE OF DEVELOPING GUIDELINES

The development of guidelines is aimed at providing a framework for intervention in social work practice when responding to or addressing bullying incidents. These guidelines intend to strengthen social work intervention methods in dealing with bullying and offer guidance on effectively addressing the issue holistically. Social work professionals and organizations providing services related to bullying will receive guidance on proactive and reactive approaches to bullying. The interventions will support learners involved in bullying, as well as teachers, school governing bodies, parents, and the community.

1. The results of the guidelines are to provide social workers with a standardized framework to be used to provide intervention in bullying.

2. To empower social workers, teachers, learners, parents, school governing body and communities with skills to be able to address bullying.

3. To develop working relationships with different stakeholders within the bullying interventions among learners.

4. To provide psychosocial support to learners that are involved in incidents of bullying.

5. To provide strategies to be applied to address bullying within learning context.

6. To enhance the intervention methods and skills to social workers working to respond better to bullying incidents.

7. To develop pool or resources required to provide complete effective bullying interventions.

8. To equip social workers with skills to enhance their knowledge and attitudes towards bullying interventions.

9. To provide education about information that is relevant to communities about bullying and its consequences.

6.4. THE OBJECTIVE/S FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES.

10. The objectives of developing guidelines are to provide social workers and organizations that offer bullying services with standardized guidance. This will enable social workers to provide inclusive, universal services that address the issue of bullying.

6.5. LEVEL OF INTERVENTION

The explanation of the theoretical framework and the theory applied in developing guidelines is important. The explanation stage is critical before the developed guidelines can be presented and finalized. The study is grounded in the ecological approach, which provides the foundation and basis (Zastrow, 2013). The ecological approach focuses on the significance of the natural world and the attitudes in which human beings are located and are a part of (Pawar, 2014). This approach provides understanding that social work professionals need to understand the impact that bullying has on learners within learning institutions (Kuo et al, 2014). The theory explains the levels and ways learners could be bullied within learning institutions. Chapter three of this thesis provides a detailed account of how the theory is applied and its applicability to this study. The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and chronosystem are important elements to explain the environment and its impact the behavior of learners. It is fundamental for the social workers who are linked to schools providing services to address bullying to understand how these outlined systems impact on the environment of learners. This approach integrates social work interventions for individuals, families, communities and stakeholders. The elements are explained in more detail below.

6.6. PRESENTATION OF GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH BULLYING MALADY IN LEARNING CONTEXT

This section presents the guidelines developed for social work practice in dealing with bullying within a learning context. Guidelines are crucial in providing social workers with the necessary terms and understanding to effectively intervene in bullying incidents. The phenomenon of bullying requires guidelines that can assist social workers in gaining the background knowledge and understanding of what needs to be done to provide appropriate interventions. It is important to explain the purpose of these guidelines to ensure a clear understanding of the task at hand. This section must also cover the main

objectives and expected outcomes of developing these guidelines. Additionally, the outline and presentation of the guidelines will be discussed in this section.

6.6.1. The impact of bullying on learners in learning institutions

This guideline relates to the social and emotional impact that bullying has on learners in learning institutions. It provides guidelines that will assist social workers in dealing with the social, emotional, and physical aspects of bullying. The following steps are for consideration by social workers when addressing the impacts of bullying.

1.　　Holistic assessments

Social workers should conduct comprehensive assessments to inform the interventions that need to be taken. Assessment is an important method used by social workers to gather information. They need to use assessment to determine the strengths and weaknesses of both the bullies and the victims, to identify and develop better intervention. The assessment should also examine the level of knowledge about bullying among the victims, bullies, and teachers. This will help in developing an intervention plan to address the problem. The assessment of knowledge should specifically focus on understanding bullying and its consequences. Additionally, social workers should assess the environmental factors that contribute to bullying. Furthermore, the assessment should examine the impact of bullying on social, emotional, and physical aspects. A holistic assessment will provide a better understanding of the intervention plan that needs to be implemented.

2.　　Planning

Planning is important to shape the future of the intervention and the action that will be taken. Social workers need to develop a plan on how the bullying will be addressed,

the methods to be applied and intervention strategies. The planning should have activities and the action committee members that are going to be responsible for the implementation of the program. Problems need to be identified the social worker need to identify organizations and stakeholders within the learning context. Resources that can assist address bullying need to be identified and the available experience, skills and expertise.

