

**ECOSYSTEMIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE IN  
UNDERSTANDING LEARNER BULLYING BEHAVIOUR IN TWO  
TOWNSHIP PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GAUTENG**

**by**

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## DECLARATION

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I affirm that this dissertation is a product of my efforts and that I have acknowledged all sources utilised or referenced by providing complete citations.

In addition, I have verified the dissertation's originality through an authenticity-checking programme, and it conforms to the established standards for originality.

Finally, I attest that I have not previously submitted this work, or any section of it, for assessment at Unisa for another degree or at any other institution of higher learning.

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Date: 24 February 2024

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

My late beloved granny, Mrs Mfiphazo Lessia Mchunu- Ndlela, who was my prayer warrior for always supporting me and making me believe that I could achieve anything I put my mind to. Thank you ... *Macingwane, Nyanda yemikhonto.*

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## ABSTRACT

In today's education system, learners from diverse cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds present various emotional and behavioural challenges. Such challenges are further compounded by differences in gender orientation, ethnicity and ability. This study aimed to identify the ecosystemic and socio-cultural factors that contribute to the prevalence of bullying in schools. The study utilised the Bronfenbrenner bio-ecological systems theory and Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory as a lens to understand the factors that influence bullying and its management in schools. An interpretivist research paradigm and qualitative approach were adopted in this study guided by a case study design. The study employed purposive sampling to gather data from a sample of participants comprising two principals, two Heads of Department, four Grade 7 teachers, two School Governing Body members (SGB), and twelve Grade 7 learners aged between 10 to 13. Purposive sampling ensured that participants were selected due to their diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. The area of study was two primary schools in Diepsloot Township, which is located in Johannesburg North Region. Diepsloot was selected because of its diversity. According to the study's findings, school bullying is influenced by various factors within the ecosystem and socio-cultural context. These factors encompass peer relationships, family dynamics, community norms and school policies. Moreover, the study emphasises the intricate interplay between these factors and their contribution to the prevalence of bullying in diverse settings. Furthermore, the study revealed that both boys and girls experience some form of bullying; however, they engage in bullying behaviours differently. The study recommended a holistic approach to managing bullying effectively, which entails collaboration between schools, families and communities to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

**KEYWORDS:** Bullies, bullying, bystander, ecosystem, learners, perpetrator, school, sociocultural, victim, violence

## Opsomming

In die huidige onderwysstelsel kom verskeie emosionele en gedragsuitdagings by leerders uit diverse kulturele, godsdienstige en sosio-ekonomiese agtergronde voor. Hierdie uitdagings word verder vererger deur verskille in geslagsoriëntasie, etnisiteit en bevoegdheid. Die studie was daarop gemik om die ekosistemiese en sosiokulturele faktore te identifiseer wat tot afknouery (boeliegedrag) in skole bydra. Die studie het Bronfenbrenner se bio-ekologiese stelselteorie en Vygotsky se sosiokulturele teorie as lens gebruik om die faktore te verstaan waardeur afknouery en die bestuur daarvan in skole beïnvloed word. 'n Vertolkende navorsingsparadigma en kwalitatiewe benadering is vir hierdie studie aanvaar en die studie is deur 'n gevallestudie-ontwerp gerig. Doelgerigte steekproefneming is gebruik om data in te samel. Die deelnemers het bestaan uit twee skoolhoofde, twee departementshoofde, vier Graad 7-onderwysers, twee lede van skoolbeheerliggame en 12 Graad 7-leerders tussen die ouderdomme van 10 en 13 jaar. Doelgerigte steekproefneming het verseker dat deelnemers op grond van hul diverse kulturele en godsdienstige agtergronde gekies is. Die studiegebied was twee primêre skole in die Diepsloot-dorpsgebied wat in die Johannesburg-Noord streek geleë is. Diepsloot is gekies op grond van sy diversiteit. Volgens die studiebevindinge, word skoolafknouery deur verskeie faktore binne die ekosisteem en sosiokulturele konteks beïnvloed. Hierdie faktore sluit portuurverhoudings, gesinsdinamika, gemeenskapsnorme en skoolbeleide in. Daarbenewens beklemtoon die studie die ingewikkelde wisselwerking tussen hierdie faktore en hul bydrae tot die voorkoms van afknouery in diverse omgewings. Die studie het voorts ook openbaar dat beide seuns en dogters die een of ander vorm van afknouery ervaar, maar dat daar 'n verskil is in die manier waarop hulle met afknouery omgaan. Die studie het 'n holistiese benadering aanbeveel ten einde afknouery doeltreffend te bestuur. Dit behels samewerking tussen skole, families en gemeenskappe om 'n veilig en inklusiewe omgewing vir alle leerders te skep.

**SLEUTELWOORDE:** Boelies, afknouery, toeskouer, ekosisteem, leerders, skuldige, skool, sosiokultureel, slagoffer, geweld

## Okucashuniwe

Uhlelo lwesimanje lokufunda luhlanganisa, abafundi abasuka ezindaweni ezahlukene ngokwamasiko, ezenkolo kanye nezenhlalo-mnotho futhi bafika nezinselelo ezehlukene ngokwemizwa nokuziphatha kwabo. Lezi zinselelo zidalwa nawukwehluka ngokuzizwa ngokobulili, ubuzwe kanye nekhono lokwenza izinto. Lolu cwaningo beluhlose ukuhlonza umthelela wendlela yokuphila nenhlalo ngokwesiko okwenza izingane zivukwe ubuqhwaya ezikoleni. Lolu cwaningo lusebenzise itiyori ka-Bronfenbrenner ebheka ubudlelwane bengane nomzali kanye netiyori ka-Vygotsky ebheka inhlalo ngokwesiko njengendlela yokuqonda imithelela edala ubuqhwaya kanjalo nendlela yokubhekana nalobu buqhwaya ezikoleni. Lolu cwaningo lwenziwe ngokuthi kusetshenziswe indlela yokuhlola iqophelo lokuthi abantu basiqonda ngokunjani isimo, kwaphinda kwasetshenziswa imibhalo ecwaningiwe. Ucwaningo lusebenzise amasampula ukuze kuqoqwe idatha kubabambiqhaza abahlanganisa othishanhloko ababili, izinhloko zomnyango ezimbili, othisha abane Bebanga lesi-7, amalungu amabili esigungu esimelele isikole (SGB) kanye nabafundi abayi-12 Bebanga lesi-7 abaneminyaka ephakathi kweyi-10 kuya kweyi-13 ubudala. Ukuthathwa kwesampula kuye kwaqinisekisa ukuthi ababambiqhaza bakhethwa ngenxa yokwehluka kwabo ngokwamasiko nezenkolo. Indawo okubanjelwe kuyo ucwaningo bekusezikoleni ezimbili zamabanga aphantsi elokishini e-Diepsloot, esifundeni esiseNyakatho yeGoli. I-Diepsloot ikhethwe ngenxa yokuhlukahluka kwabantu abayakhele. Ngokwemiphumela yalolu cwaningo, ubuqhwaya ezikoleni budalwa yimithelela eminingi eyahlukene ngokwendlela yokuphila nenhlalo ngokwesiko. Le mithelela ifaka phakathi ubudlelwane kontanga, ukuhluka kwezinto emindenini, izinkambiso zomphakathi kanye nenqubomgomo yezikole. Ngaphezu kwalokhu, lolu cwaningo lugcizelela ukusebenzisana ekubhekaneni nale mithelela kanye negalelo layo ekusabalaleni kobuqhwaya ezindaweni ezahlukahlukene. Okunye futhi ukuthi, ucwaningo luveze ukuthi abafana namantombazane baye babhekane nezinhlobo ezithile zobuqhwaya; ngenxa yalokhu-ke, ihlukile nendlela ababhekana ngayo nalobu buqhwaya. Lolu cwaningo luncome indlela ehlanganisa konke yokubhekana kahle nobuqhwaya, ezohlanganisa ukubambisana phakathi kwezikole, imindenini kanye nemiphakathi ukuze kwakheke sibe nendawo ephophile futhi ebandakanya abafundi bonke.

AMAGAMA AMQOKA: Iziqhwaya, ubuqhwaya, isibukeli, indlela yokuphila, abafundi, iselelesi, isikole, inhlalo ngokwesiko, isisulu, udlam

## ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DoE	Department of Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HoD	Head of Department
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and other
NCES	National Centre for Educational Statistics
NIDA	National Institute on Drug Abuse
NSVS	National Schools Violence Study
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACE	South African Council of Education
SAPS	South African Police Services
SASA	South African Schools Act
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Organisation
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America



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# **CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter introduces the study, including the background, problem statement, research questions, aim, objectives and rationale for investigating learner bullying behaviour in selected primary schools in Gauteng from an ecosystemic and socio-cultural perspective. It also covers the research design and methodology chosen, as well as ethical and quality criteria considerations. Additionally, the chapter provides a brief overview of the delimitations of the study. The conceptual framework and key terminology used in the study are also explained. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the subsequent chapters.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

The right to education for all children and the safety of schools is emphasised in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA,1996) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 1994, 1948). Both call for schools to provide learners with quality education while ensuring they feel safe and secure. Dollard and Nesor (2013) and Mbambo (2016b) support this notion and emphasise the importance of creating a secure and safe learning environment for learners. However, scholars from different countries have observed an increasing incidence of violence and bullying in primary and high schools (Sambo & Govender, 2023; Holley, Salazar & Telfair, 2017a; Mbambo, 2016; Patchin & Hinduja, 2016; Singh, 2016; Fareo, 2015).

Mbambo (2016) and Mveli (2013) identified a clear link between bullying, violence, a lack of responsibility, problem-solving abilities, interpersonal skills and fundamental communication skills in our society. Smith and Louw (2013) argue that children who are not taught certain social skills, such as conflict resolution without resorting to violence, are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviour toward others. According to Sassu (2015) and Bilbay and Akyol (2023), bullying is undesired and intentionally damaging behaviour that is repeated over time.



As a result, bullying is viewed as a power imbalance (Dillon, 2012b) and a learning obstacle (Meyer, 2015; Dillon, 2012b).

Olweus (2013) highlighted that bullying is a global problem that happens in both the workplace and the classroom. Traditionally, bullying in the classroom was viewed as harmless and juvenile conduct that occurred among children. Olweus (2013) and Morojele (2011a) narrated that when a boy is bullied, he is taught that it is part of growing up and that he should not weep as this reflects cowardness. However, children who have been exposed to such violence may suffer physical, emotional and psychological consequences, including low self-esteem, reduced school attendance and academic underperformance (Mncube & Harber, 2012). Spreen and Vally (2010) suggest that schools should be spaces where learners should feel comfortable and unthreatened; however, Mweli (2013) and Rigby (2013) have found that schools worldwide have become unsafe spaces and trigger learning-related, physical and mental health challenges in children.

### **1.2.1 International Perspectives on School Bullying**

Bullying is a significant problem that has gained global attention in recent years (UNESCO, 2017b). Studies conducted in various countries have demonstrated that bullying is prevalent worldwide. Peer pressure, family dynamics and cultural norms are some of the factors attributed to it, all of which can have adverse effects on children's mental health and well-being (Román & Murillo, 2011; James, 2010; Olweus & Limber, 2010; Isidiho, 2009). Furthermore, bullying has been linked to several behavioural and socio-emotional problems in adulthood, such as poor social adjustment, a higher chance of substance abuse and a higher risk of engaging in criminal activity. The consequences of bullying can be severe, with psychological and emotional effects that persist into adulthood for both the victims and the perpetrators.

### **1.2.2 School Bullying on the African Continent**

Bullying is not only a problem in developed countries but also in African nations such as Nigeria and Lesotho (Singh, 2016; Fareo, 2015; Mosia, 2015; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Burton, 2008; De Wet, 2007; Egbochuku, 2007). Scholars have reported that

schools are no longer safe havens where children can thrive and succeed but have become places of exclusion and disappointment. To achieve teaching excellence and success for all, children must be in a secure and supportive learning environment. However, bullying has become prevalent in schools, violating children's right to an education (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Moreover, bullying has a profound impact on the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of affected children, leading to low self-esteem and feelings of shame, embarrassment and stress (Myers & Cowie, 2018). Okoiye, Anayochi and Onah (2015) emphasise that bullying is a serious issue that requires immediate attention, as it instils fear and undermines the learning environment's atmosphere of security and comfort.

### **1.2.3 School Bullying in South Africa**

Bullying is a significant concern in South African schools, as indicated by the findings of several studies (Ngidi, 2018; Nchoe, 2017; Rigby, 2017; Msezane, 2015; Sassu, 2015; Smith, 2014; Smith & Low, 2013; Jacobs, 2012). In comparison to other countries, learners in South Africa appear to be more susceptible to bullying and aggressive behaviour, as noted by Mncube and Harber (2012). Numerous studies conducted in South Africa have identified the fundamental causes of school violence and bullying, including a lack of tolerance among learners (Mbambo, 2016b), overcrowding in schools (Van Jaarsveld, 2011), and inadequate teaching and learning resources (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Chabalala, 2011). Ndebele and Msiza's (2014) research in Thohoyandou, South Africa, revealed that learners often bully others to gain recognition, attention and respect from their peers within the school. It is imperative to implement preventative measures in schools to address the issue of bullying. Addressing the underlying causes of violence in South Africa should thus be a top priority. The question of how to create a safe and conducive learning environment by addressing bullying remains a significant challenge, given that it is such a pervasive issue for learners in educational settings. To achieve this, one must gain a more profound contextual understanding of bullying, including its most common forms and characteristics, the conditions that support bullying and how school learners are bullied. These questions provided the basis for the study, which aimed to examine the causes and effects of bullying from an ecosystemic and socio-cultural perspective.

### **1.3 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Despite existing policies against bullying in South African schools, schools in townships are under-resourced and cannot effectively implement policies. Learners who live in townships face significant adversities which compound or trigger psychological challenges (Spaull, 2013), thereby, in many cases, inciting violence and bullying. Bullying poses a significant threat to children's right to receive education within a safe and nurturing environment, thereby impeding their journey towards self-actualisation. Research studies prove that South African teachers are not sufficiently equipped to address psychological challenges that they encounter in under-resourced contexts among learners at schools, which impact teaching and learning and negatively affect both learner and teacher wellness. Lekena (2016) noted that issues of bullying and aggressive behaviour are not observed only at school, but also at home and in playgrounds. Research by Wang, Berry and Swearer (2022), Seisa, (2020), Sokol, Bussey and Rapee (2016) and Rogowicz et al. (2014) found that parents' emotional stability influences their children's behaviour. Studies show that one of the main causes of bullying is related to family background, children's upbringing, financial constraints and social circumstances and family environment whereby children may be neglected by their biological parents, sparking aggression and anger (Atik, 2011; Terry, 2010). Children who witness domestic violence are more likely to copy the aggressive behaviours they see, which can create a vicious cycle, leading them to become victims or perpetrators of domestic violence in the future. Furthermore, witnessing domestic violence may have a long-lasting psychological impact such as an increased risk of developing mental health problems like anxiety and depression (Coyne & Monks, 2011).

Consequently, it becomes crucial to address this issue comprehensively by gaining a deeper understanding of its causes and consequences. Therefore, the rationale for this study was to explore stakeholders' perspectives and understanding of learner bullying behaviour in primary schools to identify key ecosystemic and socio-cultural factors that place learners at risk of bullying or being bullied. By adopting an ecosystemic and socio-cultural perspective, factors in homes, schools and communities may also serve to mitigate bullying. The study aimed to obtain valuable insights through a thorough exploration of this escalating phenomenon at two co-

educational public primary schools located in the Diepsloot township, Johannesburg North, District 10 in Gauteng.

#### **1.4 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to investigate and comprehend instances of bullying behaviour among learners in a township school setting from various perspectives, including ecosystemic, social and cultural. By analysing bullying behaviour through these lenses, the study sought to gain a thorough understanding of the root causes of this behaviour in this particular environment. Furthermore, the research aimed to identify potential interventions and strategies that could effectively combat and prevent bullying among learners in this context.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The primary research question for this study was as follows: *What are the underlying ecosystemic and socio-cultural determinants of bullying in township schools, and how can this knowledge inform the development of effective programmes to manage and prevent bullying behaviour in these settings?*

In an attempt to respond to the key research question of this study, the following secondary research questions were formulated:

1. What are the participants views on the extent of bullying in township schools?
2. How do ecosystemic factors influence bullying behaviour among perpetrators and victims in township schools?
3. How do socio-cultural factors influence bullying behaviour among perpetrators and victims in township schools?
4. Based on the ecosystemic and socio-cultural factors identified, what recommendations can be made for developing a programme to manage bullying in township schools effectively?

#### **1.6 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The study aimed to gain insight into the nature of learner bullying behaviour in a township school environment from ecosystemic and socio-cultural perspectives.

The following research objectives were to:

1. Gather information and opinions from the participants regarding the prevalence and severity of bullying in township schools.
2. Determine what cultural and societal factors contribute to the prevalence of learner bullying and what the implications for learners, teachers, and parents/guardians are
3. Identify what protective factors at the ecosystemic and socio-cultural levels mediate bullying at primary schools.
4. Formulate guidelines to address learner bullying and promote a more supportive ecosystemic and socio-cultural environment for all stakeholders.

## **1.7 THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted in two primary schools in Diepsloot, an informal settlement in Region A of the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, 40 kilometres North of Johannesburg city. Diepsloot falls under District 10 of Johannesburg North, managed by the Department of Education and Culture. The area was established in the 1990s as an informal, temporary area when people were evicted from neighbouring farms and private lands. This area, which lacked infrastructure and amenities, was utilised as a reception zone for those who were displaced. As more people moved into the area, Diepsloot expanded to a total of 13 extensions with the population currently estimated to be three hundred and fifty thousand ( 350 000), as noted by Scholtz et al., (2023) and City-facts (2023)

### **1.7.1 The Diepsloot Context**

Diepsloot is a community that consists of both informal and formal settlements. The area has experienced an influx of immigrants, including South Africans and unregistered individuals from other African countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Somalia, who have immigrated to seek employment opportunities. As a result, the population density has significantly increased over the years (City-facts, 2023). Unfortunately, high levels of unemployment, crime and bullying have become major challenges in Diepsloot. Due to the high unemployment rates, many families depend on government social grants. However, these measures are barely sufficient, and many undocumented individuals are left without any support. The most commonly accessed grants include the child support grant, the old persons' grant and the

disability grant. The Social Relief of Distress grant was recently established to help people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, beneficiaries are limited to South African nationals, permanent residents and registered refugees. Most foreign nationals in Diepsloot are undocumented immigrants and therefore do not meet the legal requirements for such governmental support.

In Diepsloot, there are over ten primary schools, however, in this study, two schools were chosen based on certain criteria. These schools were selected as the target population to ensure that the chosen schools represent the diverse demographics and socio-economic backgrounds present in the Diepsloot community. As the researcher, I hoped to gain a comprehensive understanding of the educational situation in Diepsloot by focusing on these two schools. Both selected schools have learners who range from 5 to 16 years old because of Grade R admission (Early Childhood Development- ECD) to Grade 7 learners. The context of the study is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

## **1.8 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

As the rationale for conducting the study, this section identifies gaps in knowledge related to bullying and establishes the context for the research question. Bullying is a widespread problem, particularly in schools, and is a significant challenge for teachers. The study aimed to assist teachers in reflecting on their practice and identifying challenges they face when dealing with bullying victims and perpetrators, seeking additional support to maximise these learners' academic potential. Additionally, the study examined social factors contributing to bullying such as school climate, home environment and peer relationships. Identifying negative social factors affecting the school environment is crucial, as learners spend much of their time at school. The study may facilitate the development of appropriate anti-bullying strategies by school administrators and teachers, benefiting both victims and perpetrators.

### **1.8.1 The Researcher's Personal Experience**

I have experienced various cases of bullying activities involving learners. I am a primary teacher in Cosmo City with Diepsloot being the closest township to Cosmo. Often, bullying acts are complicated making it difficult to know how to respond to bullying cases. Most teachers at my school, including the retired teachers, have

testified that they have experienced bullying incidents that have sometimes brought teaching and learning to a complete halt. Teachers admitted that they face challenges such as not knowing how to tackle prevalent bullying cases. Some have reported feeling unsupported by the School Management Team (SMT) or their colleagues, while others have been too afraid to speak up. For these issues to be addressed, schools must create safe and supportive environments for all teachers and students.

### 1.8.2 Gaps in the literature

Bullying remains a significant problem in South African schools, despite numerous research studies conducted to understand its causes and find effective solutions. Scholars have proposed various measures to address bullying, such as implementing anti-bullying policies, offering support services to victims, and educating students on its negative impact. However, there is still a need for more comprehensive strategies and interventions to tackle this pervasive issue successfully. The current research study focuses on socio-cultural and ecological factors that contribute to bullying and proposes recommendations for teachers, parents, and the community to collaborate positively. By comprehending the complex interplay of these factors, stakeholders can work together to create a safer and more inclusive school environment. This collaborative approach is essential in addressing bullying effectively and promoting the well-being of all students. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the significance of restorative and whole-community approaches in addressing bullying, emphasizing positive problem-solving skills and community relationships.

## 1.9 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents a brief overview of the research methodology which was used in this research.

### 1.9.1 Research Paradigm

The research is founded upon the interpretivist paradigm, as elucidated by Seisa (2020), which seeks to comprehend a specific context by acknowledging that reality is socially constructed. This means that this study using an interpretivist lens aimed to engage and interact with teachers, learners and parents/guardians with the intention of investigating how participants perceive the causes of bullying and how it can be managed in primary schools. Using an interpretivist perspective as a lens assisted in

understanding the participants' views and evaluating how their interaction influenced the study's results.

### **1.9.2 Research Approach**

Qualitative methodology offers a comprehensive understanding of individuals' perspectives, experiences and motivations (Creswell, 2014). The study aimed to gain a deep and detailed understanding of teachers' understanding of bullying and the management of it. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was used to guide the study. To conduct this research, a qualitative methodology was selected to enable a subjective exploration of participants' experiences, emotions and feelings (Bryman, 2008). This approach fostered a meaningful interaction between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2013), while utilising accessible language for everyone involved (Creswell, 2012).

### **1.9.3 Research Design**

The research design employed was a case study approach to study the selected primary schools. This cases study aimed to gain insight into bullying behaviour among learners in a township school environment from an ecosystemic and socio-cultural perspective. To facilitate this exploration, a case study research design was implemented, with twenty participants carefully chosen from two distinct schools.

### **1.9.4 Research Methodology**

The research methodology includes the study site and sampling as well as data collection and analysis.

#### **1.9.4.1 Study site**

The study site was two primary schools located in the Township of Diepsloot, in the Johannesburg district.

#### **1.9.4.2 Sampling: Participant Selection**

Purposive sampling assisted in selecting knowledgeable participants for this study. The study included a total of twenty participants purposively selected as this approach helped in gathering valuable information that addressed the research questions and contributed to the field's knowledge. The sample consisted of two principals, two Heads of Department (HoD), two members of the School Governing Body (SGB), four



Grade 7 teachers and twelve Grade 7 learners. The selected teachers and SGB members represented diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. The SGB members were parents/guardians and were responsible for governing the school and making decisions about school policies, as outlined in Section 8 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA).

Twelve Grade 7 learners were sampled, consisting of six learners from each of two selected primary schools in Diepsloot. These learners were in Grade 7 and aged between 10 and 13 during the time of study. The selection process was based on their seniority in the school and potential to provide valuable insights.

### **1.9.5 Data Collection Techniques**

To gather data for the study, multiple tools were used. The study sought to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of bullying by teachers, SGB members and primary school learners. To achieve this, data were collected through the use of focus group discussions and individual interviews with key informants.

#### **1.9.5.1 Individual interviews**

The individual interviews were conducted with each Principal, each HoD and SGB member. During the individual interviews, a voice recorder was used to capture responses, which were then transcribed and stored safely. Additionally, field notes were taken as an added resource to complement the recorded data.

#### **1.9.5.2 Focus group discussions**

A focus group is a gathering of individuals who come together to discuss a specific issue. It involves an interviewer posing questions to a group of participants (Sebola, 2015). Focus group discussions are useful in collecting data because they allow interaction between participants and researchers, making the process more engaging and informative. According to Mushambi (2016), this technique is advantageous because it enables researchers to gather valuable insights and is thus a helpful tool for collecting data (Creswell, 2014; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011).

Focus group discussions were conducted with Grade 7 teachers of each of the schools and further focus group discussions were conducted with learner participants.

### **1.9.6 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is a critical process for researchers to examine, sort, categorise, transcribe and code data collected from participants (Creswell, 2014). In this study, Thematic Data Analysis (TDA) was employed for data analysis. The effectiveness of interpretivist data analysis depends on the researcher's thinking style, careful consideration of different interpretation methods and data presentation. Data analysis followed the thematic analysis process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012). This is discussed fully in Chapter Three.

### **1.10 ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS**

One of the fundamental ways to establish trustworthiness is through the researcher's transparent approach to data analysis, as explicated by Shaw (2010). Trustworthiness is a crucial aspect of qualitative research, as defined by Nieuwenhuis et al. (2014,). To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, aspects such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were discussed and assured. All measures of trustworthiness are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.11 RESEARCH ETHICS**

All ethical procedures were adhered to before and during the study by being granted ethical approval by the University of South Africa (UNISA) and permission from the Gauteng Department of Education's Research Directorate before commencing the research. Additionally, each principal and School Governing Body (SGB) were approached for permission to conduct the research at their schools. Invitation letters were sent to prospective participants (principals, teachers and SGB members). Parents of Grade 7 learners were requested to sign consent forms granting permission for their children's participation in this research study. These ethical issues relate to voluntary participation and informed consent and assent. I assured parents, learners, and teachers that every possible step would be taken to prevent harm to the well-being of all participants.

Participants were also informed that all information gathered during the interview would be used exclusively for the study and would be treated with confidentiality. Anonymity was preserved by utilising pseudonyms instead of participants' real names

thus protecting identities. To ensure anonymity, participants were assigned codes, as recommended by Singh (2016). All ethical issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.13 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

Merriam (2010) defined delimitations as boundaries or restrictions that researchers set before starting their study to narrow its focus. These parameters determine the investigation's scope, such as the specific population or sample size, geographical location, time frame and the variables that are included or excluded from the study. By setting delimitations, researchers can maintain a focused and manageable study, resulting in more precise and meaningful results. Additionally, delimitations help identify any potential limitations or constraints that may affect the validity and generalisability of the findings (Muvhango, 2016). This study was conducted in District 10 of Johannesburg North, in the Gauteng province, with two primary schools serving as the study sample and the group of participants. By establishing these parameters, the researcher would be able to draw more precise conclusions and avoid generalising. Delimitations play a critical role in restricting the study's scope and ensuring it remains feasible and manageable within the given time frame and resources.

### **1.14 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

As part of contextualising this study, it is important to give meaning and understanding to certain concepts used within this study.

#### **1.14.1 A Bully**

According to Singh (2014), a bully is a person who derives satisfaction from exerting power over others and considers themselves superior, especially to those who are powerless. The author classifies bullying into two types: overt (such as physical and verbal aggression) and covert (such as rationalisation and harassment). Meanwhile, Liouh (2010) and James (2010) view bullying as an intentional act. This study defines a bully as someone who purposely seeks to control and dominate others, often through aggressive or manipulative behaviour. This definition emphasises that bullying is not accidental or unintentional, but instead a deliberate act. Furthermore, bullying can

cause severe harm and distress to the victim, leading to long-lasting emotional and psychological consequences.

### **1.14.2 Bullying**

The act of bullying involves subjecting a vulnerable or weaker individual to hostile behaviour from those with more power, resulting in potential physical or psychological harm (Coloroso, 2011; Olweus & Limber, 2010). This study delves into the topic of bullying within a school setting, where learners regularly interact with one another. The primary aim was to gain insight into the power dynamics and vulnerabilities that contribute to incidents of bullying between learners.

### **1.14.3 Direct Bullying**

Direct bullying is when one person targets another repeatedly with harmful actions or words. It can take forms such as physical assault, verbal abuse or social exclusion and often involves a power imbalance (Ndebele & Msiza, 2014). According to James (2010), the consequences of direct bullying can be severe, leading to emotional distress, low self-esteem and even physical injuries. Addressing and preventing direct bullying is important to create a safe environment. In the context of this study, direct bullying pertains to the utilisation of power by an individual to intimidate a weaker person through physical means like hitting, kicking or using mean words (Morojele, 2011b).

### **1.14.4 Indirect Bullying**

Indirect bullying as Marais and Meier (2010) state, can take the form of name-calling, teasing, taunting, mocking, as well as intimidating other learners. Bullying can also consist of indirect actions such as stealing or damaging other learners' belongings or hurting them emotionally.

In this study, the term 'indirect bullying' refers to a person who is bullying others by intimidating them through the form of harassment. Indirect bullying may include other behaviours such as threats, intimidation and assaults, forcing one to do or act in a certain way or taking off one's property without permission or causing damaging to it.

#### **1.14.5 Cyberbullying**

According to Lekena (2016), 'cyberbullying' involves the spread of rumours through social media platforms and the use of technology to harass, humiliate, threaten or embarrass someone. Okoiye et al. (2015) further explain that cyberbullying can take the form of verbal threats, attacks and taunts from peers on social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter. Singh (2016) also notes that cyberbullying includes purposeful harm to others through hostile behaviour using information and communication technologies. For this study, cyberbullying refers to any instance where a student shares false information or videos about another student to undermine their dignity.

#### **1.14.6 Xenophobic Bullying**

Xenophobic bullying is a form of bullying that is motivated by prejudice and fear towards individuals from different cultural backgrounds or ethnicities. It involves the targeted harassment, discrimination and exclusion of individuals based on their perceived differences.

#### **1.14.7 Teacher-Learner Bullying**

Teacher-learner bullying involves the mistreatment of a learner in an educational setting, causing severe negative effects on self-esteem, academic performance and overall well-being (Adewusi, 2021). The South African Schools Act (SASA) explicitly prohibits teacher's bullying learners. It states that educators should refrain from any conduct which humiliates the learner in any form of abuse whether physical, psychological or any form of sexual harassment.

#### **1.14.8 Physical Bullying**

The term 'physical bullying' describes aggressive behaviour that uses physical force or violence to threaten, injure or control other people. This can take many different forms, such as pushing, kicking, hitting and even more serious acts like assault. Physical bullying may cause visible injuries to the victim, and the effects may include long-term psychological damage.

### **1.14.9 Violence**

Based on Lekena's research (2016), violence refers to any action that utilises force or threatens harm, damage, intimidation or injury towards another individual. Terrorism, gang violence and domestic abuse are all examples of the various forms that violence can take. Singh (2016) pointed out that this multi-faceted issue can have significant consequences for both individuals and society. Bullying in the form of violence can lead to considerable harm for victims, leaving them feeling isolated from their school community and lacking a sense of belonging. Bullying can take the form of violence. Children who grow up in areas where violence occurs are more likely to become involved in acts of violence.

### **1.14.10 The Bully (Perpetrator) and the Bully-Victim**

Bullying is the act of aggressive behaviour that intimidates others. The term 'bully perpetrator' refers to someone who bullies others and also participates in bullying behaviour themselves. According to Scherman's (2020) research, bullying is more prevalent in schools with lower socio-economic status. This indicates that bullying may persist in certain educational environments as a result of socio-economic issues. Scherman's findings also highlight the importance of addressing and reducing bullying in schools with lower socio-economic status to create a safer and more inclusive learning environment for all children. Rigby (2013) defined a victim of bullying as a learner who is vulnerable and powerless and becomes the target of bullying behaviour. For this study, the term victim refers to the learner who is being bullied.

## **1.15 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The five chapters that make up this study on ecosystemic and socio-cultural perspectives in understanding bullying behaviour in school are organised as follows:

**Chapter 1** briefly describes the study's background, social context, rationale, objectives, and dissertation structure.

**Chapter 2** presents an in-depth overview of the current literature on school bullying in two sections. The first section focuses broadly on the nature and conceptualisation of bullying. The second section provides detailed information about the conceptual

framework underpinning this study based on the ideas of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems Theory (2005).

**Chapter 3** concentrates on the methodological procedure of the study. Chapter three outlines the research paradigm and the approach that is adopted in the study. It also explains the sampling and the data collection methods used. Furthermore, the chapter clarifies the ethical clearance and limitations of the study.

**Chapter 4** provides a comprehensive overview of the study's methodology which includes the research paradigm, research approach and design, sampling approach, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The discussion highlights and describes key aspects that inform the study's design and execution.

**Chapter 5** is the final chapter, which presents the research findings and evaluates the study's response to the critical questions it initially aimed to explore. Finally, this chapter sets out the recommendations for the teacher, schools, parents, the Department of Education, policymakers, and the students.

## **1.16 SUMMARY**

This chapter provided the background of the study. The problem was stated, the aims and purpose of the study were spelt out and the reasons that triggered the interest of this study were given. In addition, the focus of the study was declared. A detailed account of the importance of the study was given, focusing on different institutions that may benefit from the study. The objectives and critical questions guiding the study were also highlighted. The main concepts used in the study were defined and clarified. The next chapter presents the literature used to frame the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an in-depth literature review relevant to this study. It covers the definition and history of bullying, its causes, effects, common patterns, different types of bullying, role-players in bullying, and effects of and on socio-cultural and ecological systems. When addressing bullying in schools, a key objective is to find practical answers that put interconnected systems, rather than the learner, in focus. The conceptual framework is highlighted, which demonstrates ecosystemic and social-cultural interrelationships as precursors to and causes of bullying behaviour underpinned by Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems Theory.

### **2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF BULLYING**

Bullying in schools has become a significant concern for policymakers, educators and parents. According to research conducted by Mncube in 2014, the prevalence of this issue is alarming and often covered by various media outlets. Research conducted by Zuze et al. (2018) and Isdale et al. (2017) highlights the concerning rise of bullying in South African schools, as evidenced by media coverage and viral social media. Shockingly, bullying has created a violent and criminalised learning environment that impedes educational goals, as mentioned by Qwabe, Maluleke and Olutola (2022). The impact of bullying is not limited to its victims but also extends to the mental and emotional health of all students. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the characteristics, causes, outcomes and difficulties of bullying.

The academic literature, as noted by Mdaka in 2021, signals an increase in school violence, with most learners experiencing bullying on the school premises, at home and in the community. Although there is no universally accepted definition of bullying, research suggests that most scholars working in the field agree on several important issues when it comes to bullying (Olweus, 2013; Coloroso, 2010; De Wet, 2010). Bullying is recognised as a deliberate act that occurs repeatedly and injures someone typically perceived as powerless over time (Monks & Coyne, 2011; Coloroso, 2010;



Olweus & Limber, 2010). Furthermore, Thomas, Connor and Scott (2018) have explored the complex social dynamics of bullying, underscoring the negative impact it can have on a child's overall psychosocial well-being.

### **2.2.1 Bullying from an International Perspective**

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2017a), bullying is a pervasive phenomenon that affects people worldwide. Qwabe et al. (2022) contend that bullying is a toxic behaviour that becomes aggressive when it occurs repeatedly and often results in an imbalance of power. In a qualitative study, Aluede, Ojugo and Okoza (2012) found that there are approximately 2.7 million victims of bullying in American schools, a staggering figure that underscores the severity of the problem. Despite the existence of numerous anti-bullying policies in the United States of America (USA), bullying in schools takes various forms, such as physical, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse, which could have long-lasting effects on the victims. Moreover, modern technological advancements have opened new ways for bullies to hide their identities, making it even harder to address the issue (McCann, 2018). According to the National Centre for Education and Statistics (NCES) (2020), 75% of violent incidents occur in primary, middle and high schools, further highlighting the gravity of the situation. These incidents can be categorised as physical attacks with or without weapons, theft and cyberbullying, all of which can have devastating consequences for the victims.

### **2.2.2 Bullying from an African Perspective**

Africa, like any other continent, has a history of countries where bullying is experienced. Ghana, Zimbabwe and Swaziland are some examples of such countries (Seisa, 2020). Several studies have been conducted in Lesotho, which suggest that bullying is a common occurrence, especially during initiation (Lekena, 2016; Mosia, 2015; Isidiho, 2009) and Mosia (2015) reported that students are often subjected to bullying in the absence of teachers in the classroom. The problem of bullying is not limited to schools but also occurs in the community and at home (Lekena, 2016). Research conducted in Kenya (Gendron, Williams & Guerra, 2011) has found that bullying harms academic performance, dropout rates and absenteeism. Additionally, studies suggest that in Zimbabwe, boys engage in bullying more frequently than girls

(Mbambo, 2016), and that they use their physical strength to bully girls (Ncube et al., 2015). In Botswana, Mangope, Dinama and Kefhilwe (2012) suggest that the bullying behaviour of boys is influenced by community and home-based factors, where boys are treated as superior.

Lastly, Fenny and Falola (2020) discovered that in Nigeria, 59.9% of bullying behaviours were committed by boys, which indicates that bullying is a severe issue that urgently needs to be addressed in African countries. Steps must be taken to combat bullying and create safer environments for all citizens, particularly vulnerable groups such as children and adolescents.

### **2.2.3 Bullying Behaviour in South Africa**

Bullying is a grave issue in South African schools, defined by the South African Human Rights Commission (2017:2) as "intentional, repeated, and persistent behaviour that aims to harm, create fear, or cause distress to someone with unequal power relations between the perpetrator and victim, influenced by factors like race, gender, and socio-economic status". School violence is also prevalent in primary, secondary or high schools in South Africa. Juan et al. (2019) indicate that 99% of bullying occurs in no-fee-paying schools compared to fee-paying schools, indicating better management strategies in private institutions. Ncontsa and Shumba's study (2013) found that 91% of participants attributed violence in society as a cause of school violence. Hunger due to poverty is the primary cause of school violence, with learners stealing lunch boxes (Khumalo, 2019), and overcrowded classrooms also contributing to the problem (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013), as both are rooted in poverty and parenting failures.

The topic of bullying has sparked a lively debate among scholars, with divergent viewpoints expressed by experts (Volk, Veenstra & Espelage 2017; Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Olweus, 2010; Rigby, 2002; Olweus, 1993). For example, cyberbullying is a type of bullying that involves the use of social media to post hurtful messages and embarrassing videos, as noted by Grigg (2010) and Allen (2010). This results in psychological and emotional trauma. As a result, the learner's dignity is tarnished, causing embarrassment and high-stress levels. Studies show that bullying is a complex social phenomenon, resulting from a combination of individual and contextual factors over time (Hong & Garbarino, 2012; Espelage & Swearer, 2010).

As per the research of Berlan et al. (2010) and Terry (2010) bullying remains a multifaceted social and cultural phenomenon in schools. On the other hand, some students may tend to view bullying as harmless or even amusing (Seisa, 2020).

Despite the South African Constitution's goal to safeguard children from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation and ensure freedom from all forms of violence from public or private sources (Mangope et al., 2012)), bullying and violence in South African schools persist. Arseneault, Bowes and Shakoor (2010) found that mental health problems are closely related to bullying and have long-lasting effect on learners who have constantly been bullied at school. To address the issue of bullying, teachers need to identify all forms of bullying behaviour and implement programmes to prevent this type of behaviour and guide learners on how to deal with bullying in schools. Johnson (2014) emphasises that school rules play a pivotal role in maintaining order and building an environment of security and discipline within the school.

In conclusion, bullying is a pervasive and harmful phenomenon that can have long-lasting effects on victims. While there is no universally accepted definition of bullying, it is commonly understood as a deliberate and repeated act that injures someone typically perceived as powerless over time. Power dynamics play a critical role in bullying, which can be influenced by various factors such as race, gender and socio-economic status. The effects of bullying on victims' psychological and emotional state are often underestimated making it crucial to understand the long-term effects of bullying on victims.

### **2.3 BULLYING**

Zibeleni, Morojele and Motsa (2017) define bullying as direct (physical aggression) and indirect (psychological, social exclusion) actions that are repeated, while Mbambo (2016) characterises bullying as a deliberate act intended to intimidate, harm and distress weaker individuals. Fretwell (2015) further defines bullying as a negative behaviour that intends to hurt others, including an inequality of power in which the bully overpowers the victim. Monks and Coyne (2011) and Olweus (2005) differentiate bullying from general aggression by emphasising the power disparity between the victim and the perpetrator. Similarly, Rigby (2010) characterises bullying as a pattern of abuse by those who are more powerful, while Aluede et al. (2012) define bullying

as acting in any way that threatens or harms a weaker person. As in other countries, in South African schools bullying can be physical, verbal or social, and a power gap may also be factored into bullying (Laas & Boezaart, 2014; De Wet, 2010).

Although bullying can occur in various settings, including the workplace, home and school, this study aims to examine and elaborate on the literature that specifically defines bullying in schools. Bullying in schools involves repeated and continuous exploitation of a person or people, often leaving them defenceless (Bush & Zuideman, 2012; Olweus, 2012a; Olweus, 2012b; Rigby, 2010). Furthermore, bullying is a deliberate act committed to causing harm to another person and instilling fear and hurt (Smith et al., 2013; Bush & Zuidema, 2012; Coloroso, 2010; De Wet, 2010).

### **2.3.1 Bullying as a Repetitive Act**

According to various research studies, bullying is defined by Rigby (2010) as an activity that repeatedly harms the victim that occurs when a person is frequently and persistently exploited by one or more individuals while defenceless (Bush & Zuideman, 2012; Olweus, 2012).

### **2.3.2 Bullying as a Deliberate Act**

It is concerning that bullying remains a prevalent issue in society despite the increased awareness and efforts to combat it. The definitions provided by various authors highlight the intentional, deliberate nature of bullying, which suggests a concerning lack of empathy and respect for others. The fact that bullying is not an accident but a purposeful means of causing harm to the victim, as argued by Bush and Zuidema (2012), is particularly troubling. It raises questions about the root causes of such behaviour and the social and cultural factors that may contribute to its prevalence. Furthermore, the distinction made by Smith, del Barrio and Tokunaga (2013) between bullying and common childhood behaviours like sibling rivalry or peer conflicts, highlights the need to distinguish between normal developmental experiences and harmful behaviours that require intervention.

### **2.3.3 Bullying as a Desire to Gain Popularity**

The notion that bullying is motivated by a desire for power, position and popularity is a concerning reflection of our society's values. Lekena (2016) and Thornberg (2010) suggest that some children may use violent behaviour to establish dominance over

weaker peers in their pursuit of status and respect. Marais and Meier (2010) argue that bullies believe humiliating others will result in gaining respect and popularity which is a problematic cultural mindset that values aggression and domination over empathy and kindness. This toxic attitude can have long-term consequences for both the perpetrator and the victim.

Isidiho (2009) claims that bullying behaviour can produce a sense of satisfaction for the bully, is particularly disturbing. It raises questions about the psychological and emotional factors that may contribute to such behaviour and the need for effective interventions to address them. Additionally, Mosia's (2015) suggestion that children may turn to bullying if they do not receive affection from their parents or develop the necessary social skills at home, highlights the need for comprehensive support systems that address the root causes of bullying behaviour. The notion that bullying is motivated by a desire for popularity and power reflects a disturbing cultural attitude that values aggression and dominance over empathy and kindness. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach that tackles the root causes of bullying behaviour and promotes a culture of empathy, respect and kindness.

Furthermore, it is essential to note that the terms 'perpetrator' and 'bully' should not be used interchangeably as it implies that the behaviour is a defining characteristic of the individual. Rather, it is important to recognise that individuals who engage in bullying behaviour can change and should be held accountable for their actions.