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3.   Intervention

The intervention to be provided should be learner- and teacher-friendly and age-appropriate. Social workers will intervene in the lives of clients to solve the problems they are experiencing and develop a support system to prevent them from recurring. The intervention plan should be a response to the assessment that was conducted. Theories of social work are important when providing intervention as they provide an understanding of certain behaviors and explain different human behaviors and as such during planning, theories should be considered. Theories also provide guidance to social workers in providing effective interventions for bullying.

Social workers need to provide intervention to individuals, families, groups, and communities. Individual intervention should focus on both the victims and perpetrators of bullying. It is important to prioritize both the victim and perpetrator when providing intervention. The group should consist of learners who share similar traits that need to be addressed. Additionally, social workers should establish bullying champions, who are learners that have previously engaged in bullying but have since changed their offensive behavior and become involved in anti-bullying programs.

4.   Referral system

Social workers involved in addressing bullying should establish a robust referral system. This system should include the creation of a database and network of professionals who specialize in handling bullying cases. The purpose of this referral system is to ensure that clients receive the appropriate expertise to effectively address their bullying problem. It is crucial for social workers to establish relationships with these experts who play a role in assisting students involved in bullying. The referral process should include a standardized letter that outlines the reasons for the referral and the specific services required. In addition, involving a multidisciplinary team is essential. Social workers must have a clear understanding of their own skills, competencies, and professional boundaries to make appropriate referrals.

5. **Evaluation.**

Continuous evaluation of the services provided is important. Evaluation is a fundamental step in the process of social work intervention. Social workers need to evaluate the services they are providing for bullying, develop plans for improvements, and create recovery plans. This is important in order to understand areas for improvement in the interventions provided. Evaluation will assist in determining whether the program and services are being achieved.

6.6.2. BULLYING ADDRESSED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN LEARNING INSTITUTIONS.

This guideline is important for social workers as it provides guidance on services and programs that can help address and respond to bullying. It plays a crucial role in the services that social workers provide to learners who are victims of bullying, the perpetrators of bullying, bystanders, and parents. The guideline recommends that social workers effectively utilize their skills to enhance knowledge among learners about bullying.

6.   Therapeutic and debriefing services

Therapeutic support services involve the development of relationships between social workers and their clients. In order to establish effective helping relationships, social workers must demonstrate acceptance, trust, and respect. It is crucial for social workers to possess the necessary skills to provide therapeutic services to victims of bullying. Additionally, learners should be equipped with coping mechanisms to deal with the effects of bullying. By doing so, learners will be able to perform better academically, attend school regularly, and reduce the risk of contemplating suicide. Debriefing services are also essential for indirect victims who have experienced bullying, as they help individuals cope with the challenges associated with these incidents. Furthermore, social workers play a vital role in building resilience in bullying victims, enabling them to effectively handle any future occurrences.

7.   Psychosocial support services.

Psychosocial interventions focus on the behavioral aspects and social factors that can enhance the social functioning of individuals involved in bullying. These interventions aim to improve the quality of life for those affected and prevent any disruption to their positive functioning. Additionally, they provide a foundation for the mental health of individuals exposed to bullying, addressing their emotional, spiritual, social, and cultural well-being.

8.   Behavior modification and parenting programs.

Social workers need to implement behavior modification programs to address the aggressive and violent behavior of individuals. Learners who engage in bullying demonstrate behavioral issues that require intervention. It is crucial for social workers to focus on the bullies themselves in order to modify their behavior. Additionally, social workers should offer parenting programs to promote effective parenting practices. This is important because inadequate parenting contributes to instances of bullying and

exposes children to violence and domestic abuse. By providing parenting skills programs, we can ensure that parents fulfill their responsibilities and prevent children from being exposed to violence and aggression.

6.6.3. STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN ADDRESSING BULLYING IN LEARNING INSTITUTION.

Stakeholders play a crucial role in addressing the issue of bullying in the context of education. Without the involvement and support of these individuals, incidents of bullying will persist among targeted learners in schools. The social work profession works alongside various stakeholders to provide services and programs aimed at addressing bullying within the school environment. Key stakeholders in the fight against bullying include learners, parents, family members, teachers, school governing bodies, and social crime prevention of the South African Police Service. Each of these stakeholders has a unique role to play in ensuring that the number of reported bullying cases in schools is minimized.

9. **Develop case flow management team.**

The Case Flow Management Team will assist with areas of concern related to intervening in bullying. The team will meet monthly to analyze the challenges and develop an action plan. They will be responsible for managing incidents and cases of bullying reported in the learning institution. Reports should be provided for the team meetings, and solutions must be provided to address the problems. The team should include teachers, student leaders, the school governing body, social workers, and the police. Social workers, as custodians of children empowered by the Children's Act 38 of 2005, and the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 should take the lead. The team has different roles in dealing with bullying within the learning institution.

6.6.4. STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING BULLYING IN LEARNING INSTITUTIONS.

There are a range of strategies that social workers need to implement to address bullying in educational institutions to create a safe learning environment, free from violence, aggression, and abuse. This guideline is essential for effectively reducing and managing cases of bullying within educational institutions.

10. Anti-bullying programs.

Anti-bullying programs should involve all learners involved in bullying, as well as the other learners, school staff, and the entire community. Learners, educators, and social workers should speak out against bullying to discourage bullies from continuously harming others. Social workers should create anti-bullying programs that target learners, parents, and communities. These programs should focus on educating learners about the risks of participating in bullying.

11. Preventative and awareness campaigns.

Proactive social work strategies should be implemented to address bullying in educational institutions. Prevention is crucial in reducing the likelihood of bullying incidents in a learning environment. Three types of prevention interventions should be utilized: primary prevention, which involves intervening before the problem arises; secondary prevention, which focuses on early detection and identification of issues; and tertiary intervention, which involves managing the problem after it has been identified. Schools that exhibit a high prevalence of bullying and display signs of such behavior should be targeted for preventative programs aimed at reducing bullying incidents. It is important to involve relevant stakeholders in order to avoid duplicating services for the same target. Social workers should continuously update their programs to effectively respond to the challenges they face.

12. Research on the improvement of intervention and strategies.

Social workers need to continuously conduct research to improve the strategies and interventions provided for bullying incidents. Bullying is a complex and evolving phenomenon, necessitating social workers to stay updated with research studies. Research is essential in reducing and managing any social problem, and bullying is no exception. Social workers also need to refer to articles, documents, theses, journals, and academic books. The utilization of research, approaches, and theories enhances the effective intervention required to address and manage bullying within learning institutions.

13.   Policy development and Policy improvement.

Reviewing existing policies and legislation is crucial for assessing their effectiveness and impact on dealing with bullying in learning institutions. This assessment will help improve the response required to address bullying. Policies and legislation play a significant role in preventing learners from engaging in acts of violence and managing bullying incidents. Evaluating the services provided for bullying incidents and the effectiveness of policies and legislation will help identify areas for improvement. It is important to develop and advocate for policies that promote the employment of social workers on a full-time basis in schools. Social workers have a critical role to play in addressing bullying, providing proactive and reactive services.

The development of standard operating procedures, policies, and procedures is going to assist in addressing the problem of bullying. Social workers should play active role in the development of policies that seek to address bullying. Anti-bullying programs can take the form of awareness campaigns, policies, and education. Social workers will assist schools in developing anti-bullying policies and programs that effectively address bullying. The experience and knowledge of the phenomenon of bullying will assist in the development, amendment of policies. Social workers are able to identify gaps on problems and causes of bullying in schools. This process will involve the identification of

the needs, gather information about bullying, and consult stakeholders. Drafting of document will then be implemented to finalize the process.

6.7. SUMMARY.

This chapter presents a comprehensive explanation of the developed guidelines for social work practice. These guidelines pertain to the response that social workers should provide to bullying incidents within learning institutions. The aim was to establish a universal standardized framework or set of guidelines that would assist social workers in understanding how to respond. The initial stage of this chapter provided an overview, which included the Delphi methods and the steps that are followed. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the final guidelines, which are designed to ensure that social workers understand the framework. The intervention guidelines specifically offer guidance on how to effectively intervene in cases of bullying in educational settings.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This study has identified, explained, described, and explored the issue of bullying in educational settings and has developed guidelines for social work practice. The study aims to provide an understanding of the roles social workers play in addressing bullying, the stakeholders involved, and the challenges faced within educational institutions. Additionally, it offers guidelines for social workers working with bullying incidents in schools. The study also establishes critical strategies that can be used to address bullying. This chapter includes a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for employers, future research, social workers, policy developers, parents, and stakeholders.

7.2. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY.

This research report is comprised of seven chapters, each designed systematically to ensure the validity and credibility of the research findings. All the processes followed in conducting a qualitative research study have been observed. The preceding six chapters of the research study are summarized as follows:

Chapter one provides the general orientation for the study. It covers the background of the study, problem statement, and rationale, all supported by relevant literature. The chapter also includes the research objectives, questions, and ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and avoidance of harm. Additionally, the limitations of the study are discussed.