## **2.4 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF BULLIED VICTIMS**

Bullied children frequently exhibit insecure tendencies and are often fragile, timid and introverted with low self-esteem (Mushambi, 2016). These children may live in constant fear as they are afraid to report the bully for fear of exacerbating the situation. The bully frequently persecutes the victim by threatening not to disclose the problem, which might lead to thoughts of suicide. Bullying damages the victim's life, according to researchers such as Olweus (2010), Marias and Meier (2010) and James (2010). According to the experts, the victim's self-esteem is lowered in comparison to their peers who are not victims of bullying. Bullying victims who are provocative and those who are docile, are distinguished by researchers (Dillon, 2012a; Katz, 2012). Passive bully victims are unstable and untrustworthy individuals who will not respond

aggressively if assaulted or provoked (Fried & Sosland, 2011). Provocative victims will tease and incite bullies, according to Mushambi (2016), are usually suicidal because of peer rejection.

## **2.5 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF BULLYING**

Mangope et al. (2014) investigated student achievement in Botswana, demonstrating the adverse effects of bullying. The findings suggest that bullied students lose confidence and become more vulnerable, which negatively affects their academic performance. Bullying occurs when a learner is repeatedly humiliated by other students by being called names, teased or is the subject of rumours to make them feel bad. Research has revealed that bullying can have severe social and psychological consequences for students (Katz, 2012; Dupper, 2010). Research findings by Smith et al. (2002) and Hawker and Boulton (2000) indicate that the more frequent the occurrence of bullying, the more significant the psychological damage experienced by victims. Furthermore, Arseneault et al. (2010) suggest that bullying can cause suicidal ideation<sup>1</sup>, as victims struggle to cope with the ongoing harassment. As pointed out by Fareo (2015), bullying is a pervasive form of school violence that is becoming increasingly concerning due to its hazardous effects.

## **2.6 TYPES OF BULLYING**

Bullying can occur in both direct and indirect ways (Edward, 2019). According to Johnson (2014), the bully builds a culture of spreading or saying terrible things about someone, psychically stealing other learners' goods and mocking or purposefully leaving a learner out of a group (Johnson, 2014). Understanding the many forms of bullying can assist in preventing and stopping bullying before it begins.

### **2.6.1 Direct Bullying**

Bullying is a pervasive issue that can take many forms, including direct physical bullying. According to Edward (2019) and Johnson (2014), direct bullying is a type of bullying that involves open attacks on a victim, which can include physical violence such as shoving, kicking and fighting. James (2010) also notes that physical bullying can cause bodily harm to a person, making it a particularly damaging form of

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<sup>1</sup> Often called suicidal thoughts

aggression. However, it is not just physical violence that constitutes direct bullying. Burton and Leoschut (2013) argue that other behaviours such as threatening, extortion and name-calling also fall under this category.

### **2.6.2 Indirect Bullying**

Johnson (2010) defines indirect bullying as being more subtle and less direct. Singh (2016) further indicates that indirect bullying includes social isolation, exclusion from a group, spreading rumours and gossiping about a learner. According to Burton and Leoschut (2013), indirect bullying also includes the propagating of rumours and social exclusion. Furthermore, Marais and Meier (2010) classify verbal bullying as a sub-type of indirect bullying while Mosia (2015) identified several verbal bullying behaviours, which include name-calling, gossip, insults, mocking and threats.

### **2.6.3 Physical Bullying**

Bullying can take different forms and physical bullying is the most common and straightforward type, according to Bradshaw et al. (2013). It is also the most recognisable form, as pointed out by Carbone et al. (2010). However, it is vital to acknowledge that physical bullying is not the only type of bullying, as highlighted by Olweus and Limber (2010). In some Western African countries such as Ghana, Liberia and Togo, physical bullying is considered a unique form of bullying, as reported by Aluede (2011). On the other hand, in South African schools, physical bullying is characterised by overt actions such as hitting, pushing, and punching, as noted by Protogerou and Flisher (2012) and James (2010).

### **2.6.4 Verbal Bullying**

Bullying, which involves other students using derogatory language, taunting, mocking, calling names, threatening behaviour and taunting is regarded as verbal bullying (Singh, 2016; Venter, 2013; Miller & Lowen, 2012; Ngakane, Muthukrishna & Ngcobo, 2012; Fried & Sosland, 2011). According to a study on bullying in Lesotho conducted by Mosia (2015), verbal aggression is the most common type of bullying and receives the least attention from teachers, who are unaware of how children develop psychosocially as they may believe no 'real' harm has been done. One of the worst types of direct bullying, according to Venter (2013), is verbal abuse which can range from hurtful name-calling and malicious teasing to taunting, embarrassing and

humiliating another person. Fried and Sosland (2011) also list cursing, chatting up other people, 'dissing'<sup>2</sup> someone and making fun of their appearance. In the USA, name-calling, taunting, belittling, critical remarks, character-defaming statements and sexually explicit statements are all examples of verbal bullying (Coloroso, 2010).

According to Aluede et al. (2011), verbal forms of bullying include taunting, threatening to harm the other person without cause, enforcing the completion of undesirable tasks and threatening negative outcomes if the request is not fulfilled. Other types of verbal bullying, such as passing sexual insults and threats, especially from male students to female students, have been documented in the literature in South African schools (Mbambo, 2016).

### **2.6.5 Cyberbully**

Lass and Boezaart (2014) define cyberbullying as a new type of verbal bullying that has recently gained popularity in the South African context. Cyberbullying is defined as the use of electronic devices, such as cell phones or internet social networks, to harass and humiliate another person (Lass & Boezaart, 2014).

While the Internet has significantly impacted daily lives, it has also had an impact on children's lives. According to Okoiye, Anayochi and Onah (2015:110), "Cyber-bullying is manifested in the form of verbal threats, attacks, and taunts from peers through social networking websites, such as Facebook and Twitter". With the advancement in technology, a new type of bullying has occurred, namely cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is one of the foremost social media means of bullying in which learners engage these days. It was stated by Okoiye, Anayochi and Onah (2015) that cyber bullying is on the rise and involves text messages or images that are hurtful, embarrassing or threatening via the use of cell phones, emails and instant messaging. In addition, Singh (2016) refers to cyberbullying as the intentions of revenge, amusement, boredom and to get a response from their victims.

Furthermore, once the bully has sent a short message service, e-mail or embarrassing picture, it cannot be taken back. A study by Joyce and Mmankoko (2014) revealed that bullying is common nationally as well as internationally and has a devastating

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<sup>2</sup> Speak disrespectfully to or criticise



impact on the well-being of a child. Miller and Lowen (2012) found that cyber-bullying can include spreading rumours and posting nasty or incorrect information on social media with malicious intentions. It is also important to note that learners are not just victims of incidences of bullying, but also listeners and spectators of physical and verbal bullying. Ascertaining the extent of bullying behaviour is crucial; however, understanding the factors that cause this problem is as important.

### **2.6.6 Sexual Bullying Behaviour**

Inappropriate sexual jokes, touching and body shaming form part of sexual bullying. Ndebele and Msiza (2017) state that starting rumours about sexual activities, as well as the passing of unwanted notes or sexual pictures are also seen as forms of sexual bullying. Ndebele and Msiza (2011) report that it is usually female learners who are victims of this type of bullying. Sexual bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological in nature. It humiliates, degrades and demeans an individual. Sexual bullying, according to Lass and Boezaart (2014), includes physical and sexual acts like touching someone inappropriately, stripping them naked and having sex with them against their will. Sexual bullying, according to Wilson et al. (2012), includes passing sexually explicit jokes and remarks, showing sexual images or private parts and even disseminating sexual rumours about another person.

Sexual bullying, which also occurs in schools, may include exhibitionism and sexual positioning (Louw, 2015). According to Aluede et al. (2011), students in secondary schools in Nigeria, particularly girls, mentioned sexual harassment as one of the frequent forms of bullying they experienced in the classroom. Similar to the incidents mentioned above, De Wet (2010) asserts that sexual harassment was one of the most prevalent forms of bullying reported in schools in the Free State, South Africa. Furthermore, Swearer et al. (2010) reported that most students experience sexual harassment at school and in the community.

### **2.6.7 Racism and Bullying**

Racism or ethnic discrimination, hostility toward others based on skin colour or cultural differences, is another type of violence that can reflect larger society and exists in schools (Mncube & Harber, 2013). Research findings indicate that racist bullying, which may predominantly be physical, psychological and verbal makes a person feel

unwelcome, marginalised, excluded, powerless or worthless because of their skin colour, ethnicity or culture, is becoming a worrying feature in many schools (Smith, 2013). According to Swearer Napolitano (2011:228), involvement in bullying is “a cross-cultural phenomenon that transcends ethnicity”. However, research has shown that "students who are in the ethnic minority in a school are more likely to be bullied than those in the ethnic majority" (Jimerson, Swearer & Espelage, 2010:228). In South Africa, "the colonial education system left a legacy of classifications, labels and negative relationships that created unprecedented levels of mistrust and hostility between racial groups" (Harber, 2004:87).

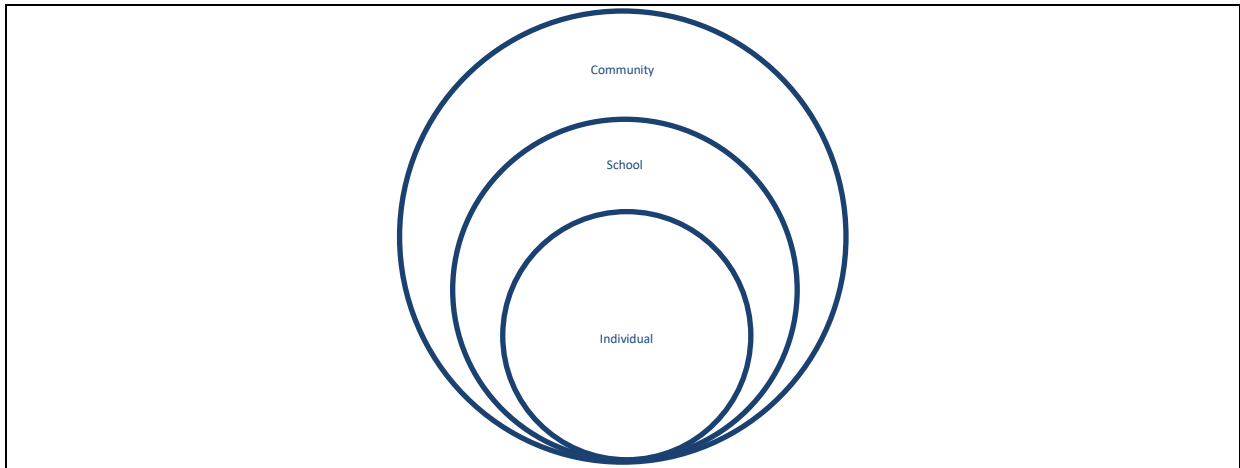
### **2.6.8 Homophobic Bullying**

Homophobic bullying, as defined by Dupper (2013), is a form of bullying that targets individual based on their perceived or actual sexual orientation. It involves the use of derogatory language, physical aggression or exclusion to intimidate and harm the victims. According to Swearer et al. (2010), homophobic bullying is a type of sexual harassment that is directed at people who identify as homosexual or transgender. Unfortunately, the community of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQI+) learners often experiences higher rates of bullying than their heterosexual counterparts (Rose et al., 2011).

## **2.7 FACTORS INFLUENCING BULLYING**

Bullying is a complex phenomenon and is influenced by a variety of factors such as individual factors as well as family, community, school, and culture (Edward, 2019; Mbambo, 2016b; Olweus, 2013; Mollo, 2009). Edward (2019) argues that bullying and other aggressive behaviours of perpetrators towards their peers can be seen as a response to their failure at school. Such behaviours can be interpreted as the frustration of the perpetrator's reaction, leading to bullying tendencies.

The following is a schematic representation of the four concentric circles corresponding to the factors influencing bullying behaviour, each of which are discussed in subsequent sections.



(Source: Fried & Fried, 1996)

## **Figure 2.1: Factors influencing bullying behaviour**

### **2.7.1 Individual Factors influencing Bullying**

Research on bullying in schools reveals that various factors are responsible for this phenomenon, both at the local and international levels. Terry (2010) suggests that social expectations and environmental, familial and personal influences all play a role in bullying. According to Edward (2019) and Mbambo (2016), an active and impulsive temperament is often at the root of bullying tendencies. Students' traits, routines and physical characteristics can also influence their interactions with others, whether positively or negatively.

Book, Volk and Hosker (2012) assert that bullied children often exhibit similar personality traits, such as passive aggression, paranoia and extreme dependency towards on students. Motivation for bullies to target other students may include gaining control, the need to be in charge or exacting revenge. Studies conducted in Ghana and Nigeria suggest that students who are overweight or underweight, or those with different skin complexions from other students, are often victims of sexual harassment and bullying (Mbambo, 2016; Ndibalema, 2013; Rose et al., 2011). Peer pressure and the desire to gain popularity among their peers are two factors that contribute to bullying, as demonstrated in various studies (Ndebele & Msiza, 2014; Kruger, 2011; Chabalala, 2011). Researchers have also proposed that underdeveloped or superior social skills and power-hungry personalities may contribute to bullying (Cook et al., 2010; Olweus, 2010; Coloroso, 2010).

### **2.7.2 Family Influence on Bullying**

Family plays a fundamental role in shaping a child's behaviour and social development and research has unequivocally established its impact on bullying. Bronfenbrenner (2005) argues that children observe and replicate behaviour from their homes and produce them at school (Mushambi, 2016; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey 2010).

Some researchers argue that family circumstances do not consistently influence a child in becoming a bully, (Swearer & Hymel, 2015; Adeosun et al., 2015); however, studies suggest that parenting styles may impact a child's social development. Studies in South Africa by Mbambo (2016), Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) and Chabalala (2011) assert that bullying behaviour may also be influenced by factors outside of the family, such as peer pressure or societal norms.

The current study revealed that parenting styles and family circumstances, such as single parenting, divorce, death and parental substance abuse, can significantly contribute to a child's likelihood of becoming a bully (Coyne & Monks, 2011). A study conducted in Australia found that parents who do not instil positive values and ill-treat their children are more likely to have children who become bullies (Rigby, 2013). According to Wang et al. (2013), children may unconsciously act as tools for bullies when parents forbid them from expressing their feelings or having an opinion. Hinduja and Patchin (2012) found that in Japan, most bullies come from homes lacking warmth and affection from parents or their caregivers. Studies conducted in China (Wang et al., 2012) and Nigeria (Adeosun et al., 2014) also found that children who experience domestic violence or family conflicts are likelier to develop aggressive personalities and project their aggression onto other students.

### **2.7.3 School Culture as a Contributing Factor to Bullying**

The influence of school culture on bullying in schools was established by Cook et al. (2010). A lack of a culture of rules and discipline can lead to bullying in schools (Mushambi, 2016). According to Kaar (2012) and Gudyanga et al. (2014), teachers who are well-informed and prepared for class are less likely to experience bullying behaviour from their students. Additionally, educators can support and improve their students' intellectual and social development by having a positive outlook and showing

compassion towards them, as per Rigby (2013). This can help them develop positive social skills and reduce the likelihood of engaging in bullying.

Students may exploit a supervisor's absence to engage in various forms of bullying. In the absence of rules prohibiting verbal, psychological or physical bullying, for instance, students may bully (Fried & Sosland, 2011). Research conducted by Kaar (2012) and Mbambo (2016) has indicated that learners in Ghanaian schools tend to fight during class due to too much free time. Similarly, studies conducted in Nigeria have shown that instructors' attitudes towards their work can significantly affect bullying behaviour.

The teacher's management style in the classroom may either encourage or deter bullying (Rigby, 2013; Olweus, 2010). When teachers have a laissez-faire management style, where everyone does as they please, learners may behave negatively and be overly accessible. At the same time, an autocratic teacher may make students want to be power-hungry and in charge and are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour (Swearer et al., 2010).

#### **2.7.4 Teacher Influence as a Factor in Bullying**

Teachers are meant to interpret and implement the intended curriculum and contextualise it so that it comes alive for students; however, in many cases teachers find themselves spending teaching time dealing with bullying either in class or outside the class. A study by Gunam (2014) asserts that teachers may also be perpetrators of bullying. According to reports from South Africa, bullying in schools has increased due to teachers using power-assertive disciplinary tactics like corporal punishment (De Wet, 2013; Miller & Lowen, 2012; Underwood & Rozen, 2011). Considering this, more research conducted in South Africa revealed that several factors might contribute to bullying and school violence, including intolerance among students, overcrowding in classrooms and a lack of adequate teaching and learning resources (Van Jaarsveld, 2011; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013).

The attitudes, behaviour, and supervisory routines of teachers, as well as the lack of appropriate resources within schools, are the main factors that contribute to higher levels of school bullying. According to Olweus (2013), bullying often takes place when there is little or no supervision in places like school playgrounds, and when teachers have limited attention and warmth towards the child.

### **2.7.5 Large Classes as a Factor**

Bullying and overcrowding in classrooms are related (Dixon, 2011). Discipline can be challenging in large, crowded classes where it is challenging for teachers to maintain control of the class (Mushambi, 2016). Without the teacher noticing, it might encourage students to bully one another verbally, psychologically or physically (Dupper, 2013; Joubert, 2010).

### **2.7.6 Societies Influence on Violence in Schools**

The community or society in which a person grows up can significantly impact their life, either positively or negatively. Early experiences, such as parental neglect, family instability and aggression in the home or society, can influence the learner. Thompson and Smith (2011) state that these experiences can influence a child's behaviour. Kalyva (2011) also notes that the diversity of cultures in different societies has an effect on bullying. The level of acceptance or rejection towards bullying is determined by the attitudes and actions of the community. According to Hensley (2015), societies promote different levels of interpersonal aggression that affect the degree of acceptability of certain bullying behaviours. Fundamental social elements such as violence, racial harassment and sexual harassment have a significant impact on the prevalence of bullying in schools. Findings from a study by Ngwenya (2015) concur that in a diverse township, such as Diepsloot, individuals are likely to experience various forms of bullying due to the influence of different cultural backgrounds and societal norms.

### **2.7.7 Technology's Influence on bullying**

Technology is the advanced communication technology that is sweeping the world. Despite being the fastest and most accessible form of communication, technology has become the most significant issue in contemporary society Katz (2012). According to Lemke (2014), modern communication speeds up and facilitates communication; however, it further encourages bullying in new ways such as sending text messages. Dupper (2013) claims that technology has changed how people communicate and behave. Studies show that school learners are now victims of bullying through social media (Dillon, 2012; Miller & Lowen, 2012; Fried & Sosland, 2011). Dupper (2013) adds that technology can humiliate, harm, tease or destroy friendships and reputations.

### **2.7.8 Modelling Behaviour's influence on Bullying**

Home and communities are the lens through which learners experience violence. According to a study conducted by Nyawo in 2016, children may adopt behaviour patterns developed by families to cope with challenges, which they may perceive as acceptable or desirable, and apply them in other contexts, such as bullying. Fried and Sosland (2011) also found that bullies generally become abusers through learned behaviour, acquired primarily from family members and friends. Furthermore, Dawson and Singh (2010) observed that bullies usually come from families where the parents condone 'fighting back' and the use of physical punishment as discipline. Additionally, children who bully others may come from families lacking warmth, in which violence is common and where discipline is inconsistent.

### **2.7.9 Drugs and Substance Use**

Bullying can lead to mental health disorders and addiction (substance use disorder) in adulthood. Drug and substance abuse can harm the body and mind, whether they are legal or illegal. The Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act (No. 140 of 1992) prohibits the possession of certain drugs, their trade, production or storage. Burton and Leoschut (2013) suggest that communities need to take proactive measures to build safe and non-violent communities. The South African Schools Act (SASA) (No. 31 of 2007), Section 8(a)(1), allows schools to conduct substance testing and searches to address violence among students. Alcohol use is associated with poor physical well-being and an increased risk of various illnesses and accidents (Qwabe et al., 2022). According to a study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), people who were physically bullied as children are more likely to partake in drug and alcohol abuse in adulthood; however, students who are victimised and also bully others are more likely to engage in substance use.

### **2.7.10 Poverty as a Factor of Bullying**

A study shows that learners who are envious of their more privileged peers or steal other students' lunches or belongings may become bullies (Edward, 2014). At present, South Africa is facing the issue of unemployment, which is a significant challenge for the country's economy and has led to an increase in poverty within certain communities.

The problem is exacerbated by the growing population and limited job opportunities, leading to social and economic inequalities, as noted by Ngwenya (2015). A study conducted by Suryahadi, Al Izzati and Suryadarma (2020) indicated that the poverty rate has increased globally since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has intensified the unemployment crisis as many businesses have been forced to close or downsize, leaving even more people without work. Such issues threaten the stability of families and leaves children vulnerable to teasing and mocking by those who are better off, as pointed out by Miller and Lowen (2012). Gunam (2014) suggests that poverty deprives individuals of resources and mechanisms to control their lives, particularly in townships and rural areas. Furthermore, the lack of economic opportunities and limited access to education exacerbate the cycle of poverty and violence in South Africa.

#### **2.7.11 Divorce and Death in the Family**

Research has shown that children whose parents go through a divorce or experience the loss of a family member are at a higher risk of experiencing intense emotional distress, confusion and trauma. According to studies conducted by Miller and Lowen (2012), these negative emotions can lead to various detrimental behaviours, such as aggression, rebellion and antisocial tendencies. Similarly, research by Govender (2013), suggests that bereaved children may exhibit symptoms of depression, anxiety and social withdrawal. These findings highlight the importance of providing adequate support and counselling to help children cope with the emotional aftermath of divorce or death in the family.

### **2.8 THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN BULLYING**

According to Gunam (2014), a teacher's lack of motivation and enthusiasm in the learning process may lead to learners underperforming and misbehaving at school. Allen (2010) asserted that even though teachers are aware of forms of bullying, they become a target for the community when they follow the guidelines that the school has put in place regarding bullying.

Establishing a conducive and effective learning environment in the classroom requires effective classroom management. Classroom management entails laying out precise guidelines, putting good engagement tactics into practice and swiftly dealing with any



disruptive behaviour (Olweus, 2010). In addition, encouraging a sense of community and respect for one another among students is another aspect of classroom management. Teachers may make the most of their class time and guarantee that every student has the chance to thrive academically by managing the classroom well. Marias and Meier (2010) stress the importance of learner supervision within classes as study results prove that when there is a lack of learner supervision, bullying is most likely to occur (Maphosa & Mammen, 2010).

This study deems it important to highlight the use of a school code of conduct as it enables schools to include an anti-bullying policy in which schools can state clearly that bullying is taken seriously and that consequences will be applied should it occur. The aim of an anti-bullying policy is to assist in the establishment of a safe environment by providing clear rules and procedures for dealing with bullying on a regular basis (Gunam, 2014). Apart from the school's code of conduct, every school is expected to have an effective safety plan that complies with all the requirements set out in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 (Act No. 85 of 1993), which contains safety measures in order to make the school environment safe and bully-free. A school safety plan should clearly indicate how learners should be supervised all the time. This makes it possible for teachers to keep an eye on the behaviour of the learners and be able to curtail any bullying.

According to Mushambi (2016), in the absence of supervision, the learning process is disturbed, and unsuitable behaviour may occur. Learners can hurt one another or break the property of the school. To prevent any form of bullying or unruly behaviour, an educator therefore must be present in the classroom and not leave the learners unattended. The playground, bathrooms and waiting areas have a high risk of harassment and bullying. As a result, it is important to mention the control of these places in the safety plan. To manage the abovementioned areas, a duty roster for the staff must be in place. To control bullying, an intervention plan is required that involves all the learners, parents, and staff members to ensure that all learners can learn in an environment that is safe and secure.

Allen (2010) further suggested that schools need to conduct awareness campaigns to teach parents about bullying. Even though the Department has developed a School Safety Framework (Addressing Bullying in Schools, 2012), it needs to be implemented

through a school bullying programme where all stakeholders are accountable, such as parents of the bully (DBE, 2012). However, such policies need to be regularly reviewed and updated. School should also develop a good relationship with the community as this would aid teachers in gaining a better understanding of society's values, norms and cultures.

## **2.9 LEGISLATION AND POLICIES**

South Africa has several laws and regulations, some for the protection of children and others specifically for learners.

The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b) was designed to create and provide for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of the country's schools. Various sections relate to bullying.

- Section 8(1) requires school governing bodies to draw up a code of conduct for learners in consultation with learners, parents and educators.
- Section 8(5) relates to the development of a code of conduct that must make provision for the interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary procedures.
- Section 10 provides for the protection of learners against physical and mental harm.

To ensure that these laws are enforced, SGBs must create a code of conduct in consultation with learners, parents and educators.

Educators in South Africa are required under the Childcare Amendment Act No. 96 to report all incidences or suspicions of a learner's ill-treatment or deliberate injury to learners. This Act mandates regular contact with learners to detect such incidents. Educators have regular contact with learners and therefore should easily be able to notice signs of ill-treatment of children.

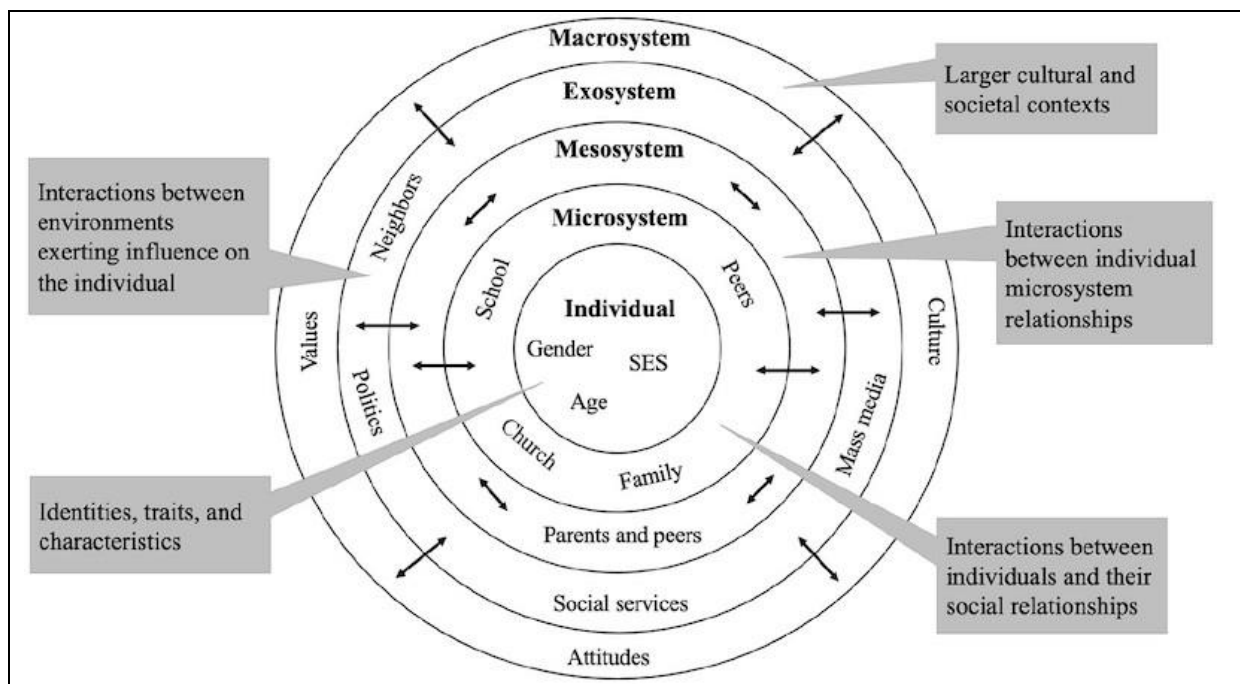
## **2.11 THE UNDERLYING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter reviewed the literature on how bullying is conceptualised, how learner bullying behaviour is understood and how to manage it. The theoretical framework on which this study is based, is presented in this section.

The theoretical foundation for this study were the Bronfenbrenner Bio-Ecological Systems Theory and Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory which assisted in investigating the role of the ecosystem and socio-cultural factors in bullying and its management in schools.

### 2.11.1 The Bio-Ecological Systems Theory

One of the most influential ideas in the field of developmental psychology is often regarded as being the Bronfenbrenner bio-ecological model (Swart & Greyling, 2011). Bronfenbrenner (2008) asserts that it is critical to consider an individual's full social-ecological milieu in order to comprehend human development. Consequently, contact between an individual and his or her environment leads to human growth (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).



**Figure 2.2: Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems Theory**

### 2.11.1 The Bio-Ecological Systems Theory and the Overlapping Influences

The association and interdependence of humans and their physical surroundings is a crucial aspect of every individual's life. As Maris and Meier (2010) elaborate, a system is composed of interconnected, dependent and cooperating components that work together to create a coherent whole. A child's physical, emotional and intellectual growth is influenced by their development. To comprehend how humans interact with their social environments, Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems Theory is the

most appropriate approach, as noted by Edward (2019). This theory recognises the dynamic relationships between people and their social environments and acknowledges that each environment has an impact on a child's emotional, intellectual and physical development. Therefore, this theory provides valuable insight into how people interact with their social surroundings. Managing bullying behaviour in primary schools requires considering intricate relationships, social contexts and interactions. Monks and Coyne (2011) suggest that an ecological system perspective is the best approach. Additionally, Bronfenbrenner's theory highlights how child development occurs and "how events in one system can impact or be affected by other systems" (Johnson, 2014:27). As per Marais and Meier's (2010) research findings, bullying is the most prevalent disruptive behaviour that affects students' emotional and physical experiences at school.

### **2.11.2 Microsystem**

The first category under this theoretical framework is the micro-system. Family, school, peers, and the job are a few examples of the microsystem, which is a person's or a child's immediate surroundings or environment (Englander, 2013; Swart & Pettipher, 2011; Espelage & Swearer, 2010; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this system, children engage in close relationships with their parents, grandparents and other members of their extended family (Mushambi, 2016). As a result, ineffective parenting techniques or child-rearing practices may help explain why some children harass others (Olweus, 1993). To fully understand bullying, Espelage and Swearer (2009) asserted that it is crucial to consider all facets of bio-ecology. Liasidou (2012) claimed that youngsters who experience various types of bullying - physical, sexual, emotional, or social - are more likely to grow up to be bullies themselves. According to Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994), the child's growth is significantly influenced by their family, school life and peers. The microsystem thus assists in explaining how students become bullies with the influence that they experience in and from their surroundings.

As a result, unfavourable relationships among family members serve as a model for children's bullying behaviour (Nyawo, 2016). Children could exhibit the same violent bullying behaviours at home as they do at school (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006). Therefore, it seems reasonable to claim that students' family backgrounds are often the cause of bullying behaviour. In the micro-system (See Figure 2.2), how bullying is

perceived is also influenced by the socio-economic standing of the families. When bullying occurs in low socio-economic status homes, it may be seen as a normal part of growing up, however, bullying may be seen negatively in middle-class families (Mushambi, 2016).

Based on the research of Louw (2015) and Mabatha, Magano and Sedibe (2014) microsystems refer to the immediate environments where proximal processes take place. These processes impact a child's behaviour and can involve parents, siblings or other influential individuals, such as those found in schools, neighbourhoods or childcare environments. Lastly, it is suggested that one microsystem for learners could be a home environment with parents and siblings, while another microsystem could involve schoolteachers and peers (Edward, 2014).

### **2.11.3 Meso-System**

The mesosystem refers to the connections among the components of a microsystem and how they affect each other. A notable example of this system is when parents and peers form a mesosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner (2009, 1979), Kail and Cavanaugh (2010) and Mbambo (2016), the mesosystem is a space where microsystems interact with one another. Recent research reveals that many children come from families where parents are absent due to work or death, resulting in children having to take care of themselves. Maunder and Crafter (2018) argue that low socio-economic status (SES) increases the likelihood of bullying. Bronfenbrenner (2009) elaborates that the interdependence and continual interaction between family, school and peers are reflected in the mesosystem. Additionally, Bronfenbrenner (1995; 2009) classified the mesosystem as the connecting of structures of the micro-system. Singh (2016) found that child development is linked to the environment in which the child grows up, such as the school environment and family structures. According to Bronfenbrenner (2013), if a child grows up in an unhealthy home with poor family behaviour and treatment, that child is likely to treat others the same way.

### **2.11.4 Exo-System**

According to Mbambo (2016), the exo-system is the more extensive social system in which the child is not a direct part. The education system, health care system, social welfare system, media, support groups, recreation centres, housing and workplaces

are a few examples of environments in the exo-system. Parents are more likely to treat their children poorly at home if they are bullied or harassed at work (Liasdou, 2012). Children may then transfer the same bullying behaviour to their schools and other public places (Nutbrown & Clough, 2006).

Additionally, adult-perpetrated acts of violence at work and in the community may encourage bullying behaviour in children, such as murder, vandalism and verbal or sexual abuse (Miller & Lowen, 2012). Bullying can occur as a result of economic circumstances that have an indirect impact on the learner. Despite not directly containing the individual, Swart and Greyling (2011) claim that the exo-system indirectly affects them. Olweus (2013) supports that claim and contends that teachers' perceptions of bullying are influenced by their personal experiences with bullying in school, the school's anti-bullying policies and the support they receive from their school administration and the school community.

In this study, although, the exo-system relates to teachers' perceptions of bullying, it is partly made up of the affiliations between the school and their peer groups.

#### **2.11.5 Macro-System**

Bronfenbrenner (2005) refers to this aspect as the outer stage of the structure. This stage is influenced by a variety of factors, such as resources, cultures, economy, values and beliefs. When the community shares the same beliefs, cultures and values, they belong to a macro-system. Mbambo (2016) defines the macro-system as the cultural values, customs, laws and beliefs of a society. The macro-system helps one to understand the complexity of the family as a system as well as how the child functions within the family and society. Societies, where learners are exposed to violence and upheaval, encourage violent behaviours in the learners from an early age, which may lead to bullying behaviour at school.

### **2.12 VYGOTSKY'S SOCIO-CULTURAL THEORY**

Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory is a psychological concept that underscores the importance of social interaction and cultural context in cognitive growth (Scott & Palincsar, 2013). In Vygotsky's view, learning is a collaborative process that occurs through engagement with others and is shaped by the cultural tools and practices of

one's society (Maunder & Crafter, 2017). Vygotsky proposes that knowledge and skills are gained through interaction with individuals who possess more expertise, such as parents, educators or peers (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). This theory according to Chabalala (2011), emphasises the crucial role of social relationships and cultural factors in influencing an individual's cognitive development.

School bullying is a serious global issue and understanding it requires examining it through a socio-cultural theoretical lens, as proposed by Maunder and Crafter (2017). This approach recognises that bullying is contextual and has far-reaching implications for research and practice. This study delves into Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), which posits that children learn appropriate behaviour and cognitive processes through social interactions with family members and other community members. According to Maunder and Crafter (2017), children who bully others pose a potential risk not only to their peers but also to themselves. Espelage (2014) contends that language and mediation play a significant role in constructing knowledge in a school context, while La Salle et al. (2015) argue that a child's development is heavily influenced by their cultural contexts, such as family, schools, community and social groups. For instance, parents or families experiencing difficulties related to low socio-economic status, limited educational opportunities or instability within the family, may resort to aggression towards their children, which could result in the child acting out in a similar manner towards other children. Numerous scholars have explored the socio-cultural approach (Maunder & Crafter, 2017; Espelage, 2014; Monks et al., 2009; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Just as Nehuleni (2015) sought to investigate the effectiveness of Vygotsky's theory in enhancing students' learning outcomes and how it can be applied in classroom settings, this study aimed to offer insights into school bullying as a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by cultural, historical and institutional factors. The researcher believes that the socio-cultural perspective has a significant impact on bullying, and the study can bridge a gap by utilising socio-cultural theory to provide a framework for comprehending bullying in schools.

### **2.12.1 Influence of Family on Behaviour Modelling**

The family has the most significant impact on behaviour modelling and serves as a buffer for elements like poverty, absences from school and peer pressure that may

contribute to increased school violence. According to Burton and Leoschut (2013), a young person's family and home environment significantly impacts their risk of becoming a victim of bullying and engaging in bullying themselves. According to these authors, families serve as the primary setting in which children learn about socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Burton and Leoschut (2013) contend that children who have witnessed some interpersonal violence between family members are more likely to imitate and replicate it.

According to the South African Council of Education (SACE) (2011), exposure to crime and violence in the home increases the likelihood of experiencing victimisation at school. According to Burton and Leoschut (2013), family composition is one aspect of family life that has been repeatedly linked with school violence. Furthermore, Burton and Leoschut (2013) add that experiencing violence due to having family member who have engaged in criminal activity or have been imprisoned also increases the risk of being exposed to school violence. A nuclear family is one in which a child and both parents reside together while a non-nuclear family is one that does not conform to the traditional notion of a marriage, but in each case the family still determines who they are, their roles, how to set boundaries, and even what to call themselves (Shea, 2013).

### **2.12.2 Influence of Peer Relationships**

Peer pressure is a significant risk factor for school violence, according to Bhana (2013). This is corroborated by Burton and Leoschut (2013), who hold the belief that peers increasingly impact students' attitudes and behaviours when they enter adolescence. Research has found that some learners spend time away from home with antisocial and delinquent peers, engaging in drug-related, sexual or criminal activities (Mushambi, 2016; Mosia, 2015; Khanyela, 2012). Children have much free, unsupervised time in most chaotic neighbourhoods. Due to the absence of parental control and supervision, children in slums organise play groups to gain acceptance and support from their peers.

### **2.12.3 Influence of Political Culture and Violence**

According to Ngqela and Lewis (2012), school violence may stem from the larger community and societal factors over which the school has little or no control. Similarly, Ngakane et al. (2012) argue that the high level of violence in schools reflects a



complicated combination of history and recent stresses at an individual, school, and community level in society. SACE (2011) believes that violence in schools is gender-based as girls and boys tend to be exposed to different forms of it. Girls are victims of sexual violence, harassment and rape, contrary to boys who experience bullying and mostly physical assaults (SACE, 2011). In contrast, the National Schools Violence Study (NSVS) conducted by Burton and Leoschuit (2012) claims that the violence is similar across all age and gender cohorts. For this study, the focus was on how the politics of the community, which is multicultural, has triggered bullying in school.

#### **2.12.4 Influence of Economic Culture**

Carl (2011) identified poverty, social and economic inequality and unemployment as major barriers to youth development in South Africa. These challenges still persist, leading to an increase in criminal and violent activities among young people. Carl (2011) further notes that unemployment levels are also high among parents of learners in South African townships. A study conducted by Singh and Steyn (2013) in KwaZulu-Natal schools reveals that poverty, broken homes and poor parenting are key elements that contribute significantly to antisocial learner behaviour. Contrary to Singh and Steyn, Carl (2011) believes that poverty, hunger, unemployment and the shortage of housing do not necessarily lead to an increase in crime or rebellious behaviour, although admits that they are challenges.

#### **2.12.5 Influence of Township Culture**

Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya (2014) believe that gangsterism, criminal and domestic violence as well as substance abuse are concerns in most South African township areas. They view the forming of gangs in South African townships as an aspect associated with poverty, unemployment and the changing patterns in family life caused by urbanisation. These researchers believe that young boys with poor economic prospects, caused by the impact of post-apartheid globalisation and the neoliberalism of the economy, are more inclined to aspire to the lifestyles of gangsters. The formation of gangs in communities has many root causes including “poor socio-economic conditions such as unemployment, low income, unemployment and inadequate living conditions” (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya 2014:43).

## **2.13 CONCLUSION**

This chapter defined bullying concepts and discussed the different types of bullying and the extent of exposure to the various forms of bullying at the school level. In addition, the psychological effects were mentioned. Furthermore, the teacher's experience with bullying and duties of the school regarding bullying were discussed. The chapter also provided a review of the literature covering the theories of Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner which formed the conceptual framework for this study.

In Chapter 3, the research methodology and design for this study is presented and discussed.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter specifically focuses on the research methodology used in conducting the empirical investigation. Additionally, the justification for the choice of the research approach and design, which was influenced by the research questions and the aims of the study, the sample groups selected for the research and data collection methods and data analysis technique implemented, are provided. In addition, the measures to ensure their trustworthiness are explained as well as the ethical measures adopted in conducting the investigation.

### **3.2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of ecosystemic and socio-cultural factors in promoting or mitigating bullying at selected public schools in the township of Diepsloot, Gauteng Province.

The main research questions that guided the study was: *What are the underlying ecosystemic and socio-cultural determinants of bullying in township schools, and how can this knowledge inform the development of effective programmes to manage and prevent bullying behaviour in these settings?*

The following sub questions supported the main research question:

1. What are the participant views on the extent of bullying in township schools?
2. How do ecosystemic factors influence bullying behaviour among perpetrators and victims in township schools?
3. How do socio-cultural factors influence bullying behaviour among perpetrators and victims in township schools?
4. Based on the ecosystemic and socio-cultural factors identified, what recommendations can be made for developing a programme to manage bullying in township schools effectively?

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The first section of this chapter presents a description of the research methodology used to guide this research.

### **3.3.1 Research Paradigm**

Paradigms serve as the foundation for research by providing a framework for understanding observations and experiences related to a problem (Henning, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Researchers use paradigms as a way of examining facts in studies (Creswell, 2014). According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), Creswell (2012), and Rubin and Rubin (2012), paradigms focus on how individuals view the world based on their life experiences. The concepts of epistemology, ontology, ethics and methodology form the basis of paradigms (Creswell, 2014). Epistemology relates to how individuals attempt to understand the world, while ethics is concerned with their values and morals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), a study's philosophical foundation is shaped by epistemological and ontological perspectives. According to these experts, philosophical beliefs have an influence on every part of the study, including topic selection, question formulation, method selection, research approaches and design.

The Interpretivist paradigm was utilised for this study as I wished to interact with participants extensively and address the how and why questions and, according to Maxwell (2012), interpretivist theories attempt to address these questions. Interpretivist scholars study how people perceive and make sense of their surroundings as humans contribute meaning to their social reality. Henning et al. (2011) explains that research based on the interpretivist paradigm is primarily concerned with disclosing participants' perspectives. According to the interpretivist paradigm, human behaviour is impacted by social world knowledge (Maree, 2016). Furthermore, Henning et al. (2011) indicates that the interpretivist paradigm provides insight into people's lived experiences from their point of view. In this study, I attempted to comprehend the learners' social environment and determine what external and internal factors influence their behaviour in the study. Listening to people in their social surroundings, according to Maree (2016), provides a better opportunity to comprehend their perspectives on their actions.

The study's purpose was to determine the underlying ecosystemic and socio-cultural determinants of bullying in township schools through obtaining insight into what participants think and understand about bullying, as well as how they deal with it. As a result, the interpretivist paradigm was deemed best suited for this research study

and because of the various methods of analysing the collected data, an interpretivist approach was unavoidable for this study (Creswell, 2012). In this case, it explains how bullying is perceived in schools, including its causes, types, effects and general patterns observed by participants as they interact with one another and with the researcher (Henning et al., 2011).

### **3.3.2 Research Approach**

In qualitative research, an interpretive, naturalistic approach is applied. By attempting to understand events in terms of the meanings that people give to them, qualitative researchers look into phenomena in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). According to Silverman (2010), the qualitative approach allows the researcher to interact intimately with their participants while still giving authentic and credible data. The qualitative approach is interpreted by Yin (2015) and Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2012) as a strategy or tool for eliciting people's ideas, feelings, experiences and events as they occur in the natural world.

This study adopted a qualitative research approach given the nature of the research problem. Nieuwenhuis (2013) describes a qualitative approach as research that attempts to collect rich, descriptive data on a specific phenomenon to develop an understanding of what is being observed. Mushambi (2016) concurs that the qualitative research method adopted in research, allows the researcher to engage with the subject in a more in-depth, explorative, descriptive and contextual manner.

The qualitative research method adopted in this research allowed for in-depth interviews and observation of humans in their social and natural settings. The researcher relies on the views of the participants, asking broad, general questions. The selection of a qualitative research approach provided a clear grasp of the participants' perspectives and experiences (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) to capture participants' perceptions as they naturally arise and in their own words (Johnson & Christensen, 2011). It offers the opportunity to obtain in-depth information on how the participants comprehend and represent their experiences and actions as they encounter and live through certain situations, as well as examine the different schools' approaches to regulating bullying behaviour. Patton (2015) elaborates that the

qualitative research approach allows the researcher to obtain in-depth information on research issues.

According to Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012), qualitative research shapes various behavioural patterns and aims to piece together a coherent story, which in this case is understanding the experience of bullying in primary schools from the perspectives of those who are involved. As a result, qualitative research indicates that information can be gathered through verbal contact between individuals or groups. It is concerned with the underlying characteristics of subjective experiences as well as the meaning attached to occurrences (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Neuman (2011) also elaborates that qualitative research is concerned with learning about subjective experiences that allow the researcher to see things from the perspective of the participants.

Researchers use data patterns to build concepts, insights and knowledge in qualitative research because it is a method for elucidating the knowledge and meaning of individuals and groups of people involved in a human issue (Silverman, 2013). Wagner et al. (2012) also argue that a qualitative method is humanistic since it involves researchers studying people qualitatively, getting to know them intimately and experiencing what the participants go through in their daily difficulties in society. As the qualitative technique is concerned with people and how they interact with their surroundings, this study sought to gather useful data by investigating various social contexts and the people who live in them.

### **3.3.3 Research Design**

Qualitative research encompasses a wide range of methodologies, with the major genres being ethnographic, phenomenological, grounded theory and case studies (Creswell, 2014). For the current study, an exploratory case study design was employed. This investigative strategy sought to provide a comprehensive description of the case within its world context (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014; Lapan et al., 2012). As defined by these scholars, a case study is a qualitative approach that employs various in-depth data collection techniques to explore one or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time. Through this methodology, a rich and detailed understanding of the case(s) can be gained.

A case study is a data acquisition strategy that centres on a particular societal problem, drawing on the perspectives of participants to gain insights (Bazeley, 2013). According to Yin (2014), this qualitative approach involves examining one or more bounded systems (cases) over time, utilising various advanced data collection techniques. Robson (2011) and Lapan et al. (2012) state that the aim of a case study is to provide a detailed account of events within their world context. The integration of multiple sources and techniques in data collection, as emphasised by Maree (2016), enhances the data's reliability and generates a wealth of information about the phenomenon. This approach is particularly suited for understanding human consciousness in its natural environment (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011).

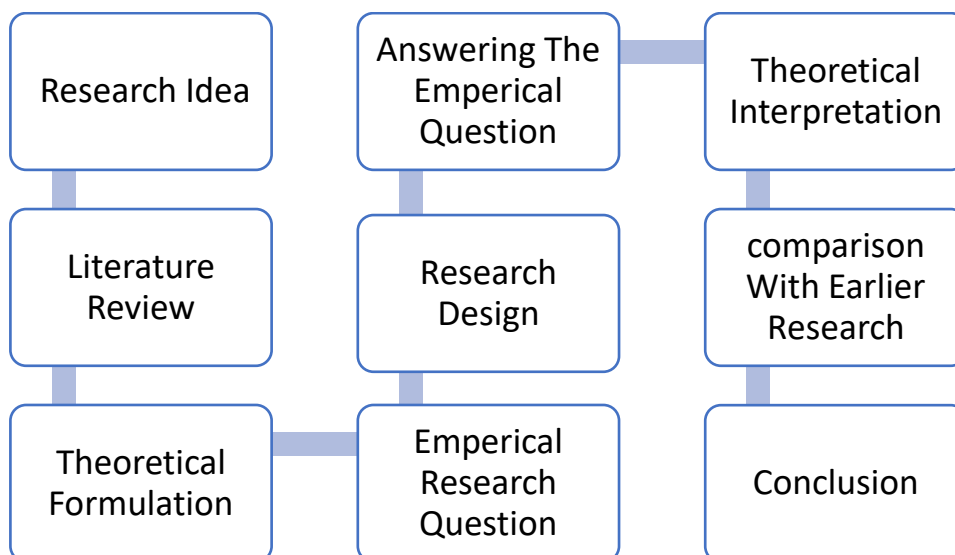
For the current study, a case study was chosen to explore how bullying is perceived, experienced and addressed in schools, with a focus on township schools. This methodology provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon by incorporating various perspectives and generating rich descriptions of events (Creswell, 2014). By selecting two primary schools in Diepsloot, as the researcher I was able to obtain an in-depth understanding of the underlying ecosystemic and socio-cultural determinants of bullying (Henning et al., 2011; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The case study methodology enables the researcher to focus on a single group of participants, a single setting and a single scenario, thereby gaining a nuanced understanding of bullying in the school environment. Overall, the case study approach was well-suited for this study, as it facilitated insight, discovery and interpretation, as opposed to hypothesis testing typically associated with quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Furthermore, case studies and qualitative research complement each other by focusing on particular elements, such as the individual case chosen to illustrate the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This approach emphasises the importance of generating high-quality data, which is essential for in-depth qualitative investigations (Yin, 2015).

As a researcher, I employed a case study research design to find a wide range of social and cultural issues. The case in this study pertained to the phenomenon of learner bullying behaviour in a delimited context. However, I was aware that this approach may be difficult to analyse, as Bhattacharjee (2012) confirmed that the researcher's findings may be biased, affecting the direction and interpretation of a

study's findings. I mitigated this risk by meticulously organising and monitoring all data collection and analysis operations. I was also mindful of the potential impact of personal biases and subjectivities, and I relied on my supervisor's ongoing support and critical discussion. As a researcher, I recognise that case studies can provide valuable insights into a variety of social and cultural issues (Bhattacharjee, 2012). However, I was also aware that this approach could present challenges when it came to data analysis, and that my personal biases may impact the direction and interpretation of the study's findings.

The figure (Figure 3.1) provides a schematic presentation of the process of research that is discussed in-depth in the following sections.



(Source: Adapted from Braun & Clark, 2013)



### Figure 3.1: Phases in the research process

Table 3.1 expands on Figure 3.1 and provides the phases and their description.

**Table 3.1: Phases in the research process in a sequential form**

<b>PHASES</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS</b>
1. Research Idea	Familiarise myself with the concrete research question (formulation and explication preconception).
2. Literature Review	Link the research question to the theory.
3. Theoretical Formulation of the Research Problem	Generate the literature review by selecting the conceptual framework for the current study.
Empirical Research Question	Formulate the suitable questions by determining the goal and focus of the study.
5. Research Design (planning)	Use the theoretical frameworks that inform the current study.
6. Data Collection and Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct interviews with the selected participants.</li> <li>• Gather all data relevant to each potential theme</li> <li>• Check if themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set.</li> </ul>
7. Reporting and Evaluating the Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answer the empirical research questions</li> <li>• Select vivid, compelling extract examples</li> <li>• Final analysis of selected extracts and relate the analysis back to the research question, objectives and previous literature reviewed.</li> </ul>

### 3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Researchers have a plethora of methods at their disposal to gain insight and knowledge (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In experimental research, numbers are often utilised to interpret and analyse data, while process research leans heavily on inductive reasoning (Babbie, 2014). According to Nieuwenhuis (2013), research methodology refers to a comprehensive approach that begins with underlying philosophical assumptions and progresses to the selection of a research design, identification of participants, data collection strategies and data analysis methods. The research questions influence the design selected and shape the way data are collected and interpreted.

### 3.5.1 Sampling: Selection of Research Site and Participants

According to Creswell (2012), sampling is the selection of a subset of the population for research purposes. It is a crucial aspect of research that involves the careful selection of research participants and location based on the research hypothesis (Creswell, 2012).

#### 3.5.1.1 The research site

The sample was drawn from the township of Diepsloot located in Johannesburg's North District. The name 'Diepsloot' originates from Afrikaans and refers to the dry riverbed that runs through the area. Diepsloot, originally established in 1994 by individuals who were evicted from informal settlements, such as Honeydew, Zandpruit, and Alexandra, is known to comprise over 50 000 shacks as reported Ngwenya (2015). Diepsloot's population is approximately three hundred and fifty thousand 350 000 people (over 20 000 households) living in a mix of formal and informal settlements.



(Source: Adapted from the internet)

#### Figure 3.2: Photograph of Diepsloot Township

The township is marked by significant challenges such as high rates of unemployment, teenage pregnancy, crime, drug abuse, and alcoholism, with drugs referred to as 'Nyaope' and 'Mercedes'. Additionally, Diepsloot is recognised as a 'multi-country'

since it is home to individuals from diverse African countries such as Lesotho, Mozambique, Nigeria, Malawi, Somalia, Pakistan and Bangladesh. According to one resident, more than half the population in the area hails from Limpopo. This demographic makeup contributes to the schools in Diepsloot being diverse, with students from neighbouring countries and provinces. However, the languages of instruction in the schools, especially the ones selected as the field of study, are English, Sepedi and Isizulu.

Two schools were selected for the study from the large range of schools located in the township. The schools were purposively selected as they are about twenty kilometres away from my home which meant ease of access and limited travel expenses.

### **A description of School A: Zizonke Primary School**

Zizonke Primary School (pseudonym) is a government-owned primary school located in Diepsloot, Gauteng Province, South Africa. The school has a principal, four heads of department, one deputy principal, 41 educators, and 1 317 learners from Grade R to Grade 7. The school has two administrative clerks and several teacher assistants provided by the government, as well as two student practitioners who are completing their teaching practice. The school has seen an increase in learner enrolment in the past three years. The school is built with bricks, surrounded by a brick wall, and has a main gate with stationed security guards for both day and night shifts to maintain the safety and security of teachers and learners. The main gate is always locked to control access and maintain safety.

The school is categorised as a quintile 5 school as most of the learners' parents fall below the poverty line and are unemployed, relying on government pensions for survival. As a result, the government provides a feeding scheme that offers full lunch meals daily for the learners, with some learners taking food home to feed their elders. During my first appointment, the principal, deputy principal, and heads of departments were present, and after a brief discussion, permission to conduct the study at the school was granted by the deputy principal.



((Source: Adapted from the internet)

**Figure 3.3: Zizonke Primary School**

### **A description of School B: Zwelethu Primary School**

Zwelethu Primary School (pseudonym) is a government-owned primary school located in Diepsloot, Gauteng Province, South Africa. With one principal, a deputy, three heads of department, 46 educators, and 1354 learners, the school caters to grades R through 7. Additionally, the school has three administrative clerks, a group of teacher assistants.

Zwelethu Primary School is built using prefabricated container-class structures, including the principal's office, and is not fenced. This lack of a fence has led to some learners sneaking in and bunking classes unnoticed. The school faces challenges with overcrowded classrooms due to insufficient space and furniture. To address this, the school has adopted an alternative mode of attendance where learners come in alternately. Despite this measure, the classes remain overcrowded.

The school is categorised as a quintile 5 school due to most learners' parents falling below the poverty line. The school follows a no-fee day scholar policy and provides full lunch meals to learners through a government feeding scheme.

On the first visit to the school, the principal welcomed me and discussed the study's goals. After a brief discussion, the principal called the chairperson of the School-Based Support Team (SBST), who is also one of the heads of the department, to assist in

selecting the participants for the study. I scheduled a subsequent appointment to meet the selected participants and obtain their consent.



(Source: Adapted from the internet)

### **Figure 3.4: Zwelethu Primary School**

As previously mentioned, Diepsloot is a densely populated informal settlement area, with the sampled schools, referred to as Schools A and B being among the many schools located in the township. Through the use of a purposive sampling frame, I was able to select learners, teachers and principals at both schools to gather relevant data.

#### **3.5.1.2 Sampling**

In this study, a purposive sampling frame was adopted to identify participants who could provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon of bullying in schools. The sampling process was conducted in two stages: firstly, to select the schools, and secondly, to select the participants. Purposive sampling was used to ensure the selection of participants who could provide valuable insights into the research topic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A total of two principals, two Heads of Department (HoD), two members of the School Governing Body (SGB) and four Grade 7 teachers from the two schools were selected for the study as well as 12 learners. The purposive sampling frame allowed for the careful selection of participants who were knowledgeable and experienced in the phenomenon of bullying, thus providing valuable insights into the research problem (Creswell, 2012). Overall,

the sampling process was carefully conducted to ensure the selection of participants who could provide detailed and informative data, which was essential for the success of the study.

### **Principal Sample**

The principal of **School A** is a highly experienced 62-year-old female who has been a principal for over 15 years and a teacher for over 30 years. She holds a master's degree and was selected to participate in the study as one of two principals from her school.

**School B** principal selected for the study is a 47-year-old male with 8 years of experience as a teacher and 10 years as a principal. He also holds a master's degree.

Both principals were chosen to provide valuable insights into the prevalence and nature of bullying at their respective schools, given the significant bullying concerns in the area. As research sites for this topic, their schools were considered reliable sources of information.

### **Head of Department Sample**

**Participant 1:** is a 44-year-old male who is an intermediate phase teacher with 10 years of teaching experience. He is also the coordinator of the School-Based Support Team (SBST) and serves as the Intermediate and Senior Head of Department for English Home Language and Life Orientation. Additionally, he is health-conscious, enjoys sports, and teaches physical education lessons both in the school and the community.

**Participant 2:** is a 52-year-old female who has been with the school for 9 years. Prior to joining this school, she taught in KwaZulu-Natal, specifically in the suburb of Hammersdale where she was born and raised. She has over 27 years of experience in education and currently serves as the Head of Department and School-Based Support Team (SBST) chairperson. She teaches IsiZulu and Life Skills to students in Grades 4-7 and has previously taught in the Foundation Phase.

### **School Governing Body (SGB) member sample**

**Participant 1** is 49 years old and is one of the senior teachers at the school. She has been teaching since 1995. She has served in this school for more than 14 years. She teaches in the Foundation Phase. She is known in the community because of her teaching skills.

**Participant 2** is a teacher as well as an SGB member on the teacher's wing. With the experience of 5 years in teaching. He is 32 years old and is teaching Social Science to Grades 5 and 6. He is an outspoken, verbal person who is not afraid to voice his opinion and thoughts.

### **Grade 7 teacher Sample**

**Participant 1** is a 35-year-old teacher who has been with the school for five years. He teaches Mathematics and English in Grade 7 and has a positive outlook on life. He despises things that hurt children, such as bullying, and loves everyone in the school, especially the children.

**Participant 2** is a 45-year-old teacher who has been with the school for 12 years. She has a caring nature and takes care of everyone around the school, including staff and learners. She teaches Life Skills and Social Science in Grade 7 and loves netball. She is also a member of the School-Based Support Team (SBST).

**Participant 3** is a 41-year-old teacher with nine years teaching experience. He is intelligent and always comes up with profound ways of solving problems in the school. He teaches Creative Arts and Mathematics from Grades 6 to 7.

**Participant 4** is a 44-year-old teacher who teaches English and Physical Education in Grade 7. He has more than 15 years of teaching experience and loves sports, especially soccer. He previously taught in Limpopo before coming to Diepsloot.

Overall, the participants in the study have a wealth of experience and expertise in teaching different subjects, ranging from Mathematics and English to Life Skills and Creative Arts. These participants also possess various qualities that make them caring, intelligent and passionate about helping children.

After being informed of the study's goals, these teachers were invited to engage voluntarily in the study. These participants spend much of their school days dealing with bullying within the school settings and were considered to be a wealth of information on the subject under research.

### **Learner sample**

According to Creswell (2012), participants in a study can be selected in different ways, such as through volunteering, role or employment-based selection or random selection, depending on the desired outcome. In this study, Grade 7 learners from the two participating schools were chosen as participants after being informed about the study's goals and invited to participate voluntarily. In selecting the participants, the study included only Grade 7 learners since they are the senior learners in primary school. The younger classes were not included as they may have limited understanding about bullying. A total of 12 learners, six from each school, were chosen as participants in this study.

### **3.6 DATA GENERATION**

This section describes the data collection procedures employed in this study. According to Mbambo (2016), case studies typically use multiple methodologies to generate data. The data collection instruments used in this study were semi-structured interviews and document analysis (Wagner et al., 2012) to obtain in-depth perspectives and perceptions of participants on learner bullying behaviour. Two research types of interviews were used to collect data: semi-structured interviews for principals, teachers, and SGB members, and focus group interviews for Grade 7 learners from the selected schools. The data collection process began on November 8th, 2021, with a meeting with the principals, and continued with interviews of both groups of learners on November 12th. Interviews with teachers from school A and the principal were conducted on November the 18th and 19th, followed by interviews with teachers from school B on November 23rd. Interviews with the HOD and SGB were conducted on November 26th, and the last interview with the HOD and SGB of school B took place on January 28th, 2022. Before each interview, participants were required to sign a consent form, and for focus group interviews, and an agreement form was also signed to ensure voluntary participation.



### **3.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Interviews are mostly employed in qualitative studies and serve as an empirical source for case study research where questions are posed to individuals and their responses are carefully analysed (Yin, 2013). They are an exchange of words and viewpoints between two or more people about a certain problem. As defined by Seidman (2013), interviews are a form of dialogue between two or more people, discussing a specific problem. Seidman (2013) distinguishes between structured and semi-structured, and standardised and unstandardised interviews. In this investigation, semi-structured interviews were used to allow participants to share their perspectives on the topic at hand.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews are not formal events with predetermined responses but rather are more like conversations where participants can willingly voice their experiences (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2013). These interviews provide participants with the opportunity to express their thoughts on the topic at hand (Cohen et al., 2011) and are not constrained by the researcher's beliefs or supervision. allowing participants to speak freely about their experiences, providing valuable insights into the topic.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted as they enabled participants to express their perspectives on the topic under discussion (Cohen et al., 2011) and allowed for face-to-face interaction between the researcher and participants providing more flexibility and an opportunity for debate on current bullying issues (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Babbie, 2014). I aimed to elicit participants' comprehension of bullying by allowing them to express their perceptions and experiences of bullying. The interviews were conducted using a predetermined schedule to ensure consistency and accuracy in the collected data. Individual interviews with participants were conducted in the staff room to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

### **3.6.2 Focus Group Interviews**

Focus group interviews are a qualitative research tool that involves a group of individuals being asked questions about their views on a particular topic (Harding, 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Focus group interviews are a popular research method in social science because they bring people together in a similar activity,

allowing researchers to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a short period (Singh, 2016). Nevertheless, there are several limitations to focus group interviews that need to be considered. Firstly, some participants may be reluctant to express their opinions freely due to fear of being judged by others (Singh, 2016). Secondly, due to the sensitive nature of certain topics, such as victimisation, participants may feel uncomfortable sharing their experiences in a group setting, which can lead to self-censorship and a lack of participation (Patton, 2015). In such cases, individual interviews may be a better option for eliciting honest responses (Patton, 2015).

Focus group interviews require skilled facilitation to prevent the discussion from becoming dominated by one or two participants, thereby limiting the coverage of issues and resulting in biased results (Patton, 2015; Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, individuals who hold minority perspectives may be hesitant to speak up in a group setting because active individuals tend to be more engaged in the discussion than passive ones (Krueger & Casey, 2015), leading to skewed results (Patton, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to create a comfortable and inclusive environment that encourages all participants to contribute equally. To overcome this limitation, researchers may need to employ additional methods, such as individual interviews or surveys, to capture a broader range of perspectives. In summary, focus group interviews offer many advantages, however, they also have limitations that researchers need to consider carefully. By being aware of these limitations and employing appropriate strategies to address them, researchers can use focus group interviews effectively to gain valuable insights into complex social phenomena.

Focus group interviews were used to gather data on bullying within the selected schools from the perspectives of learners, teachers and SGB members. The interviews were conducted after school hours to avoid disrupting the teaching and learning process, and participants were selected with the help of school principals. To ensure that participants were comfortable, I conducted the interviews in warm, inviting, and suitable settings, such as offices and staffrooms, which were easily accessible to participants and were negotiated well in advance. I established rapport with the participants by outlining the research objectives, thanking them for their involvement, and reassuring them of the strict confidentiality of their details. Participants were

invited to participate voluntarily after being informed about the study's objective and signed consent forms. Each focus group interview session lasted between 45 minutes to an hour and was moderated by the researcher, who ensured that discussions were not dominated by a few participants and that the discussion was focused on the research topic. I also used probing questions to elicit additional information from participants about the causes, effects, types, and general patterns of bullying (Creswell, 2014; Harding, 2013).

The data collection process involved a total of eight days of interviews with different groups of participants, which were held on different days to avoid interfering with the learning process. Overall, the focus group methodology was important in this study as it allowed for interactive discussions among co-researchers, and students were better able to understand and express their views on bullying in a group setting. However, I had to ensure participants' comfortability and take into consideration the possibility that some participants may be hesitant to voice their opinions in a group setting. With participants' permission, the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

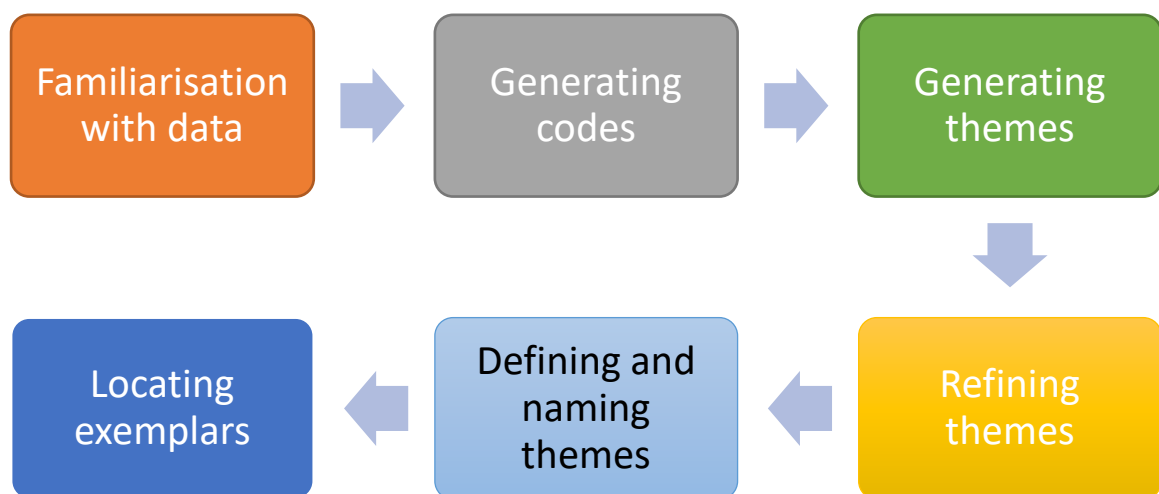
### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

The process of combining and making sense of collected data is called data analysis. Data analysis is the process by which qualitative researchers bring together collected data and make sense of it through scrutiny (Creswell, 2012) and begins with transcription where information gathered during semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were converted into a format that could be analysed. Verbatim statements from all participants were transcribed to facilitate coding and analysis. The researcher aims to identify recurring perspectives expressed by the participants in response to the questions posed (Creswell, 2014). During data analysis, the researcher uses inductive methods to organise the obtained data and perform comparison and comparison processes.

Thematic analysis offers the researcher the opportunity to work through the data methodically while identifying patterns and themes that can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Researchers using this approach meticulously examine various data sources, including transcripts, field notes and other relevant materials, to immerse themselves in the information and

identify patterns and connections that may not be readily apparent. By doing so, researchers can gain insight into the experiences of the participants and develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Thematic analysis, as defined by Creswell (2014), was used to organise and generate meaning from the data obtained. The process involved analysing the data to identify categories and themes. The study aimed to present the results objectively and compared the differences and similarities between the findings of the empirical study and the literature on the topic, as suggested by Harding (2013). Braun and Clark (2012) suggest following a number of steps in the analysis process, as indicated in Figure 3.5.



**Figure 3.5: Thematic analysis process**

**Step 1: *Familiarisation with data:*** During the immersion stage, I read the transcripts and listened to the recorded data from the participants to understand their perspectives in preparation for classifying, coding and analysing the data

**Step 2: *Generating codes:*** Coding, as described by Babbie (2014), involved breaking down the data into small parts and categorising them into categories with specific meanings. The study employed open coding, which investigates concepts and

meaning in data (Friese, 2012), coding by listing (Creswell, 2014) and coding in vivo, which uses participants' words as codes, as suggested by Bazeley (2013).

**Step 3: *Generating themes:*** The data were organised by selecting themes and phrases from the participants' perspectives that had similar meanings and assigning codes to these same perspectives. I then combined comparable codes to generate categories or themes. Categorisation, as suggested by Creswell (2014), entails categorising primary codes into categories, patterns and purposes and giving each group a name. I created categories where the same items of the same type were found. Categorisation was used to bring together data linked to the same topic, as emphasised by Creswell (2012) and Alvesson and Kärreman (2011).

**Step 4: *Refining themes:*** Checking if all data related to the study is grouped under the correct themes for the study is grouped under the correct themes for answering the research questions

**Step 5: *Defining and naming themes:*** An ongoing analysis to refine the specific themes and ensure that the clear definition and names of each theme was generated.

**Step 6: *Producing the report with exemplars:*** Final analysis of selected extract result in relating the analysis back to the research questions, objectives and literature reviewed.

### **3.8 ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The degree to which the data and data analysis are believable and trustworthy is referred to as trustworthiness. Credibility, transferability, reliability and confirmability are all aspects of trustworthiness. In a qualitative study, the goal of trustworthiness is to improve understanding of a phenomenon in each setting, not to generalise the findings to a larger population (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

To mitigate these risks, I took a number of steps to ensure the rigour and objectivity of my research. For example, I developed a comprehensive data collection and analysis plan, which included detailed protocols for conducting interviews and analysing data. I also made sure to maintain a high level of transparency and accountability throughout the research process, keeping detailed records of all my activities and sharing my

findings with my supervisor and other colleagues for feedback and validation. In addition, I remained mindful of the potential impact of personal biases and subjectivities on my research and took steps to mitigate these risks. For example, I engaged in ongoing self-reflection and critical analysis of my own assumptions and beliefs and sought out diverse perspectives and feedback from a range of stakeholders throughout the research process. Overall, my use of case studies as a research approach was guided by a commitment to methodological rigour, transparency, and objectivity. I believe that these efforts have helped to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings provided.

### **3.8.1 Credibility**

In research, credibility refers to whether the data collected is accurate and is representative of the phenomenon under study. It is a trustworthy characteristic related to data collection and how a researcher interacts with participants while collecting data (Bazeley, 2013). During semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, I interacted directly with participants in this study which ensured prolonged engagement and triangulation. Participants signed informed consent forms for teachers and principals, as well as assent forms for learners, before data collection. During semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, I interacted directly with participants in this study and ensured that all data were the rigorous techniques used to gather the effectively collected through rigorous techniques and thereafter credibility was assured by member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **3.8.2 Transferability**

Transferability addresses the applicability of the findings to similar contexts or individuals not to broader contexts. Transferability can be achieved by a 'thick description' of the findings from multiple data collection methods. In this study, I ensured that a rigorous data collection through multiple techniques and a range of participants ensured that to a certain extent the findings could be transferable to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **3.8.3 Dependability**

Dependability entails correctly and thoroughly reporting results (Mushambi, 2016). It is an in-depth description of the study procedures and analysis to allow the study to be replicated. For the sake of dependability, I collected data from participants, transcribed it, analysed it, and accurately reported it so that other researchers can use the results for further study in their studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This means that the processes and procedures in data collection and analysis were well documented. An audit trail ensures dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **3.8.4 Confirmability**

Singh (2016) defines confirmability (neutrality) as the research techniques and findings that refers to the absence of prejudice and subjectivity. Throughout the procedure, I strove to maintain objectivity, avoiding subjectivity and bias, which could have influenced the interpretation and description of data. To do this, I conducted member checking, which entailed returning the interpretations and descriptions of the data analysis to the study participants to confirm their accuracy and believability. The participants were given the transcribed data to double-check that all the transcripts were genuine and recorded correctly to ensure confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Rossman and Rallis (2017) define ethics as the set of moral principles that determine what is right or wrong, good, or bad. Ethical research entails what researchers ought not to do in their study (Cohen et al., 2018). Therefore, ethical considerations are standards of morality that researchers follow to safeguard participants from harm. According to Cohen et al. (2018), ethical considerations must be assessed and evaluated at every stage of the research, including planning, conducting, reporting, and disseminating the results. The researcher must adhere to ethical principles throughout the research process (Maree, 2014). As a result, this study was guided by the ethical values outlined below (Maree, 2014).

### **3.9.1 Permission to conduct Research**

I obtained ethical clearance from the University's Ethics Committee (see Appendix A 2021/04/14/36544582/19/AM). Thereafter permission was sought from and granted by

the Gauteng Department of Education's Research Directorate (see Appendix B). Principals of the two selected schools were contacted via email with regard to conducting research in their schools, and after receiving acceptance letters, I arranged a meeting with the principals to discuss the study and obtain consent forms.

Data collection began with obtaining written permission from the principals to approach teachers and Grade 7 students, who were invited to participate voluntarily after I had explained the study's purpose during school assemblies. I submitted the requested information letter to the principal, and the School Governing Body (SGB) members and Grade 7 teachers with the consent form to obtain permission for the participants to participate in the study (see Appendices D and E). Participants signed informed consent forms granting permission for their children to participate in the study (see Appendix F), and learners signed assent forms (see Appendix G) before data collection.

Since ethical considerations demand that participants' rights in research be protected, results must be reported accurately, and researchers must interact with participants and share data (Silverman, 2013).

### **3.9.2 Confidentiality, Privacy and Anonymity**

The privacy and anonymity of the participants must be always protected during the research. According to Nchoe (2017), confidentiality encompasses protecting both the participants' identities and the information collected during the study. Maintaining the privacy and anonymity of participants is crucial in research. In this study, I assured the participants that any information shared during the study would be kept confidential and private, even after the study's completion. I understood the significance of safeguarding participants' confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity. To ensure anonymity, in place of real names and identities, participants were assigned codes, as recommended by Anderson (2007).

According to Nchoe (2017), secrecy refers to safeguarding the participants' identities as well as the information obtained throughout the study. I understood the need of maintaining the participant's confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity and thus assured the participants that any notes obtained during semi-structured interviews or focus group interviews would not be shared with anyone else without their consent.



Furthermore, participants were made aware that research study findings would solely be used for my master's degree and not shared with external parties.

### **3.9.3 Informed Consent and Assent**

Depoy and Gitlin (2016) emphasise the importance of the researcher informing the participants about all aspects of the study. This means that every participant has the right to know about the research before they agree to participate (Oliver, 2010). According to Nchoe (2017), consent is an imperative body of research. The consent forms were provided to the participants. In the case of learners, since they are minors (under the age of 18) the consent form was sent to parents. Informed consent letters were drafted to explain what the study is about, what is expected of the participants, and what will be done with the information obtained from the participants (Alderson & Morrow, 2010). As noted by the researchers above, the consent involves the voluntary participation of the participant with his/her right to withdraw from the study at any time.

### **3.9.4 Voluntary Participation**

Participants have the right to choose whether to participate and should not be pressured or manipulated in any way, therefore participation in this study will be fully voluntary. All participants, according to King (2010), have the right to withhold the information received from them. For this study, all participants were made aware that participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any time.

### **3.9.5 Protection from Harm**

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) explain how the participant is protected from injury. As bullying is such a delicate subject, I needed to be mindful of the potential for harm both during and after the study (it could be emotional, psychological, or physical). The study provided all required information to participants so that they can make an informed decision about whether to proceed with the interview. Furthermore, to ensure that no harm comes to participants, I ensured that no harmful or offensive language was used towards the participants. The research study was also conducted in an environment, such as the principal's office as well as the staffroom, where all participants felt safe.

### **3.9.6 Beneficence**

I ensured that the knowledge and skills gained, as a result, would be beneficial to both participants and other educational stakeholders. The research on bullying will benefit learners, teachers, and principals as it will recommend approaches to combat and deal with bullying in schools. Learners will benefit from this study by better understanding how to recognise and respond to bullying behaviours, ultimately creating a safer and more inclusive learning environment. Parents will benefit from receiving guidance on how to support their children who may be experiencing bullying, and teachers will benefit from gaining effective strategies to address and prevent bullying incidents in their classrooms.

Principals will benefit from the research by gaining insights into the overall prevalence and impact of bullying in their schools. This will enable them to implement comprehensive anti-bullying policies and interventions. Additionally, the research provides principals with a better understanding of the specific factors contributing to bullying, enabling them to create a positive school culture fostering empathy, respect and inclusivity.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, a detailed description of the research design and methodology was presented. Using an interpretivist lens, a qualitative approach and guided by a case study design, data were gathered information from participants in two schools serving as research sites, via focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. The importance of adopting a qualitative research approach in generating comprehensive insights into students' bullying experiences was emphasised, along with a thorough exploration of the benefits and drawbacks of the data collection approach relative to the study objectives. Furthermore, key trustworthy concepts such as dependability, transferability and confirmability were highlighted as well as ethics that are crucial in ensuring the credibility of research findings. Moving forward, Chapter 4 explores the findings emerging from the thematic analysis, presented in tables with insightful commentaries on their most significant features.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, the research methodology and design of the study were discussed. The descriptive case study design, research site, participant selection and data collection and analysis methods used were explained. Furthermore, the quality criteria and ethical considerations that guided the study were explained.

Chapter 4 reports on the study's findings by presenting themes and sub-themes identified through the process of inductive thematic analysis of the generated data. Verbatim quotations from the focus groups and interviews are presented to support the themes and sub-themes under discussion. The chapter concludes by discussing the findings in terms of the relevant literature and conceptual framework.

### 4.2 THE PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION PROFILES

The interviews were conducted at two township schools with the participants grouped as follows: the principals (individual interview); two Heads of Department (focus group participants); two School Governing Body member (individual interview), two teachers (focus group participants) and six Grade 7 learners (focus group participants).

In Table 4.1, the participant categories, the venue and the type of data collection is outlined. The research sites were two public primary schools in Diepsloot township in Gauteng Province.

**Table 4.1: Participants, venues, and type of interview**

PARTICIPANT CATEGORY	NUMBER	VENUE	INTERVIEW TYPE
Principals	2	Principal's' office	Individual semi-structured interview
Head of Department	2	HoD's office	Individual semi-structured interview
SGB members	2	School Library	Individual semi-structured interview
Grade 7 teachers	4	School Library	Focus group
Grade 7 learners	12	School Library	Focus group

To ensure that the principle of confidentiality was executed meticulously, each school was coded as indicated in Table 4.2. Participants were coded in such a way as to ensure both the participants' anonymity and the confidentiality of the data. Two principals, six teachers and twelve learners participated in the interviews and focus group discussions.

**Table 4.2: Participant codes**

SCHOOL	CODE	GENDER	AGE RANGE
School A: Principal	PA	Female	62-65
School B: Principal	PB	Male	49-55
School A: Head of Department	SAHoD-SMT	Male	44-50
School B: Head of Department	SBHoD-SMT	Female	52-55
School A: School Governing body member	SGB1	Male	32-35
School B: School Governing Body member	SGB2	Female	49-55
School A: Teacher 1	SAT1	Male	44-50
School A: Teacher 2	SAT2	Male	41-45
School B: Teacher 1	SBT3	Male	35-40
School B: Teacher 2	SBT4	Female	45-50
School A: Learners 1 -6	SAL1-SAL6	4 females and 2 males	Under 15 years of age
School B: Learners 1 -6	SBL1- SBL6	3 females and 3 males	Under 15 years of age

Participating teachers were selected because they had been teaching at the school for over five years hence, they would be more likely to have broader experiences of bullying which they may have witnessed during their teaching.

#### **4.3 PRESENTATION OF THEMES, SUB-THEMES AND CATEGORIES**

This section presents three major themes that emerged after analysing data, as well as their sub-themes and categories, the three major themes, sub-themes and categories are presented in Table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3: Themes and sub-themes

<b>THEMES AND SUB-THEMES</b>
<b>THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF BULLYING</b>
<b>Sub-theme 1: Experiences of bullying</b>
Category 1: Understanding what constitutes bullying Category 2: Bullying is embedded in the power imbalance
<b>Sub-theme 2: Types of bullying</b>
Category 1: Physical bullying Category 2: Verbal and psychological bullying Category 3: Cyberbullying and social media
<b>THEME 2: ECOSYSTEMIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH BULLYING</b>
<b>Sub-theme 1: Individual factors</b>
Category 1: Social-emotional effects: Fear/anxiety/depression, Fear of failure/ rejection/ peer pressure, Self-esteem Category 2: General academic performance
<b>Sub-theme 2: Family factors</b>
Category 1: Socio-economic risks Category 2: Parenting and family structure Category 3: Societal Influence on the family
<b>Sub-theme 3: School factors</b>
Category 1: Age cohort, teasing, gossip and jealousy Category 2: School management structure, unequipped and unskilled teachers Category 3: Lack of Resources
<b>Sub-theme 4: Environmental factors</b>
Category 1: Gangsterism and substance abuse
<b>THEME 3: SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH BULLYING</b>
<b>Sub-theme 1: Influence at a family level</b>
Category 1: Challenging Upbringing Category 2: Lacking positive role models
<b>Sub-theme 2: Influence at a school level</b>
Category 1: Teacher's behaviour and classroom management.
<b>Sub-theme 3: Influence at a community level</b>
Category 1: Xenophobic and ethnic bullying Category 2: Racism in school

#### 4.4 THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF BULLYING

In this section, the findings of the study are presented by discussing the first main theme which comprise two sub-themes and related categories that emerged during the thematic analysis of raw data, in terms of participants' understanding of the nature of bullying in primary schools in a specific area in Gauteng Province. Participants' experiences of bullying and their perceptions of the types of bullying encountered are also discussed, enhanced and enriched by direct quotations. Table 4.4 provides an overview of the emerging sub-themes and categories.

**Table 4.4: An overview of Theme 1**

<b>Theme 1:</b> <a href="#">Understanding the nature of bullying.</a>		
<b>Description of the theme:</b> This theme describes participants' understanding and views on the nature of bullying and what they perceive as bullying behaviour		
<b>Inclusion Criteria:</b> <a href="#">All data concerning participants' views and understanding of the nature of bullying</a>	<b>Exclusion Criteria</b> <a href="#">All data that do not make direct reference to participants' views and understanding of the nature of bullying</a>	
<b>Sub-theme 1: Experiences of bullying</b>		
<b>Category 1</b> <i>Understanding what constitutes bullying</i>	<b>Category 2</b> <i>Bullying is embedded in the power imbalance</i>	
<b>Sub-theme 2: Types of bullying</b>		
<b>Category 1</b> <i>Physical bullying</i>	<b>Category 2</b> <i>Verbal and psychological bullying</i>	<b>Category 3</b> <i>Cyberbullying and social media</i>

This section presents the study's findings by discussing the first theme which describes participants' understanding and views on bullying and what they recognise as bullying behaviour.

##### 4.4.1 Sub-Theme 1: Experiences of bullying

The study noted that bullying experiences for male and female learner participants differed. Boys indicated that other boys bully them, whereas girls mentioned that big

boys bully them more when they are new to the school, when they are quieter, and/ or are younger than other girls. Bullying as aggressive behaviour that includes harm that is both physical and verbal significantly emerged as the sub-theme from all the participants. Two categories were generated from this sub-theme, and they are discussed next.

### **Category 1: Understanding of bullying behaviour**

To fully grasp the concept of bullying, an awareness of how participants understand bullying was required. It seemed clear that teachers and learners have a general understanding of the nature of bullying. Perceptions differed according to their experiences, time and place.

During the interviews, for the most part, participants had similar understandings of what constituted bullying. For instance, to the question '*What do you understand by bullying?*' different responses from the participants included elements of physical aspects such as the use of force and violence to hurt someone, as shown in the following excerpts and elsewhere in this discussion:

**PA:** *Bullying is like forcing someone to do something that they are not willing to do either by using physical effort or by just hitting someone.*

In defining bullying, participants mentioned examples such as: *hurt, beating, pushing, forcing someone to do things he doesn't want to do* (**PB and SAL1**)

**SAL2 and SAL3** shared the same sentiments when they described bullying as *any act that causes intentional harm.*

**SAL3:** *It is a power or strength that someone uses to abuse someone. Bullying is physical or verbal hurt, degrading others, and making comments about others. Therefore, it is defined as beating someone weaker.*

**SAL2:** *Bullying is when someone uses his power to abuse another person.*

Participants also identified acts of discrimination and verbal and emotional slander as bullying: **SAL3** mentioned: *[cultural] bullying primarily is based on punch, pushing, kicking or beating, stealing from each other or taking photos of other learners and posting them on social media or raping someone.*

These definitions and explanations, offered by participants, identify two significant dimensions of bullying: physical and emotional. Most participants believe that bullying has a physical and emotional component using words like 'force' and 'hurt,' 'harm,' and 'beat.' Even though participants defined bullying consistently most participants were victims of bullying. Learners shared their experiences as follows:

**SBL1:** *...mostly guys bullying because of the attention they want from girls.*

**SBL3:** *They used to call me names such as I am gay.*

**SBL4:** *The first year in this school, I was hassled by some guys, and being quiet said that I'm too full of myself.*

Some learners only had a superficial understanding bullying and its experience. **SAL5** and **SAL6** reported that they have not experienced bullying.

**SAL6:** *I have not had any experience of being bullied but I have seen someone being bullied and I think the cause of that is the background of where the person is coming from.*

**SAL5:** *Well, I haven't experienced bullying, but I've seen the other guy in class being bullied.* He related the experience as the cause of the racial clash: *I don't know whether it is because of discrimination or race, but the boy was an Indian.*

Participants described the idea that bullying is a form of violence or harm. These definitions offered by participants identify bullying's two primary facets as its physical and emotional aspects. By using words like 'force', 'hurt', 'damage' and 'beat', most students assume that bullying involves both a physical and an emotional component. Although most participants provided fairly accurate description of the nature of bullying, they seemed to accept the notion that bullying is a frequent occurrence at face value. Many of the learners interviewed appeared to have a clear understanding of the phenomenon of bullying, according to (**SAL6**), who noted that his definition of bullying included the word '*intentional*', implying this act was deliberate and does not always happen by chance.



## **Category 2: Bullying is embedded in a power imbalance**

The results highlighted that age and power disparity are fundamental to bullying as another element in their perceptions of the nature of bullying. The interviews revealed the connection between bullying and an imbalance of power between the parties. The participants described the disparity in power between the bullies and the bullied by using words like older, more vital, powerful and more significant.

According to participants, bullying is a violent act that puts the stronger person against the weaker. In contrast, **SAT3 and SBL1** highlighted that students punch, kick or push each other, emphasising aggressive behaviours. In this way, teachers and learners, **SAT2, SAL2, and SAL5** perceive bullying as exerting power over the weaker. Principal A, SAL2 and SBL1 stated the following that support the discussion:

**PA:** *Bullying is usually about one learner confronting another learner simply because they think may be physical, they are empowered.*

**SAL2:** *It is when one uses his physical ability to oppress other people so that another person feels inferior for his or her benefit.*

**SBL1:** *... defined as a power or strength that someone uses to abuse someone.*

Principals also agreed that bullying is aggressive behaviour, due to age, size and abuse of power, perpetrators inflict harm that is both physical and emotional or psychological (verbal). **SBL2** agreed that the perpetrator is usually older and thus more powerful than the victim that they victimise *Normally, the bully is powerful, sometimes older, while the victim is weaker.*

Two participants defined bullying by focusing on the physical aspects, as shown in the following excerpts:

**PA:** *Bullying is quite deeper and abroad, especially in a school context. It is practising power over someone without a limit in a way that creates uncertainty or uncomfortable feelings.*

**PB:** *... is a violent, aggressive behaviour that is repeated (punching, hitting, swearing, calling names.*

The different types of language and words that constitute bullying towards other people were also viewed as bullying, this can simply be put as calling one names. **PA** was quoted saying: *We have learner-learner bullying, learner-teacher bullying.*

The principal of School A reported an incident relating to learner-learner bullying as an example of the use of power as follows: **PA:** *The boy is over age to be at the primary always picks up the fight and is bossy to the young ones.*

The results show that bullying experiences differed in age and grade phases. In this case, there is mainly teasing in the lower grades, whereas once the learners enter the higher grades, the severity of bullying increases. For example, the principal of School B stated that she experienced different cases of bullying according to the different grades.