Chapter two gives an overview of the literature applied in the study, focusing on the bullying malady in a learning context. It reviews literature that aligns with the research aims and objectives, providing a basis for the findings. This chapter includes literature on bullying, its effects on learners, and strategies to address bullying. The literature review presents what past studies have found and highlights the work of other scholars in the field. Credible articles, documents, journals, books, and internet sources were reviewed.

Chapter three presents the theoretical and conceptual framework. The chapter introduces the ecological approach and social learning theory, differential association theory and self-determination theory which provided the background for the study. These theories guided the study by examining their influence on learner behavior related to bullying. The impact of these theories on learners and how they influence their behavior was explored.

Chapter four describes the research methodology adopted for the study. It provides a detailed account of the research approach, specifically the application of a qualitative research approach and exploratory design. Justifications for the chosen research paradigm, methodology, sampling procedure, and methods of data analysis are provided. The chapter also discusses sampling and location, data collection methods, data analysis, pilot study, and data verification.

Chapter five presents the research findings through the development of themes, sub-themes, and categories. These elements are derived from the data collected in the study. The findings are compared and contrasted with other studies using literature control. The data analysis was conducted by the researcher and verified by the research supervisor to ensure credibility.

Chapter six focuses on the development of guidelines for social work practice in addressing the bullying malady in a learning context. These guidelines are based on the findings of the study. The chapter explains the purpose and objectives of developing the guidelines.

The last chapter summarizes the study, presents the conclusions, and provides recommendations. The recommendations target future research and the social work profession.

7.3. CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The findings detailed in Chapter Five have led to conclusions. These conclusions have been guided by the themes and subthemes that were identified during the study. The following themes and subthemes are presented below.

Conclusions on the participants' perception and understanding of bullying.

The definition of the concept of bullying has new elements that need to be considered. There is a need for the review of the definition and understanding of bullying. The definition of bullying should consider the intentional and continuous misuse of power through the physical, emotional, verbal and cyberbullying. It should be understood that this is done to cause harm on the victim of bullying. Sexual and psychological bullying should be considered as part of the types of bullying. It is important that social workers continuously receive training to understand better the phenomenon of bullying and the concept of bullying. The understanding of social workers on the concept of bullying need to be improved to ensure immediate response to the incidents of bullying reported within the school environments. The improvement of knowledge of social workers is fundamental because of the changing nature of the phenomenon. Social workers are better placed to effectively render the services to bullying program.

Conclusions based on the impacts of bullying on learners in a learning institution.

Bullying has a range of impacts on the lives of learners within a learning context. Social workers need to develop programs to respond to the challenges and effects of bullying on learners within a learning context. Psychosocial support programs, therapeutic interventions and debriefing need to be provided to better manage the effects of bullying on the learners. Social workers should have programs that address isolation, absenteeism from school, school dropout, drop in school performance, stress, depression, trauma, contemplating suicide and suicide. Programs need to be developed to address the mental health problems that may occur because of the incidents of bullying. Social workers need to be proactive in the program of bullying to prevent incidents from taking place. Reactive programs should also be in place to manage the incidents that

have been reported within learning contexts. Failure to manage and prevent the incidents of bullying has the potential to disrupt the social functioning of the victim, therefore social workers need to play an active role in the service of bullying.

Conclusions based on bullying addressed by social workers in a learning institution.

Preventative programs are fundamental for social workers to prevent incidents from taking place. These programs should include the awareness campaigns, educational programs aimed at improving the knowledge of learners in learning institutions. Counseling services should also be provided when incidents have taken place already. Social workers need to establish programs that will ensure cooperation with the parents to address the root cause of bullying. Family group conferences and the victim offender mediation should always be considered when addressing the problem of bullying. These will assist understand the learners holistically to ensure that effective intervention plan is developed and implemented.

Conclusions based of the stakeholder involvement in addressing bullying in learning institutions.

Stakeholders are important to ensure integrated services are provided to the service of bullying. Critical stakeholders for the provision of bullying services are social workers, learners, parents, team and the school governing body. Socia workers to establish a team that will be responding to bullying providing different skills, knowledge and expertise. The stakeholders should have their roles clearly outlined to ensure that there is understanding of boundaries in addressing bullying. Social workers need to prioritize stakeholder relations and provide the effective bullying services. Education, awareness campaigns and preventative programs are main services to be provided by the stakeholders.