**PB:** *In my school teasing happens mostly in lower grades, whereas in higher grades the severity of bullying increases, such as physical (hitting and stabbing) and emotional (cyber and sexual harassment).*

**SAT1:** *Boys demand and steal money from other learners, or make other learners carry other learners' bags, especially girls.*

During the interviews and focus groups, it was clear that bullying and the power imbalance between the parties involved are inextricably linked. The participants used adjectives like older, more robust, more powerful and more significant to depict the disparity in power between the bullies and the bullied. Additionally, the participants implied that the bully is typically older and exerts power over the victim. The above experts relate that age significantly impacts learners' experiences of bullying. Whether they are old or young, they experience some form of bullying.

#### **4.4.2 Sub-Theme 2: Types of Bullying**

As the above data indicate, bullying takes different forms, from direct physical actions such as beating to various sorts to name-calling. Participants' responses in the individual interviews and focus group interviews reflected types of bullying categorised into three categories: physical bullying, verbal and psychological bullying, cyberbullying and social media, acts of discrimination, xenophobia, homophobia and

racism. Two categories were generated from this sub-theme and are discussed in the next section.

### **Category 1: Physical bullying (beating, pushing, punching and kicking)**

Physical bullying is one of the forms of bullying. From focus groups and individual interviews, some were subjected to physical incidents such as beating, punching, pushing, and biting. **SAL4** and **SBL1**, used phrases such as: *'he pushed me against the wall', 'they cornered', 'he tried biting me' and 'he bit me when I refused to give him my food.*

**SAL1:** *In most cases, boys are the ones who push and beat us, even force us to buy food for them during lunch in the tuckshop.*

**SAT1:** *Some learners are punched, kicked, and shoved against the wall by other learners to the point that learners feel unsafe.*

**PA** expressed his great displeasure about bullying by saying, *It (bullying) is an incurable disease.*

The current study revealed that in most cases, boys are the dominant perpetrators in bullying and girls are the victims. For instance, this finding was confirmed by Principal A (**PA**) who stipulated aspects of physical bullying by stating: *Some learners are punched, kicked or shoved against the wall by other learners to the point that learners feel unsafe.* **SAT1** also reported that he experiences bullying to be a violent activity. *Some learners are punched by other learners to an extent that the learners feel the environment is insecure.*

**SAL2** reported bullying in a variety of ways, to the extent that they seemed to find it difficult to discuss that they were victims and the feelings and emotions evoked by these bullying behaviours. They may or may use a second person as a technique to keep themselves away from harm and indicate levels of concern about how people perceive bullying. When asked how she was bullied **SAL2** said: *like maybe when we are just playing with them (the older ones), like kicking them, they will yell at us and beat us.* It may be deduced from this response that victims of bullying are, in some cases, younger learners who provoke the older ones into physically hurting them.

It was observed that **SAL2** believes that bullying only occurs when an older person hurts a younger person, not vice versa. When asked whether the participant is not bullying an older person by kicking them when they are playing, she responded by saying, *Ah no. Since the bully is much older, I don't think I can bully that person.*

**SAL1** Explained the silence on bullying: *We do not usually report bullying because of the fear of being exposed and that if you do report to a teacher and then the teacher does not believe or doesn't work out that problem, they are going to bully you even more.*

Failure to report these physical acts is one of the contributory factors to physical bullying being the most common form of bullying among these participants. Additionally, most participants indicated that the perpetrators of these beatings, pushing and hitting are mainly boys. **SAL1's** affirmation stated that *in most cases, boys are the ones who push and beat us, even force us to buy food for them during lunch in tuckshop.*

Principal 1 expressed his great displeasure by saying: *It (bullying) is an incurable disease. (PA)*, insinuating that bullying in schools is ongoing and repetitive. This shows how bullying for learners was not just an idealised or imagined phenomenon, but a lived experience of their everyday lives.

## **Category 2: Verbal and psychological bullying**

Some learners are labelled and given names because of their family and environmental backgrounds. One learner reported that bullies call her a *jerk, magogo (granny)* because she wears old clothes. Although this form of bullying does not cause direct physical pain, these kinds of names can intimidate and demean individuals thus leaving them intensely traumatised. **SAT1, SASGB and SAL4** revealed that the words used were *excluding someone, hurt feelings, forcing someone and making the person inferior*. One reported that *some learners are ... like telling others how stupid are like they tell you how fat are they.*

**SAL 1:** *Bullying is a soul-stirring act that leaves its victim torn up inside.*

**SAL6:** concurs with (SAL1) and asserts that: *Bullying is an emotional act aimed at devastating the victim.*

**SAT 1** added: *It's an emotive behaviour that causes the victim to feel undignified.*

**SBL1 and SBL4** also felt that: *A temperamental doing that causes feelings of inferiority, humiliation and it embarrasses them from their peers.*

Some participants are the targets of verbal bullying, which included indirect bullying that includes intimidation of other students and name-calling, teasing, gossiping and spreading rumours. Bullying was also recognised as an emotional act in this study.

From their responses, one can deduce that participants were emotionally distressed during the interviews as they were unable to contain their tears of worry while sharing their experiences with bullying. As per the Ethics Guidelines of the overseeing University, it was ensured that such participants received some form of debriefing.

### **Category 3: Cyberbullying and social media**

Cyberbullying refers to the use of digital communication technologies, such as social media platforms, instant messaging, text messages, emails or online forums, to intentionally harm, harass or embarrass someone else. It is often a form of bullying that takes place outside school hours and away from the physical presence of the victim.

Although the invention of the cell phone has given the contemporary world a quick and reliable way to connect in schools, it has also led to emotional and psychological harm of learners. Use of cell phones to bully their peers is a significant problem in many schools. It has resulted in unimaginable suffering for the numerous victims who have been the target of its wrath.

The principal of School A highlighted the growing incidence of the rise in cyberbullying at his school: *Cyberbullying...where pupils send one another frightening text messages...has been rising in my school over the last couple of years (PA).*

**PA:** *...girls were fighting over a boy. One took a video and posted it on social media .... She tried committing suicide.*

**SBL3:** *Learners used social media, such as posting pictures of other kids..... That trends the entire school. That's when the principal banished phones.*

**SAL1:** *Kids are watching all sorts of violent games and porn movies, sending each other awful text messages and taking photos of others and them on social media.*

As indicated in recent findings, the progression of technology has unfortunately led to a rise in the occurrence of cyberbullying. Modern tools and platforms, such as Facebook, the Internet, SMS, and cell phones, are utilised by individuals to engage in making fun of, bullying, harassing, and threatening other learners.

#### **4.4.3 Discussion of Theme 1: Understanding the Nature of Bullying**

In this study, it emerged that participants had a fundamental understanding of bullying. The participants identified several behaviours as being connected to bullying. In focus group talks and one-on-one interviews, every participant showed they fully understood bullying. This suggests that teachers and learners are aware of the violence and aggression that is taking place in schools, as they define bullying as being violent. Participants cited school bullying as the biggest challenge in their schools. The participants indicated that most participants understood bullying involves physical force and making others feel inferior due to their group or social status. Learners and teachers have witnessed bullying incidents in their schools. Teasing, punching and shoving were among the types of bullying that were mentioned by participants.

In confirmation of this finding, Mushambi (2016) defines bullying as a global pandemic which is faced by teachers and schools. Ndibalema (2013), Osman (2013) Athanasiades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzis (2010) and Olweus and Limber (2010) agree that bullying in schools among peers is a phenomenon between two or more learners. To elaborate, Gorsek and Cunningham (2014), Dillon (2012) and Mishna (2012) concur that bullying's violent acts and cruel teasing weakens and makes a victim more susceptible to other acts of bullying. Edward (2019), Lekena (2016), Mbambo (2016), Mweli (2013), Singh (2012) and Bush and Zuidema (2012) agree and highlight the repetitive character of bullying and reject apparent events that many individuals may misinterpret as bullying.

The interviewees also mentioned that some learners bully each other because of gender differences and power imbalance. This was confirmed by Athanasiades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzi (2010:328) that “gender differences in preferred forms of aggression, with boys being generally more aggressive than girls and girls being predominately more indirectly aggressive than boys, especially during adolescence”. Participants used words such as older, more robust, more powerful, and more significant to describe the power gap between those who bully and victims. The participants perceived bullying as physical and persistent behaviour that endangers the victim's life, a finding confirmed by Olweus (2013). Additionally, the participants suggested that the offender is frequently older and more powerful than the target victim. Researchers have discovered that a bullied person is always open to further bullying (Gorsek & Cunningham, 2014; Mishna et al., 2012). Bush and Zuidema (2012) reject apparent events that many people might mistake for bullying and emphasise the repetitive nature of bullying.

The research has revealed that learners use the internet and social media platforms to shame and harm others by capturing and sharing their images without their consent. Several scholars, including Venter (2013), Dupper (2013), Dillon (2012), Katz (2012) and Furlong et al. (2010) have acknowledged that bullying is prevalent among learners both within and outside the school environment through the use of cell phones and the internet. Children tend to replicate violent behaviour that they observe from adults. According to Nalini's (2016) research, violence is a learned trait from experiences in life, such as witnessing aggressive behaviour, or violent acts motivated by the media (Chabalala, 2011).

Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems Theory suggests that parents, families, communities and the media can act as positive role models for good behaviour to help students develop discipline. This can be achieved by setting clear expectations, enforcing regular penalties for disobedience, and offering support and direction to children so they learn the value of discipline. In addition, educators and educational institutions play a crucial role in fostering discipline by providing a disciplined and caring atmosphere that encourages healthy behaviour and equips students with the tools they need to regulate themselves. Although media violence may have an impact on bullying in schools, there is not much research or reporting about how media can

prevent violence at home, school or in the community. Therefore, stakeholders must develop a systematic approach to create a safe and inclusive school environment that discourages bullying and discriminatory behaviour.

#### 4.5 THEME 2: ECOSYSTEMIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH BULLYING

This theme aims to explicate context-specific (eco-system) factors that may contribute towards bullying in selected primary schools in the Diepsloot township area. From the participants’ responses, it was evident that multiple factors were believed to contribute to bullying which are embedded in the richness of the township ecologies. The identified factors were arranged into sub-themes: individual, family, school, and environmental factors. Each sub-theme and categories are listed in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: An overview of Theme 2**

<b>Theme 2: Ecosystemic Factors Associated with Bullying</b>		
Description of the theme: This theme focuses on the participants’ knowledge and views on ecosystemic factors they believe are associated with bullying in their schools and the community.		
<u>Inclusion Criteria:</u> This theme includes data related to the participants’ general knowledge and views regarding ecosystemic factors that contribute to bullying.	<u>Exclusion Criteria</u> Any reference not related to the participants’ view regarding ecosystemic factors that contribute to bullying	
<b>Sub-theme 1: Individual factors</b>		
<u>Category 1:</u> Social-emotional effects - Fear/anxiety/depression - Fear of failure/rejection/ peer pressure - Self-esteem	<u>Category 2:</u> General academic performance	
<b>Sub Theme 2: Family factors</b>		
<u>Category 1</u> Socio-economic risks	<u>Category 2</u> Parenting and family structure	<u>Category 3</u> Societal influence on the family
<b>Sub-theme 3: School factors</b>		
<u>Category 1</u>	<u>Category 2</u>	<u>Category 3</u>



Age cohort, teasing, gossip and jealousy	School management structure, unequipped and unskilled teachers.	Lack of resources
<b>Sub-theme 4 – Environmental factors</b>		
<u>Category 1: Gangsterism and substance abuse</u>		

Bullying in the participating township primary schools was associated with a variety of factors according to the data from the interviews with principals, teachers and learners from the two primary schools. The study concentrated on the following key areas: individual factors, family factors, environmental factors, and school factors. These core areas were used to further elaborate on the primary determinants of bullying as suggested by the various participants.

#### **4.5.1 Sub-Theme 1: Individual Factors**

Responses to the questions that sought to ascertain the effects of bullying on the teaching and learning environment revealed that bullying could have dire consequences for the victims, affecting learning adversely. Based on the findings from the interviews, the effects of bullying are categorised as social-emotional development and general academic performance.

The participants asserted that when one is experiencing the emotions of embarrassment and being afraid, this emotion affects their learning.

**SBL3:** *They used to call me gay, and it made my self-esteem low.*

**SAL2:** *Some even poke fun at learners and insult them about their looks. It makes one feel useless and undignified.*

**SBL4:** *If you are being bullied, you are even scared to come even to school.*

Most participants in the study reported that learners feel terrified and embarrassed as one of the consequences of bullying.

**PA:** *Some (learners) would commit suicide just because they are being bullied in school. Or it could lead to them leaving school - dropping out of school because of bullying.*

**SAT2:** *One boy took out his screwdriver and he stabbed the other boy. That boy nearly lost his life.*

A teacher from School A conveyed that learners are so scared to report bullying.

**SAT2:** *Children don't report these incidents of bullying because they are afraid of the bully,* sentiments shared by **SAL2 and SAL2**

### **Category 1: Social and emotional development**

In this category, various aspects are taken into consideration:

- a) Fear/anxiety/depression
- b) Fear of failure/rejection/peer pressure
- c) Self-esteem

Emerging from the findings, it was found that peer pressure and aggressive behaviour among peers play a major role in the development of social and emotional problems. Participants noted that certain peers engage in negative actions in order to impress or out of fear. They also mentioned that their friends have a strong impact on their lives, often influencing them to engage in similar behaviour. For example, if their friends bully someone, they may also do so to seem cool, and if their friends smoke, they may also smoke to fit in. In group settings, participants disclosed that they typically follow the rules and avoid questioning, fighting or refusing to comply, as they fear getting into trouble. The quotations here attest to these statements:

**SBL3:** *They are forcing me to do things...that can cause bullying...peer pressure.*

**SAL5:** *They want to impress a certain group of people. Others they even steal because of peer pressure.*

**SAL1:** *Here at school, there are days whereby we wear our clothes (we call it civvies). So, there is a competition for who wears expensive clothes. So other kids steal from others for them to buy those clothes so that they will look like they afford them.*

Data from the interviews indicated that victims of aggression suffered from low morale and lacked confidence in themselves. For example, some participants try to impress other learners by bullying so that they fit into the group.

This study demonstrated how bullying has a wide range of emotional consequences. The data collected during the interviews confirmed that emotional bullying was on the

increase in primary schools. Most participants who acknowledged being bullied felt depressed, while others felt helpless and degraded due to the bullying. For instance, **Learner FF** stated: *People who bully others are inferior, some take advantage of those who have no power to defend themselves.*

Teachers also confirmed this view: **SAT1** explained: *When I went to my class, I saw a small girl in front of my classroom crying. Upon finding out, I realised that one of the boys was taking her money to buy food. So, the girl was without her money for lunch. She was very upset and couldn't understand why he was doing that (SAT1).*

This study demonstrated how bullying has a wide range of emotional consequences. Most participants who acknowledged being bullied felt depressed, while others felt degraded and experienced low self-esteem due to the bullying. **SAT1** pointed out in the following extract that low self-esteem can hurt individuals in the long term:

*It is going to create very passive and reserved adults. It could lead to these learners eventually not being able to exert their thoughts and feelings in their adult life. And also...even a child with potential will be limited because of the fear...because the moment you draw attention to the classroom...put yourself out there to be victimised and to limit their potential (SAT1).*

Additionally, **SBL1**, **SAL2**, **SAL5** and **SAL6** spoke of the crushing psychological impact bullying has on a person's self-worth, as is indicated in the following extracts:

**SBL1:** *... bullying changes the inner voice inside you...it kind of squashes you.*

**SAL2:** *... it forces you...undermines your confidence...your core system, everything gets ruined...destroyed.*

**SAL5:** *It destroys the 'whole you', the future you had, the vision...everything in one action seems useless because no one believes in you...*

**SAL6** concludes by saying, *... because they're scaring you...anyone can do whatever they want to you because nobody cares what you feel.*

## **Category 2: General Academic Performance**

Data emerging from the analysis indicated that victims of aggression who suffered from low self-esteem lacked confidence in themselves and further experienced

challenges in their academic performance. On the other hand, learners who presented as perpetrators of bullying may have also experienced academic challenges.

For example, participants stated the following:

**SBHoD-SMT:** ... *poor performance. when the bully is always not performing well in class, she or he will always bully others.*

**PA:** *A lack of school achievement makes someone a bully learner. A learner who experiences poor performance in class is likely to be either a victim or a bully.*

The view that academic performance may be the result of bullying behaviour was corroborated by other teacher who affirmed that *children bully because they do not have good academic results (SAT2)*. The common nexus of bullying concerning academic performance is reinforced by an SMT member who confides that *... some learners bully because they do not have good academic results; they always repeat the grades. (SAHoD-SMT)*

Participants reported that persistent bullying contributes to absenteeism and negatively impacts academic achievement. Participants also emphasised that learners who are subjected to various types of bullying at school are always low academic performers. Learners who were victims of bullying indicated that are often absent from school as they fear being mistreated by their bullies. On the other hand, perpetrators of bullying who also experience low self-esteem and emotional disturbances for various other reasons may perform poorly in academics. Learners demonstrated that bullying leads to low academic performance and absenteeism in all schools among learners.

#### **4.5.2 Sub-Theme 2: Family Factors**

The immediate family is the initial socialising environment that the child is exposed to, and it may significantly influence how the child behaves socially throughout their life. Literature suggests that learners who become bullies are generally children from families with a high level of violence, a lack of clear rules, poor discipline, poor supervision and limited parental interest in what is going on in children's lives. Moreover, a lack of attention and warmth towards a child and the modelling of

aggressive behaviour at home create the perfect conditions for the child to develop aggressive behaviour and engage in bullying actions.

According to most participants, one of the important reasons leading to learner bullying in schools is the learners' family history and background. This sub-theme is covered in the following sections: socio-economic risks, family structure, poverty and poor parenting.

### **Category 1: Socio-economic risks**

Participants in this research feel that what happens in schools is influenced by what happens in society. The surrounding community has a major influence on school violence. Learners provided examples to indicate how their economic status contributes to their bullying experiences and affects them. They used comments such as: *If your house is not well built, coming from umkhukhu<sup>3</sup> with no television or fancy clothes, other learners look down upon you. (SAL1)*

**SGB 2:** *Unemployment within the community which is accelerating... You can see what was happening in our country, looting. Unfortunately, some parents because of poverty, allow bullying (to them it's a feat of survival)*

Learners provided various examples to illustrate how one's economic status affects them, as exemplified here:

**SBL1:** *It feels so painful, and you even blame your parents and ask yourself many questions like 'Why don't they have enough money to support us?'*

**SAL2:** *They do not know how you feel about that, and you know your parent's situation.*

The findings indicate that financial status has an impact on the lives of learners, especially if the learner comes from a family or a place where other learners think he is struggling financially.

### **Category 2: Parenting and Family Structure**

Parenting and family structures are most important in a child's life. If a family structure is broken, the child is more likely to become vulnerable and at risk. Participant perspectives during the interviews revealed that children who are rejected at home are

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<sup>3</sup> A house built from metal roof material (zinc) or mud in an informal housing settlement.

more likely to display unacceptable behaviour than those who receive care, warmth, attention, acceptance and love. Participants explained that the lack of these expressions of humanity within the family places children at a greater risk of engagement in bullying actions.

According to the participants' responses, the parenting styles which prompt bullying are aggressive parents, poor communication skills, lack of affection and support, negative role modelling, and encouraging violent behaviour. In the elaboration of this **PB** said: *Parents have not been involved in their kids' lives, for example, learners' schoolwork, they don't play a role, but when there is a problem, they come and fight with the teacher.*

**SAL1** added: *Parents encourage children to fight back if they are bullied but that continues the cycle of bullying.*

**SBT4** also said: *To some families, bullying is seen as a harmless game to toughen up children"*

**SAL6** further stated that: *When parents are too permissive or too strict, that may also contribute to bullying in bullying.*

According to the study, children raised in loveless, unsupportive, and disrespectful families often develop into adults who lack empathy and respect for others. Children subjected to harsh, inconsistent punishment, left unsupervised, and lacking parental involvement are more likely to exhibit bullying behaviour.

This statement is corroborated by participants who stated that learners from homes characterised by poor parental supervision, where parents always fight or are already divorced, cannot concentrate on their schoolwork, and end up bullying other learners.

**SAL2:** *Lack of parenting. most parents are teenagers, they even consume alcohol and drug abuse in front of kids. Violence and swearing became an 'in thing'.*

**SAT1:** *Adults fight in the presence of children and children are likely to copy and transfer the same behaviour to schools.*

The influence of the family or home factor is further reinforced by **SGB1** who added by stating that *most learners witness their parents fighting and learn to mimic the same behaviour.*

Other participants mentioned causes which may trigger bullying, including previous abuse and witnessing parents fight at home. According to **PA**, *The background ... most of our learners come from very broken families ... most of the parents are single parents.*

The lack of cooperation and support from parents was pointed out: *Our community is very underprivileged, very violent, unemployment is rife and as a result, maybe most of the households are battling to survive so, the stronghold in the household would become depressed.* (**SBT4**).

According to the results of the study, there seems to be a clear relationship between violence occurring in schools and the socio-economic status of the surrounding community. The socio-economic status of the neighbourhood influences violence in schools. As a microcosm of society, schools reflect whatever occurs in the larger environment; if the environment is violent, this spills over into the school. Violence surrounding communities bring violence into the school environment.

#### **Category 4: Societal Influences**

Participants in the study believe that the neighbourhood in which children grow up profoundly impacts the adults they become. Participants explained that violence is one of a youngster's most damaging experiences, influencing how they think, feel and act. Children who see violence are more likely to become entangled in a vicious cycle that leads to future aggressive behaviour such as aggression, violent crime and child abuse.

Culture and the media were among the other factors mentioned by participants as fostering bullying at the social level.

##### **(a) Culture**

The participants postulated that individuals' culture constitutes an ability to conserve learners' bullying behaviours. According to **PA**: *Children who grow up within a culture where ill-treating and harming others is not discouraged, they are most likely to bully others. In some cases, the clashing of cultures"*

In consensus, **PA** further stated that: *In our society, corporal punishment is used to discipline, children understand aggression to be a correct behaviour.*

**SBT4** further asserted: *Our culture didn't promote equality and children and women are aggressively placed in their place by man ... our male children learn bullying woman and children is accepted.*

Participants indicated their beliefs by mentioning that culture, gender-based violence and the decline in social standards appear to promote violence and bullying, which seeps into schools and school culture.

#### **(b) Media**

The findings of the thematic data analysis indicate that the participants held divergent views regarding the correlation between media violence and bullying among young individuals. Some participants believed that exposure to violent media amplifies the chances of learners engaging in bullying, whereas others did not think that media had a notable influence on the issue. In support of these statements, these extracts apply:

**SAT1** asserted that: *Most of the children who were perpetrators of bullying were reported by their parents to being exposed to brutal television movies, games and music.*

**PA:** *Children spend the most time on social media networks because they are immature, they are most likely to get influenced and get new intriguing ideas of bullying others.*

**SGB1:** *Unfortunately, our cultural values and norms are also influenced by the media.*

In contradiction, **SBT4** asserted that: *A lot of children watch violence on the media daily, but they don't go around assaulting others...*

**SAT2:** *If a child is growing in an environment whereby parents are involved in what the children are watching, therefore media is not a bad thing.*

Accordingly, some participants concur that media violence is linked to anti-social behaviours such as bullying. However, other participants view media as a platform to learn something new.

#### **4.5.3 Sub-Theme 3: School Factors Contributing to Bullying**

This theme aims to understand school factors contributing to bullying in a primary school setting. The participants discussed several issues, including the management



structure of the school, poorly qualified teachers and a need for more resources. Bullying in primary schools is a complex issue requiring a multifaceted approach. One of the main factors contributing to this problem is the school's management structure. In some cases, the hierarchical structure of the school can create an environment where bullying is more likely to occur.

### **Category 1: Age cohort, teasing, gossip and jealousy**

The following data depicts learner participants' perspectives on the age effects of bullying:

**SAL1:** *When you are older than your classmate, you are being teased for your age, called umagogo<sup>4</sup> because of your age.*

**SBL1:** *It is easy to take young ones' possessions and run away with them because young ones cannot recognise you or will be scared to report.*

**SBL3:** *It is easy to kick a young boy because I am older than him. There is nothing that he can do because he is powerless.*

These extracts indicate that age significantly impacts learners' experiences of bullying. Whether they are young or old, they experience some form of bullying. Participants indicated that they are called specific names for being older than other learners in class. Young learners are bullied emotionally and physically. Both boy and girl participants argued that it is easy to bully a younger learner as she or he has no power to bully back.

There is diversity at school in terms of capabilities and learner achievement. Some participants seem to think that they become the target if they perform better than their perpetrators in academic tasks, thus making bullies jealous. This is affirmed by quotes such as:

**SBL4:** *I pass very well, that's why they bully me, mostly, bullies fail at school, so they make sure we all fail by bullying us.*

**SAL1:** *If you always have good marks and receive awards, some learners become jealous of you and start calling you names.*

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<sup>4</sup> Granny, grandmother or old lady.

This implies that bullies might feel the need to bully others to destroy those who perform better than them.

In addition, participants revealed that bullying occurs because of their status, their physical features or anything to do with the family.

**SAL3:** *It is devastating to be in an environment where you are being teased because of your status (HIV). I know of a girl who was always being judged because her parents died of AIDS.*

**SBL6:** *People are gossiping about you, saying you have khwashu<sup>5</sup> ... not getting enough food.*

These factors reveal that learners are vulnerable to bullying and it thus challenges teachers, parents and caregivers to protect learners from exploitation by bullies.

### **Category 2: School management structure, unequipped and unskilled teachers**

Findings emerging from this study suggest that teachers believe they may not have sufficient knowledge and expertise necessary to handle bullying incidents effectively. As a result, victims may not receive adequate support or receive ineffective responses. Another significant factor is a lack of resources, such as money for anti-bullying initiatives and instruction for teachers and staff. It can be challenging to create a welcoming environment for all learners without relevant sources. Participants expressed that schools must address these underlying issues and work to make all learners feel more supported and nurtured to effectively combat bullying in primary schools:

**SAL3:** *Some teachers have no skills of how to deal with bullying learners.*

**SAT1** added: *I have never been trained on how to manage to bully so we use trial and error.*

**SBT3** asserted: *...but I am not sure how to go about helping the victim.*

One principal acknowledge that overcrowding is a contributory factor: *Teachers are not well trained when it comes to handling situations such as overcrowding (PA).*

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<sup>5</sup> A form of malnutrition caused by protein deficiency in the diet.

Furthermore, **SAL3** expressed strong sentiments against the poor management structures and the functioning of the disciplinary committee, particularly if: *teachers have no skills of how to deal with bullying learners, so bullying will increase in schools.*

**SBT4:** *Management always uses the top-to-the-down method, they are autocratic. Whatever they say, must be done without involving the staff's opinion.*

Furthermore, **SAL2** added that certain situations allow for bullying: *I think [the] lack of supervision of learners by teachers during break time in the playground.*

The failure by teachers to control and stop bullying incidents at school influences the learners to fully engage themselves in bullying behaviour. The SGB from both schools confirms by saying:

**SGB1:** *Most teachers are very reluctant to intervene and see bullying as a way of children growing up and do not see any problem in that regard.*

**SGB2:** *In some cases, it's because teachers are coming from or raised in the environment where bullying (teasing and fighting) is seen as part of growing, especially in boys.* She further stated that: *In most African communities, a boy child is not allowed to be seen crying, he is labelled as (uyatetema, uyatefa <sup>6</sup>).*

**SAT2:** *Some learners like being petty, I don't have time for petty verbal insults, I respond only when they are physically hurt.*

Most participants commented on teachers' lack of bullying management training. The above quotations demonstrate that the school environment influences learners' bullying behaviour due to educators' and school management's inability to maintain discipline at school.

Of concern, however, is the issues of bullying by teachers.

**SAL3:** *Teachers who bully learners also contribute to bullying in schools.*

Throughout the individual and focus group interviews, it became clear that inadequate supervision and weak discipline in the school environment significantly contribute to promoting bullying behaviour. The interview data strongly indicated that poor

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<sup>6</sup> A person who cannot stand up for his own, always crying when others are teasing him.

management structures within the school system had a significant role in learner bullying.

### **Category 3: Lack of or limited resources at home and school**

The perspectives shared by participants during focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews illustrated that a lack of or limited resources at home affected learners' bullying behaviour.

**SAT2:** *If resources are not enough at home, children will come to school and steal from others.*

Participants also stated that bullying occurs in their schools because they do not have enough resources to occupy learners. Their views are presented below.

**SAL1:** *If there are no facilities for learners to play with, they end up beating and teasing each other.*

**SAL3:** *Insufficient books is also a cause of destruction. When there is nothing to keep you busy, you end up doing wrong things.*

**SAT1:** *If resources are not adequate. If there are overcrowded classes and, in some instances, if teachers lack the knowledge and skills on how to deal with problematic learners, learners end up tearing books and kicking each other.*

**SBT2:** *In some cases, if resources are not enough, like chairs and tables, there will be a lot of bullying incidents in school.*

**SAT4:** *Well, if there are no facilities for learners to play, they become emotionally affected and the result is that they will end up venting their anger to other learners through beating.*

Teachers have highlighted several reasons, including a lack of resources at school and at home, as contributing to the issue of bullying at these research sites. According to the findings, when learners lack the necessary support and guidance, they may resort to bullying as a coping strategy for their frustration and loneliness. This can lead to a variety of negative outcomes, including poor academic performance, low self-esteem and even mental health difficulties.

The findings demonstrate participants' views that schools must invest in mechanisms that can make students feel connected and supported, such as counselling services and peer support groups and even extra-curricular activities, to address this problem.

**TBL4:** *Extra-curricular activities after school will keep them away from bad hangouts and bad friends.*

Additionally, teachers could collaborate with parents and community members to create a safe and welcoming environment for all learners. By taking these actions, teachers could contribute to reducing bullying in their schools.

#### **4.5.4 Sub-Theme 4: Environmental Factors**

The views expressed by the participants in the interviews strongly suggest that environmental factors play a crucial role in learner aggression in township primary schools. Research findings indicated that most primary school learners residing in township areas do not have before- and after-school programmes to keep them busy and involved. As a result, they become involved in activities such as aggressive behaviour to be accepted by the gangsters in the community.

#### **Category 1: Gangsterism and substance abuse**

The sub-theme that emerged distinctly from most participants was that gangsterism and substance abuse were the most influential factors in school bullying. Participants in the study expressed a clear consensus that gangsterism and substance abuse are the primary drivers of school bullying. The prevalence of these issues in schools has created an environment where students feel compelled to engage in aggressive behaviour toward their peers. This is particularly true for vulnerable or marginalised people, as they may be seen as easy targets for bullies seeking to assert dominance.

The principals in the study pointed to 'gangsterism' and peer influence as influencing the general patterns of different types of bullying in schools. Extracts that support this statement are:

**PA:** *Gangsterism is rife in our community, so when learners come to school, they belong to gangs to protect themselves from being bullied.*

Learners not belonging to gangs for protection, find themselves victims:

**PB:** *Gangs bully them by taking their money, especially if it's civvies day.*

An SGB member from School B echoed that the impact of gangsterism and substance abuse on school culture cannot be overstated.

**SGB2:** *Gangsterism and substance abuse undermine the sense of safety and security that students need to thrive academically and socially.*

The principals indicated that gang members influence each other to tease, swear, fight and carry dangerous weapons. The findings from participants revealed that peer influence and gangsterism trigger different types of bullying, which disrupts teaching and learning.

The principals of both schools (Schools A and B) stressed the impact that the use of drugs and alcohol had in their schools. When describing the presence of drugs in their schools, principals used expressions such as, *...also you know, peer pressure, gangsters, whoonga<sup>7</sup> and dagga that is freely available (PB).*

**PA:** *Everyone in neighbour schools is complaining about the whoonga.*

The principal of School B further explained that the use of illegal substances such as Benzine, Dagga and water pipe makes learners dependent: *...the child becomes so addicted to that substance that when the craving arises, they need to have a smoke or two. (PB)*

**SBHoD- SMT** confirmed that drugs are used on the school premises: *It does take place on the school premises like dagga...I've seen it.*

**SAT1:** *I've seen learners consuming alcohol, even girls.*

Learners stated that certain learners from communities where there is a high level of stealing, fighting, stabbing, kicking or destruction of property tend to imitate and transfer the same bullying behaviour to schools. Their views are presented below:

**SAL1:** *I think exposure to violence, drugs and alcohol or crime at home and in the community also contribute to bullying in schools.*

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<sup>7</sup> *Whoonga* is a type of recreational drug. It generates intense feelings of euphoria, deep contentment, and relaxation. It also reduces appetite. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whoonga>

**SBL1:** *I think crime in the community also makes learners do the same behaviour at school like stealing, stabbing others or some form of violence. I think the violent video games we watch on social media also contribute to bullying.*

**SAL3:** *I also think that poverty in the community and at home makes learners to be bullies.*

#### **4.5.5 Discussion of Theme 2: Ecosystemic Factors associated with Bullying**

According to the literature review, bullying in schools is a significant problem that has an impact on students all over the world. Ecosystemic factors associated with bullying include the social and cultural norms that perpetuate aggressive behaviour, as well as the availability of resources and support for victims. In addition, individual characteristics such as low self-esteem, poor social skills and a tendency towards aggression can also contribute to bullying. The impact of bullying on individuals and communities can be significant, leading to long-term emotional and psychological consequences for victims.

The participants' responses demonstrated that bullying has severe repercussions for victims. These emotional or psychological consequences can significantly harm teaching and learning as they cause students to feel excluded and inferior at school. The current study reveals that bullying victims are children who become depressed, helpless, hopeless and unhappy due to bullying.

These findings imply that bullied people may experience psychological, emotional and physical effects. According to the quotes above, some students bully to gain attention, while others do it out of insecurity. Research by Olweus (2003) and Marais and Meier (2010) support participants' reports that this vulnerability can be attributed to the envy and resentment that overachievers may arouse in their peers. Furthermore, the stress of upholding strict academic standards might isolate these people, making them more vulnerable to bullying (Peiper, 2013; Olweus, 2009).

According to Miller and Lowen (2012) and Dupper (2010) most bullies come from homes where they have experienced different types of bullying. Additionally, violent communities with behaviours like murder, theft, mugging, rape or property damage may be imitated by children and repeated at school. Bronfenbrenner (1977 cited by Kruger, 2011) reveals that bullying has many dimensions. The bioecological systems

theory, which is made up of interacting systems like the micro-system, mesosystem, exo-system, macrosystem and chronosystem, is consistent with this. According to Miller and Lowen (2012) and Fried and Sosland (2011), societal violence affects how students act at school. This demonstrates how bullying among students accurately reflects what is happening in the neighbourhood and what is making people angry. This is supported Bandura's social learning theory and demonstrates how bullying in schools is influenced by family history. Due to the life circles that the child might experience, a child's ability to manage his emotions during this challenging time may increase his likelihood of acting violently or impulsively against others.

Despite the literature supporting the above conclusions that bullying can be modelled on how children are raised at home, there is limited substantial evidence that all bullies are children of bullying families and communities. Families and communities can also set an excellent example for children to follow and develop good discipline; however, this is dependent on the community having good role models for students (Dupper, 2013).

In addition to dysfunctional families, which is a significant factor in bullying in schools, raising children poorly by parents who cannot instil proper discipline and provide necessary care, significantly contributes to disruptive, antisocial behaviour. Miller and Lowen (2012:48) endorsed this viewpoint and asserted that “parents who unintentionally exhibit aggressive, antagonistic, argumentative, irritable, domineering, critical, or other violent behaviour set a poor example for their children”.

According to the current study, which is supported by earlier studies, students behave well at school when there is peace in the neighbourhood. Mushambi (2016), Dupper (2013) and Miller and Lowen (2012) argue that learners from violent backgrounds will behave violently in support of the points mentioned earlier. Furthermore, study findings indicate that learner bullying is exacerbated by poor parental participation and broken family groups (Mabatha et al., 2014; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). Lack of parental support and family backgrounds marked by physical abuse, conflict and domestic violence are the primary causes of bullying in schools.

Existing research on the issue of culture and bullying indicate that expected behaviour and norms within different cultures may support bullying, thus cultural norms have been said to be very influential in moulding the behaviour of children, including



aggressive behaviour such as bullying (Cook et al., 2010; Rigby, 2010). Most participants see culture playing a major role in shaping the child's future. According to the current study, if the community and its cultural practices promote ubuntu<sup>8</sup>, children are likely to have ubuntu as well; however, it is not proven that this has become the case always. Additionally, Cook et al. (2010) argued that unsafe and disorganised neighbourhoods may maintain bullying.

Available literature concurs with some parts of the findings of the current study and implies that some researchers believe media violence to be linked to anti-social behaviours such as bullying (Olson et al., 2009). It has been further stated that over the decades, research has been conducted to discredit the effects of exposure to aggressive media to be affiliated with bullying (Swearer Napolitano, 2011). Notably, the causes of bullying as perceived by the participants, ranged from all the systems of the bioecological model of Bronfenbrenner. The above findings align with Bandura's social learning theory that emphasises external environmental cues as elicitors of aggression. Bandura suggests that aggressive behaviour is learned and maintained through environmental experiences. According to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, factors related to family background are linked to bullying in schools (Monk et al., 2009). The influence of family factors on bullying behaviour may also occur through social learning, in which case people pick up bullying behaviours through observation, role modelling and reinforcement. Hong et al. (2012:167) stated that "social learning theorists hypothesise that aggressive behaviour was acquired and maintained by emulating aggressive parents, abusive caregivers as well as deviant and antisocial peers".

Furthermore, according to the findings, it was evident during the interviews that teachers who arrive for lessons unprepared also contribute to various bullying behaviours among students. This finding is supported by Mushambi (2016), who stated that teachers who are poor role models for their students encourage bullying and contribute to its development. Learners can learn good behaviour from their teachers by watching how they conduct themselves. The study further shows that some teachers are unequipped when it comes to dealing with bullying. Furthermore,

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<sup>8</sup> A quality that includes the essential human virtues; compassion and humanity.

the literature on teachers who are positive role models for their students is lacking (Mosia, 2015; Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008).

In conclusion, according to the findings of this study, it is clear that parents and teachers create a conducive environment where children will get care, warmth, attention, acceptance and affection. This statement is supported by Mestry and Khumalo (2012), who claim that students from households with inadequate parental supervision, such as those where parents constantly quarrel or are already divorced, are unable to focus on their academics and end up bullying other students, unlike children from warm, loving and caring families.

#### **4.6 THEME 3: SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH BULLYING**

Peer pressure, societal norms and the impact of family dynamics are some socio-cultural factors linked to bullying. A challenging upbringing, a lack of positive role models and cultural attitudes toward violence and aggression may also influence the prevalence of bullying behaviour. It is crucial to address these underlying causes in order to effectively prevent bullying and intervene when it occurs.

The findings of this study reveal that the socio-cultural contributory elements to bullying are impacted at three levels: the home, the school and the community. Each subtheme, some categories are discussed in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: An overview of Theme 3**

<p><b>Theme 3: Socio-cultural factors associated with bullying</b></p> <p><b>Description of the theme:</b> This theme describes participants' perspectives on socio-cultural factors associated with bullying behaviour in township schools.</p>	
<p><u>Inclusion Criteria</u></p> <p>This theme includes data related to the participants' general knowledge and views on socio-cultural factors associated with bullying.</p>	<p><u>Exclusion Criteria</u></p> <p>Any reference not related to the participant's knowledge and views on socio-cultural factors associated with bullying.</p>
<p>Sub-theme 1: Influence at a family level</p>	
<p><u>Category 1</u></p> <p><u>Challenging upbringing</u></p>	<p><u>Category 2</u></p> <p><u>Lacking positive role models</u></p>
<p>Sub-theme 2: Influence at a school level</p>	
<p>Category 1</p> <p>Teacher's behaviour and classroom Management</p>	
<p>Sub-theme 3: Influence at a community level</p>	
<p>Category 1</p> <p>Xenophobic and ethnic bullying</p>	<p>Category 2</p> <p>Racism in School</p>

#### **4.6.1 Sub-Theme 1: Influence at a Family Level**

The topic of influence within family dynamics delves into how interpersonal relationships within a family can mould an individual's perspectives, principles and actions. Typically, family members are the primary source of emotional comfort and direction when faced with life's challenges. Parents set standards for their children's conduct and often serve as their first examples. Siblings play a crucial role in shaping a person's character as they grow up together and exchange ideas. Even in adulthood, family members continue to wield significant influence, as they are relied upon for guidance and assistance.

Learners from Schools A and B come from families with low socio-economic status, and this may have an effect on how they behave.

**PB:** *“In most cases, learners involved in bullying such as taking others food simply because they come from poor families ... which is not justifying their act”.*

Another participant said: *“People from poor economic status are naturally aggressive and they are likely to be involved in bullying because their home environment is equated with violence and poverty” (PA).*

Conflictingly, **SBT4** stated that: *“Children do not abuse others as a result of parental unemployment or poverty”.*

However, some participants explained that learners with higher socio-economic status also display poor behaviour traits.

**SAT1:** asserted that: *Middle-class children perpetuate bullying because they are spoilt.*

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that there is no direct causal relationship between poverty, family unemployment, and children turning violent toward others. More closely linked to aggressive behaviour in children are factors such as temperament, exposure to violence and poor parenting techniques. Instead of stigmatising families who are experiencing unemployment or poverty, it is critical to address these underlying causes.

According to the participants' responses, aggressive parenting, poor communication skills, a lack of love and support, setting a bad example, and encouraging violent behaviour were parenting traits that contributed to bullying.

**PA:** *Generally, children mimic their parents ... if parents are bullies the child does the same.*

**SAT4:** *Parents encourage children to fight back if they are bullied but that continues the cycle of bullying.*

**SAT1:** *Parents love their children in a way that they do not tell them even when they are wrong. How you raise your child and how you teach your child is how your child will behave.*

These parenting practices frequently produced children who lacked empathy and had trouble controlling their emotions. The participants also pointed out that parents' frequent inconsistent use of punishment also aided in the escalation of bullying behaviour.

**SAT3** further stated that: *When parents are too permissive or too strict, that may also contribute to bullying in bullying.*

Of concern in society is the issue of teenage mothers, no fathers, grandmothers bringing up children, which has an effect of the child and could influence their behaviour.