Conclusions based on the strategies for addressing bullying in a learning institution more effectively.

Government need to consider the employment of full-time social workers to be based in schools to address bullying and other social problems experienced within a learning context. Social workers will develop range of strategies to deal with the phenomenon of bullying. Development of anti-bullying programs, policies and legislations are important when dealing with bullying. Social worker have an important role in preventing and managing incidents of bullying as well as development and improvement of bullying related policies and programs. Establishment of support groups are important to ensure that learners learn from one another with coping mechanisms. Social workers are competent in developing and establishing programs that will respond to bullying problems within learning contexts. Social workers need to work with the school governing body to develop and implement policies that are against bullying activities in learning contexts.

7.4. RECOMMENDATIONS.

This section offers recommendations based on the study's findings. These recommendations are derived from the presented study and propose the best possible solutions to the challenges identified. They provide suggestions for institutions, individuals involved in the phenomenon, and organizations. The recommendations are directed towards employers, future researchers studying the phenomenon, social workers, and policy developers in the field.

1.   Recommendations for the employer.

There is a need for the full-time employment of social workers at schools to address bullying and other social problems. These social workers should focus on issues within the school environment and work with students and their families. It is important to have dedicated social workers with manageable workloads in order to effectively deal with bullying. Employers play a crucial role in supporting social work professionals in their efforts to address bullying. Considering the employment of full-time social workers can

help implement proactive and reactive programs to prevent and manage bullying incidents. It is undeniable that employers have a fundamental role to play in the fight against bullying and in supporting social work professionals.

This study has found that there is a need to establish a bullying program or directorate. This would ensure that the program is adequately resourced, budgeted for, and staffed with individuals dedicated to addressing bullying challenges. The directorate would assist in developing materials such as pamphlets, videos, documents, and legislation to guide the program. It would also help create guidelines for interventions in bullying prevention. Participants in the study emphasized the need for employers to prioritize bullying prevention, create presentation materials, display videos about bullying and its consequences, and ensure sufficient support and funding for the bullying directorate.

Employers are recommended to regularly provide training for social workers and other stakeholders who deal with bullying-related challenges. Empowering and enhancing the skills, knowledge, and expertise of these individuals is crucial in combating the ever-changing nature of bullying. Social workers and teachers require intensive training to effectively address the needs of bullying victims, bullies, bystanders, teachers, and parents. Improving knowledge helps in providing effective social work services and working with key stakeholders to address these challenges. The training provided should be updated to meet the needs of learners in the educational context.

2.   Recommendations for future researchers.

Bullying is a growing problem in schools and communities, and research is crucial for understanding and addressing it. Researchers studying bullying, its effects, and strategies to combat it are necessary to provide informed interventions for students. Ongoing research is needed to find solutions to this issue. Studies should be tailored to specific areas and take cultural influences into account. Research will offer scientific evidence and new perspectives on bullying. Future studies should be experiential,

longitudinal, and compare existing literature. The focus should be on developing strategies to effectively address bullying and provide systematic solutions. Research will not only bring solutions, but also enhance the skills of social workers in intervention efforts.

Comparing study findings across different regions and provinces, as well as the entire country, is important. Continued research is needed until a solution is found that addresses the challenges faced in educational settings. Similar studies in other areas will help compare data and literature, providing critical insights into the phenomenon. Different regions may generate diverse data and findings that can be relevant to bullying in all areas. Future research is necessary due to the changing nature of the issue. By reassessing data, future research can address theories, models, and intervention guidelines. Previous research findings will serve as the foundation for future research, building upon existing journals, articles, and dissertations.

3.   **Recommendations for social workers.**

The social work profession plays an important role in addressing bullying and offers a variety of programs to combat this issue. However, there is a need for improvement in the programs and services provided, and it is crucial to have dedicated social workers specifically focused on schools with manageable workloads. Social workers should continuously evaluate and assess the effectiveness of their programs and services related to bullying. It is essential to provide support to social workers when dealing with bullying. Additionally, it is recommended that social workers implement preventative programs to prevent bullying from occurring. They should also offer counseling services to victims, bullies, and parents, as well as debriefing services to bystanders, teachers, and staff. Education is an important tool that social workers should utilize to ensure that students understand the nature of bullying and its consequences. Social workers must be competent in addressing bullying to effectively manage and respond to this issue.

The study revealed that many schools do not have social workers specifically focused on bullying and social issues within the school environment. While some schools do have social workers, a significant number do not, which negatively affects efforts to combat bullying. The findings indicate that social workers are crucial stakeholders in addressing bullying and are readily available to provide interventions. Despite limited support, staff, and resources, social workers play a fundamental role in helping students navigate challenges at school. The study found that social work interventions take both proactive and reactive forms, including awareness campaigns, preventative programs, education, counseling, debriefing, and therapeutic services. Overall, the study suggests that social workers have a significant role to play in addressing bullying and have a range of programs to offer in response to this issue.

4.   Recommendations for policy developers.

Policy development is crucial in addressing the ever-changing nature of bullying. It is essential to have effective policies, procedures, and legislation in place to tackle this issue. Anti-bullying policies should be developed to discourage learners from engaging in harmful activities. Policy developers have the responsibility to create, educate, maintain, implement, and evaluate these policies. They must ensure that there are appropriate policies in place to effectively address bullying, as well as a designated body responsible for enforcing anti-bullying laws and sufficient funding for related programs. Relevant policies need to be developed to ensure a comprehensive response to bullying. Policy developers should conduct research to better understand the challenges associated with bullying in educational settings, enabling social workers and other stakeholders to effectively respond to new developments in the field. The study highlights the need for policy developers to assess the situation, develop policies and procedures, and address bullying.

Policy developers should identify gaps in addressing bullying and create policies that directly target these issues. In addition to what was previously mentioned, policies should be developed for the recruitment of social workers specifically focused on meeting the

needs of learners in schools. Policies should also be established for maintaining a database of bully offenders. Policy developers are responsible for ensuring that programs and awareness campaigns are regularly updated and reviewed to assess their effectiveness. Mandatory monitoring and evaluation of these programs should be conducted to determine their relevance and effectiveness in addressing the challenges faced. Proposals for policy amendments should be submitted for consideration, and new policies, legislations, and Acts should be developed to address bullying. Policy developers need to engage with different stakeholders and relevant departments to improve existing policies and legislation, making them more responsive to the issue of bullying in educational settings.

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COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

03 November 2022

Dear Mr Sekgobela Tumelo

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 03 November 2022
to 03 November 2023

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
69719675_CREC_CHS_2022

_____

Researcher(s): Name: Mr Sekgobela Tumelo
Contact details: 69719675@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Prof. KJ Malesa
Contact details: maleskj@unisa.ac.za

Title: Bullying Malady in a learning context: Developing intervention guidelines for social work practice

Degree Purpose: DSW

_____

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for five years.

The *low risk application* was reviewed by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.

7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date **(03 November 2023).** Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **69719675_CREC_CHS_2022** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature:

Signature: PP

Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Prof K. Masemola
Exécutive Dean: CHS
E-mail: masemk@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 2298

ADDENDUM B:

LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY:

67/7 6th street

Buffalo wings

Mookgophong

0560

The Head of Department (HOD)

Department of Social Development

Limpopo province

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct a study with Limpopo Social Workers

I hereby write to apply to conduct a study with Social Workers of the Department of Social Development in Limpopo Province. The researcher wants to study Bullying Malady in a learning context: Developing intervention guidelines for social work practice. The population of the study is found to be in Limpopo province because of the increasing cases of bullying in learning context. It has been observed that more communities in the province of Limpopo are experiencing bullying in schools.

The study finding will benefit the Department as the employer, the provincial government and the country as a whole as the country is struggling with the influx of bullying incidents in learning context. It will further assist with interventions to better address the challenges of bullying. The study is fundamental to assist the Department and the country with possible interventions to support and prevent bullying. I am a registered student in the Doctor of Social Work program in the Department of Social Work, School of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

Thank you
Kind regards
Tumelo Sekgobela

Researcher

ADDENDUM C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

Research title: Bullying Malady in a learning context: Developing intervention guidelines for social work practice

Researcher: Mr Tumelo Sekgobela

I ………………………………………………………… volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by **Tumelo Sekgobela**, a student at UNISA. I understand that the project is designed to gather information on the **Bullying Malady in a learning context: Developing intervention guidelines for social work practice**

As an informed participant of this research study, I understand that:

1. My participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw from the research study at any time and without giving a reason and without any cost.

2. During this interview, notes will be taken and the interviews audio recorded.

3. All data will be stored anonymously once it has been collected. This means that it will be impossible to trace information about me.