**PB:** *Nowadays, the parents that we are serving are teenagers, they don't care about the wellbeing of a child.*

**SBHoD-SMT:** *Some learners are brought up by single parents, so they are always angry because they don't know their father ... most of them are born outside marriage ... so you find that the home is dysfunctional.*

**SAL6** concurred by saying: *It is so sad to see other children speaking good about their fathers, hence you don't know yours.*

**SAHoD-SMT** concurred with the above comments by stating: *The children have no parents ... they live with their grandparents. One of the learners said to me that she had no one because she lost her mum when she was four years old, and they grow up frustrated coming from these broken homes.*

**PB:** *Dysfunctional families. Some kids witnessed abusive parents towards each other.*

According to the participants, it is believed that parents support bullying when they use aggressive behaviour to settle disputes and when they show no concern or support for their children's emotional well-being. Furthermore, research has shown that parents who are aggressive or who have a history of bullying are more likely to unintentionally encourage bullying in their children.

## **Category 2: Lacking positive role models**

Participants lamented the absence of positive role models in the children's lives. Most parents display aggressive behaviour, and the problems encountered at home manifest themselves when learners play out their frustrations at school. The principal

of School B highlighted this point when he stated that children copy what their parents do at home:

**PB:** *The parents themselves display characteristics of bullying where fathers are beating mothers in front of their children, so some of these aggressive qualities are genetically imported by the learners from their parents.*

**SAHoD-SMT** expressed similar sentiments of ill-treatment that the parents have and display: *There is this boy in grade four here at school. We're not sure what the problem is. He has a problematic background and lots of family issues.*

**SBHoD-SMT:** *Sometimes we find that they are having problems ... they are being ill-treated and applying what's being done to them to other people.*

A teacher agreed with the opinion expressed by SAHoD-SMT that the issue of alcohol and multiple partners were also factors.

**SAT2:** *Parents drink in front of their kids, having multiple affairs, so kids when they come to school, they bring frustration to other kids, and they become aggressive...and that causes them to be bullies.*

**SAL1** concurred by saying: *Parents encourage children to fight back if they are bullied but that continues the cycle of bullying.*

Participants concurred with this viewpoint by asserting that parents who are aggressive, hostile, argumentative, short-tempered, domineering or critical and generally demonstrate violent behaviour, inadvertently serve as poor role models for their children.

#### **4.6.2 Sub-Theme 2: Influence at a School Level**

The nature of bullying in schools may be ascribed to school-level effects, as indicated by participants. In this situation, the factor of teacher behaviour was highlighted as a crucial influence.

##### **Category 1: Teacher behaviour and classroom management**

Overwhelmingly, school managers in the study attributed the problem of bullying to being influenced at the school level by teachers' behaviour and lack of classroom

management. As indicated earlier, teachers admitted that they lacked the necessary skills to manage bullies and bullying.

**SAL2:** *Some teachers have no skills of how to deal with bullying learners, so bullying will increase in schools.*

**SAT2:** *You can have excellent management skills, but if you are not able to implement these accordingly, you can become frustrated and angry.*

**SBT3:** *I am not sure how to go about helping the victim.*

Most schools have rules in place such as the Code of Conduct, but it seems that rules are not implemented and followed:

**PA:** *Our code of conduct gives far too many limitations to those who are trying to put things right.*

**SAL3:** *I think [the] lack of supervision of learners by teachers during break time in the playground.*

In addition, the teacher is often the bully, which is a concern:

**SAL6:** *I think the school does contribute to a lot of bullying because there are teachers who abuse learners in front of other learners.*

In addition, the principals of Schools A and B had similar thoughts about bullies and blamed teachers for failing to take full control in managing the classroom:

**PB:** *We need to take the blame as teachers. Some colleagues still use corporal punishment.*

Participants believed that teachers who bully learners through swearing, teasing or beating serve as bad role models as learners imitate the same bullying behaviour with other learners.

**SAT2:** *You can have excellent management skills, but if you are not able to implement these accordingly, you can become frustrated and angry and you know you might tend to exercise some form of verbal bullying.*

**SBT3:** *I always use what I think is right (demerit system) ...but I am not sure how to go about helping the victim.*

**SBHoD-SMT:** *Some teachers are not role models, they come to school drunk, especially on Mondays.*

Participants from both schools thought that bullying was strongly influenced at the school level. Teachers' incompetence in speaking to learners and their behaviour trigger bullying.

#### **4.6.3 Sub-Theme 3: Influence at a Community Level**

A community's negative influence can have a wide range of effects on a child. It may result in higher crime rates, less social cohesiveness and a general decline in well-being. Negative influences can also obstruct community development initiatives and the advancement of common objectives.

##### **Category 1: Xenophobic and ethnic bullying**

Another sort of violence mentioned by the participants was xenophobic, homophobic, and racial or ethnic discrimination when one person is hostile to another as a result of their ethnicity, sexual orientation, race or cultural differences. The recent xenophobic attacks against foreigners in various parts of South Africa have significantly impacted the nation's youth.

As the issue spread, it got worse at the school level. Responses from principals show how easily learners can be influenced to become violent. Principal from School A related a shocking incident of xenophobia experienced at his school:

**PA:** *These past years you will recall there was this national problem of xenophobia and we've got a learner from outside countries, namely Zimbabwe, Somalia and Lesotho who were being bullied ... some of the classmates were saying "We are going to burn you!" and "Go back to Lesotho! Go back to Somalia, go back to Zimbabwe" and this youngster was just terrified! So, the children were being bullied...being abused because they were foreigners.*

##### **Category 2: Perspectives on Potential Racism in School**

Participants' perspectives as expressed during the interviews, showed that racism is a critical issue in schools. This statement is supported by the following extracts from participants:



**SBT1:** *When learners discriminate against each other based on culture, race or tribe, that's bullying*

**SBL5:** *I've seen the other guy in class being bullied. I don't know whether it is because of discrimination or race.*

**PA:** *In our school, we have a percentage of coloured kids. They use defensive mechanisms towards lack of race, they always gang up if anything happens to them.*

Similar sentiments were expressed by other participants:

**PB:** *There's also a race thing in our school, and I'm going to say this point blank .*

**SAT3:** *Parents from another ethnic group, they don't respect us as they do in a white school.*

SAT1 confirmed the view expressed by PA when she stated: *I have two foreigners in my class. During the xenophobic attacks, they [learners] were surrounding the children and chanting for them to go back from wherever they came from.*

According to the findings of this study, it appears that the minority group within educational institutions is at a higher risk of being subjected to bullying by the majority. This is a pressing matter that requires immediate attention from the education system. The provision of a safe and inclusive environment for all students, irrespective of their race, ethnicity or religion, is of utmost importance.

#### **4.6.4 Discussion of Theme 3: Socio-Cultural Factors Associated with Bullying**

The findings of this study show that bullying in schools has several causes that come from interactions between various people in various societal institutions. Coyne and Monks (2011) explain that experiences of poverty lead to discrimination even amongst older people. Learners who are associated with poverty are usually ostracised by learners who come from financially well-off families. This makes it clear that sometimes a learner's social status (poverty or wealth) contributes to becoming either an agent or a target of bullying.

Additionally, Maunder and Crafter (2018) and Dupper (2013) argue that events in various interconnected social systems affect how students act in school. If a child

grows up in a supportive family and peaceful community, that child will likely demonstrate good qualities in school, unlike one coming from a violent community.

In this study, the hierarchy of bullying at socio-cultural levels was the dire effects of poverty, unemployment and xenophobia. According to Dupper (2013), the major obstacle that motivates youth to participate in unlawful and violent behaviour is economic disparity. The findings also show that what happens in the classroom among learners creates a clear picture of what happens in the greater society. Children may imitate violence in the neighbourhood by destroying property, vandalising shops, hitting others or taunting, and then bring this behaviour to school as bullying. Violence in society, according to Fried and Sosland (2011), adds to the frequency of bullying behaviour in schools. In addition, the findings also show that teachers' behaviour also contributes to bullying behaviour. Participants from the current study indicated that some teachers came to school drunk, this was supported by Mushambi (2016), which means that some teachers are poor role models for their students. Numerous types of bullying behaviour among students are also caused by teachers who show up to school unprepared to teach. Findings revealed that teachers' intervention toward bullying is ineffective, as supported by Athanasiades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzis (2010), that teachers do not have proper tools in place or are not equipped to deal with bullying in class.

Existing literature states that, within reasonable limits, a person's socio-cultural status affects how they treat others (De Wet, 2010), an issue confirmed by Sebola (2015) who found that a person's socio-cultural status can significantly impact how they treat others. This highlights the value of promoting diversity and inclusivity in all facets of society and providing information and tools on cultural sensitivity (Aluede et al., 2012).

According to the findings, some students discriminate against one another based on their cultural, linguistic or ethnic backgrounds. According to Basilici, Palladino and Menesini (2022), Athanasiades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzis (2010) and Rigby (2010), racial and cultural disparities have given a new dimension to the challenges of home-school connections. Learners at the same school who speak different languages may not understand each other culturally. The results show that some students are prejudiced against one another because of their cultural, linguistic or ethnic origins. According to Rigby (2010), the difficulties of home-school connections have taken on

a new dimension because of racial and cultural disparities. Different language speakers who attend the same inclusive school may not be able to communicate.

Xenophobic bullying has recently surfaced in South African schools, where students have been harassed and threatened because of their immigrant status, resulting in the current spike in cyberbullying in schools (Maunder & Crafter, 2018; Singh, 2016; Ndibalema, 2013). Perpetrators were also reported to be at risk of becoming delinquents, drug addicts, thieves and perpetrators of domestic violence as they get older (Coyne & Monks, 2011). In agreement, Rigby (2013) reported that the trauma of being bullied has been suspected to repress immune functioning resulting in bully victims becoming depressed as the trauma alters brain chemistry negatively.

Xenophobic attacks have significantly impacted youth's mentality toward foreigners in many areas of South Africa (Solomon & Kosaka, 2013). Children in schools started to imitate their fellow citizens, directing their rage and hatred toward foreigners. Miller and Lowen (2012) and Fried and Sosland (2011) added that a range of racist bullying makes one feel alienated and powerless due to the colour of their skin, ethnicity or culture.

Mncube and Harber (2012) highlighted that racism is still a significant issue in South African schools, despite the efforts to create a more inclusive educational system. While the multiracial institutional policy has allowed students of all races to access education, according to Swearer Napolitano (2011), it has not always been promoted equality and respect. Racial epithets, bullying and exclusion are all reported incidents demonstrating how discrimination and prejudice still exist in this country. Socio-cultural factors associated with bullying include various elements that can influence the occurrence and persistence of this behaviour. These factors may include the cultural norms and values of a particular community and the attitudes alongside beliefs of individuals within that community. Additionally, social factors such as peer pressure, social status and group dynamics all play a role in shaping the behaviour of those who engage in bullying. Other important factors may include family dynamics, socio-economic status and access to resources such as mental health services or educational opportunities. Understanding these complex socio-cultural factors is critical in developing effective strategies in preventing and addressing bullying in all its

forms. Addressing these underlying issues can help create safer and more inclusive communities for everyone.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented the findings emerging from the analysis of data collected through individual and focus group interviews. Participants in the research demonstrated a thorough awareness of bullying, including its causes, effects, numerous forms and broad patterns that might be adopted in school settings. Physical assault, theft, mocking, verbal abuse, threats, contempt and prejudice were all defined as bullying by participants. Participants highlighted a lack of resources, parental violence and drug usage as core reasons for bullying in schools, emphasising the prevalence of gangsterism, peer pressure and xenophobia. Bullying has been proven to have a variety of negative repercussions, including low academic performance and absenteeism. To summarise, bullying may be understood via sociological, cultural and ecological perspectives, and it is necessary to involve stakeholders to address this widespread issue.

In Chapter 5, the focus is on synthesising the findings, answering the research questions, drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 4, the study's findings, emerging from analysing the data generated from semi-structured individual and focus group interviews, were presented within the context of the existing literature and the conceptual framework to understand how ecosystemic and socio-cultural factors influence learner bullying behaviour in two Diepsloot township schools in Gauteng.

In the current chapter, conclusions are drawn by addressing the research questions formulated in Chapter 1 and relating the findings to the conceptual framework. This chapter also discusses the potential contributions of the study and reflects on its limitations and challenges. The chapter concludes with recommendations for training, practice and future research.

### **5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

The present study has been conducted to investigate the bullying behaviour of township school learners from an ecosystemic and socio-cultural perspective. The participants in this study evidenced a clear comprehension of the concept of bullying and highlighted its violent nature, which is perceived differently by various stakeholders. Verbal abuse and social exclusion were identified as equally significant forms of bullying by the learners, while teachers and principals considered physical aggression to be the primary form of violence. The study revealed that both boys and girls experience some form of bullying; however, they engage in bullying behaviours differently. Boys are more prone to physical bullying, while girls primarily engage in indirect or verbal forms, such as spreading rumours, name-calling and teasing.

This research found that bullying occurs most frequently at school and at home, indicating the need for increased supervision during school hours and raising concerns over parenting styles at home. Socio-cultural factors were identified as contributing to bullying. This research suggests that under-reporting is common among learners who fear retribution. The study also revealed that overcrowding and a lack of teacher skills contribute to bullying. The participants identified several other factors that promote

bullying in schools, such as media, parental discipline, economic status, and cultural diversity. The research confirms a high rate of bullying in schools, which has the potential to negatively affect learners' self-esteem, confidence and sense of safety. All participant groups unanimously identified the extent of cyberbullying proliferation as a growing concern and emphasised the importance of educating learners on responsible internet usage and the potential consequences of their online actions. Creating a positive school environment and promoting student empathy is crucial in preventing bullying incidents and fostering a safe learning environment.

### **5.3 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ACCORDING TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study aimed to gain insight into the nature of learner bullying behaviour in a township school environment from ecosystemic and socio-cultural perspectives. This study used a qualitative research approach and a case study design with selected participants. In this section, the secondary research questions are addressed and thereafter, the primary research question is addressed.

#### **5.3.1 Secondary Research Question 1: What are participant views on the extent of bullying in township schools?**

This question aimed to explore participants' views on the extent of bullying in township schools. In this way, participants' knowledge of and experiences with various forms of bullying are foregrounded. Following recurrent bullying incidents in schools and communities in Gauteng townships in recent years, motivated this study and purposively selected the Diep Sloot township. Learners are holistically affected by these incidents at school and in their homes and communities. According to Allen (2010), bullying has various psychological and emotional effects on a child's health, which diminishes human dignity, results in embarrassment and causes high stress levels.

The findings of the study indicate that the participants' conception of bullying primarily involves physical aggression. Specifically, learners are perceived to engage in bullying when they inflict physical harm on others, such as punching, kicking, slapping, smacking or forcing others to carry their bags, thereby creating a sense of insecurity within the school premises. The participants' accounts further suggest that power

imbalances are at the core of bullying, as evidenced by their use of phrases such as 'older, more muscular, size, age and power abuse' to describe the power dynamics involved. It is noteworthy that bullying is not confined to the classroom context but extends beyond into communities and homes.

Based on the feedback from participants, the extent and nature of bullying varied depending on the grade level of the learners. In the lower grades, learners were found to engage in teasing and physical harm, while in the higher grades, bullying took on a more covert form. This involved spreading rumours and participating in cyberbullying as the learners matured. Even though learners bully each other, teachers as participants in the study blamed parents for perpetuating bullying by turning a blind eye to their children's bullying behaviour and overprotecting them. The participant's responses revealed that bullying behaviours are committed by both girls and boys toward other learners who are new to the school. The findings made it clear that most male and female learners experience some type of bullying at some point and that bullying occurs daily at schools.

### **5.3.2 Secondary Research Question 2: How do ecosystemic factors influence bullying behaviour among perpetrators and victims in township schools?**

The objective of this research question was to understand how ecosystemic factors influence bullying among perpetrators and victims in township schools. The findings indicated that to understand bullying in township primary schools, it is important to understand systemic level factors and interactions associated with bullying. These aspects are discussed by the bio-ecological systems theory which comprises the microsystem, mesosystem, exo-system, macrosystem, and chronosystem as five interrelated systems. According to Dupper (2010) and Kruger (2011) events in the various interconnected social systems impact on how learners behave in school and class.

#### **Microsystem**

##### **a) The family microsystem**

The family environment plays a crucial role in shaping a child's perception of bullying in school. Studies show that bullying often occurs within a social context and is influenced by family factors such as parental arguments and abusive language at

home. Children who experience bullying at home may develop emotional and psychological challenges that can lead them to engage in bullying behaviour. Poor parenting practices can also contribute to bullying behaviour. A child who engages in bullying may be struggling to adjust to school, and those exposed to domestic violence may imitate and encourage bullying behaviour in the school setting. Parent modelling plays a significant role in shaping a child's attitudes towards bullying. A lack of parental involvement and poor upbringing can significantly impact a child's development and behaviour.

### **b) School and classroom microsystems**

This study found that bullying can significantly impact a learner's engagement with school. Learners who experience adverse events and challenges are more likely to avoid participating in school activities, which can result in a decline in their academic performance

### **c) Classroom and academic performance**

Bullying can have a detrimental effect on learners' academic performance. Studies have shown that learners may skip class due to fear of bullies and those who experience bullying, may have difficulty focusing on their studies, which can lead to a decline in grades. This negative impact on academic achievement can hinder learners' ability to reach their full potential.

### **d) Teachers and microsystem**

Classroom bullying can stem from unprepared teachers and overcrowding. Unfortunately, learners often feel hesitant to report bullies, fearing retaliation or being labelled a 'snitch'. Furthermore, inadequate intervention strategies and support systems in schools only exacerbate the issue, leaving victims feeling helpless and unheard. As a result, teachers may require more training and resources to effectively combat bullying. Tragically, victims of bullying often skip class, leading to increased rates of truancy. Ultimately, blaming parents and teachers for bullying ignores the fact that it is the bullies themselves who must take responsibility for their actions. It is important to note that some bullies may also be victims of bullying, creating a cycle of abuse. When teachers fail to manage these situations appropriately, the bullies gain even more power over their victims.



## **Summary**

It has been observed that bullying behaviour from parents and teachers has a negative influence on students, who may begin to exhibit similar behaviour. On the other hand, if parents set a positive example for their children, bullying can be effectively eliminated as students will follow and promote positive behaviour within their community. As a researcher, parent, and teacher, I agree with this conclusion as it is also worth noting that poor behaviour in children can sometimes be attributed to inadequate parenting. Even in cases where parents are good role models, external factors such as peer pressure and the desire to conform can still cause children to misbehave. Parents and teachers must work together to combat this issue and create a safe and conducive learning environment.

### **Mesosystem: How do factors in the mesosystem influence bullying in schools?**

The role of relationships in an individual's growth and development cannot be overstated, especially at the mesosystem level. The interplay between a child's family and their school has a profound impact on their academic performance and overall well-being. To create a supportive environment that can positively influence a child's learning, is crucial to foster open communication and collaboration between these two microsystems, allowing the child to thrive and reach their full potential. This study delved into factors that contribute to bullying in schools, revealing some shocking findings. The research showed that the environment in which learners grow up has a direct correlation to their behaviour in school. Learners who grow up in hostile environments, where violence and aggression are the norm, are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour at school. Poverty also plays a significant role in learners' self-esteem, leading to negative effects such as stealing lunch from other learners and forcing them to give away their money.

The study also highlighted the importance of positive role models in preventing bullying among learners. Teachers who lead by example and behave respectfully, reliably and trustworthily are viewed as positive role models by learners and can have a significant impact on their behaviour in school. However, the study also revealed that some teachers may be the source of bullying behaviour among learners due to their unprofessional conduct in the classroom. Overall, the study indicated that what happens in society, consequently, has a direct impact on how learners behave at

school, and bullying among learners reflects what is happening in society. As such, it is crucial to take a holistic approach to tackle bullying, considering the microsystems that influence a learner's behaviour and the role models that shape their attitudes and actions.

### **Exo-system: How do factors in the exo-system influence bullying?**

The environment in which a child grows up can have a significant impact on their development. For example, a school's policies and rules can negatively affect a student's life. Research has shown that teachers may feel powerless to intervene in bullying taken that anti-bullying policies are perceived as top-down strategies. While teachers are not responsible for creating these policies, they do play a role in managing bullying in the classroom. In addition, some parents may take out their frustration with working on their children, modelling bullying behaviour that they have experienced. This is the reason that parents should avoid behaving violently in front of their children or engaging in substance abuse. The study also found that teachers' cultural backgrounds and upbringing can impact how they perceive classroom bullying. Some teachers may view bullying as a normal part of a child's growth and development, which can lead to a reluctance to intervene. All adults need to understand the impact their behaviour has on children and take steps to model positive behaviour.

### **Macrosystem: How do factors in the macrosystem influence bullying?**

The macrosystem encompasses the broader society, indirectly affecting a child's development through various systems. Societal norms, values and laws are among the macrosystem factors that impact bullying behaviour. In societies that value hierarchical structures, bullying may be more prevalent as it can assert dominance or preserve social order. Conversely, in cultures that prioritise equality and respect for others, bullying is frowned upon and viewed as unacceptable. Fostering a deeper understanding of these cultural dynamics is essential for effectively tackling and preventing bullying on a larger societal scale.

### **Chronosystem: How do factors in the chronosystem influence bullying?**

The chronosystem encompasses the impact of historical events, societal shifts and personal milestones across time. This dynamic framework has significant implications for how individuals react, behave and think about bullying. According to the study

findings, bullying is encouraged by several factors based on the township's ecology. The family, the school environment and societal influences are all outlined as interdependent systems among the identified factors. According to the review of literature, the most significant contributor to the persistence of bullying is the environment at the school. The influence of teachers, management, school safety and the school's ethos are all part of the school climate. In particular, the high self-esteem of learners, teachers' frequent absences, the school's safety measures, and its cultural norms all work together to create a hostile learning environment. The findings revealed that a variety of factors interact with one another at several socio-cultural levels to cause bullying in schools. The effect of bullying has demanded cultural progress towards greater awareness and intolerance of bullying which has led to the implementation of anti-bullying measures in schools and communities.

### **5.3.5 Secondary Research Question 3: How do socio-cultural factors influence bullying behaviour among perpetrators and victims in township schools?**

This study explored how socio-cultural factors like poverty, violence and discrimination contribute to bullying behaviour in township schools. Learners' socio-economic status and exposure to violence has an influence whether they become a bully or a victim. Poverty can lead to several issues that increase the risk of bullying. Broken nuclear homes, poor upbringing and inadequate parental supervision have contributed to the erosion of discipline, teaching and learning culture in schools. Violent activities in the home and community can also expose learners to bullying. The findings revealed that learners imitate violent behaviour witnessed in the community, leading to bullying in schools. However, not all low-income learners engage in such behaviour. Participants identified various forms of discrimination, including xenophobia, homophobia and racial or ethnic discrimination, as types of bullying in schools. Discrimination can lead to bullying behaviour as a way to cope with feelings of anger and resentment. This kind of bullying can manifest in violent acts against someone due to their ethnicity, sexual orientation, race or cultural differences.

Teachers and administrators face the challenge of xenophobia and discrimination in schools, which can lead to anxiety and fear for learner safety. The study found that drug abuse, exposure to violence in the media and a lack of resources and role models in the community contribute to school bullying problems. However, it is not always

clear why some learners engage in bullying while others from violent cultures or families do not.

#### **5.3.4 Secondary Research Question 4: Based on the ecosystemic and socio-cultural factors identified, what recommendations can be made for developing a programme to manage bullying in township schools effectively?**

The objective of the question was to suggest effective strategies for addressing bullying in township schools. This study aimed to clarify ideas for developing an effective programme to address bullying in township schools while considering ecosystemic and socio-cultural factors. An all-encompassing strategy can be created to effectively address bullying by comprehending the particular difficulties that township schools face. Awareness campaigns to educate learners, educators and parents about the harmful effects of bullying and promote an inclusive and respect-filled culture may be necessary to achieve this. In addition, creating clear reporting guidelines and helping victims and offenders can aid in creating a safe and supportive environment.

The findings indicated the necessity of collaboration between the parents, community and educators to combat bullying. According to the research, numerous contextual factors within the socio-cultural and systemic levels, are intertwined with or appear to be the root causes of bullying. Based on the findings, it is clear that bullying is still an extensive problem that is prevalent in many schools. Many scholars have researched bullying and suggested various ways to manage bullying; however, bullying is still largely prevalent.

The research findings connect to the development of a conceptual framework to guide the involvement of all stakeholders to collaborate on reducing bullying in schools. An in-depth understanding of bullying and how to deal with it in schools with the aid of the microsystem, mesosystem, exo-system, macrosystem and chrono-system has emerged. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory (2005) helped to comprehend bullying from all angles and formulate recommendations that could enable students, teachers, parents and the community, to collaborate to address the issue of bullying.

In linking the findings relating to bullying in families, schools and communities, there were three areas where the current study identified characteristics significantly associated with bullying perpetuation. According to the study, bullying has an impact on both teaching and learning as well as on learners. The effects of bullying are so severe, according to the school principals, that they interfered with the school's regular operations and consumed class time. Victims who suffered low self-esteem, shame, embarrassment and detectable levels of tension and anxiety, also felt the effects to a large extent. As a result, there were notable rates of absenteeism, drop-out, transfers to other schools, ill health, depression and even suicide. According to the findings, the leading causes of bullying in communities included poverty, unemployment, poor role models, gangsterism and xenophobia.

It has been confirmed that parental involvement plays a crucial role in the socialisation of children. The process of socialisation begins at home, and it is there that the foundation of character is laid. Through socialisation, children are encouraged to develop important social skills such as communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution. The school may benefit when parents create a secure environment at home. Adults must reinforce appropriate behaviour while ignoring or punishing inappropriate behaviour if they hope to succeed. The interrelationships between different microsystems constitute the mesosystem

### **5.3.5 Addressing the primary research question:**

**What are the underlying ecosystemic and socio-cultural determinants of bullying in township schools, and how can this knowledge inform the development of effective programmes to manage and prevent bullying behaviour in these settings?**

The study's findings underscore the need to address the complex social and cultural issues that influence bullying in schools. Effective interventions must consider not only individual factors but also familial and societal influences. By raising awareness of the multifaceted nature of bullying, educators and policymakers can better understand the underlying dynamics and develop targeted strategies to prevent and respond to bullying behaviour. The study found that bullying in schools is perpetuated by various factors related to the learner's upbringing and community. Broken families, lack of

positive role models, and poverty were identified as contributing factors. Domestic violence and single-parent households were also mentioned. Learners from low-income families are at a higher risk of bullying; however, this research study proved that not all students from such families become bullies. Learners who witness domestic violence at home are also likely to bully others. Other factors include social isolation, weight problems and mimicry of violent acts observed in the environment. The study highlights the need to address the complex social and cultural issues that influence bullying in schools.

### **Perpetrator's background**

Participants thought that the family backgrounds of bullies impacted their behaviour. They appear to believe that most bullies bully others at school because they believe that violence is the way to solve problems. Participants who portray this behaviour usually come from violent, dysfunctional homes where they witness violence almost daily. The social learning theory, which contends that children pick up knowledge by imitating others, is related to this finding. Violence only breeds more violence, as one participant explicitly stated.

### **Societal norms and beliefs**

Participants talked about some biological traits that make some susceptible to bullying. They suggested that being older, fatter or different makes victims more vulnerable to bullying. One participant mentioned being called names like 'umagogo' (grandmother) because of your height, and other participants brought up how people call you 'khwashu' when you are not feeling well. Learners who appear to be overweight or underweight seem to be the ones who are frequently humiliated and made fun of because of their weight.

### **Personal factors**

The last category is personal factors. Participants admitted that bullies occasionally bully for selfish motives. For instance, they might bully students who appear to excel academically out of jealousy, ultimately leading to a decline in their schoolwork. Additionally, they appear to think bullies are people who aspire to fame and demand respect and attention.

Communication and relationships were two other issues brought up by study participants. Most participants claimed that learners who grow up in families or

societies where no one loves them or cares about them are more likely to struggle emotionally, socially or spiritually and act out differently when bullied at school. This research study contends that parents who quarrel and fight in front of their children set a poor example and encourage bullying and aggressive behaviour in the classroom. Research has also shown that parents who do not get along with their children, do not make good role models. Children may imitate the same antisocial behaviour and bring it into the classroom thus perpetuating violence. Consequently, inadequate parental socialisation or interaction with children contributes to the emergence of bullying behaviour in children (Singer, 2011). How a child interacts with adults and other children, for instance, can be used to assess how well they get along with others at school. A child who has a poor relationship with their parents is likely develop a poor relationship with other students at school. In contrast, a child with a good relationship with adults at home will also get along with other students.

Despite the expectation that families provide support and love for one another, research indicates that families can also contribute to bullying behaviour. Edward (2012) found that parents who use violence with their children may create a lack of self-control in their children later in life. Participants in the study believed that parents who have not been involved in their children's lives, for example, learners' schoolwork, they blame teachers when there is a problem. This lack of parental involvement could result in aggressive behaviour from children, increasing the likelihood of bullying both within the family and in other social settings. In some cases, parents who abuse substances may neglect their children, further perpetuating the cycle of neglect and addiction within the family. As Mushambi (2016) notes, the effects of society on children's behaviour can extend to the home and school environments.

Overcrowding in schools was also cited as a trigger for bullying by case study participants. Teachers have a difficult time maintaining discipline in classes with a large number of students. Mushambi (2016) agrees with the preceding notion that controlling students in crowded categories is challenging for teachers. According to participants and literature, lack of resources plays a role in bullying in schools; nevertheless, there is silence from both sides on how bullying behaviour can be avoided even if resources are insufficient. The researcher has observed that in some cases, learners remain disciplined despite a lack of resources. Even in terrible situations, teamwork may bring out the best in the human spirit. The current study

findings reveal that most participants believe that the way in which bullies are raised at home influences their bullying behaviour. This finding is also related to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, which states that children learn by mimicking adults and that when adults are violent, children are more likely to be violent.

In conclusion, to address the issue of bullying according to the study findings, the provision of the socio-cultural contexts of a child as a whole is important, (chronosystem). Findings indicate that adequate provision of resources, good supervision, good socialisation and interaction, clear rules, good treatment and understanding of each other's culture as well as working collaboratively with all stakeholders at each level of the bio-ecological model's five systems, will help to address bullying among learners. Findings further revealed that collaboration with all stakeholders in each system of bio-ecological theory addresses bullying behaviour in schools because learners will copy and reproduce the same good behaviour in other places of society including schools.

#### **5.4 REVISITING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study encompasses three pivotal theoretical moments within a conceptual framework. Their contributions were instrumental in exploring the impact of ecosystem and socio-cultural factors on learner behaviour and the management of bullying. The initial theoretical aspect involves examining the ecosystem's different elements that affect the behaviour of learners, such as family dynamics, peer connections and community influences. This analysis aims to provide insight into how external factors influence incidents of bullying and the strategies used to manage them. The second theoretical aspect delves into the socio-cultural factors that contribute to bullying behaviour. This involves examining cultural norms, societal expectations and values that may either promote or discourage bullying. Understanding these socio-cultural influences is crucial in developing effective interventions and prevention programmes.

The second theoretical moment that was significant in the aspect of bullying was Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, which implies that the development of bullying behaviour is influenced by the social and cultural context in which individuals are raised. This theory highlights the importance of understanding how social interactions, such as peer relationships and societal norms, contribute to the occurrence and



perpetuation of bullying. Additionally, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory emphasises the role of language and communication in shaping children's understanding of power dynamics, which can further contribute to the manifestation of bullying behaviour. The study discovered that parents or families that are facing challenges related to low socio-economic status, education experiences or stability within the family tend to be aggressive towards their children, which leads the child behaving in the same way towards other children. The study revealed that the exo-system affected the way teachers manage bullying both in the school by their colleagues and again in society. The teachers reported that lack of support and much contradiction from the parents and the community negatively impacted the way that teachers managed bullying.

At the macrosystem level, teachers were directly affected by the Department of Education's policies and guidelines regarding bullying. These policies provided a framework for teachers to address and prevent bullying in schools. However, the implementation of these policies varied across different schools and districts, leading to inconsistencies in how teachers managed bullying. Additionally, societal attitudes towards bullying also influenced the way teachers approached the issue, with some communities placing less importance on addressing bullying compared to others. Lastly, the study highlights the significance of providing positive role models and creating opportunities for students to observe and imitate desired behaviours. In this study, Bandura's social learning theory in education suggests that individuals learn by observing others and imitating their behaviour. This theoretical framework emphasises the importance of social interactions and the function of role models in shaping behaviour and learning. In education, it emphasises the importance of creating a supportive and collaborative learning environment where learners can learn from each other through observation. The theory also highlights the significance of providing clear and consistent instructions, as well as constructive feedback to enhance the learning process. By incorporating various teaching strategies, such as modelling, scaffolding and guided practice, educators can effectively facilitate the acquisition of new skills and knowledge.

Additionally, this theory emphasises the need for learners to have opportunities for active engagement and hands-on experiences to solidify their understanding and application of what they have observed. Teachers are affected by various external

factors, collectively known as the exo-system, that impact how they manage bullying in schools. These factors include the societal norms and values of the community in which the school is located. If the community tolerates or promotes aggressive behaviour, teachers may find it challenging to address bullying in their classrooms. Moreover, the exo-system can also affect the resources and support available to teachers in dealing with bullying, such as access to training programmes or counselling services. Therefore, it is crucial to create a supportive and inclusive environment that empowers teachers to manage and prevent bullying effectively.

In conclusion, to reduce bullying according to the study findings, the provision of the socio-cultural contexts of a child as a whole is important. Findings indicate that adequate provision of resources, good supervision, good socialisation and interaction, clear rules, good treatment and understanding of each other's culture as well as working collaboratively with all stakeholders at each level of the bio-ecological model's five systems would help address bullying among learners.

## **5.5 POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

Bullying is still a problem in South African schools, even though many scholars have studied its causes and effective management. Numerous researchers focus on bullying in schools, but there is little information on how ecosystemic and socio-cultural factors affect bullying, so the current study is valuable in this particular context.

The current study also adds to the body of knowledge about the topics covered by various stakeholders outside school grounds who are cooperating to inform parents about how to deal with bullying in the community as well as the assistance for children to deal with bullying. The restorative approach, which emphasises using positive problem-solving skills rather than punishment, the whole-community approach, which fosters the rebuilding and restoration of community relationships could be approaches that would assist in dealing with bullying issues.

## **5.6 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS**

The study was delimited to primary township schools, and the sample size may have only partially represented the diversity and variability in this context. Moreover, the study excluded urban schools, parents, real victims of bullying, bullies themselves and

higher-level officials, which limits the in-depth perspective on the issue of bullying. Additionally, the research was conducted in only two schools in South Africa, limiting the findings' generalisability to other areas, both geographical and socio-economically. Furthermore, the study solely focused on bullying within the school setting, without exploring the influence of external factors, such as social media or community dynamics on bullying behaviour. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, further research should be conducted by including schools from different socio-economic backgrounds and other townships in the Johannesburg District. This would enable one to explore variations in bullying prevalence and handling. Additionally, interviews or surveys with students, parents and teachers could provide a more detailed understanding of the issue and help develop effective intervention strategies.

Moreover, some students and teachers were hesitant to discuss their observations of bullying in the classroom, possibly due to concerns about professional repercussions or a lack of training on how to address the issue effectively. To mitigate these concerns, individual interviews or anonymous surveys could be conducted to create a safe space for students to share their experiences and perspectives on bullying. It would also be valuable to gather long-term data on the effects of bullying on participants' well-being and academic performance.

## **5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section presents the recommendations that originated from the outcomes of the research study and those that were proposed by the participants who participated in this study. These recommendations have been categorised into four sections namely: policy, relational leadership, ethics of care and code of conduct.

### **5.7.1 Recommendations for Policy**

To best combat bullying, the current study recommends that a policy be put in place that encompasses the following elements:

- Creating a thorough definition of bullying and outlining its associated consequences
- Putting in place social-emotional learning initiatives
- Establishing a straightforward reporting system

- Providing support and resources for both victims and perpetrators
- Regularly assessing the effectiveness of anti-bullying policies and
- Offering educational initiatives that emphasise the value of compassion, decency, and practical conflict-resolution techniques

### 5.7.2 Recommendations for a Relational Leadership

To effectively combat bullying through a relational leadership, it is essential to focus on the following key aspects:

- **School environment:** Creating a safe and inclusive environment is pivotal in preventing bullying and ensuring it is not tolerated.
- **School leadership:** Establishing an open and inclusive communication culture that encourages individuals to express their concerns and experiences related to bullying is crucial.
- **Department of Education:** Implementing comprehensive anti-bullying policies and programmes at schools and providing resources and training for teachers and staff to effectively address and prevent bullying is essential. Collaborating with external organisations specialising in bullying prevention can further enhance these efforts.
- **Teachers:** Incorporating lessons and activities that promote empathy, diversity, and inclusion to foster a positive learning environment is critical.
- **Parents:** Encouraging open communication with children and listening to their concerns, as well as educating themselves about the signs of bullying and how to intervene effectively if their child is being bullied, are key.
- **Community:** Organising community-wide anti-bullying campaigns and workshops to raise awareness and promote a culture of kindness and respect, as well as supporting and collaborating with schools in their efforts to address bullying, can contribute to a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

### 5.7.3 Recommendation for a School Code of Conduct on Bullying

To effectively combat bullying at school level, it is essential to focus on the following key aspects:

- A school code of conduct on bullying should prioritise creating a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

- It should clearly define what constitutes bullying behaviour, including physical, verbal, and cyberbullying.
- The policy should outline the consequences for engaging in such behaviour, emphasising the importance of disciplinary actions that are fair, consistent, and aimed at educating students about the impact of their actions.
- It should emphasise the role of prevention through proactive measures such as awareness campaigns, counselling services, and fostering a culture of empathy and respect among students.

### **5.7.5 Recommendations for Future Teacher Training**

The following recommendations for future teacher training are made:

- The study recommends that a section of the teacher training curriculum in colleges and universities should include guidance and counselling aspects in understanding and managing bullying in schools. The recommendation originates from the finding that teachers could benefit from training on understanding the complexities of bullying and how to assist learners in understanding the nature of bullying and how to curb the behaviour.
- The study recommends that training is required for teachers to explore strategies that could be employed to establish an enabling learning environment that supports the academic, social and emotional lives of the learners and, inadvertently, their families.

### **5.7.6 Recommendations for Future Research**

The research focused on bullying in two township schools in Johannesburg North. The following recommendations are made for further study:

- Further investigation is needed to compare bullying outcomes in urban schools and to broaden the scope by including experiences of learners from different grades and geographical areas. It is important to prioritise every learner's needs and eliminate bullying to create an inclusive environment where all learners feel valued and accepted.

The participants in this study included the principals, teachers and Grade 7 learners but excluded participants such as other grades, district officials as well and parents.

- Further studies should include these participants so that a more holistic

perspective on the phenomenon is achieved.

The study focused on the perspectives of bullies.

- Further studies should focus on the role played by bystanders in promoting bullying.

Lastly, the study reveals that the implementation of internal policies is not sufficient, future

- It is recommended that management needs to include teachers when these policies are implemented and reflect on them yearly.

## **5.8 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER-REFLEXIVITY**

This study revealed that even though bullying among primary school learners was on the rise, it was being overlooked or disregarded by school administrators, parents, school communities, and the Department of Basic Education. During the study, I learned that the community has not done much to support or work with schools in their efforts to combat bullying. It also implied that schools operate in isolation. The School Management Team (SMT) neglects the needs of teachers. Despite being present, school policies and rules are not effectively implemented and acted upon. Furthermore, the entire school community, including teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as school psychologists, were not involved. The data collected from two selected primary schools, revealed that there is a lack on anti-bullying policies and daily structured programmes instructing teachers on how to effectively deal with bullies and addressing issues of bullying to ensure that the teaching and learning process is effective.