4. All information appearing in the final report will be anonymous. This means there will be nothing that will enable people to work out what I said.

5. This research study has been approved by the Scientific Review Committee and the Social Work Research Ethics Committee. These committees are run by a panel of professionals who make sure that proposed studies meets high standard of professionalism before approval.

6. All my questions about the study have been satisfactorily answered and I am aware of what my participation implies.

7. **Tumelo Sekgobela** will treat my participation in this study into utmost confidentially and that anything I say in the interview will be treated confidentiality, unless convinces him to believe that my safety and my repute are in danger. In this case, he will be unable to keep this information confidential. If this happens, he will inform me that he will have to share that information because of his concern for my welfare.

8. I understand that I will be given a copy of the consent form.

I have read and understood the provided information, and agree to take part in this study:

Participant's Signature: _____Date: _____

I have explained the above and answered all questions asked by the Participant.
Researcher's Signature: _____Date: _____

ADDENDUM D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Section A: Biographical Information for research participants

    8.   How long have you been practising as a social worker?

    9.   How long have you been working with bullying incidents at school?

Section B: Topical questions for research participants

    10.   What is your understanding of the term "bullying"?

    11.   Please narrate to me about the types of bullying you have dealt with in a learning context.

    12.   What form of training/s have you underwent to be able to deal with bullying in schools?

    13.   Tell me about the challenges you experience while executing your duties as a social worker linked to schools?

    14.   Share with me how you deal with bullying incidents at schools?

    15.   What resources do you needs as a school linked social worker to effectively address this bullying malady in a school context? Share with me how you have been addressing the bullying in learning context?

    16.   What effects does bullying have on learners?

    17.   What is the roles and responsibilities of school linked social worker?

    18.   What kind of support has been offered to you to help you deal with the bullying?

    19.   Which relevant stakeholders do you think have a critical role to play?

    20.   What strategies do you think could be used to reduce bullying?

    21.   Thank you for the valuable information. Is there anything else you would like to add before we end?

ADDENDUM E:

DEBRIEFING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT LETTER

Enq: NF Mohale

Tel. (C): (081) 014 5529
Tel. (H): (076) 669 6953
Email: Ntombifuthi.Mohale@dshd.limpopo.gov.za
         mohalef@yhaoo.com

To whom it may concern

Re: LETTER OF DEBRIEFING SERVICES ARRANGEMENT

This serves to confirm that Mr. Tumelo Sekgobela student no: 69719675 arranged with me to render debriefing services when a need arises. I am employed at the Department of Health in Lephalale as a counsellor and commit myself to offer debriefing services as requested.

Your cooperation in this regard shall be highly appreciated.

Regards
Ntobifuthi fortunate Mohale

NF Mohale (counsellor)

ADDENDUM F: CERTIFICATE OF EDDITING

Editing report for Tumelo Sekgobela

PhD thesis, 07 January 2024

Title: Bullying Malady in a learning context: Developing intervention guidelines for social work practice.

Extent of editing: Proofreading a `degree of Doctor of Social Work thesis text (seven chapters). A light editing was performed including correcting of spelling, grammar and punctuations, fonts, capitalization as well as basic layout of the text. Pages edited amounted to approximately 240. Editing also included checking the in text reference against the reference list and vice versa. Track Changes were used.

General notes:

- Read through the text carefully to ensure you correctly apply each comment and/or suggestion and address them individually and thoughtfully; editor cannot be responsible for corrected errors that are not addressed by the client.

Note: The first chapter sets the form/style choices for spelling, punctuation etc. in the document as a whole. Consistency must be maintained across chapters. Names and phrases must not be changed as they may appear to be the same but carries a different meaning according to the context.

1. **Logical coherence and repetition:** Some sentence and paragraphs in some instances where repeated as they are. Throughout the chapters the researcher's explanations are too long. i.e one paragraph with 15-20 lines without a break in between. Other paragraphs have long sentences without acknowledging any source. Short sentences must be joined together to avoid repetition of words
2. **Use of terms and abbreviations:** Once a term is introduced it must not be changed or applied interchangeably with other terms. i.e school-linked social worker, school social worker. All terms must be written in full before they can be abbreviated.

3. **Structure:**

- All the headings had a full stop, some chapters' headings where numbered.
- The entire document headings and most sub-headings capitalized which affect the structure of the document.
- Chapter two has improper numbering of sections and sub-sections left without numbering.

- Chapter 4, section 4.2 need attention as it has been copied as a table, it should be typed manually.