## **5.9 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS**

This study investigated how ecosystemic and socio-cultural factors impact bullying in primary schools. It examined the causes, effects, trends and types of bullying using interviews with learners, teachers and principals. The study has revealed that bullying among primary school learners is on the rise and requires immediate attention. The prevalence of bullying is a result of the relationship between the ecosystem and socio-cultural factors. To address this issue, it is crucial to develop a collaborative effort with all stakeholders. Proactive measures such as implementing anti-bullying policies and providing comprehensive education on empathy and respect are essential in creating

a safe and inclusive learning environment. For primary school children to learn in a secure and welcoming environment, all parties involved must collaborate. Research has shown that collaboration between teachers, parents, and students significantly increases the effectiveness of anti-bullying efforts. To address bullying behaviour and promote a culture of respect and empathy, schools should establish open communication channels and foster a positive school climate.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Ethics Clearance Certificate



### UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/04/14

Ref: **2021/04/14/36544582/19/AM**

Name: Mrs LK Malembe

Student No.:36544582

Dear Mrs LK Malembe

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2021/04/14 to 2024/04/14

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mrs LK Malembe  
E-mail address: lihlemtungwa@gmail.com  
Telephone: 076 124 7171

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Prof K Mohangi  
E-mail address: mohank@unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: 012 337 6169

**Title of research:**

**Eco-systemic and sociocultural perspectives in understanding learner bullying behaviour in township primary schools in Gauteng**

**Qualification:** MEd Psychology of Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2021/04/14 to 2024/04/14.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/04/14 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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



## Appendix B: Permission from Gauteng Department of Education



**GAUTENG PROVINCE**  
EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**For admin. Use only:**

Ref. no.:

## GDE RESEARCH REQUEST FORM

### REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN INSTITUTIONS AND/OR OFFICES OF THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

#### PARTICULARS OF THE RESEARCHER

<b>1.1</b>	<b>Details of the Researcher</b>	
	<b>Surname and Initials:</b>	Malembe
	<b>First Name/s:</b>	Ladyfair Khayelihle
	<b>Title (Prof / Dr / Mr / Mrs / Ms):</b>	Mrs
	<b>Student Number (if relevant):</b>	36544582
	<b>SA ID Number:</b>	7702060476082
	<b>Work permit no. (If not SA citizen)</b>	N/A

<b>1.2</b>	<b>Private Contact Details</b>	
	<b>Home Address</b>	<b>Postal Address (if different)</b>
	6 Park Road	P.O.BOX 4533
	Halfway House	Randburg

Extension 4	
Midrand	
<b>Postal Code: 1686</b>	<b>Postal Code: 2125</b>
<b>Tel: 011 805 0010</b>	<b>Cell: 0761247171</b>
<b>Fax: N/A</b>	<b>E-mail: lihlemntungwa@gmail.com</b>

## PURPOSE & DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

<b>2.1</b>	<b>Purpose of the Research (Place cross where appropriate)</b>	
	<b>Undergraduate Study - Self</b>	
	<b>Postgraduate Study - Self</b>	X
	<b>Private Company/Agency – Commissioned by Provincial Government or Department</b>	
	<b>Private Research by Independent Researcher</b>	
	<b>Non-Governmental Organisation</b>	
	<b>National Department of Education</b>	
	<b>Commissions and Committees</b>	
	<b>Independent Research Agencies</b>	
	<b>Statutory Research Agencies</b>	
	<b>Higher Education Institutions only</b>	
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Full title of Thesis / Dissertation / Research Project</b>	
	Eco-systemic and sociocultural perspectives in understanding bullying at a township primary school in Gauteng	
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Value of the Research to Education (Attach Research Proposal)</b>	
	Understand the nature of bullying from systemic and socio-cultural perspectives to inform policy on curbing bullying and violence in primary schools	
	Findings could lead to workshops to help improve overall relationships and well-being the school	

<b>2.4</b>		<b>Date</b>
<b>Envisaged date of completion of research in GDE Institutions</b>		<b>May 2021</b>
<b>Envisaged date of submission of Research Report and Research Summary to GDE:</b>		<b>November 2022</b>
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Student and Postgraduate Enrolment Particulars</b>	
<b>Name of institution where enrolled:</b>		UNISA
<b>Degree / Qualification:</b>		MEd (Psychology of Education)
<b>Faculty and Discipline / Area of Study:</b>		Psychology of Education
<b>Name of Supervisor / Promoter:</b>		<b>Prof. K Mohangi</b>

<b>2.6</b>	<b>Employer</b>	
<b>Name of Organisation:</b>		Cosmo City Junior Primary
<b>Position in Organisation:</b>		Principal
<b>Head of Organisation:</b>		Mrs Ladyfair Khayelihle Malembe
<b>Street Address:</b>		2632 Angola Avenue, Cosmo City
		Extension 2, Randburg
<b>Postal Code:</b>		2194
<b>Telephone Number (Code + Ext):</b>		087 701 1766
<b>Fax Number:</b>		N/A
<b>E-mail:</b>		ccjps2@gmail.com

<b>2.7</b>	<b>PERSAL Number ( GDE employees only)</b>
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6	1	4	2	5	5	7	0
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**PROPOSED RESEARCH METHOD/S**

(Please indicate by placing a cross in the appropriate block whether the following modes would be adopted)

**Questionnaire/s (If Yes, supply copies of each to be used)**

YES		NO	X
-----	--	----	---

**Interview/s (If Yes, provide copies of each schedule)**

YES	X	NO	
-----	---	----	--

**Use of official documents**

YES		NO	X
<i>If Yes, please specify the document/s:</i>			

**Workshop/s / Group Discussions (If Yes, Supply details)**

YES		NO	X
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**Standardised Tests (e.g. Psychometric Tests)**

YES		NO	X
<i>If Yes, please specify the test/s to be used and provide a copy/ies</i>			
N/A			

**INSTITUTIONS TO BE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH**

*Type and NUMBER of Institutions (Please indicate by placing a cross alongside all types of institutions to be researched)*

<b>INSTITUTIONS</b>	<b>Write NUMBER here</b>
<i>Primary Schools</i>	2
<i>Secondary Schools</i>	
<i>ABET Centres</i>	
<i>ECD Sites</i>	
<i>LSEN Schools</i>	
<i>Further Education &amp; Training Institutions</i>	
<i>Districts and / or Head Office</i>	

**Name/s of institutions to be researched (Please complete on a separate sheet if space is found to be insufficient)**

<b>Name/s of Institution/s</b>
<i>Zizonke Primary School A (Pseudonym)</i>
<i>Zwelethu Primary School B (Pseudonym)</i>

**District/s where the study is to be conducted. (Please indicate by placing a cross alongside the relevant district/s)**

District/s			
<i>Ekurhuleni North</i>		<i>Ekurhuleni South</i>	
<i>Gauteng East</i>		<i>Gauteng North</i>	
<i>Gauteng West</i>		<i>Johannesburg Central</i>	
<i>Johannesburg East</i>		<i>Johannesburg North</i>	x
<i>Johannesburg South</i>		<i>Johannesburg West</i>	
<i>Sedibeng East</i>		<i>Sedibeng West</i>	
<i>Tshwane North</i>		<i>Tshwane South</i>	
<i>Tshwane West</i>			

If Head Office/s (Please indicate Directorate/s)
N/A

Number of learners to be involved per school (Please indicate the number by gender)

Grade	1		2		3		4		5		6	
<i>Gender</i>	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
<i>Number</i>												

Grade	7		8		9		10		11		12	
<i>Gender</i>	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
<i>Number</i>	3	3										

Number of educators/officials involved in the study (Please indicate the number in the relevant column)

<b>Type of staff</b>	<b>Educators</b>	<b>HODs</b>	<b>Deputy Principals</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Lecturers</b>	<b>Office Based Officials</b>
<b>Number</b>	4	2		2		

**4.6 Are the participants to be involved in groups or individually?**

<b>Groups</b>		<b>Individually</b>	<b>X</b>
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**Average period of time each participant will be involved in the test or other research activities (Please indicate time in minutes)**

<b>Participant/s</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time</b>
Principals, Hod's, Teachers, 6 Grade 7 learners of 2 sample schools and SGB and SSC member of each school.	Interview via Microsoft Teams	18 participants @ 60 minutes each
18 participants		1080 minutes

**Time of day that you propose to conduct your research.**

<b><u>During school hours (for limited observation only)</u></b>		<b><u>After School Hours</u></b>	<b><u>X</u></b>
--	--	----------------------------------	-----------------

**School term/s during which the research would be undertaken.**

<b>First Term</b>		<b>Second Term</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Third Term</b>	
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**CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN GDE**

**Permission may be granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and permission may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:**

The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned, the Principal/s and the chairperson/s of the School Governing Body (SGB.) must be presented with a copy of this letter.

The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and co-operation of the GDE District officials, principals, SGBs, teachers, parents and learners involved. Participation is voluntary and additional remuneration will not be paid.

Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal and/or Director must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.

Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded by the end of the THIRD quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.

Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.

It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written consent from the SGB/s; principal/s, educator/s, parents and learners, as applicable, before commencing with research.

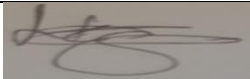
The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilizing his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institution/s, staff and/or the office/s visited for supplying such resources.

The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research title, report or summary.

On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management, with electronic copies of the Research Report, Thesis, Dissertation as well as a Research Summary (on the GDE Summary template

The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned;

Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director/s and school/s concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

<b>DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER</b>	
<b><i>I declare that all statements made by myself in this application are true and accurate.</i></b>	
<b><i>I accept the conditions associated with the granting of approval to conduct research and undertake to abide by them.</i></b>	
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>06 February 2021</b>



**DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR / PROMOTER / LECTURER**

***I declare that: (Name of Researcher) Ladyfair Khayelihle Malembe***

***is enrolled at the institution / employed by the organisation to which the undersigned is attached.***

***The questionnaires / structured interviews / tests meet the criteria of:***

***Educational Accountability;***

***Proper Research Design;***

***Sensitivity towards Participants;***

***Correct Content and Terminology;***

***Acceptable Grammar;***

***Absence of Non-essential / Superfluous items;***

***Ethical clearance***

***I will ensure that after successful completion of the degree / project an electronic copy of the Research Report / Thesis / Dissertation and a Research Summary (on the GDE template) will be sent by the researcher to the GDE.***

<b>Surname:</b>	<b>Mohangi</b>
<b>First Name/s:</b>	<b>Kamleshie</b>
<b>Institution / Organisation:</b>	<b>University of South Africa</b>
<b>Faculty / Department (where relevant):</b>	<b>Psychology of Education</b>
<b>Telephone:</b>	<b>012 337 6169</b>
<b>E-mail:</b>	<b>mohank@unisa.ac.za</b>

## Appendix C: Request Permission Letter to the District Director (D10)



### **Request for permission to conduct research in selected schools in Johannesburg North, District 10.**

Date: February 2021

P.O. BOX 4533

RANDBURG

2125

Title: Ecosystemic and socio-cultural perspectives in understanding bullying at a township primary school in Gauteng

Mr. V. Ndlovu

District Director: Education

GDE Department of Education

PRIVATE BAG X 1

Braamfontein

2017

Tel: 011 694 9300

Email: [Malasela.Moabelo@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:Malasela.Moabelo@gauteng.gov.za)

Dear Sir

I, Ladyfair Khayelihle am doing research under supervision of Professor K. Mohangi, a professor in the Department of Psychology of Education towards a MEd (Psychology of Education) at the University of South Africa. We request permission to conduct research in selected schools (D10) study entitled: Eco-systemic and sociocultural perspectives in understanding bullying at a township primary school in Gauteng.

The aim of the study is to gain insights into the nature of learner bullying behaviour in a township school environment from an ecosystemic and socio-cultural perspective.

This research is with the view to understand how bullying is experienced by different stakeholders, their views on the causes of bullying and how to mitigate it in the different systems that the learner is a part of. It is believed that the experiences of principals, teachers learners and parents will provide invaluable data to my study.

The study will entail the purposive selection of two primary schools whose school principal will participate in the individual meeting aimed to understand their experiences in the problem of bullying, also to give them the outline of my study. The principals of the targeted school will then help the researcher to select two School Management Team (SMT) to voluntary participate in the study using the Microsoft Teams platform. Furthermore, the principals together with teachers will help in selecting 3 learners in each school to participate in virtual interview. According to the methodology of my study under level 3 restrictions, face-to-face interview is prohibited. Should the lockdown levels decrease, face-to-face interview will be conducted.

The potential benefits of this study are that the researcher will gain an insight from what the participants will share, also the benefits of this study are that the experienced of the principal, teachers and learners will provide invaluable feedback to my study, also to policy makers in attempt to reduce the incidence of bullying in primary schools. The anticipated risks in this study may Participants involved virtual through Microsoft Teams. Sensitive research topic. Potential risk of emotional harm or discomfort. Personal information gathered and analysed from the participants. Some of the participants are children under the age of 18 or vulnerable adult who have had traumatic experience in addressing bullying in their school.

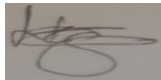
The participant's privacy and anonymity will be guaranteed in this study. All the information gathered from participants will be treated confidentially and school and the participants will not be identifiable in research and code names will be used throughout the study. I will discuss the findings with all participants. Learner participants will be informed of the findings in an age-appropriate manner. research participants, including the University of South Africa as well as The Gauteng Department for future reference and use.

All requirements for ethical conduct in the research will be adhered to including informed consent, voluntary participation, and no negative consequences for non -

participation or withdrawal at any time in the research process, confidentiality and anonymity of participation or withdrawal at any time in the research process, confidentiality and anonymity of participants and schools. Ethical clearance for the study will be obtained the UNISA College of Education research committee.

I may be contacted at any time. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. My supervisor Professor K. Mohangi may be contacted via email: [mohank@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mohank@unisa.ac.za) or telephone, 012 337 6169.

Yours sincerely



\_\_\_\_\_  
Ladyfair Khayelihle Malembe

Supervisor: Prof. K. Mohangi

[mohank@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mohank@unisa.ac.za)

012-3376169

**APPENDIX D: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS**

**ACCEPTANCE LETTER FROM SCHOOL A.**

Date: 20 October 2021

Good morning

**LADYFAIR KHAYELIHLE MALEMBE STUDENT NUMBER: 36544582**

Good morning Lihle, I acknowledge receipt of your letter to conduct the research study on " " and we are happy to assist you with your research.

Regards

(Principal)

**ACCEPTANCE LETTER FROM SCHOOL B.**

Date: 04 November 2021

Good morning

**LADY FAIR KHAYELIHLE MALEMBE STUDENT NUMBER: 36544582**

We have received your letter to conduct the workshop on bullying, the EMT of the school gives you permission to conduct the workshop.

Regards

(Deputy Principal)

**Appendix D: Request for Permission to Conduct Research at Schools -  
Participant Information Sheet**



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Ecosystemic and socio-cultural perspectives in understanding bullying at a township primary school in Gauteng

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is Ladyfair Khayelihle Malembe. I am doing research under supervision of Professor K. Mohangi, a professor in the Department of Psychology towards a MEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Eco-systemic and sociocultural perspectives in understanding bullying at a township primary school in Gauteng. This study is expected to collect important information that could be of use to the study. The study aims to gain an insight and understanding of the nature of bullying, potential causes and ways to mitigate and strengthen relationships. The benefits of this study are that the experienced of the principal, teachers and learners will provide invaluable feedback to my study, also to policy makers in attempt to mitigate the incidence of bullying in primary schools and improve relationships.

I purposefully invited you to be the part of this interview because of your valuable experience related to my research topic. Your engagement is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 60 minutes. It will take place via Microsoft Teams at a time convenient to you. If you feel uncomfortable during the question time, you are free to stop the interview and decline the question. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. With you granted permission, the tape recorder will be used during the interview to collect accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. You will be granted the opportunity to listen to the recorder to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to

add or clarify any points that may be captured incorrectly. All the information that you will be shared, will be treated confidentially.

There will be no taking of photos during and after the interview. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study. However, with your permission, anonymous quotation may be used. The data collected during the interview will be retained a password computer for the period of 12 months in a safe place. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as participant in this study.

If you have, please any questions regarding this study, or you want the clarity based on the research, please contact me at 0761247171 or email me at [lihlemntungwa@gmail.com](mailto:lihlemntungwa@gmail.com)

You are requested to participate in the interview, which will be held in virtual platforms because it is believed that the experienced that you have, will provide invaluable data to my study.

The study involves questions that would be asked which are:

- What are participants' views of bullying in their school?
- What are the ecosystemic factors that influence bullying (perpetrator and victim) in schools?
- What are the sociocultural factors that influence bullying (perpetrator and victim) in schools?
- What guidelines do schools follow to curb bullying behaviour?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent (adult)/ assent (participant younger than 18 years old) form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. You may experience emotional discomfort due to the sensitive nature of the research topic. Should any harm attributable to the study occurs, a trained psychologist will provide de- briefing session. The participant's privacy and anonymity will be guaranteed in this study. All the information gathered from participants will be treated confidentially and school and the participants will not be identifiable in research and code names will be used throughout the study. I will make the final report available to all research participants, including the University of South Africa as well as The Gauteng Department for future refence and use. I may be contacted at any time on 0761247171. You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere

and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research and Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number, or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

With your granted permission, the voice recorder will be used during the interview to collect accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. You will be granted the opportunity to listen to the recorder to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that may be captured incorrectly. All the information that you will be shared, will be treated confidentially. There will be no taking of photos during and after the interview. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. The data collected during the interview will be retained on a password computer for 12 months in a safe place.

I will make the final report available to all research participants, including the University of South Africa as well as The Gauteng Department for future reference and use. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Professor K. Mohangi at mohank@unisa.ac.za. Her number is 012 337 6169.

Should you have concerns about how the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof. K. Mohangi at mohank@unisa.ac.za. Her number is 012 337 6169.

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

Thank you.

Researcher's Name & Surname: Ladyfair Khayelihle Malembe

06 FEBRUARY 2021



## Appendix E: Consent to Participate in this Study (Return Slip)



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

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the  
information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared  
to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am  
free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

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

I agree to the recording of the virtual interview via Microsoft Teams that will take place  
during the interview.

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

Participant Name & Surname (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Example of a Letter Requesting Parental Consent for Minors to Participate in a Research Project



Dear Parent

Your child \_\_\_\_\_ is invited to participate in a study entitled: Eco-systemic and sociocultural perspectives in understanding bullying at a township primary school in Gauteng

I am undertaking this study as part of my master's research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is to explore and understand learner bullying behaviour in a township school environment from an exosystemic and socio-cultural perspective. and the possible benefits of the study are the improvement of this research study. I am asking permission to include your child in this study.

I expect to have the other children participating in the study. If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/ her to take part in a virtual interview via Microsoft Teams. The participant's privacy and anonymity will be guaranteed in this study. All the information gathered from participants will be treated confidentially and school and the participants will not be identifiable in research and code names will be used throughout the study. The interview will take place after school at the place where your child feels comfortable at. The interview will commence in May 2021. If your child agrees to participate to the interview, he/she will be given an assent form to fill in. All the information that will be shared, will be treated confidentially. There will be no taking of photos during and after the interview. Your child's name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study. However, with your permission, anonymous quotation may be used. The data collected during the interview will be retained in a password computer for the period of 12 months in a safe place.

During level 3 lockdown restrictions, visiting and social contact is restricted. We will have the interview via virtual platforms. Should the lockdown decrease to level 1, you

will be urged to follow COVID 19 PROTOCOLS by sanitising, always wear your mask during the face-to-face interview and wash your hands regularly.

You may experience emotional discomfort due to the sensitive nature of the research topic. Should any harm attributable to the study occurs, a trained psychologist will provide de-briefing session. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her responses will not be linked to his/her name or your name or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study; however, the possible benefits to education are recommendation that come from data, which will help teachers to curb bullying in schools. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not affect him/her in any way.

Similarly, you can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty. The study will take place during regular classroom activities after school hours with the prior approval of the school and your child's teacher. However, if you do not want your child to participate, an alternative activity will be available, the consent letter.

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study and you, and your child will also be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter. If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he or she will not be included and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password locked computer in my locked office for five years after the study. Thereafter, records will be erased. The benefits of this study are that the researcher will gain an insight from what the participants will share, also the benefits of this study are that the experienced of

the principal, teachers and learners will provide invaluable feedback to my study, also to policy makers in attempt to reduce the incidence of bullying in primary schools.

There are no anticipated or known risks in this study. The participant's privacy and anonymity will be guaranteed in this study. All the information gathered from participants will be treated confidentially and school and the participants will not be identifiable in research and code names will be used throughout the study.

I will make the final report available to all research participants, including the University of South Africa as well as The Gauteng Department for future reference and use. I may be contacted at any time on 0761247171.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. I will make the final report available to all research participants, including the University of South Africa as well as The Gauteng Department for future reference and use.

If you have questions about this study please contact my supervisor, Prof. K. Mohangi at the Department of Psychology, College of Education, University of South Africa. [mohank@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mohank@unisa.ac.za) and my contact number is 0761247171, e-mail is [lihlemntungwa@gmail.com](mailto:lihlemntungwa@gmail.com). Permission for the study has already been given by the principal and SGB of the school, and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

If you are allowing your child to participate in this study, your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Sincerely

Researcher's Name & Surname: Ladyfair Khayelihle Malembe

06 FEBRUARY 2021

**CONSENT FORM**

**NAME OF LEARNER:** \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian's name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix G: Letter Requesting Assent from Primary School Learners to participate in a Research Project**



Date\_\_\_\_\_

Dear learner,

My name is Teacher Malembe. I am trying to understand the issue of bullying at primary schools in Gauteng as part of my studies at the University of South Africa. Your principal has permitted me to do this study in your school. I would like to invite you to be a special part of my study. You have been chosen because it is believed that you are much more aware of what is happening in your school with bullying, and you will be able to share your knowledge and experiences. You will have a better understanding and be able to talk about what happens in a bullying situation. I am doing this study so that I can offer your principals, teachers and school governors some guidelines that may help many other learners of your age in different schools.

This letter is to explain to you that I would like you to do. I would like to ask you questions which will take approximately 60 minutes. If you are uncomfortable during the interview, you will be allowed to stop. I will write a report on this study, but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are.

Please speak to your parents or guardian about taking part before you sign this letter. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. A copy of this letter will be given to your parents.

Regards  
Teacher Malembe

**Appendix H: Focus Group (Through Virtual Platform, Microsoft Teams)  
Consent/Assent and Confidentiality Agreement**



I \_\_\_\_\_ grant an assent that the information I share during the focus group may be used by Teacher Malembe for research purposes. I am aware that the group discussions will be digitally recorded and grant consent/assent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to divulge any information that is shared in the group discussions to any person outside the group to maintain confidentiality.

Participant 's Name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix I: Interview Schedule: Teachers and Principals



Mrs Ladyfair Khayelihle Malembe: Student number: 36544582

### Sample of semi-structured interview questions: Teachers and principals

1. Tell me about your role as an SMT member in this school. In your experience, how have you come to understand the nature of bullying? What does bullying or bullying behaviour mean to you?
2. Can you define bullying from a multicultural perspective? How does a learner's or teacher's culture influence bullying behaviour?
3. Does the multicultural and diverse nature of the school community and context influence bullying? How? Please elaborate.
4. What are your views on family background and the role it may play in bullying behaviour?
5. What are your views on the community background and the role it may play in bullying? How does it contribute to bullying or not?
6. From your experience as a ( teacher/principal) what do you think are the contributory factors to bullying?
7. What do you think are the main causes of bullying in schools?
8. Do you relate hitting and beating as general patterns of bullying, and how and why?
9. What are other forms of bullying you have experienced over the years at school?
10. How do you think bullying can be reduced? What needs to happen at schools and home?
11. What role does the principal play in reducing bullying behaviour and enhancing relationships?
12. What role does the teacher play in reducing bullying behaviour and enhancing relationships?



## Appendix J: Interview Schedule: SGB and SSC



Mrs Ladyfair Khayelihle Malembe: Student number: 36544582

### Sample of semi-structured interview questions: SGB and SSC

1. Tell me about your role as an SGB/SSC member in this school. In your experience, how have you come to understand the nature of bullying? What does bullying or bullying behaviour mean to you?
2. Can you define bullying from a multicultural perspective? How does a learner's or teacher's culture influence bullying behaviour?
3. Does the multicultural and diverse nature of the school community and context influence bullying? How? Please elaborate.
4. What are your views on family background and the role it may play in bullying behaviour?
5. What are your views on the community background and the role it may play in bullying. How does it contribute to bullying or not?
6. From your experience as a parent, what do you think are the contributory factors to bullying?
7. What do you think are the main causes of bullying in schools?
8. Do you relate hitting and beating as general patterns of bullying, how and why?
9. What are other forms of bullying you have experienced over the years at school?
10. How do you think bullying can be reduced? What needs to happen at schools and at home?
11. What role does the principal play in reducing bullying behaviour and enhancing relationships ?
12. What role does the teacher play in reducing bullying behaviour and enhancing relationships.

## Appendix K: Interview Questions Schedule: Learners



Mrs Ladyfair Khayelihle Malembe: Student number: 36544582

### Group Interview Questions for Learners

1. What does bullying mean to you? What does a bully look like? What does a bully victim look like?
2. What do you think are some of the causes of bullying in schools?
3. What are your views on family background as contributing factors to bullying in schools?
4. What are your views on community background as a contributing factor to bullying in schools?
5. Do you think that the school context contributes to learners becoming involved in bullying? What and how? Please elaborate on your answer.
6. What are your views on social media as a contributing factor to bullying in schools?
7. In your understanding, What are your views on social media as a contributing factor of perpetrators in schools?
8. Do you think that low educational achievement (for example, not performing well in tests and examinations) can be viewed as a contributing factor to bullying in schools? Please elaborate.
9. What can you say about the lack of time to relax as a contributing factor to bullying in schools?
10. Do you think that drugs, alcohol and smoking cigarettes contribute to the factor of bullying in schools? tell me more about that.
11. What do you think are some of the causes of bullying in schools?
12. In your understanding, who are bullies, victims and witnesses? How does one become a bully or victim? Who is a witness?

13. In what way can swearing and teasing be viewed as general patterns of bullying in schools?
14. In your opinion can expulsion be viewed as an effect of bullying in schools?  
Please elaborate
15. What are other forms of bullying you have experienced over the years at school?
16. How do you think bullying can be reduced? What needs to happen at schools and home?
17. What role does the principal play? What role does the teacher play in reducing bullying behaviour

## **Appendix M: Transcription from Focus Groups Discussions and Interviews**

### **TRANSCRIPTION FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT AND SGB MEMBERS FROM SCHOOLS A AND B**

**Location:** Staff room from each school

**Time:** 14h30 – 15h20 for school A and 13h00 to 14h00 for school B

**Date:** 26 November 2021 (for school A) and 28 January 2022

**CODES:** Head of Department (HOD1) for school A, HOD 2 for school B, School Governing body member (SGB 1) for school A and SGB 2 for school B

**Interviewer:** Good Afternoon, Firstly let me take this opportunity and thank you for allowing me to come and have a discussion with you, I want to welcome you to this interview we are going to be talking about the bullying at your school and I would like all of you to give as much information as possible for each of the questions I have set for you. So welcome and we will move on to the first question.

**Interviewer:** Our first question is: What does bullying mean to you? How serious is the problem of bullying in your school? Explain by relating a few incidences that took place.

**HOD:** Bullying is very broad and narrow. but in a simpler form, I would say that bullying is usually about one learner confronting another learner simply because they think may physically, they are empowered. “Some learners are punched by other learners you know, you know, pushed by other learners against the wall when they meet in the passages to an extent that the learners feel the environment is insecure. Learners tend to be violent.” “It can be derogative remarks to other learners to sort of gain self-confidence such that other learners become vulnerable. They would maybe threaten them in terms of I will get you into trouble if you don’t buy me something from the tuckshop.

**SGB:** To me, I would say, It is when a particular culture believes that their culture is superior to the other and they try to assert that over other learners. “An older learner would bully younger learners into giving them tuckshop money. So big learners bully younger ones because of their physical appearance. Bullying comes in different forms and differs from grade. For example: the common type of bullying in the foundation phase is teasing, kicking and calling names, whereas in higher grades it goes deeper to cyberbullying, emotional bullying... even harassment.

**HOD 2:** I understand bullying failure to follow instructions and being disruptive in class through exercising power over other learners by kicking or beating teasing, discriminating against them or touching girls’ private parts. What they do is, they will mainly kick these learners who always contribute to class. It could be by those who are more gifted or simply by those who want to disturb classes because we do have learners who will always try to disturb classes. **SGB 2:** I think bullying is the

disempowerment of an individual in a disrespectful manner. Bullying is harassment. I can also say, it is overpowering other people from other cultural backgrounds. They are misusing their power. It can be defined as a way of dominating learners from the other group or discriminating based on culture. They can hurt them by taking money from them “It is when learners discriminate each other each other based on culture; it can be when one group of learners dominate another group from another culture.”

**Interviewer:** Thank you for that, can we move to the next question? What do think in your opinion causes bullying in schools?

**SGB:** I think the causes for bullying...you know...sometimes it's the learners... they got the problem at home. Some learners are brought up by single parents, so they are always angry because they don't know their fathers, especially boys. Others come from violent families, where they witnessed Papa beating umama. This makes a child to be very angry, sadly sometimes that particular child takes up to other children, So when they come to school, they see these other learners coming from good families. So, they feel like it's...eh... they want to be somebody because they are coming from those so-called broken families. And you know..because they are not happy at all, so whatever these other children...whatever they doing they would interpret it sometimes in their ways.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that the school context contributes to learners becoming involved in bullying?

**HOD 1:** I strongly believe that learners' home life and home environment plays a very important role in the manner in which he/she behaves. A lot of it I think stems from the home situation. The bullying I find is definitely stuff that they may be experiencing at home or experiencing from their environment where they come from. The disruptive behaviour also stems from home. I mean they may not be getting the attention they're seeking at home and they're looking for that attention somewhere else and that may be their way of seeking the attention.

**SGB 1:** lot of time you will find that those children that are bullies are actually children that have a problem at home with their family lives. Where maybe their parents are very authoritarian, and they do the same with the children. So, it's kind of like an acting out.

**HOD 2:** There is this boy in grade four here at school, we're not really sure what the problem is, he obviously has a problematic background and lots of family issues. And we've spoken to the guardian at the moment who's been taking care of him. And you know it's actually quite sad because sometimes you don't realise this child is acting up and you really don't know the situation that they're in or how it is impacting on them and that is why maybe that they are acting up. But the thing is to deal with it is a difficult situation in the classroom.

**SGB 2:** I agree, some learners witness their parents fighting and learn to mimic the same behaviour. learners who are bullied at home and feel bad and as a result “they or from the environment the social ... [indistinct] could happen to the individual. But we can see it from the way their parents treat each other. For instance, a father could overpower a mother and that's how he gets his way with the mother or vice versa.

Do you think that low educational achievement (for example, not performing well in tests and in examinations) can be viewed as a contributing factor to bullying in schools?

**HOD:** I would say one of the reasons is poor performance. Here in our school, we have witnessed a lot of cases, but I will mention one, this year we had a fight of girls from grade 6 A. When we made a follow-up, the bully is always not performing in class. Now she was always bullying this other girl to write for her and even to make her copy. Now this time the teacher caught them and sent letters to the parents. The next day the victim wanted to come clean, and the principal suspended the girl, after school, she waited for the girl with a sharp object.

**Interviewer:** Shoooo what did you do, it must be scary.

**HOD:** Luckily one of the girls in grade seven heard about it, and she came and reported it. Thank God we got on time.

**Interviewer:** Thank God indeed. Then what happens to a victim and a perpetrator?

**HOD 1:** We called the social services for the victim because she was scared to come to school. As well as the bully, it was of no use to suspend her because this means now more learners will be the target. So, the police officers and social services were contacted.

**SGB 1:** I want to add on what Madam HOD has said, you know, bullying is so deep. The very same child who was a bully, we also find out that she stayed with both parents when she was growing up, and the teachers from her previous school attest that she was a good learner, even her report witnessed that. Now they move here after her father chased her and mom in her home because of her step mother. Now they were forced to come and leave here at mkhukhwini, obviously now she has anger management.

**HOD 1:** I agree with the member. Another is that I need to raise is the issue of peer pressure which also have a big role because most kids they are forced to do what they do want to do simply because they need to fit in the group. there will be a group of boys who always ill-treat others, take their stuff. You will find that this is a social issue, peer pressure. And then there is the issue of drugs which can cause aggression especially to these learners...there is the issue of drugs which is there. There's a lot of them there taking those drugs, in our school, they take what the call as pipe, Nyaope and coming to school and then they will show this aggression because of what they have taken. I think that that too contributes to their bullying because they harass other learners, shout at them... you doing all this stuff to other learners which I think...drugs is a social issue coming into schools.

**HOD 2:** "If they come from a community of violence that will be the same element they will take and display at school, because that is what they think is right, because that is what they are exposed to every day.

**SGB 2:** "Making negative comments and engage in fights over those comments. If learners are discriminated against, they tend to be prone to bullying.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for sharing, now we move on to the next question. From your experience as a teacher, what do you think are the contributory factors to bullying?

**SGB 2:** If learners are exposed to violent video games on television or newspapers, they would want to do the same at school, at times take photos of other learners and post them on social media

**HOD 2:** What they see on television and social media they also want to do it at school. You know these violent videos they watch on social media will make them want to practice the same kind of behaviour at school. Learners copy what they see on social media to bully other learners. If they are exposed to violence in the media, they would also want to practice that to other learners here at school. The news they watch, cartoons they watch, always in a cartoon, there is always bullying. So, that type of exposure electronic media or television, internet through video games, violence, the thing of violence, seen as something which is acceptable and- and bullying is violence.

**HOD 1:** Most teachers said that lack of resources at home and at school make learners to engage in bullying activities such as stealing, beating, kicking, threatening others, calling others names and discriminating others who don't have resources. If resources are not adequate. If there are overcrowded classes and, in some instances, if teachers lack the knowledge and skills on how to deal with problematic learners, learners end up tearing books and kicking each other.

**HOD 2:** "In some cases, if resources are not enough, learners like chairs and tables, there will be a lot of bullying incidents in school." 98 Teacher C: "If there are no resources. Well, if there are no facilities for learners to play, they become emotionally affected and the end result is that they will end up venting their anger to other learners through beating, they will engage in drug abuse."

**HOD 1:** It can also be due to lack of resources. If resources are not enough at home, children will come to school and steal from others. Teachers had one voice that violence, lack of resources and lack of role models at home school or media cause bullying in schools. If there is peace, adequate resources and good role models at home, school and community, it likely that there will be no bullying in schools.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for answering that question in a very professional manner and we will now proceed to the next question and that is um... What role do you think needs to be played by stakeholders in reducing bullying?

**HOD 1:** there are various strategies to be used to address the problem of bullying. Working with different stakeholders will help to stop bullying in school, such as parents, the South African Police Service, S.E.N.C.A, Community Based Youth Centre, Love Life, Child Protection and the Department of Education.

**HOD 2:** We also have youth organisations like Love Life, they also come and address learners and talk about such things and try to motivate them and try to encourage them to desist from such behaviour. We invite parents with problem learners and we tell them that they should always watch their children at home.

**SGB 2:** We do sometimes work with S.A.P.S. because they come and address learners.

**SGB 1:** We deal with Child Protection because some of these are crime related. We also have a connection with the Community Based Youth Centre because, in some of the issues, children walk with scars in school uniforms and stuff like that. We call parents for disciplinary hearings for their children. Parents come for annual general meetings, and it is in such meetings that they are told to check on their children's behaviour at home. The police come to talk to the learners. I remember some time, was it last year; they came to talk about such things." The views above clearly show that working with various stakeholders helps to address bullying problems in schools. This implies that solutions to address bullying problems in schools are derived from an environmental perspective rather than from a psychological one.

**Interviewer:** Okay, ladies and gentlemen, we have come to the end of the interview, and I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the teachers for making the time and to contribute to this very important topic and I want to thank you again and wish you everything of the best for the holidays.

## **TRANSCRIPTION FOR GRADE 7 TEACHERS SCHOOL A**

**INTERVIEWER:** MS LADYFAIR KHAYELIHLE MALEMBE

**INTERVIEWEE:** TWO GRADE SEVEN TEACHERS

**TYPE:** FOCUS GROUP

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:** 19 NOVEMBER 2021

**START TIME OF INTERVIEW:** 14H30

**END TIME OF INTERVIEW:** 15H25

**LOCATION OF INTERVIEW:** DIEPSLOOT (JOHANNESBURG NORTH, DISTRICT 10, GAUTENG)

**INTERVIEW TOPIC:** Eco-systemic and Socio-cultural Perspectives in Understanding Learner Bullying Behaviour: A Case Study of a Township School in Gauteng

### **INTRODUCTION:**

**Interviewer:** Good afternoon teachers, I want to thank you and would like to welcome you to this interview we are going to be talking about the incidence of bullying at your school and I would like both of you to give as much information as possible for each of the questions I have set for you.

Both: You welcome

**Interviewer:** So welcome and we will move on to the first question. Our first question is: What do you understand bullying? How serious is the problem of bullying in your school? Explain by relating a few incidences that took place



**Teacher 1:** I understand bullying to be a violent activity. You know “Some learners are punched by other learners you know, you know, pushed by other learners against the wall when they meet in the passages to an extent that the learners feel the environment is insecure. One insistence an older learner gave a younger learner from grade 3 to go buy for him at the tuck shop a KOTA worth R5, but the child was given 10 cents to imagine.

**Interviewer:** Shooo, I can imagine the trauma that the child went through

**Teacher 1:** Oh yes, He was even told not to come without unless he will be “sorry”

**Teacher 2:** Bullying seems to be a huge problem in our school and it's scary you know. I remember an incident whereby one boy came to school with a screwdriver. This boy was very, very angry because some rumours were spread about him. Then he took out his screwdriver and he stabbed this other boy and then after that he ran away and the teachers, followed him. They caught him, they brought him back to school and we phoned the police. The police came and they took him and then this other boy who was stabbed, we took him to the clinic. He nearly lost his life. It was something very, very serious. We had to call the parents of the boy who was stabbed, but eh...honestly the problem of bullying is very, very high in our school, especially in the higher grades.

**Interviewer:** This must be difficult for you as teachers.

Both (oh yes, it is)

**Interviewer:** Thank you. Ma’am, can you relate an incident?

**Teacher 2:** You know bullying differs from grades. In lower grades usually it's minor teasing. Eh... I will talk about emotional bullying...the one that I experienced in my class whereby one boy...I think he has an underlying problem emanating from home. So, I think he wants to let other learners feel he is superior to them...so he bullied them... at one instance he threatened a young boy and told him to buy lunch during break time Then when I discovered that, I interviewed and spoke about that and I told him that if he continues, I will relay the matter to the parents but anyway I just tried as an educator to try and sort that problem out.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing. Is there any other incident that anyone would want to relate before we move to the next question?

**Teacher 1:** Oh yes, I want to mention, you know these are all sorts of things happening these days, even sending each other text messages, are sort of bullying messages. I have seen a situation in this school where other learners open websites, aha where they take other learners’ photos of the ugliest boy and ugliest girl in the school, the laziest boy in the school or all those sorts of remarks.”

**Teacher 2:** Yeah, I’m 100% agree with my colleague, you see in our school “We have also picked up lately, in the past two or three years, a lot of cyber-bullying. It is taking place within the community because everyone is exposed to social media and it seems to be the safest way to bully because the bully might not necessarily be known to the victim and young girls are the ones that suffer a lot.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it clearly shows that there is a lot to be discussed with bullying. Thank you so much, now let's move to the next point. What in your opinion are the underlying causes of bullying in your school?

**Teacher 2:** I think the causes for bullying...you know...sometimes it's the learners... they got the problem at home. Some learners are brought up by single parents, so they are always angry because they don't know their father. So, when they come to school, they see these other learners coming from good families. So, they feel like it's...eh... they want to be somebody because they are coming from those so-called broken families. And you know ... because they are not happy at all, so whatever these other children...whatever they doing they would interpret it sometimes in their ways...they are...as if they saying that to them whatever they doing...so now they would always want to protect themselves because they've got nobody...they don't have a father figure who they look up to. So, when they come here, they look at these children...so they envy them. And then even little things will become huge problems because they've got this problem, they come from broken homes, they need ...they need help because children need to grow up in a family situation whereby there is a father and a mother...so there's no love sometimes in other children's homes and that's why they always have problems.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for that ma'am.

**Teacher 1:** In my opinion, I want to say...maybe it is caused by wanting to conform because of the factors that ma'am has mentioned. The problem emanates from home...finding that they don't have steady homes and some of them you find that they are having a problem like they...they...they could see that some learners are coming from better homes, then they just want to conform, appearing in other people's eyes as if they are better than the others...so it's one of the problems. Sometimes we find that they are having problems of being ah...what can I say...they are being ill-treated so because they are ill-treated, they are applying what's being done to them to other people. So, it's what is ingrained in their hearts that the way to be is to ill-treat somebody to appear as superior. So, they get pleasure in doing that. I think that's about it.

**Teacher 2:** I think that another thing is that maybe they are getting corporal punishment, and they are taking this anger out on others.

**Interviewer:** Are you talking about corporal punishment at home and school?

**Teacher 2:** No, we do not practice corporal punishment in school (said doubted). sometimes you find that the parents are fighting at home, so they always witness those things. You find that maybe the mother and the father or maybe... most of them are being born outside marriage. Their mothers...they don't even know who their fathers are.

**Teacher 1:** As my colleague has mentioned there...so you find that the home is dysfunctional, and they are used to all sorts of bad behaviour. The mothers drink, they have boyfriends with them, and they change boyfriends and they look up to them... so I mean the children look up to their elders that are bringing them up. So, you find that

when they come to school that brings frustration and they become aggressive... and that causes them to become bullies.

**Teacher 2:** And there's also an issue of sexual harassment at school. Sometimes sexual harassment is not only experienced by the girls, but also by the boys...and you know, boys don't talk. They will just sit and get so angry every day towards the boys who they think are not experiencing this thing. So, he is angry at everyone... at every person who is a male because there's someone who holds unity who is sexually abusing him at home, and he is afraid to speak out. And then he lets his emotion run through being aggressive.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you very much because I think that's very insightful. So, tell me from your observation of bullying in your school, what are some of the consequences of bullying behaviour on victims? What happens to the victims when they are bullied?

**Teacher 1:** It changes them because you will find out that sometimes this learner was so good in his schoolwork but once this learner has been bullied, he changes. He will not want to come to school, he will not want to do his work, and he will always be afraid because he doesn't know when they are going to bully him again. His behaviour changes in totality...changes everything.

**Teacher 2:** If you... as educators you are very observant you will notice that the learner is changing. Sometimes even in schoolwork will drop and you won't get good results...so you will know there is something wrong. Maybe you will find out that other learners are busy playing together, but he'll be standing there in the corner because he is so afraid to associate with the other learners because of these bullies...because sometimes they will also maybe take his food...they will come to school and they will take his lunch...he will not be able to eat. So, then he will not want to come to school at all...he will end up hiding somewhere and the parent will...will think their child is going to school and all of a sudden, they 'll find that their child is not coming to school because of this behaviour...because of what happens to him because he was so bullied and he couldn't fight back.

**Teacher 1:** And the children, they don't report these incidents of bullying...they don't because they are afraid of the bully because they 281 will say "If you report me, I'm coming for you...after school, I will get you". So, they'll end up saying "Oh, it's okay. He will forget about me. He will get somebody else to bully so I must just be patient because it's just going to pass."

**Interviewer:** As you indicated before, it just came to my mind that culture has an impact on bullying. In your understanding, please define bullying from a multicultural perspective.

**Teacher 2:** when learners discriminate against each other based on culture, race or tribe, that's bullying. They said learners from the same culture are seen grouped on their own and they use power to punch other learners or swear at them.

**Teacher 1:** We are a multicultural school, we have Basotho, Zimbabweans, Swazi, some South Africans and you know, they tend to have different patterns of behaviour, some due to areas where they come from want to sort of dominate others.”

**Teacher 2:** “Particularly at this school, one of my colleagues used to say South Africa is an African continent (laughing) because all these neighbouring countries are here, I mean look here at Diepsloot, there is a place called Basotho, simply because its dominated by ABASOTHO. We have learners from different backgrounds; in some cases, they tend to discriminate against each other according to culture.”

**Interviewer:** In your years of teaching, which form of bullying can you say is dominating thus far

**Teacher 1:** You know in our school we have a percentage of coloured kids. They use defensive mechanics towards the black race, they always gang up if anything happens to them. I mean in one scenario, one girl fought with a coloured girl, next day it was a big fight. Also, we have a lot of foreign learners. I have two foreigners in my class. During the xenophobic attacks, they were surrounded by South African learners, chanting for them to go back from wherever they came from.”

**Teacher 2:** For the past years you will recall there was this national problem of xenophobia and we’ve got children from Zimbabwe and others are from Somalia who and these kids were being bullied...some of their classmates were saying “We are going to burn you!” and “Go back to Somalia” and these youngsters were just terrified! So, the learners were being bullied...being abused because he was a foreigner. “You know a multicultural school like this one learner tend to discriminate against each other verbally, or socially, you find out that, learners belonging to a certain culture would want to talk and chat on their own and share things on their own.”

**Teacher 1:** True, they do not participate in class activities; this makes them to be underachievers. their sense of worth is lost. They would laugh at him or her, make fun of him or her,

**Teacher 2:** Very true, they watch violent video games on television, and they want to exercise that at school with other learners. I have seen a situation in this school where other learners open websites ha! Where they take photos of other learners and post them on social media for everybody to see.” We won’t deny that some of the bullying comes from us as teachers.

**Interviewer:** How sir, please elaborate

Yeah, teachers who bully other learners through swearing, teasing or beating serve as bad role models as learners will also imitate the same bullying behaviour of other learners.

**Teacher 2:** “You can have excellent management skills, but if you are not able to implement these accordingly, you can become frustrated and angry and you know you might tend to exercise some form of verbal bullying. “MHM” “If the learners know that their class does nothing, senior teacher or the principal does nothing and they always get away with it every time, bullying will increase.”

**Teacher 1:** adults fight in the presence of children and children are likely to copy and transfer the same behaviour to schools. “Somehow, you find out that the mother is cheeky. Either the father beats the mother or vice-versa in front of the kids, I mean that learners grow up with anger and a perception of the opposite sex as a punching bag, no wonder we have such a bullying, violent community.

**Teacher 1:** Yooo bullying comes in different forms and is broader!

**Interviewer:** Please carry on we would like to hear more.

**Teacher 1:** Lack of role modelling at school and home may explain various forms of bullying that affect the social wellness of learners. Where I’m going to is Overcrowding, Yoh, that is cancer in all if not most of the schools, especially here in our area (devastated)

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for that. We will now go on to the next question. What role do principals, parents and teachers play in reducing bullying behaviour?

**Teacher 1:** Moral values such as respect, and forgiveness as well as the concept of brotherhood and sisterhood need to be addressed in schools, you know from a Christian background, people are taught values, e.g., how to live with others and as much as they value themselves.”

**Teacher 2:** We deal with Child Protection because some of these are crime-related. We also have a connection with the Community Based Youth Centre because, in some of the issues, children walk with scars in school uniforms and stuff like that. We call parents for disciplinary hearings for their children.” Even though not all parents play their role, some are willing.

**Teacher 1:** “Parents come for parent meetings and that is where they are told to monitor their children at home and that is where such things as bullying are discussed. Like the police officers.”

**Teacher 1:** You know we always refer learners with barriers, guess what department took forever to place them in proper schools, so what’s the use?

**Interviewer:** What do you think needs to be done by stakeholders?

**Teacher 1:** The code of conduct is there as dusted furniture. I don't think it's working... especially when it comes to bullying. There are a lot of holes in it. So, it fails to combat bullying head-on because we are constrained by South African law, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, among other things.

**Interviewer:** from your experience as a teacher, what do you think are the contributory factors to bullying?

**Teacher 1:** For me, I think the major one is poor parental control: Ya...they (bullies) feel aggrieved, upset and have no way of handling a situation. While you are in a discussion, they react violently. If I have to give a reason for this, I will say parents pretty much are not controlling the situation. When parents come to school, they treat the other person violently, and parental control is not happening from home.

**Teacher 2:** The underlying factor that I have noticed is that of poor parental guidance in terms of teaching the child...their upbringing, I can say poor upbringing...how you raise your child, how you teach your child.”

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for that. We will now go on to the next question. What is the school policy on bullying in your school? Is the policy working? What else do you think needs to be done to address the problem?

**Teacher 1:** Okay, um...bullying is not allowed, and we've got the code of conduct and we give the code of conduct to the learners at the beginning of the year and they are aware because we read the code of conduct, we explain to them and honestly it is working for us but we haven't reached the stage whereby we can say that now that our learners are so disciplined. I would say that if all the stakeholders are involved and take part...they play a more active role in our school, that will also help a lot. When you discipline those learners, then if we work together as parents then the learners will know that at home and school, they have the same policy...that is what is happening.

**Teacher 2:** So, then we will end up not having this problem of bullying all stakeholders work together because learners, they have this tendency- if the parents- if the learner goes home and report...they come to school with the attitude of “I will fix them!” so the learner will continue misbehaving because he knows that he has the support from the parent. But if more of the parents come to school more often and help the school...so then the learners if we work together will be able to build a better future for our children.

**Teacher 1:** We all need each other because these children are our future...because we cannot just throw them away. So, we need to mould them shape them, and build them because they are our future leaders. Without our youth, we don't have a society at all because they are our future.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, before we close, I would like to ask any of you if there is something you need to add as a final comment.

**Teacher 1:** I just want to touch on these three approaches. Firstly, I think home visits, you know, where you get one-to-one correspondence, sometimes the child behaves in a particular manner in school, we talk about bullying that ignites aggression in this case, when we visit the home, you begin to pick up some things you didn't think about. And then by seeing the parents at home they, you know, become moved by that because they are concerned, and they also will show concern for the child. So, it's a kind of a friendly approach and then I think, following up on that, I don't think the school will deny us- it is not only when a problem arises then we call the parent to school. Sometimes if, during breaks, if you call a parent “You know if you can come to school, I will quickly discuss your child with you.” I think that kind of approach will probably minimise the problems much more than what we probably envisage at this moment.

The other one is a bit far-fetched, but I think it's the one that we have to look for in future. Looking at outside resources, we have all the resources probably in the community- police- senior police officer eh... an independent person- a person with vast experience from your knowledge- get them here so that we can have now what we call a multi-directional approach. So, each one now will be able to look at that child from a different angle and that child now will feel a certain kind of importance, that you

know, that he has to come now meeting new people, new faces, and probably people he didn't see before- people with vast experience. So, it can bring about great change in the child.

**Teacher 2:** There are many ways to support the learner- one of them is getting them involved in sports eh... mainly sports teaches them discipline so it will keep them away from drugs and alcohol- giving them something else to do instead of alcohol and drugs to get their high – to get involved in sports and some kind of activities that will stand in the area.

**Interviewer:** Can you explain further on that... sports...when can you have that?

**Teacher 2:** Well, let's look at the private schools. They have a vast sports field (I strongly blame the government for that, period) because our society has been robbed. Comparing the rate of crime, and bullying cases as to our township schools.... we are leading, WHY? Because we don't have such facilities. Poverty is our key.

You know even when the school starts computer lab, the same community come and 'STEAL' So as I was saying sports will keep them away from the areas like... the areas where they play sports and activities will be further away from the area where they obtain drugs. yah, I mean extra-curricular activities after school will keep them away from bad hangouts and bad friends. Generally, the healthier people are the ones that participate in sport as well- so it should keep them away from the bad influences in life.

**Interviewer:** Thank you.

**Teacher 1:** Ah... just to add onto that. Not everybody is a sports person, so sport is a bit difficult to narrow in terms of your options but overall, it's all about positive reinforcements. You have to find the aspects that the child is good in and the child enjoys and use that as an 'eh...' base to promote their growth because a lot of these children tend to act out to be aggressive, they haven't had the opportunity to be made to feel like they worth much more and as soon as you do that, they expect more of themselves and that's what they don't do.

**Interviewer:** What else can be done?

**Teacher 1:** It begins with us. When we see the learners, we must show them, love, we must chat about their problems, and they must open up to us so that we know exactly what...their background is. Once we know their background, they will say "Anything that I do, I have to do it for my teacher, that's why I'm positive". Number two: I think if you can have people from the department, social workers make them available to us especially in school, saying every school has got a social worker that will deal with those problems with the learners. I think that will solve the problems.

**Teacher 2:** Now it is also possible to invite stakeholders to give a pep-talk to these learners in connection with this drug abuse, the process of HIV/ AIDS- I think this will do a lot.

**Teacher 1:** Also invite parents not only when there is a problem, but invite them to educate them on how to deal with anger management, and how to resolve issues

positively. There is a good quote that says, a healthy body in a healthy mind. The school is a place of hope. So, it is up to teachers to build that hope by running social clubs for parents.

**Teacher 2:** Oh yes I agree with my colleague, the school can even go as far as teaching parents skills that will help them to sustain themselves, in our area, Poverty is an in-thing, hence we have EMS (Economic Management Science) teachers, why are they not forming social clubs for parents and render those skills for free, Again as teachers instead of sitting and sobbing, there is a lot of change that we can make. Thank you.

**Interviewer:** Oh wow, believe me, I have gained a lot of insight today. I just want to say that I'm very thankful to you for the contributions you have made and I'm sure that whatever you have said here will contribute to reducing this problem of bullying in our schools. Thank you for an excellent job.

**Teachers:** Thank you so much.

## **TRANSCRIPTION FOR GRADE 7 TEACHERS SCHOOL B**

**INTERVIEWER:** MS LADYFAIR KHAYELIHLE MALEMBE

**INTERVIEWEE:** TWO GRADE SEVEN TEACHERS

**TYPE:** FOCUS GROUP

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:** 8 NOVEMBER 2021

**START TIME OF INTERVIEW:** 10H30

**END TIME OF INTERVIEW:** 11H25

**LOCATION OF INTERVIEW:** DIEPSLOOT (JOHANNESBURG NORTH, DISTRICT 10, GAUTENG)

**INTERVIEW TOPIC:** Ecosystemic and Socio-cultural Perspectives in Understanding Learner Bullying Behaviour: A Case Study of a Township School in Gauteng

### **INTRODUCTION:**

**Interviewer:** Good afternoon teachers, I want to thank you and would like to welcome you to this interview we are going to be talking about the incidence of bullying at your school and I would like both of you to give as much information as possible for each of the questions I have set for you.

**Both:** You welcome

**Interviewer:** Our first question is: What do you understand bullying? How serious is the problem of bullying in your school? Explain by relating a few incidents that took place



**Teacher 3:** To me, bullying comes in many forms. I will tell you how. I understand bullying to be a violent activity. (teacher highlighted) that learners punch, kick or push each other during lessons. They said learners demand and steal money from other learners or make other learners carry learners' bags. In most cases, we find out that the culture has an impact in perpetrating violence "It is when a particular culture believes that that their culture is more superior to the other and they try to assert that over other learners." Thank you. In this case...I met a small girl in front of my classroom crying. Upon finding out I realised that one of the boys was taking her money to buy food. So, the girl was without her money for lunch. Upon finding out I learnt that the boy (who took the girl's money) was from a poor home. He always comes to school without eating so he takes money from the weaker ones to buy food.

**Teacher 4:** It can be derogative remarks to other learners to sort of gain self-confidence such that other learners become vulnerable." For instance, "They would maybe threaten them in terms of I will get you into trouble if you don't buy me something from the tuck-shop." OR "They can do whatever they can do, maybe they tell them that every day you going to give me R2."

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing. Is there any other incident that anyone would want to relate before we move to the next question?

**Teacher 3:** "You know a multicultural school like this one learner tends to discriminate against each other verbally, or socially, you find out that, learners belonging to a certain culture would want to talk and chat on their own and share things on their own."

**Interviewer:** So, this means that the background, I mean the environment seems to be the key.

**Teacher 4:** Oh yes, definitely, let me give an example, violent incidents learners are exposed in the media: television, newspapers and the internet. Learners imitate violent sporting games like wrestling and boxing which forms part of their bullying behaviour at school.

**Teacher 3:** "They like doing things from the media: it can be cell phones or the internet and if the world brings the two together and explore. They have role models that they look up to, but these role models are not necessarily positive role models." Such as wrestling

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it clearly shows that there is a lot to be discussed with bullying. Thank you so much. Now let's move to the next point. What in your opinion are the underlying causes of bullying in your school?

**Teacher 4:** if resources are not enough in all schools, learners will take this chance to bully each other. "Our community is very underprivileged, very violent, unemployment is rife and as a result maybe most of the households are battling to survive so, the stronghold in the household may have become depressed.

**Teacher 3:** "Some children are not given lunch money, now they vent their physis, you know, upon these small smart ones and say, if you give me some money, I will protect you."

**Interviewer:** In your years of teaching, which form of bullying can you say is dominating thus far

**Teacher 3:** To me bullying incidents in schools, especially where I have been is explained by low self-esteem and low academic achievement. low self-esteem leads to disruption of teaching and learning since learners feel that they are worthless in the presence of other learners at school.

**Teacher 4:** True, they do not participate in class activities; this makes them to be underachievers. their sense of worth is lost. They would laugh at him or her, make fun of him,

**Teacher 3:** If learners are bullied at school, their performance deteriorates, and the school's performance is affected negatively. This is a cause-effect of disruption of lessons that in turn impedes teaching. The learners underachieve academically because they are always beaten by other learners. It's the last lesson before lunch and I know that boy from the neighbouring class will be standing at the door demanding money. They tend to lose concentration in class and the bullies in most cases would always look for those areas where they would pick on their opponents. I can say 'gangsterism' is rife in our community, so when learners come to school, they belong to gangs.

**Teacher 4:** "At this school, I have seen a physical one where learners beat, kick or push each other in corridors or classrooms. At times they bully each other verbally by teasing or swearing at each other or calling each other names. I have also seen that in most cases learners are emotionally or psychologically affected. There is also cyber-bullying where learners post photos of other learners on the internet for everybody to see. At times they bully each other socially or culturally, you would see learners from one culture grouped on their own."

**Interviewer:** What role do principals, parents and teachers play in reducing bullying behaviour?

**Teacher 3:** I can say in my school, the principal and the SGB try a lot because the school is working with different organisations to address bullying problems, such as Love Life, South African Police Services, S.E.N.C.A and Community-Based Youth Centres as organisations that help teachers and principals deal with bullying in schools. We also deal with Child Protection because some of these are crime related. We also have a connection with the Community Based Youth Centre because, in some of the issues, children walk with scars in school uniforms and stuff like that. We call parents for disciplinary hearings for their children." Even though not all parents play their role, some are willing.

**Teacher 3:** "Parents come for annual general meetings, and it is in such meetings that they are told to check on their children's behaviour at home. The police come to talk to the learners."

**Teacher 4:** in the past years we used to use psychologists...one of them was Mrs L ... they were assisting a lot because when we used to find that learner...this one has

got a serious problem of bullying...we used to report to them but off late they are not as active as before.

**Teacher 3:** SMT needs to revisit the school policy and make it available to parents at the beginning of the year.

**Teacher 4:** You know the code of conduct when it comes to actual implementation, really it does not work.

**Interviewer:** From your experience as a teacher, what do you think are the contributory factors to bullying?

**Teacher 3:** for me, I think the major one is poor parental control. Ya...they (bullies) feel aggrieved and upset and have no way of handling a situation. While you are in a discussion, they react violently. If I have to give a reason for this, I will say parents pretty much are not controlling the situation. When parents come to school, they treat the other person violently, and obviously, parental control is not happening from home.

**Teacher 3:** lamented the time spent by parents communicating with their children because both parents work and come home late each day: "I think it's a lack of parenting and guidance eh...from home. Could be because both parents are working as well...they don't have time for their kids...they come home tired, and they don't know how to deal with problems."

**Teacher 4:** (complained about parents spoiling their children to the point that they become aggressive and expect everything without putting in any effort).

The upbringing you know...some parents spoil their children. They give them a mentality that whatever you want, you will get. So now they grow up with that mentality, so now they use aggressiveness to get what they want.

**Interviewer:** Alright. Thank you for that. How have you as teachers assisted the management of your school in managing learner aggression? Could you please explain?

**Teacher 3:** Ya...I probably had the fortunate position because of my counselling background...in that, I've been called in from time to time to attend to problems, especially in terms of one of an aggressive nature where we called in the parents; we called the teachers involved; child involved- learner involved and we try to a reasonable solution to contain the problem... and when children are suspended or when there's tension at the school, in assisting the management is to try to get the child to school as soon as possible so that he doesn't lose time as far as education is concerned. So that's one way that we assist the management.

**Teacher 4:** We also... in school, we have a system in place where a teacher has to keep a record of learners who present problems and from time to time to assist the management, the teacher has to inform the management of the problem they having especially those of an aggressive nature.

Some of the learners will come here having changed their behaviour when they're not at home and the parent will then be surprised. Through that, when the parent is involved, the teacher is involved and you as a teacher again, I mean the SMT is

involved, you as a teacher are also involved- I mean if three of you work on the child- sometimes you do know you get there.

**Interviewer:** So, you saying that from a teacher's perspective, you try as a teacher first to assist the child and if you can't then you go progressively to management.

**Teacher 4:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for that sir. We will now proceed to question five and question five reads: Have you received any support from parents in managing the problem? Please explain.

**Teacher 3:** I think we can look at this from a positive point of view. Generally, parents are called, they come to school at their earliest convenience, but we must understand that parents also have commitments. Sometimes they are working, and they may not get time off, so the process is delayed but when parents come here, they're very cooperative. We have of course exceptions to the rule- some of them you know are very protective of their children and try to defend them at all costs knowing that the child is at fault but generally speaking I think parents give us a better insight into that... but parents...they agree and whatever conclusion we come to, whatever decision we come to...that we in agreement, all the parties agree that this is the solution. So generally speaking, I think it's quite positive from the parent's side.

**Interviewer:** Your perspective on that.

**Teacher 4:** I actually, personally have a relationship with other parents whereby they'll call me, and they'll ask me what's his behaviour...what's his behaviour now and so they do try and do follow-ups just to see if things are still going... the kids are still on track or they're not so they will even call you even in the weekends but you still have to accommodate them and just tell them the truth. By telling them the truth these parents can work on the child-like on the parent's level, hand-in-hand with the teachers at school, so it does help. I Thank you for that.

**Teacher 4:** Also, at our school, we have a policy in terms of the parents coming to fetch the reports for their children because it opens the doors of communication... actually in terms of the child's progress and terms of the child's behaviour.

I mean extra-curricular activities after school will keep them away from bad hangouts and bad friends. Generally, the healthier people are the ones that participate in sport as well- so it should keep them away from the bad influences in life.

**Teacher 3:** Ah... just to add to that. Not everybody is a sports person, so sports is a bit difficult to narrow in terms of your options but overall it's all about positive reinforcements. You got to find the aspects that the child is good in and the child enjoys and use that as eh... base to promote their growth because a lot of these children tend to act out to be aggressive, they haven't had the opportunity to be made to feel like they worth much more and as soon as you do that they expect more of themselves and that's what they don't do.

**Teacher 3:** Maybe every institution needs a psychologist it will be sort of... aid in the school so that in case of this nature the psychologist comes in to speak to the learner to sort out the problem.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, before we close, I would like to ask any of you if there is something you need to add as a final comment.

**Teacher 3:** I just want to touch on two things that have been said. Firstly, in connection with sports, now if you look at the youngsters, they have a lot of energy, and not only sports but other activities as well. Some children are not sports orientated, so we can look at other activities to keep the child occupied - keep his mind away from evil things-from wrong-doings. So, we must think of activities in the school where a child can be gainfully occupied or meaningfully occupied so that his energy is diverted in the right direction. Right and... and then important also, you know, children you can be hard on children but if you show them true love, show them that you are concerned about their welfare and their wellbeing, that you are doing what you are doing not because you hate them, but you hate what they are doing as a person. That's it. So as educators, I think this is how we should move forward to curb aggression or aggressive behaviour.

**Teacher 4:** The management needs to practice the down-to-top managerial skills

**Interviewer:** What is that Sir, can you explain further?

**Teacher 4:** You know (changing posture) management always uses top to down method, they are autocratic. whatever they say, must be done without involving the staff's opinion. This led to some negative decisions. Now even if you have a brilliant idea as an educator, they won't apply it because you are just an ordinary teacher. So, if they can allow other's opinions without feeling insecure about their position, believe me, there will be a huge difference in school. Thank you

**Interviewer:** Okay, ladies and gentlemen, we have come to the end of the interview, and I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the teachers for making the time and to contribute to this very important topic I want to thank you again and wish you everything of the best for the holiday.

**Both teachers:** Thank you and have a good day.

#### **TRANSCRIPTION FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GRADE 7 LEARNERS**

	<b>SCHOOL A</b>	<b>SCHOOL B</b>
<b>DATE OF INTERVIEW</b>	12 NOVEMBER 2021	15 NOVEMBER 2021
<b>TIME STARTED</b>	13H30	14H00
<b>TIME ENDS</b>	14H30	15H00
<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	Six grade seven learners	Six grade seven learners
<b>GENDER</b>	MIXED	MIXED

**INTERVIEW TOPIC:** Ecosystemic and Socio-cultural Perspectives in Understanding Learner Bullying Behaviour: A Case Study of a Township School in Gauteng

**INTRODUCTION:** Okay, learners, it is my pleasure to invite you to this interview at your school and I want to thank you very much for the time you have given me today to interview you. So welcome to the interview. The first question I'm going to ask you is: **What do you understand about bullying?** What is your experience of bullying at your school?

**Learner A:** "I think culturally bullying mostly basically is based on punching, pushing, kicking or beating, stealing from each other or taking photos of other learners and posting them on social or raping someone." Also in most cases, boys are the ones who push and beat us, even forcing us to buy food for them during lunch in tuckshop'.

**Learner B:** "Bullying is when someone uses his power to abuse another person." It is so sad ma'am to see other learners bully others, be it physically or verbally.

**Interviewer:** How can somebody use his power? Kindly elaborate further.

**Learner B:** 'Like maybe when we are just playing with them (the older ones), like kicking them, they will yell at us and beat us'

**Interviewer:** So, you mean if I hear you correctly, the bully is always an older person?

**Learner B:** Oh Yes, you know here at our school, there is this big boy who always bullies us and we are all scared to report him because he always threatened to beat us should we report him to the teachers. Since the bully is much older, I don't think I can bully that person

**Learner A:** That's true what my sister says, 'We do not usually report bullying because of the fear of being exposed and that if you do report to a teacher and then the teacher does not believe or doesn't work out that problem, then what is going to happen to you when the bully finds out that you have reported? They are going to bully you even more.

**Learner C:** "Yah! I think it is a power or strength that someone uses to abuse someone. bullying is when hurting either physically or verbally — degrading the other and making comments about others. [This] is why it is defined as beating someone else who is weaker than him."

**Learner D:** "I think [it is] when one uses his physical ability to oppress other people so that another person feels inferior for his or her benefit." Such as Taking photos and posting them on social media."

**Learner E:** "Bullying refers to beating or stealing from someone." I think bullying can be defined as a power or strength that someone uses to abuse someone."

**Learner AA:** Thank you, sir. Bullying can be physical, verbal or emotional. When someone calls you nasty names and kicks, beats or swears at you, to me that's bullying. Bullying makes you scared, sad and inferior. In my experience, the cause of bullying ...mostly guys... guys bullying because of the attention they want from girls. I

remember the time when I was still in grade 6, I used to be close to this one girl and there was this guy who had a crush on her...you know guys just want to have that bad-boy image, and girls be my witness...girls love bad-boys...

**Learner BB:** I agree with what he said sir, you see it in the movies and the girl will like...wow...so the guys will just do anything to peak the girl's attention and when you bully that poor guy you will see the whole crowd following you and the poor guy is just feeling terrible about himself...so it may be caused by girls' attention. Thank you.

**Learner CC:** Same here, yes, I did have an incident of bullying from the first day I entered this school which is in grade 5. They used to call me...used to say I'm gay which I took as folly because I'm not gay, wasn't gay, won't be gay but they will be like "I'm gay" ...some cheesy kind of bullying. That is my experience.

**Interviewer:** That is a bad experience, it should have been hard for you, how did you overcome the situation if you don't mind me asking?

**Learner CC:** Don't worry sir, I am strong as a rock (laughing). Luckily, I am an outspoken person. I asked my English teacher to form a debate club where we discuss such issues, now I can say it is history, but sadly not everyone is like me, some learners crack and even leave school.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing this with me. Now before we move on, is there anyone who needs to add?

**Learner DD:** Yes ma'am. Bullying is when somebody spreads lies about you, sending messages that make you scared to come even to school. During the first year in this school, the very first few months I was hassled by some guys and my being quiet they said that I was too full of myself. I remember this one day when I went to the toilet and there were this group of guys who cornered me in the toilet and were like "You, You are so full of yourself. I was like "Nothing" and then after that, they promised to beat me up if I didn't refrain from that. So, I was forced to refrain from any sort of communication with them. He continues emotional bullying can be classified as ignoring and or pretending.

**Interviewer:** Please expand, why are you saying that?

**Learner DD:** 'Being ignored by people that you think are your friends is so painful and makes you emotional' These boys were my classmates, can imagine now how I feel when I am in class. 'I think they are pretending to be heroes so that they use me to get them stuff like money and food from other learners.

**Learner FF:** Madam, I haven't had an experience of being bullied but I have seen someone being bullied and I think the cause of that is the background of where the person is coming from like, family, friends and community.

**Learner EE:** Well for me I haven't experienced bullying, but I've seen the other guy in class being bullied. I don't know whether it is because of discrimination or race. But the boy was an Indian. I don't know whether they underestimate him or what but then you see him like a person who wants to get love from teachers or something...he just wants to get the attention of the principal or something. And he used to follow the rules

and stuff do all of the work himself and help everyone in the class, but the one problem was they couldn't listen to him.

**Learner C:** Another one is verbal abuse from the teachers. I don't like when a teacher swears at me in front of the class, this is so embarrassing, and it makes your self-esteem low.

**Learner FF:** Some teachers when you don't do homework, call you names in front of the class so that the class will laugh at you.

**Learner B:** Some even poke fun at learners and insult them about their looks. It makes one feel useless and undignified.

**Interviewer:** What do think in your opinion causes bullying in schools?

**Learner A:** "I think exposure to violence, drugs and alcohol or crime at home and in the community also contribute to bullying in schools."

Here at school most boys.... Oh no even girls now they expose to alcohol and drugs, when I say drugs ... I mean cigarettes (Nodded her head).

**Learner B:** "I think crime in the community also makes learners do the same behaviour at school like stealing, stabbing others or some form of violence. I think learners watching lots of violent video games (such as wrestling) or using social media also contribute to bullying.

**Interviewer:** oh okay, how did social media contribute?

**Learner C:** Angithi mem (I say that madam) learners used social media, such as posting pictures for other kids, like there is a girl in grade 7 C who is smart but chubby you know, so most girls are so jealous, and they posted her and class her names. That trends the entire school. That's when the principal banished phones.

**Learner CC:** "I also think that poverty in the community and at home makes learners to be bullies."

**Learner E:** Yes, if your house is a two-roomed house or a house built with mud, other learners look down upon you.

**Learner AA:** They even sometimes say 'There is nothing that you can tell us,' maybe there is no television in your house. It feels so painful, and you even blame your parents and ask yourself many questions like "Why don't they have enough money to support us?"

**Learner B:** If your house is built with mud and their houses are built with bricks, they always say your house is leaking and falling. They do not know how you feel about that, and you know your parent's situation.

**Learner G:** "Yes I think the community is as a result of violence because if you are from an environment where people are breaking houses, breaking shops and you are still at a young age, you end up, right in your mind, thinking that it is something good — you think that it is right also."

**Learner F:** "Yes! The community contributes to bullying in schools. In our community there is a lot of violence; for example, [in] Diepsloot, the violence that is going over there is now affecting children in schools because they think violence is the solution."



**Learner D:** “Violence due to tribe that is in the community also causes bullying.” This escalate to learners at school where by example ABASOTHO are fighting with AMAPEDI .

**Learner A:** “Violence in the community and at home will make learners think that it is good to do that at school.”

**Learner AA:** “If you watch violent games like wrestling on television you also want to [repeat] the same behaviour at school.”

**Learners C:** “Madam, I think the negative reports we hear in the news contribute to bullying in schools.”

**Learner D:** “I think the use of internet through Face book also contributes to bullying in schools.”

**Learner E:** “Some people post pictures and gossip about you on internet.”

**Interviewer:** Thank you now we will move to the next question, if there is no one that needs to add, right the next question is Do you think that the school context contributes to learners becoming involved in bullying?

**Learner A:** “If there are no facilities for learners to play with, they end up beating and teasing each other.”

**Learner B:** “If classes are too big, it will be difficult for teachers to control learners.”

**Learner C:** “If books are not enough learners will fight for a few books and that is a form of bullying and if there are no effective rules to stop bullying.”

**Learner D:** “I think lack of resources like books, playgrounds and desks will also cause bullying in schools as well as low school pass rates.”

**Learner E:** “I think lack of facilities also causes bullying in schools because if learners have nothing to play with, they resort to beating each other.”

**Learner F:** “Yes it does contribute to bullying in schools because if learners do not have facilities to occupy themselves with, they will end up abusing drugs or even sexually abusing others.”

**Learner CC:** I think bullying...let’s say I come from a family... we are coming to school from different backgrounds. Then I find myself in a wrong group... they doing wrong things. Then because of peer pressure they are forcing me to do things...that can cause bullying...peer pressure.

**Learner BB:** Eh...I think what causes bullying is that we go out to get attention- we want to belong like I have to hit somebody for me to be known in school. So I may have to make people scared of me to get attention.

**Learner DD:** Eh...other causes of bullying...let us say a learner has passed and some of the learners are very jealous of that learner...that particular learner...he is a clever learner. He or she is top of the class, top of the grade... all of the grades even to matric

**Interviewer:** Any other causes?

**Learner FF:** According to my understanding... people bully other people because maybe they are inferior to the other person and maybe they take advantage because

they see he has more power than other persons. So, yeah, I think bullying is bad. And also, most people bully people because...because they find that other people don't have the effort to defend themselves. So that is the problem of bullying.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, boys and girls, I have enjoyed talking to you, now oh Okay... you want to add, please carry on. (giving learners more time)

**Learner A:** You see ma'am ( taking a deep breath) Uhm even teachers are bullied.

**Interviewer:** How do teachers become bullies?

**Learner A:** teachers who beat learners or shout at other learners in front of other learners are models of bullying behaviour as other learners will also imitate the same behaviour.

**Learner B:** even parents who fight in the presence of children are not good role models — learners will display the same behaviour at school.

**Learner A:** “You find in a class there is one problem learner, the teacher does not know how to deal with that learner. So, he started calling him names, such as You stupid stop that nonsense! in front of other learners.”

**Learner B:** “Teachers who bully learners also contribute to bullying in schools. Some teachers have no skills of how to deal with bullying learners, so bullying will increase in schools.”

**Learner C:** “I think [the] lack of supervision of learners by teachers during break time in the playground.” My sister in grade 2 was beaten by an older girl from grade 4 just because she wanted her *skhafthini* (lunchbox).

**Learner E:** “Yes, I think lack of supervision by teachers and parents — I mean if children notice that parents do not check what they are doing, they do what they want even here at school, if learners are not supervised, they will do what they want even stealing or fighting.”

**Learner F:** “I think the school does contribute to a lot of bullying because there are teachers who abuse learners in front of other learners.” We heard many cases in high school of course where teachers are raping kids.

**Learner G:** “I think parents who do not care about their children also contribute to bullying in schools.”

**Interviewer:** Tell me, what about the home background? Maybe something is happening there that influences the child. Does anybody want to comment on that?

**Learner DD:** It does have an impact. Maybe you are experiencing something at home. Maybe uncle's, father's and stuff. You can't talk to anyone because ...maybe your stepfather... and you can't say your mother anything because it's not like she can say anything...she is like blinded by love...so she's like “oh you over-reacting” ...so the only way to get rid of that anger is by taking it out on someone else. And he won't take it out on someone his age, he'll go to someone younger than him...even if they are of the same age...one is weaker so he knows “okay I could do anything to him.

**Interviewer:** Any other contributions on this side?

**Learner FF:** I have a friend...she was raped by one of her families. So like actually...I don't know how to explain this...this girl likes every time she comes to school and she wants to overdose herself. When you try to stop her, she'll hit you...and when the teacher tries to stop her, she like tells the teacher "You mustn't barge into my problems because you don't know where I come from." And I even tried to reduce her anger but because of the rape she doubted the other children...she can see that nobody can feel her pain.

**Learner BB:** I also think that discipline...we get from home. If I don't get discipline at home...if my parents don't discipline me at home, I take that to school...I'm the only child and my mum... what I want I get...so when I go to school, I'll want anything. If I tell you to go and buy one vetkoek for me, you have to do that.

**Interviewer:** I am so sorry to hear what you went through, but thank you again for sharing with me, now we are moving to the next question:

**Interviewer:** What are other forms of bullying you may have experienced or witnessed over the years at school?

**Learner A:** Emotional abuse "If you are teased by other learners, you feel you are not worthy and you do not participate in class activities and you do not attend lessons.

**Learner B:** "If they tease and swear at you most of the time you feel you are inferior and you feel like not coming to school anymore."

**Learner C:** "Yes, if you are always teased and sworn at most of the time, you do not want to come to school. I think swearing is a form of bullying."

**Learner D:** "I think other kids are forced to do what they do not want to do, like to say bad things or to steal from other learners and to bring knives to school. Simple because they want to fit in the group"

**Learner E:** YES, they want to impress a certain group of people. Others even steal because of peer pressure.

**Interviewer:** How? Kindly explain further if it's okay with you.

**Learner A:** You see ma'am here at school there are days whereby we wear our clothes ( we call it civvies). So, there is a competition for who wears expensive clothes. So other kids steal from others them to buy those clothes so that they will look like they afford,

**Learner BB:** "I think swearing and teasing are general patterns of bullying in schools which brings us back to socialisation, people are emotional [they] tease and swear [because] they think it is normal to them."

**Learner CC:** "Yes there is a lot of teasing and swearing taking place in classrooms, and some learners will become depressed. when you do something wrong, the teacher asks you to wave your hands, kneel or cross your legs and put your hands on the head for almost 30 minutes. This is very tiring (she added).

**Learner D:** I remember when I was doing grade 3, it was during winter and I didn't do my homework with the other two boys, the teacher chased us out and forced us to sit on the floor and wave our hands, while she was teaching.

**Learner AA:** "I think it's mostly verbal, physical, emotional and cyber-bullying."

**Learner DD:** “I have seen mostly cyber-bullying, verbal, and cultural and the popular one being the physical one.”

**Learner FF:** “Emotional and physical.” It will always boil down to the fact that you will be afraid fear of going to school, concerned about being around people, and fearful of simply being yourself since your weight is always being reminded and intimidated.

**Learner EE:** “I think it is mostly cyber-bullying, cultural bullying and verbal bullying.”

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much. Do you think that low educational achievement (for example, not performing well on tests and in examinations) can be viewed as a contributing factor to bullying in schools?

**Learner A:** learners who are exposed to various forms of bullying behaviour, at school are always low academic achievers. Just because they can't cope, they then target the clever one as the victim.

**Interviewer:** Eish it must have been hard for the victim. So, tell me why do you think they behave like that? I mean the bullies.

**Learner A:** I think mam, it's “Low self-esteem, absenteeism and carrying other learners' bags.”

**Learner B:** apparently if you are smart, teachers tend to like you, then you become a target. One girl was always crying, bunking lessons, and having scratches on her face just because this old boy was jealous of her.

**Learner C:** “If people bully you most of the time, you will not concentrate on your schoolwork, so your pass rate is affected.”

**Learner D:** “Learners who are being bullied are always withdrawn, bunk lessons and they are always carrying other learners' bags from one class to the other.”

**Learner E:** “They have scars and bruises on the body; they have missing body parts like teeth or ears and their clothes are torn; they do not come to school daily.”

**Learner F:** “You do not focus on your schoolwork if you are bullied or if you are always bullying others, so your academic achievement is affected.”

**Learner AA:** “I think they have missing body parts like fingers or teeth and they are always withdrawn; they do not attend lessons and school daily.”

**Learner BB:** “You will feel like not coming to school

**Interviewer:** What are the consequences of bullying behaviour? What happens when somebody bullies another person?

**Learner DD:** My encounter...I attempted to get away from school...I tried ways of getting transferred and I wouldn't tell my mum what's wrong...I've got a single parent...not much my mum could do concerning bullying would result in bloodshed so the best thing I can do is find a way of getting out of this school. And up until the very end, my mum sat me down and asked me what was wrong...why the sudden pressure to leave the school? Then that's when I spoke...and said it's because of such things I'm facing at school. So that was one of the things that happened.

**Interviewer:** What are the other consequences of bullying?

**Learner A:** Most of the time...it always happens that the girl goes for the bad boy, I must say a man because of financial constraints. The small guys who like talking to the girl...because he has a fear that the bully will not be able to communicate...and then he sees the bully and the girl coming together, he is heartbroken...very heartbroken and there is nothing more painful than a broken heart.

**Learner C:** So it happens that the self-esteem is very much lower down, it happens that most of the things you just...in school you are just down all the time.

**Learner B:** One of the consequences of bullying is that we also change who we are. We fear a lot of being bullied.

**Learner FF:** Some learners might be afraid of coming to school and some other consequences...learners may become quiet because they are scared that they can't sort their problems out.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much, now we are coming to our last question. What role do you think needs to be played by stakeholders in reducing bullying?

**Learner A:** I think learners are lacking moral values of respect, compassion, trustworthiness and kindness. Life Orientation lessons will help and using pastors addresses bullying in schools.

**Learner B:** Such moral values will help learners to be kind to each other, so bullying will stop in schools.

**Learner C:** "I think if learners learn to respect each other, then bullying will be a thing of the past."

**Learner D:** "I think such moral values will make learners respect and trust each other, as such bullying will be history in schools. If they learn to trust each other, they will not bully each other."

**Learner E:** I think they will teach each other that bullying is not good.

**Learner CC:** "Parents and police officers must also be involved."

**Learner E:** "I think parents must be involved; bullies must be expelled from school."

**Learner DD:** There was one child who hit another child, you know, teachers sent that child out for few minutes, then the child was back to class, like nothing happened..... and mind you he was BRAGGING"

**Learner FF:** "Yes madam this means that the school is not protecting the victim.

**Interviewer:** What do you think the school would do better?

**Learner A:** I think there must be policing in the school code of conduct. parents must also be involved."

**Learner B:** "I think parents must come to school every day, and schools must have good rules. The principal must call the police and involve the parents of learners who bully other learners."

**Learner F:** "I think we should make it clear that bullying is not acceptable. When you bully someone, you must get punished. So maybe they can make a change...a little

change in the school's policy. Or even get expelled for good, we cannot share the same space with bullies.

**Interviewer:** What role should the principal and teachers play in addressing bullying in schools?

**Learner EE:** I think they should settle down and talk to those who are being bullied and those who are bullying. And I think they must be open to the learners and speak about what they are doing is wrong.

**Learner AA:** I think people like social workers should also be involved because the problem doesn't start from here, it starts from way back. So, people from high places (management) should also see to that.

**Learner D:** I think something else needs to be taken into consideration about the physical bullying where some may be beaten up by the druggies. They should have more raids in the school just to make sure that there aren't any drugs being taken into the school premises because that's when they go high on drugs.

**Interviewer:** So, you think the SAPS should be more involved in this?

**Learner D:** Yes, they should be more involved.

**Interviewer:** Okay, What role should parents play in addressing bullying in schools?

**Learner FF:** When you speak of parents in my mind I'm thinking of big brothers, sisters people that think that they should just maintain the friendship status, just be friends with the child...just communicating asking about the day...because if you have that relationship with the person, you can notice that something has happened...you are looking bad, you are heartbroken. When that happens, you happen to be the old person...and if you have that much love for your child, take care of your child, then you will just act upon it as you don't want to see your child wounded.

**Interviewer:** So, this is what needs to be done by parents?

**Learner FF:** Yes...they should have this friendship with their children. Then they will be able to communicate with each other... and you should not leave the school just because of that guy.

**Learner BB:** I think parents have a big role to play here, especially with education. They should try to come to school...check out what is happening ...are their children behaving also as a parent, you should know your child's privacy... I mean like check whether the child is going to school. They should communicate their home background with the school.

**Learner D:** When the teachers and the parents come closer, you find that the parent may be just a mother and once a boy gets to this stage, he's no longer controllable.

**Learner C:** some of the parents, cannot come and discuss with the principal because some of the parents, find the issue of we as children can bully our parents because we know that as a mother, she is weak...so I can bully her anyhow I like. But when it comes to my father, I know that my father is very strict. Even though some of the children do this because they know their fathers live a long distance away. For instance, as I am here in Joburg, my father is there in Durban. The father does not know what is happening at home. Some of the parents do not come because they know that there is nothing they can do.

**Learner C:** Bullying is part of the school code of conduct, but I don't think it works. And also, the suspension thing...'cos one day one boy in my class wanted to slap me...and he was like "I don't mind slapping you and then go home for three days and come back" so there should be punishment for those who bully others-punishment similar to what they do...fair enough for everyone.

**Interviewer:** Now we are coming to the end of our meeting. I want to thank you very much for attending this interview and for the comprehensive information you have given me; I'm sure it's going to help me a lot in my research, and my study and I want to thank you very much for your time and your contributions. I wish you all the best in life and good luck with your Exams.

**All learners:** Thank you, Madam

## **TRANSCRIPTION FOR THE TWO PRINCIPALS**

### **SCHOOL A**

**INTERVIEWER:** MS LADYFAIR KHAYELIHLE MALEMBE

**INTERVIEWEE:** PRINCIPAL FOR THE SCHOOL A

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:** 12 NOVEMBER 2021

**START TIME OF INTERVIEW:** 10H30

**END TIME OF INTERVIEW:** 11H25

**LOCATION OF INTERVIEW:** DIEPSLOOT (JOHANNESBURG NORTH, DISTRICT 10, GAUTENG)

**INTERVIEW TOPIC:** Ecosystemic and Socio-cultural Perspectives in Understanding Learner Bullying Behaviour: A Case Study of a Township School in Gauteng

### **INTRODUCTION**

I would like to take this opportunity and thank you for allowing me to come and have this meeting with you despite your busy schedule. I appreciate it. I am Khayelihle Malembe, a Master's (Psychology of Education) student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). At our last meeting, I explained to you that we were to meet so that you could talk to me about your views on the topic: Eco- systematic and Sociocultural Perspectives in Understanding Learner Bullying Behaviour. As I stressed in the consent letter, your name will be kept confidential and there will be no compensation from my supervisor and myself. You are kindly asked to be honest in giving your views. You should not feel forced to say something you are uncomfortable with. If you wish to withdraw from the research, you are free to do so and will not be penalised.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the interview is to learn more about your understanding of the sociocultural and eco-systemic factors that contributed to student bullying in your school. The data you offer will aid in the creation of a framework to direct teenagers' use of social media for creating psychosocial identities.

**Timeline:** The interview should take about 45 minutes to 60 minutes.

**The interviewer starts the discussion.**

**Interviewer:** Okay sir, good day or should I say good morning to you.

**Principal:** Good day to you too.

**Interviewer:** I want to take this opportunity to thank you for giving me this opportunity to do a short interview with you and for the precious time you have given me to conduct this interview.

**Principal:** You're welcome.

**Transition:**

For how long have you worked as a teacher and as a principal?

**Principal:** This is my 27th year in the service with 10 years as a principal.

Oh, wow this is such a milestone.

**Principal:** indeed (shrugging and laughing)

**Interviewer:** I think we can start sir, Your first question sir. Tell me what do you understand about bullying?

**Principal:** Alright, (nodding the head and smiling) Bullying is quite deep and broad, especially in a school context. We have learner-learner bullying, learner-to-teacher bullying, and cyberbullying. Over and above all bullying is about practising powers over someone without limit in a way that creates uncertainty or uncomfortable feelings. Some learners are punched by others and pushed against the wall, just because they refuse to give them whatever they need, such as money. Learners tend to be violent you know.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, sir, the follow-up question is, what is your experience of learner bullying or I must say learner aggression in your school? It doesn't have to be only this year; it can be previous years as well.

**Principal:** Eh...thank you so much Em...well learner aggression is everywhere. Eh...there is no school eh... that does not experience learner aggression. Yeah, there are other ways of bullying other than being physical, like using... vulgar words, like insulting, I can't say them all but I am going to cite a few cases of eh... just recently. We've had several cases of learner aggression at our school. Eh...the first one was that of the boy (I will not mention his name) eh... who fought with a subject teacher. Em... the boy in grade 5 was playing with a cell phone toy in class when the teacher came in and asked the boy to bring it, he just refused. Instead, he wanted a fight. Eh...well, probably one of the things that contributed to that was that eh... the teacher himself is relatively young. So, the boy thought that he could eh...fight the teacher based on his age. Eh...fortunately, the head of the department and other teachers had to intervene just before the fight could. start. Em...another case was that of a boy who



has been with us for the past three years- he failed grade 3, pushed to grade 4. Mind you he is troublesome. He again failed grade 4 and still moved to grade five because of his age. Now, he picks up the fights with almost everyone in the school. Em...he's big size, he's bigger than his classmates as it were eh... as a result he ends up being bossy most of the time. His younger brother joined us this year, now he's playing bodyguard to the younger brother. So, whatever happens to the younger one, he will always come up and stand for his brother and catch up fights with whoever touches his younger brother irrespective of eh... what the argument was based on.

Some teachers have been abusing learners by using what is in place wrongly. We had a case last year, whereby the parent came to report the teacher. According to the teacher, some learners were so disruptive, and she chased them out, when they were standing, this particular child fainted, when I followed up, the previous teacher also punished the child by letting him stay in class during break time. Now this child didn't eat lunch and now he is standing in the sun for almost 30 minutes. Luckily the parent was not that harsh, but I must say it was a learning curve for all of us as teachers.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, Sir, can I proceed to the next question? So, in your years of teaching, what other types of bullying did you experience and how did you manage it?

**Principal:** There have been several times when I have experienced bullying. Learner to learner, Peer to peer as specific gangsterism (when a child does not belong to a certain group, although this type comes from outside it affects the school because if a child refuses to belong then he becomes a victim. Teacher to the learner. The most dangerous one was when the group of learners were involved in gangsterism, it was all over among grade seven boys.

A grade seven boy like me... who was just recently suspended and eh...his case is with our SGB as we speak. Eh...now this boy fought with another grade seven boy in class B. The teachers intervened, the two boys were brought up to the office, they were both suspended and on their way to the gate... eh...the school gate that is, in full view of the staff, these boys continued with the fight after getting the suspension note and when they were asked why they did that, their response was (he started me, pointing fingers) imagine, they don't even care of the suspension, that is the type of generation we are raising nowadays (sadly). When the fight started, the group of gangsters (some were high school learners and some were just well-known gangster group members) picked the fight, it was so scary now because anything could happen, these boys had dangerous weapons. I can tell you, bullying others makes me so sad because instead of teaching, you are now busy playing the police resolving becoming a social worker and trying to resolve bullying which is time-consuming, guess what when the district visits, they don't care about that, all they care about is WHY the syllabus is incomplete?