4. **Numbering of tables and figures:** Carefully check that tables are correctly numbered and do not flow with numbering of a chapter.

5. **Reference list**: the following issues were identified and require careful consideration

   - Some references used in the text are not included in the reference list

   - Some not written in full or accurately. i.e Year of publication in text differ with that in the reference list, spelling of authors names not the same in text and on the reference list

   - Incorrect use of punctuations.

   Ensure all references in text and in the reference list adhere to the style you are using.
   NB: Take a look at Harvard referencing style guide to see how you should reference different documents in text and how to put them on reference list

Dr Gundo Nepfumbada
Independent editor

ADDENDUM G: PERMISSION LETTER- LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
CONFIDENTIAL

Office of the Premier

Research and Development Directorate

Private Bag X9483, Polokwane, 0700, South Africa

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

LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS

COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Online Review Date: 18 November 2022

Project Number: LPREC/59/2022: PG

Subject: Bullying Malady in a Learning Context: Developing Intervention Guidelines for Social Work Practice

Researcher: Sekgobela T

Dr Thembinkosi 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:

1. **This study is categorized as a Low Risk Level in accordance with risk level descriptors as enshrined in LPREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

2. **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.**

3. **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.**

4. **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.**

CONFIDENTIAL

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

TO: DR MC MAKOLA

FROM: DR T MABILA

CHAIRPERSON: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE (LPRC)

ONLINE REVIEW DATE: 18 NOVEMBER 2022

SUBJECT: BULLYING MALADY IN A LEARNING CONTEXT: DEVELOPING INTERVENTION GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

RESEARCHER: SEKGOBELA T

Dear Colleague

The above researcher's research proposal served at the Limpopo Provincial Research Committee (LPRC). The committee is satisfied with the methodological soundness of the proposed study.

Decision: The research proposal is granted approval.

Regards

Acting Chairperson: Dr T Mabila

Secretariat: Ms J Mokobi

Date: 29/11/2022

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

TO: DR MC MAKOLA

FROM: DR T MABILA

CHAIRPERSON: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (LPREC)

ONLINE REVIEW DATE: 18 NOVEMBER 2022

SUBJECT: BULLYING   MALADY   IN   A   LEARNING   CONTEXT: DEVELOPING INTERVENTION GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

RESEARCHER: SEKGOBELA T

Dear Colleague

The above researcher's research proposal served at the Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC). The committee is satisfied with the ethical soundness of the proposed study.

Decision: The research proposal is granted approval.

Regards

Chairperson: Dr T Mabila

Secretariat: Ms J Mokobi

Date: 29/11/2022

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

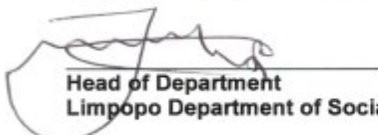Enq   : MJ Moloisi
Tel   : 015 230 4381 / 082 457 7120

67/7 6th street
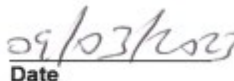Buffalo wings
Mookgophong, 0560

Dear Mr Tumelo Sekgobela

RE: BULLYING MALADY IN A LEARNING CONTEXT: DEVELOPING INTERVENTION GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

1. The above matter has reference.

2. Thank you for applying for permission to conduct research at the Limpopo Department of Social Development. The department further confirms receipt of the research review outcome from the Limpopo Provincial Research and Ethics committees certifying that you have been granted full approval and ethical clearance to conduct a study titled: *"Bullying Malady in a learning context: Developing intervention guidelines for social work practice"*.

3. The following statements are articulated in the research proposal to undertake a study at the provincial Limpopo Department of Social Development; namely that:

   • The aim of the study is to gain an in-depth understanding of social workers 'role in addressing bullying malady in a learning context to develop intervention guidelines for social work practice.
   • The objectives of the study are to explore and describe the bullying malady in a learning context and to develop intervention guidelines for social work practice.
   • The study is fundamental conducted to assist the Department and the country with possible interventions to support and prevent bullying.

4. To this end, this letter serves to grant you permission to conduct research involving Social Workers employed by the Limpopo Department of Social Development.

We trust you will find this to be in order.

_____   09/03/2023
Head of Department   **Date**
Limpopo Department of Social Development

21 Biccard Street, Polokwane, 0700, Private Bag x9710, POLOLKWANE, 0700
Tel: (015) 230 4300, Fax: (015) 291 2298   Website: http/www.dsd.limpopo.gov.za

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