**Interviewer:** so scary, I understand, If I may ask, how did you deal with such a situation?

**Principal A:** We did involve the police, it was serious and scary as you've mentioned because as long as it involves the outside parties (gangsters) it becomes big, so the police were involved, SBST, SBG, and parents were also involved. And I might say it was resolved harmoniously.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for that. We will now proceed to question two. What do you think are the main causes of bullying in schools?

**Principal:** The main cause that I have seen during my years of teaching is that: teachers are not well trained when it comes to handling situations. Such as when the child suffers from Dyslexia. The teacher labelled the child as either naughty or stupid. Now, what happens is he tends to use a defensive mechanism, ADHD, the teacher fails sometimes to understand the learners and uses power, calling names or labelling the child. Some just need love from the teacher because at home there is none.

The other one is overcrowding we have seen more of this before COVID-19, because of the overcrowding, but now since learners are coming rotational, there are fewer bullying cases. So, you can see that when the children are full in classes chances of having bullying cases are real. It could also be the case of the environment that they come from- of late we have also been exposed to gangsters and they would then take the same attitude of gangsterism to school and would want to come in and ...and practice that. It could also lead to them being in a position of looking for a place within their peers- and that would be peer pressure of course...they want to be recognised by their peers themselves and that then would mean they would bully others in...in...in.. their course for recognition of course. It could also be corporal punishment...of course... corporal punishment can lead to kids to start being bullied and doing wrong things. It could also be a lack of love from parents, a lack of love from society as a whole where the kids will feel neglected and would feel like nobody's. They will then start bullying others to try and see if they have any power at all. So, there's a lot really of... factors that could lead to doing things like that.

**Interviewer:** sounds great, If I understand you correctly, you mean bullying cases have been reduced since COVID-19, how?

**Principal:** oh yes, you heard me correctly (laughing) it is simply because now the classes are manageable.

**Interviewer:** Eh ... I noticed the maximum sanction in most schools, and obviously within the constitution and the laws of the country, is suspension. Do you think that that's enough? Is the suspension working?

**Principal:** No, it is not working- it is not working because often these kids will do that knowing that they'll only be suspended and in a few days' time, they will be back in school. Now, that then will boil down to the fact that in whatever we try and put in place to try and curb bullying, we will not win because law is on their side. So, suspension as the ceiling, doesn't work.

I will therefore, recommend if I had it my way to make a recommendation, that we are given powers as a school, that we don't stop at suspending kids but if there is a need, kids that are bullying others, should be expelled from school.

**Interviewer:** Your views on maybe the review of policies with regard to discipline in schools...what do you think? Maybe Department needs to consider that?

**Principal:** Absolutely, the department should consider reviewing some of the policies of course...eh... mainly the discipline part of it because as a school we sometimes feel

a bit left out in one way or the other. We don't get much assistance from the department of education. They may have rules that they might put forward, they may have regulations that they might put forward, they might have policies that are there in place but those policies are restricting us as schools because the bottom line is bullying is taking place in schools, it is not taking place at the head-office. So, if the department will bring in policies, that are too lenient to these kids, then it definitely will mean that we will never win this battle against kids that are bullying others in school and we will and we will always have incidents when kids will bully others knowing for sure that they will still remain in schools until they finish their schooling career.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing that, now we will move to the next question. What factors do you think contribute to learner aggression at your school? Is the community a contributory factor in bullying?

**Principal:** Well, there are so many factors that contribute to these aggressions as it were. The main one is that of uh...the background. Um... most of our learners come from very broken families uh... most of the parents are single parents and mainly it's the mothers that are still alive. So, you will find that uh... these boys will then take the responsibilities of... being the main man in the house- man of the house that is. Now they actually take that attitude, and they then bring it to school, and they would then uh... have this bossy character that they display everywhere, and, in most cases, such displays will always end up in fights. Eh... another factor, I believe in Diepsloot, for example, we have quite several problems occurs, parents are the one that is promoting, if you look at the family cycle, parents fight, separate, so kids see this trend and think it's right to resolve issues in that way, because of the violence they experienced, they come and practice it at school. Parents have not involved in their kids' lives, e.g. learners' schoolwork, they don't play a role, but when there is a problem, they come and fight with the teacher.

**Interviewer:** And it's common to most schools where parents lack parenting, maybe due to the age of the parent (teenagers)

**Principal:** Yes, you are right when you say the age group of the parents we are serving, parents don't care, they thought when the child goes to school, it the school's responsibility to raise him holistically.

And another issue that contributes to probably learner aggression at our school is the fact that uh... because of the age factor um... these boys mainly are looking for some sense of belonging and then have to show their muscular powers and things like that. And for boys the most dominant way of showing that you are more powerful than the other one would be to pick up a fight and emerge victorious at the end of the fight. That's probably one of the factors that contribute to that- that issue of...of...belonging. Um... even though the next one is not too much in terms of the rating but eh... we do have one or two cases of drugs eh... well drugs is an issue almost everywhere eh... everyone is complaining about the whoonga and apparently there's a new one that is in the market and you know, even though we are not at liberty as a school to do tests and all of that but it's highly evident eh... in that in most cases they don't do these acts- you know they don't show these, these aggression in their sober senses... it's always

evident that they are under the influence of something which in this case would not be alcohol but mainly would be drugs.

**Interviewer:** I thank you so much. I: Thank you for that. We'll proceed now to the next question. Under socio-cultural perspectives, do you think it has to do with bullying?

**Principal:** social, yes it does contribute in many ways. In some cases, the clashing of culture, you find father is a Pedi and the mother is a Zimbabwean. we are serving, parents from neighbouring countries. The Broken family set up also counts. "Our students come from broken homes!" Poor upbringing, a lack of positive role models, and the impact of media violence on students have all had a severe impact on classroom discipline, teaching and learning, and the overall ethos of schools.

**Interviewer:** I believe shame other kids are being forced by the circumstances.

**Principal:** **One** hundred percent (100%) you know I can attest to that; most kids are joining gangs because of the protection or the stealing because they are child-headed families.

Another one is learner-to-teacher: Learners are good at provoking teachers because teachers are also human beings, they lose control and end up quarrelling in front of the kids. The next possible move that I have seen teachers taking is also absenting themselves because em... especially with the female staff they resort to tears and they don't want to be in a place where nobody will see them. When somebody intervenes after a teacher has been humiliated by a child in a class, the next possible thing that you normally see would be for a teacher to sob like a baby eh... and it becomes therefore difficult the next day for the teacher to stand right up with your head held up high in the same class where you were humiliated. So, absenteeism happens in both learners and teachers after an act of aggression has been witnessed. Also, if a child has been humiliated by either a teacher or another learner, that child (the victim) suffers low self-esteem and their confidence is dented hugely. This results in negative performance. Thank you.

**Interviewer:** Thanking for answering that question in a very professional manner and we will now proceed to the next question and that is ... In your own opinion, how do you think bullying can be reduced?

**Principal:** I think Policy and emphasising of the school rules. It does help especially when we stick to it, I believe consistency is the only way to ensure it yields fruits repeatedly. I believe over and above that if we can bring back religious practices, learners need to be taught how to resolve, good behaviour, taught obedience because that was only part that helped in combating bullies, back in the day there were fewer cases of bullying because kids were taught all this, but now it's like we are removing it and left them with rights of doing as they please. If we can also revisit and adopt a cop programme to be more practical than theoretical, even the community, needs to practice ubuntu to re-emphasise the policy, taught about it.

**Interviewer:** most teachers are complaining about time wasted trying to reprimand the disruptive child, how do you do to support the teacher as a manager?

**Principal A:** IQMS helped us a lot to support teachers. The department also comes on board by introducing the programme to help teachers overcome and have a more conducive way to deal with bullying.

**Interviewer:** What role do you think the parents/teachers and the community at large should play to minimise/ reduce bullying?

**Principal:** Unfortunately, in our school, if I were to put in percentages, 90% is played by school and the 10% by parents, simply maybe because of absent parents, some kids are raised by themselves. Some parents are still teenagers. I would say if parents can work together and apply that my child is your child, it will help then you are going to see a tremendous change.

Number 2, if teachers can understand that it's not about curriculum only, it's about impacting values, knowledge, wisdom character to a child, it will be better. As parents we are secondary parents, what we say or do to learners is taking them as raw as it is, so as teachers we have an opportunity to practice and instil rights in the learners. There is a saying that monkey see monkey do (what you see is what you will do). There is something I call a "rule of engagement" you must know what to say, how, and to whom you say it. You will then never insult a child as a teacher.

**Interviewer:** So, you mean that teachers need to upskill to know how to deal with such behaviour.

**Principal:** yes, I mean if you were to look at the disorder such as ADHD, Autism. if a teacher is not well equipped, she/he can label a child a naughty or bully. So, the sooner teachers understand the nature of the problem that the child is suffering from, the better to deal with and give help before it's called bullying.

Most of the problems especially in primary schools. It's not all about bullying, but the type of disorder. This will help a child to get help at the earliest time. I would also blame the Department of Education for this. There are no psychologists and counsellors in our schools. Even though the Department of Education has (just) begun to establish service centres in several Districts, the services are inefficient, because the centres are chronically understaffed and under-resourced, making it difficult for these workers to visit all schools

Thank you, sir, we will move on to the next question,

**Interviewer:** Kindly explain to me in your understanding, do you think the ecosystem has also had an impact on bullying?

**Principal:** It depends on what are we addressing when you are talking about the total ecosystem. In my understanding when other parts most impact the other one, the ecosystem with the child society, I would say yes, it does have an impact, people always say you" only vomit what you ate" meaning when a child's behaviour strangely manifests itself, chances are it's been adapted from somewhere. if the ecosystem revolves and fits itself negatively, the behaviour will then be negative. That's why I say bullying is caused by several factors, if it's not dealt with it becomes a problem. I always say if these factors can be dealt with evenly among the stakeholders it will help

to minimise bullying, but now in most cases, teachers are the only ones to deal with sadly.

**Interviewer:** laughing ... where I have come from parents used to say (*Kanti othisha banifundisani?*) what are teachers doing?

**Principal:** Yes, sadly so it's become only the teacher's responsibility to correct what is wrong. At some parents we had a case whereby a was being stabbed and hid brother from outside came with a knife to also stab his little brother, fortunately, he came to only to find out that he wanted to kill the boy.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. We now coming to the last question. Can you explain the involvement of other stakeholders in assisting your school in managing aggressive learners?

**Principal:** Oh yes there are other stakeholders that we work hand-in-hand with eh... who come in to assist us whenever we shout. We have a very good and close relationship with our SAPS- the South African Police Services em... well they do random searches at our school. We also work with social services. They come in they do motivational talks eh... they do campaigns like eh... drugs eh... HIV & Aids and all of that. We also work hand-in-hand with SANCA eh... SANCA comes in here once a month eh... they too do individual sessions and also group sessions with both the teachers and the learners- again trying to curb eh... eh... some of the problems that we have in terms of drug abuse, they are dealing with. We have a very close and working relationship with our social workers eh... again they come in very handy at times when these learners are affected by this em... they... we refer such learners to them and eh... they assist in whatever way they can- they go out of their way in trying to assist these learners.

**Interviewer:** Do they work closely with the counsellor of the school if you do have one?

**Principal:** Yes, they work very closely with the counsellor of the school, they work very closely with eh... the management team as it were, they work very closely with eh... the school governing body because eh... like I said with the expertise that they have eh... we normally refer eh... serious cases to them.

**Interviewer:** What about parents, are they of help?

**Principal:** That one, it's like a drop in the ocean, most parents don't care. You see them whenever they want us to sign social grant forms or if there is a fight that they need to pick against the teacher.

**Interviewer:** Alright. thank you so much sir, is there anything you would like to add?

**Principal:** mhm.... my take on learner aggression or bullying is simple. This is not our problem alone as a school. This is something that the Department obviously with our government need to take seriously. They need to probably develop a plan or a policy that we as schools collectively with our sister departments would have to implement. As it is now, the way ... you know the way we handle this relies on our thinking, on our impromptu responses, but we don't have something in place that is working and that

comes in handy every time you are faced with an incident of learner aggression. Not only do we need assistance as teachers from the government and the department as an employer our learners and parents also need a clear direction from the department as to what they, as the department have in place, should a learner treat the other learner in a way that would infringe the right of the other one. The rules and regulations that we have in place do not give us the full power, the full control to try and fight this. The limitations that have been put forward by both the government and the department is more advantageous to the perpetrator of learner aggression than for us who are trying to fight it, who are trying to stop this.

**Interviewer:** Are you saying then that the current eh...code of conduct is too lenient?

**Principal:** Exactly my point. Our code of conduct em... gives far too many limitations to those who are trying to put things right. It gives far too many... it draws... it actually draws too many boundaries; it draws too many lines eh... to those who are serious about stopping this in schools and until such time such boundaries are lifted, we are always going to have learner aggression as one of the biggest concerns in schools.

**Interviewer:** Mr. Principal, I want to thank you very much for all the information you have given me on this particular topic at your school- I'm sure it's going to help me tremendously in the research and thank you very much for your time.

**Principal:** My pleasure and thank you for giving me this opportunity to state my view.

## **SCHOOL B**

**INTERVIEWER:** MS LADYFAIR KHAYELIHLE MALEMBE

**INTERVIEWEE:** PRINCIPAL OF SCHOOL A

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:** 18 NOVEMBER 2021

**START TIME OF INTERVIEW:** 10H30

**END TIME OF INTERVIEW:** 11H25

**LOCATION OF INTERVIEW:** DIEPSLOOT (JOHANNESBURG NORTH, DISTRICT 10, GAUTENG)

**INTERVIEW TOPIC:** Eco- systemic and Socio-cultural Perspectives in Understanding Learner Bullying Behaviour: A Case Study of a Township School in Gauteng

## **INTRODUCTION**

I would like to take this opportunity and thank you for allowing me to come and have this meeting with you despite your busy schedule. I really appreciate it. I am Khayelihle Malembe, a Master's (Psychology of Education) student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). At our last meeting, I explained to you that we were to meet so that you will talk to me about your views on the topic: Eco- systematic and Sociocultural Perspectives in Understanding Learner Bullying Behaviour. As I stressed in the consent letter, your name will be kept confidential and there will be no compensation

from my supervisor and myself. You are kindly asked to be honest in giving your views. You should not feel forced to say something you are uncomfortable with. If you wish to withdraw from the research, you are free to do so and will not be penalised.

**Purpose:** The interview seeks to elicit information from you about the understanding of learner bullying behaviour that you experienced in your school, sociocultural and eco-systematic. The information you provide will help in the development of a framework to guide adolescents into the use of social media in constructing psychosocial identities.

**Timeline:** The interview should take about 45 minutes to 60 minutes.

**The interviewer starts the discussion.**

**Interviewer:** Okay sir, good day or should I say good morning to you.

**Principal:** Good day to you too.

**Interviewer:** Okay, good day to you principal. I want to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to interview you today on this problem of bullying in primary schools and I want to thank you very much for your time.

**Principal:** Pleasure is all mine.

**Transition:**

For how long have you worked as a teacher and as a principal?

**Principal:** 12 years ..... no 13 to be precise

Oh, wow this is such a milestone.

**Principal:** indeed (shrugging and laughing)

**Interviewer:** I think we can start sir, Your first question.

**Interviewer:** Thank Madam, what is your experience of learner bullying or I must say learner aggression in your school? It doesn't have to be only this year; it can be previous years as well.

**Principal:** (Taking a deep breath) To my understanding bullying is a violent, aggressive behaviour that is repeated (punching, hitting, swearing, calling names. So bullying is broad and deeper, and it comes in different forms. Such as physical or emotional. The type of bullying differs especially in learners.

**Interviewer:** Can you kindly elaborate on what you mean by being differ?

**Principal:** Oh okay, here listen, in my school, the type of bullying that is common in lower grades is mostly teasing, however in bigger grades that's when we experience physical (hitting, stabbing) emotional even sexual abuse and this leads to learners taking their lives.



**Interviewer:** So, in your years of teaching, what other types of bullying did you experience and how did you manage it?

**Principal B:** (Drug taking) There was this group of boys who used the young ones to go and steal. They started from learners to teachers' purses. One day the principal called the police to come and search, and that's when we found that there were drugs involved.

**Interviewer:** shooooo how did you do then?

**Principal B:** We called the shocked parents. The Social workers were also involved. They take the child to rehab, and as we speak the child is at the rehab centre. He only comes for an exam.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you so much for that madam principal. We'll go on to question two: What personality characteristics have you observed bullies displaying in your school? What kind of people are bullies?

**Principal:** Well, that's a difficult one. That's a very difficult one. But my experience tells me that it will be well-aggressive boys eh...in...in... in every way. These are people who wouldn't want to reason things out eh... they tend to be aggressive to the younger ones... more into their physique of course because the victims in bullying 9 out of 10 times would be those small in status as it were. You know, they tend to be very arrogant of course...they are the so-called "MR. Know-it-all", eh...they are old in the school- they know the ins and the outs of the school. They have been here long enough to be called...you know the main people of the school. They tend to use a lot of force of course and the sad part is that they always think of presenting themselves as the "untouchables" and it will then lead to the younger ones having some fear even in terms of reporting them to us as management of the school.

**Interviewer:** Yeah it sounds scary, I can imagine what you've been dealing with as a teacher and a principal. Now can we move to the next question? What do you think are the main causes of bullying in schools?

**Principal:** Some of the learners become bullies because of the peer pressure. Poverty, lack of parenting. If I say so, most parents are teenagers, they are busy with their lives, so they even consume alcohol, and drug abuse in front kids. Violence and swearing an in things. Sometimes other kids use bullying to disturb learning because of poor performance. Overcrowding as well, large classes are uncontrollable. Lastly, teachers go to class unprepared, and they tend to mock and call names which makes learners develop aggressive mode. Oh, I forgot the big fish "media" that learners watch has a great impact on bullying, especially physical, emotional and sexual.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much for that madam. We'll proceed to question four ... What are your views on the community background and the role it may play, is the community a contributory factor in bullying?

**Principal:** I can say, Dysfunctional families. Some kids go to bed on an empty stomach simply because of poverty at home. Resources are not enough.

Other kids are raised by single parents in most cases it's fathers who are usually absent. This experience raises anger that they vent to other learners because of Depression and frustration. This situation leads other kids to join gangsterism.

Secondly, underprivileged, Violence, Unemployment, Lack of finances and kids have seen fathers beat up their mothers. Now they vent their physic, you know, upon these small smart ones. cheeky

Oh, the cancer one, is Cyber-bullying. Most of the learners in our school, especially in grades 6 & 7 have cases of cyberbullying, in most cases, the victims are the smart ones in the class. This affects students, particularly bullied students. You can find out that the student is afraid to attend school, which leads to excessive absenteeism and turnover. In certain circumstances, students will lie about being sick, but when you follow up, you will find that the learner is scared of being hounded by this student.

Another thing is that you will find that some learners become child-headed families, some will be very poor at home and the only place that they would feel power is in school of course. These are kids that are lost in society, that are looking for some acknowledgement- they are seeking some recognition, that they want to be known in...in...in school for that matter.

It could also be the case of the environment that they come from- of late we have also been exposed to gangsters and they would then take the same attitude of gangsterism to school and would want to come in and ...and practice that. It could also lead to them being in a position of looking for a place within their peers- and that would be peer pressure of course...they want to be recognised by their peers themselves and that then would mean they would bully others in...in...in.. their course for recognition of course.

Lastly, we need to take the blame as teachers. Some colleagues still use corporal punishment

**Interviewer:** Is it bad to use corporal punishment?

**Principal:** ...of course... corporal punishment can lead to kids to start being bullied and start doing wrong things. It could also be a lack of love from parents, a lack of love from society as a whole where the kids will feel neglected, and they would feel like nobody. They will then start bullying others to try and see if they have any power at all. So there's a lot really of factors that could lead to doing things like that.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for that clarity. We now moving to the next question. From a socio-cultural perspective, do you think it has to do with bullying?

**Principal:** Unemployment within the community accelerates.... Because to them it's normal when you bully somebody to get what you want. You can see what was happening in our country, looting. Unfortunately, some parents because of poverty, allow bullying (to them it's a feat of survival) this has an impact on children's lives. Other parents play the shifting blame game.

**Interviewer:** What did you as a school, to help or to manage the situation?

I believe what helped us a lot were NGOs that came to the party such as SANCA, as well as white paper 6 (government policy) schools have the responsibility to create relationships with the community stakeholders.

**Interviewer:** Okay thank you, you may proceed.

**Principal:** Right, as I was saying before, Child-headed families due to death or absent parents. There are cases where kids are left for a month alone here and they rely on feeding schemes ( food from school) such kids are forced to join gangs to survive, and some end up stealing, and bullying just because they need food.so you can see there are quite several points that are attributed to wards bullying, gangs in the society which are not kept, they continue as normal, killings in the society, lack of morals, all this has an impact on the learner's behaviour. Punch or kick weaker learners. They think it is right and acceptable to discriminate against each other. Ethnic groups are superior Socially, Learners tend to discriminate against each other learners belonging to a certain culture would want to talk and chat on their own.

**Interviewer:** Alright, thank you for that. What are the consequences of bullying behaviour on all the stakeholders of the school? How does bullying affect everyone in the school system?

**Principal:** Eh...well it...it...it will always boil down to the fact that...if there is something that is not going down well with you in school...eh...you will have fear- fear of coming to school, fear of being around people and fear of just being yourself of course. So, it leads to fear, it leads to anger of course where a child will think "If I had the power" you know "If I was big enough" I could fight my own battles. So therefore, it would lead to anger on their part eh ... again they would be frustrated, experience low esteem where they would lose friends and they would feel less and less of themselves presenting themselves in a way that you would be happy as a child of course.

It could lead to suicide- some would commit suicide just because they are being bullied in school. And it could lead to them leaving school- dropping out of school because of bullying. On the side of the teachers of course, eh...eh.. if you have kids that are being bullied...it means you have a problem of discipline. And in terms of class management, you will need a lot of other strategies you can put in place otherwise a lot of time is lost in terms of teaching and learning- time to sort this bullying thing out instead of doing the core business which is teaching and learning. And old as we are, it does affect us teachers in one way or the other because in some cases there are teachers who will be afraid to go to class.

Some teachers will not be in a position to present a lesson to the best of their potential because of this bullying and it therefore becomes difficult for us even to play this eh...motherly...eh...eh part of it...will be compromised because now we are even afraid of the kids are teaching in our classes. Eh... on the management side, well we spend a lot of time dealing with these kids...we spend a lot of time dealing with them- time that could be used somewhere else, but we sit in our offices, and we try and address things.

It leads to a lot of chaos in school, it leads to a lot of kids playing truancy, it leads to a lot of kids becoming criminals, one way or the other because we go to such an extent

that we involve outside people to try and assist- some cases are then referred to other places and one would say it leads to criminal activities of course.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you so much for that madam. Let us proceed to question five: Please give an example in which you were involved in addressing bullying in your school.

**Principal:** Eh...well, if possible, I just want to take you back to an incident of a boy who had been bullied for three months. Eh... obviously as a school we have our procedures, we have a code of conduct for learners that is followed should an incident of this nature occur. So as a school, we have to follow such procedures where we call in a child to write a statement. We then called in the parent to come into school, and the parent was of course duly informed. Eh... the other learner also had to write a statement and the case was then addressed by the disciplinary team of the school but because it was again beyond them, we had to refer the case to the school governing body and sanctions were then put in place for this boy and if I may add, the school governing body recommended that the boy is referred to a psychologist as a victim of course. Eh... he had also developed some symptoms that he did not even want to come to the school. So, he was referred to the psychology part while we dealt with the other boy giving him of course the sanctions we developed for that.

**Interviewer:** Alright, thank you for that. In terms of your school policy on bullying or discipline, do you think perhaps that your school policy is effective...working for you?

**Principal:** Eh...I don't think it is working to the way that it can attest, you know this bullying in particular. Eh...it has a lot of gaps and shortcomings coming from the fact that...with the rights, in particular, being given to these kids, it becomes difficult for us as a school eh... to work in such a way that we can set examples eh... in cases where we handle these for the next person not to do this. So, it fails to address this bullying head-on because we are being restricted a lot obviously by the South African Law, the Constitution, The Bill of Rights and so on. So, it is silent to tackle this bullying if I may put it that way.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for that. We will go on to the final question then. Can you explain the extent of parental involvement in curbing bullying and other incidences at school?

**Principal:** Eh...we had problems which we had put in place of course...and they would go to such an extent that they will involve parents. Now in our programmes for the year of course we do put aside days where parents are invited to school to present to kids the consequences of bullying- the negatives if I may put it that way, in terms of this bullying but I must say that again this is one fight as a school alone we are not winning because we are not getting much support from the parents. Yes, we have the systems in place, but if you take a school like ours with an enrolment of kids, only to find that on the day when parents call into school to tackle issues like bullying, you will get less than 15 parents coming to do that. You will see that even if you do have systems in place, if you do have programmes, I mean programmes that can curb bullying in your school, that we are not in a position where we can say we are fighting this collectively because bullying does not start in school- bullying is a social ill, which means it has to

be taken outside eh...to the community, it has to be taken into our homes, and if we can collectively come together, we can come up with ideas and solutions as to how we can work this out but are not winning as a school, we are not getting much support here from the parents.

**Interviewer:** Eh ... I noticed the maximum sanction in most schools, and obviously within the constitution and the laws of the country, is suspension. Do you think that that's enough? Is the suspension working?

**Principal:** No, it is not working- it is not working because often these kids will do that knowing that they'll only be suspended and in a few days, we are back in school. Now, that then will boil down to the fact that whatever we try and put in place to try and curb bullying, we will not win because the law is on their side. So, suspension as the ceiling doesn't work. I will, therefore, recommend if I had it my way to make a recommendation, that we are given powers as a school, that we don't stop at suspending kids but if there is a need, kids that are bullying others, should be expelled from school.

**Interviewer:** Your views on maybe the review of policies concerning discipline in schools...what do you think? Maybe the Department needs to consider that.

**Principal:** Absolutely, the department should consider reviewing some of the policies of course...eh... mainly the discipline part of it because as a school we sometimes feel a bit left out in one way or the other. We don't get much assistance from the Department of Education. They may have rules that they might put forward, they may have regulations that they might put forward, they might have policies that are there in place, but those policies are restricting us as schools because the bottom line is bullying is taking place in schools, it is not taking place at the head office. So, if the department will bring in policies, that are too lenient to these kids, then it definitely will mean that we will never win this battle against kids that are bullying others in school, and we will and we will always have eh... incidents when kids will bully others knowing for sure that they will remain in schools until they finish their schooling career.

**Interviewer:** Madam Principal, I want to thank you very much for all the information you have given me on this particular topic at your school- I'm sure it's going to help me tremendously in the research and thank you very much for your time.

**Principal:** You are most welcome.

## Appendix N: Data Analysis

### Analysis of Principal Data

Questions	Principal A	Principal B
1. How do you define bullying in your own understanding?	<p>Practicing power over someone.</p> <p>Learner to learner bullying</p> <p>Tend to be violent</p> <p>Abusing of powers</p> <p>Punching, kicking and swearing</p> <p>aggressive behaviour</p> <p>picked the fight</p>	<p>Teasing the younger ones</p> <p>Kicking, beating and swearing</p> <p>Calling names</p> <p>Control and abusing of power.</p> <p>Picked the fight</p>
2. What are the main causes of bullying?	<p>Tarnish your image especially from victim's side</p> <p>Cause low self esteem</p> <p>Learner affected emotionally</p> <p>Derogative remarks</p> <p>Force learner to carry/give you money or food.</p>	<p>Scared to come to school</p> <p>One learner confronting</p> <p>Power over learner</p> <p>Take things from other learners forcefully</p>
3. What are the types of bullying that are dominant to your school?	<p>Physical, such as kicking</p> <p>Harassment</p> <p>Cyber bullying</p> <p>Culturally racism</p> <p>Swearing and calling names</p> <p>beating in lower grades and In higher grades it goes serious injury like stabbing,</p>	<p>Fights</p> <p>Beating</p> <p>Verbal such as calling names and teasing</p> <p>Kicking</p> <p>Sexual – touching private parts</p> <p>Using of internets and social media platforms.</p>
4. What do you think are the main causes of bullying in schools?	<p>Overcrowding</p> <p>Socio economic disadvantages</p> <p>Learners are emotionally and psychologically affected</p> <p>Verbal threads</p> <p>Corporal punishment</p> <p>Teacher came unprepared</p>	<p>Lack of parenting skills</p> <p>Peer pressure</p> <p>Overcrowding</p> <p>Under skilled teachers</p> <p>Verbal by teasing, calling names and give threads</p> <p>Poverty</p>

		Aggressive punishment from teachers
5. What are your views on community, family backgrounds as contributory factors of bullying in schools?	<p>Fights over parents</p> <p>Depression parents/ community due to unemployment</p> <p>Gangsterism</p> <p>Rising of crime</p> <p>Stress</p> <p>Kinds of abuse</p> <p>Cultural racism</p> <p>Broken family structure</p>	<p>Crime rate</p> <p>underprivileged</p> <p>frustration and stress</p> <p>Pick on or vent fights</p> <p>Abuse of learner by parents</p> <p>Sexual and physical abuse</p> <p>Poverty caused by unemployment</p> <p>racialism</p>
6. What are your views on school as a contributory factor of bullying in schools?	<p>Resources</p> <p>Teachers are not well trained</p> <p>Overcrowding</p> <p>No resource</p> <p>No guideline to follow for discipline a child.</p>	<p>Some teachers came late</p> <p>In class</p> <p>Lack of resources</p> <p>No furniture's and classrooms</p> <p>Lacking skills to discipline learners.</p>
7. What are your views on social media as a contributory factor of bullying in schools?	<p>Awful messages</p> <p>Sharing of nude photos</p> <p>Violent stories and games</p> <p>Internet exposes explicit movies</p>	<p>Violent</p> <p>Gossip on social media</p> <p>Sharing and mocking with others.</p> <p>Take other nude photos</p> <p>Violent movies</p>
8. What are your views on socio cultural and ecosystem as a contributory factor in schools?	<p>Poverty</p> <p>Over population</p> <p>Conditions where people live in</p> <p>Heath hazardous due to environment</p> <p>Culture and language discrimination</p> <p>Emotionally affected</p>	<p>Unemployment</p> <p>Child headed family</p> <p>Death in the family</p> <p>Culture dominant</p> <p>Xenophobia</p>
9. What are your thoughts on bullying as contributory factor in victim and low educational standards?	<p>Low performance</p> <p>Attendance became very poor</p> <p>Absenteeism</p> <p>Tend to fake illness</p> <p>Lonely and become excluded in social life</p>	<p>Drop out</p> <p>Committing suicide</p> <p>Absenteeism</p> <p>Disturb emotionally</p> <p>Changing of behaviour</p> <p>Withdrawn</p>

<p>10.Can you differentiate bullies, victims and witness(bystander) of bullying in schools?</p>	<p>Learners who always pick a fight.</p> <p>Witness always watch and do nothing.</p> <p>Bullies see themselves as heroes, yet they are lonely and coward.</p> <p>Fear</p>	<p>Bystander watch and do nothing.</p> <p>Victim are one suffer bullying the most</p> <p>Victim always withdrawn</p> <p>Bullies like fighting</p> <p>Very cheeky</p>
<p>11.What role do you think the parents, teachers and the community should play to minimise or reducing bullying in schools?</p>	<p>Bring back religious education</p> <p>Upskill educators</p> <p>Department needs to run awareness to the community</p> <p>Recreation centres</p> <p>ubuntu</p> <p>school counsellors</p>	<p>Training on teachers side</p> <p>Community based centre</p> <p>Recreation centres</p> <p>Equipped sports facilities</p> <p>Stationed psychologists</p>



### Analysis of Teacher and SGB Data

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	SGB 1	SGB 2
1. How do you define bullying in your own understanding?	<p>Punched</p> <p>Kicked and shoved to wall</p> <p>Forced to buy stuff for others</p>	<p>Confronting</p> <p>abuse power</p> <p>Beating and swearing</p> <p>Cyber bullying</p>	<p>Beating</p> <p>Emotional</p>	<p>Excluded from group</p> <p>Kick</p> <p>Punch</p> <p>swearing</p>	<p>Swear</p> <p>Calling names</p> <p>gossip</p>	<p>beating</p> <p>threatened</p> <p>use of social media</p>
2. Can you define bullying from an emotional perspective?	<p>Discrimination</p> <p>Name calling</p> <p>Disempower</p> <p>Affecting other's feelings</p>	<p>Call each other's name</p> <p>Swearing</p> <p>Threatening</p> <p>emotional</p>	<p>Use of bad words</p> <p>Swearing</p> <p>withdrawn</p>	<p>Fat</p> <p>Stupid</p> <p>Teased because of a background</p> <p>Misusing of powers against the minor</p>	<p>Intimidating</p> <p>Tease</p> <p>swear</p>	<p>Making funny</p> <p>Use of vulgar language</p> <p>Don't have anything to say</p>
3. As a teacher can you explain how kicking, hitting, and beating can be viewed as common pattern in bullying	<p>Very frustrated and intimidating</p> <p>Make learner feel in fear</p> <p>absenteeism</p>	<p>It is always reported by most learners</p> <p>Young ones are always in fear</p>	<p>Common in all classes</p> <p>threads</p> <p>fear</p> <p>rights has violated</p>	<p>Most learners are withdrawn</p> <p>Fear</p> <p>Skipping of classes</p> <p>Emotional challenges</p>	<p>Endless fights and arguments</p> <p>Bunking of class</p> <p>Lots of common cases reported</p> <p>Psychological problem</p>	<p>Always reported</p> <p>Feel inferior</p> <p>Drop outs</p>

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	SGB 1	SGB 2
4. What could be the sign bullying in schools?	<p>Bruises</p> <p>Refuse to participate in social</p> <p>Low self esteem</p>	<p>Scars</p> <p>Don't play with other kids</p> <p>Reported sick</p> <p>Fear</p>	<p>Withdrawn</p> <p>Reported sick for no reason</p> <p>Always crying</p> <p>Withdrawn</p>	<p>Low self esteem</p> <p>Having excuses all times</p> <p>Wanting to go home always</p>	<p>Bleeding</p> <p>Low participation</p> <p>Crying</p>	<p>Physical bruises</p> <p>Don't play often</p>
5. What are your views on community, family backgrounds as contributory factors of bullying in schools?	<p>Fights</p> <p>Death in the family</p> <p>Rape</p> <p>Death</p> <p>Always threatened</p> <p>Violence</p>	<p>Parents usually fight Infront of the kids</p> <p>Lack of role models</p> <p>Emotional abused</p>	<p>Learners witnessing divorce and death</p> <p>Follow wrong people</p>	<p>Violence and crime in the community</p> <p>Parents are always argue and fighting Infront of the kids, using horrible words</p>	<p>Lack of resources</p> <p>Exposed in fights and violence</p> <p>Use of substance abuse by parents</p>	<p>Always fight</p> <p>Emotional and physical abuse</p> <p>rape</p>
6. What are your views on school as a contributory factor of bullying in schools?	<p>No rules</p> <p>No enough resources</p> <p>overcrowding</p>	<p>Overcrowding</p> <p>Not doing homework</p> <p>Corporal punishment</p>	<p>Vulgar language</p> <p>Role model</p>	<p>No discipline</p> <p>Procedures in place</p> <p>Big classes</p>	<p>Call him by names</p> <p>Poor performance</p>	<p>discipline</p> <p>No role models</p> <p>Poor performance</p>
7. What are your views on social media as a contributory factor of bullying in schools?	<p>Violent</p> <p>Social media</p> <p>Movies</p>	<p>Social media</p> <p>Violence games</p>	<p>Social media</p> <p>Suicide</p>	<p>Social media</p> <p>Violent video</p>	<p>Social media</p> <p>Chain of bad message</p> <p>Violent</p>	<p>Text bad message</p> <p>Gossiping</p>

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	SGB 1	SGB 2
	Internet	Cellphones	cellphones	Watching ugly cartoons		Sharing nude and watching pornographic videos
8.What are your views on socio cultural and ecosystem as a contributory factor in schools?	Learners from same culture gang against other.	Racial racism As well as culture dominant Violating others' rights Instilling fear	Discrimination Making someone feel stupid	Affect emotionally Calling names Look down to somebody's culture	Teasing their culture Language and skin discrimination	Feel inferior
9. what do you think are other types of bullying that occur in schools?	Physical Verbal Sexual harassment Gender bullying Social media	sexual gender and racial cyber bullying Physical	Cyber bullying Sex bullying Physical Verbal	Calling names Kicking Emotional Drug abuse Social media abuse	Physical Verbal Sexual harassment Social media	Emotional Drug abuse Physical Verbal Gender abuse
11.What role do you think the parents, teachers and the community should	Police involvement Parents	Parental involvement	Social worker Report bullying	Psychologist Social worker	Community awareness Social workers	Community outreach

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	SGB 1	SGB 2
play to minimise or reducing bullying in schools?	<p>Student group</p> <p>Love life</p> <p>Positive rewards</p>	<p>Child protection programmes in schools.</p> <p>Sports</p> <p>Community programmes</p>	<p>Drama groups</p> <p>Youth group</p> <p>Sport facilities</p>	<p>Involvement of police officers</p> <p>Positive rewards</p>	<p>Psychologist</p> <p>Education programmes to equipped teachers</p>	<p>Ubuntu</p> <p>Pastoral care</p> <p>Counselling , psychological counselling</p>

### Analysis of Learners Data

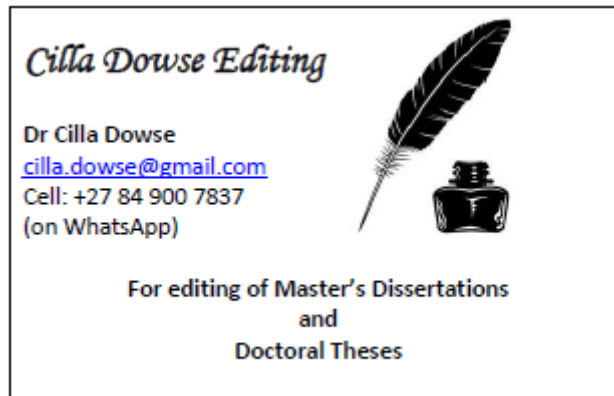
Questions	LA & LAA	LB&LBB	LC&LCC	LD&LDD	LE& LEE	LF&LFF
1.What does bullying mean to you?	<p>Pushing</p> <p>Kicking</p> <p>Strangling</p>	<p>Abuse of power</p> <p>Hurt someone</p> <p>Physical</p> <p>Verbal</p> <p>Beating</p>	<p>Physical</p> <p>Emotional</p> <p>Sexual</p> <p>Biting</p> <p>Degrading others</p>	<p>Over power</p> <p>Forcing people to do what the don't want.</p> <p>Physical</p> <p>hiting others</p>	<p>Hiting</p> <p>Kicking</p> <p>Pushing</p> <p>Verbal</p>	<p>Verbal</p> <p>Overpower</p> <p>Kicking and pushing</p>
2. What do you in your opinion causes bullying in schools?	<p>Exposure to violence</p> <p>Breaking houses</p>	<p>Crime in the community</p> <p>Stealing</p> <p>Violent games</p>	<p>Posting pictures</p> <p>Poverty</p> <p>Stealing</p>	<p>Violence</p> <p>Tribal violence</p> <p>Internet</p>	<p>Language</p> <p>Discrimination</p> <p>Face book</p>	<p>Community</p>

Questions	LA & LAA	LB&LBB	LC&LCC	LD&LDD	LE& LEE	LF&LFF
3. In your opinion, what do you think that the school contributes to learners in becoming bully?	Lacking of facilities Beating Teasing Teachers are bullies	Beating from teachers Swearing from teachers and calling names.	Insufficient of stationery Lack of parental involvement	Corporal punishment overcrowding	Lack of supervision Stealing and fighting	Teacher abuse Rape from teachers Parents don't care
What other forms of bullying did learners experience in schools?	Physical Sexual Beating and hitting teasing	Emotional Hitting Beating Cyber bullying teasing	Cyber bullying Teasing Emotional physical	Other kids forced to do nasty things Cyber bullying	Emotional Swearing Teasing emotional	Swearing Teasing
In your view how do low educational achievement contributing factor of bullying in schools?	expose to various form of bullying Low self esteem Absenteeism	Become a target Bunking of classes	Lack of concentration	Learners who are being bullied they become withdrawn Bunking of classes Inferior	Low self esteem	Absenteeism

Questions	LA & LAA	LB&LBB	LC&LCC	LD&LDD	LE& LEE	LF&LFF
<p>What role do you think needs to taken by stakeholders in reducing bullying.</p>	<p>Different strategies to be implemented</p> <p>Life orientation programme</p> <p>instil moral values back</p>	<p>respect each others culture and race</p> <p>bullying will be thing of the past</p> <p>involvement of parents</p>	<p>involvement of police</p>	<p>involvement of social worker and counselling in each school</p> <p>parental involvement</p>	<p>involvement of parents</p>	<p>policy to be at school at all times</p> <p>get a proper punishment</p> <p>implementing of policies properly</p>

<b>THEME NO.</b>	<b>THEME</b>	<b>SUB-THEME</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>LINK TO LITERATURE</b>
1	Understanding nature of bullying forms	Experiences of bullying	Types of bullying	Olweus & Limber (2010) Louw (2015)
			4.2.1.1 Physical experiences 4.2.1.2 Verbal and emotional 4.2.1.3 Cyber bullying 4.2.1.4 Xenophobic and homophobic bullying 4.2.1.5 Racist bullying experiences	Dillon (2012) Miller & Lowen (2012) Mushambi (2016) Monks & Coyne (2011) Katz (2012) Corloso (2010) Olweus (2013) Olweus (2010) Rigby (2010)
2	Factors contributing to bullying (socio-cultural)	Influences from social	Social factors contributing to bullying	Nkosi (2012) Corloso (2010) Olweus (2013)
			4.2.2.1 Family influence 4.2.2.2. Community influence 4.2.2.3 Social media influence at school level	Monks & Coyne (2011) Ndebele & Msiza (2014) Swearer and Hymel (2015) Rigby (2013) Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) Swearer and Hymel (2011)
4	Ways to manage/reduce bullying	Various strategies to manage bullying	4.2.4.1. The role of the school 4.2.4.2. The role of the community 4.2.4.3 The role of the family 4.2.4.4 The role of the outside stakeholders	Thomas (2011) Kruger (2012) Corloso (2013) Rigby 2013)

## Appendix O: Proof of Editing



This letter serves to confirm that editing and proofreading was done for:

**LADYFAIR KHAYELIHLE MALEMBE**  
**Master of Education: Psychology of Education**  
**University of South Africa**

**ECOSYSTEMIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE IN UNDERSTANDING  
LEARNER BULLYING BEHAVIOUR IN TWO TOWNSHIP PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN  
GAUTENG**

Cilla Dowse  
08 January 2024

Cilla Dowse  
PhD in Assessment and Quality Assurance in Education and Training: University of Pretoria 2014  
Basic Editing and Proofreading: McGillivray Linnegar Associates 2008  
Programme on Editing Principles and Practices: University of Pretoria 2009  
Proofreading for Academic Purposes: McGillivray Linnegar Associates 2021  
Professional Editors' Guild Associate Member, DOW003



## Appendix P: Turnitin Report

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